



## IRAQ XIII. PERSIAN NEWSPAPERS IN IRAQ: 1909-22

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### IRAQ xiii. PERSIAN NEWSPAPERS IN IRAQ: 1909-22

The publication of Persian-language newspapers in Iraq began with the implementation of the 1909 Ottoman Constitutional Law and continued until the formation of the new Iraqi nation-state in 1921-22 (see vi, above). During this period nine newspapers were published under 15 titles in Najaf, Karbalā', Baghdad, Basra, and Solaymaniya. These newspapers were primarily short-lived, local publications, with almost no circulation in Iran. Most were printed on 4 to 8 single-column pages with the size ranging from 22.5 x 16.5 cm (*Najaf*) to 45 x 29 cm (*Awqāt al-Başra*). They were mainly published in two periods: the pre-World War I era and during the 1914-18 war years. These newspapers will be treated in four sections: (1) pre-War period of 1909-12; (2) pro-British newspapers published during the war; (3) pro-German and pro-Ottoman newspapers published during the war; and (4) a marginal Kurdish newspaper published with a small Persian section in Solaymaniya during the post-war period.

1. *Pre-World War I newspapers, 1909-12.* Three newspapers with four titles were published in Najaf and Baghdad in this period. *Dorrat al-Najaf* and *Najaf* were published in the holy city of Najaf with religious and political leanings; the publishers and editors of these newspapers were influenced by the Shi'ite sources of emulation, and particularly the prominent leader, Ākūnd Mollā



Moḥammad Kāẓem Ḳorāsāni (q.v.; Āḳund-e Ḳorā-sāni) who actively supported the 1905-11 Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) in Iran.

*Dorrat al-Najaf*, the first Persian newspaper published in Iraq, began circulation under the title *al-Ġarā* on 18 Ḍu'l-ḥejja 1327/31 December 1909. After the publication of the second issue on 18 Ṣafar 1328/28 February 1910, *al-Ġarā* was closed down by the Ottoman authorities for not being compliant with the requirements and instructions of Ottoman press law (Ṣadr Hāšemi, no. 193), but it continued publication under a new title, *Dorrat al-Najaf*, eight issues of which were published during the period 20 Rabi' I–10 Ḍu'l-qa'da 1328/1 April–12 December 1910. Its publisher, Ḥājj Shaikh Ḥosayn Eṣfahāni and its main writer, Āqā Moḥammad Mahallāti, were both clerics and followers of Āḳund-e Ḳorāsāni. Presenting itself as a “nationalist newspaper” (*ruz-nāma-ye melli*), *Dorrat al-Najaf* supported the Constitutional Revolution. Aḡā Bozorg Ṭehrāni, the author of *al-Ḍari'a* (qq.v.) also cooperated with *Dorrat al-Najaf*. Excessive use of Arabic terms makes the newspaper difficult for Persian readers. It was printed on 32 to 62 single-column pages. Issues of *Dorrat al-Najafi* are available in the Library of Faculty of Theology of the University of Tehran, Āstān-e Qods Library, Tabriz National Library, Princeton University Library, Central Library of Tehran University, and Library of Isfahan University (Modarresi Čahārdehi, pp. 882-83; Meḥrābi, pp. 82-88; Ṣadr Hāšemi, no. 544; Parvin, pp. 697-99, 703, 705-6).

*Najaf* began publication on 11 Rabi' I 1328/21 April 1910 and continued until the spring of 1912. It was a predominantly religious and social newspaper, which published news of the ulema of the Najaf religious center (Ḥawza-ye 'elmiya). It dedicated its entire issue of 23 Ḍu'l-ḥejja 1328/25 December 1910 to the obituary and memory of Āḳund-e Ḳorāsāni. Shaikh Ḥosayn Eṣfahāni, the publisher of *Najaf*, was also of clerical rank. Sayyed Moslem Zovinzāda, a director of *Najaf*, served later as the mayor of the city of Ray. *Najaf* was published in 4 to 8 pages 22.5 x 16.5 cm. As was the case with the *Dorrat al-Najaf* newspaper, *Najaf* was first published in the 'Alawi printing house and later transferred to the Ḥabl al-Matin printers. Issues of *Najaf* are available at 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'i University Library, Central Library of University of Tehran, and Cambridge University Library (Modarresi Čahārdehi, pp. 882-83; Meḥrābi, pp. 82-88; Ṣadr Hāšemi, no. 1095; Moḥiṭ Ṭabāṭabā'i, pp. 248, 267; Parvin, pp. 698, 703, 705-6).

*Oḳowwat*, a bilingual newspaper, was published in Arabic and Persian in Baghdad, 23 Rabi' I–4 Ṣa'bān 1328/3 April–10 August 1910. *Oḳowwat* was an



informative newspaper with reformist ideologies; it advocated the brotherhood and cooperation of the Arab-Iranian and Sunnite-Shi'ite communities. Issue 18 of *Oḳowwat* is available at the Cambridge University Library (Şadr Hāşemi, no. 56; Parvin, pp. 698, 701, 703-4).

2. *Pro-British newspapers.* In the period of 1915 to 1918 two newspapers in Persian were published by the British forces in Basra: *Awqāt al-Başra* and *Zafar-e 'Erāq*.

*Awqāt al-Başra* was published from January 1915 to the spring of 1918. During its first year of publication, the front page and the fourth page of the newspaper were in Persian and the second and third pages in Arabic, but from 1916 a separate, four-page Persian edition was published. *Awqāt al-Başra* was devoted to the dissemination of information about the activities of the Ottoman forces in northwestern and western Iran as well as news from the cities of Buşehr and Khorramshahr (Moḥammara). Special attention was also paid to the Shi'ite ulema of the holy cities of Iraq. Issues of *Awqāt al-Başra* are available at India Office Library of London (Ebrāhim, no. 100; Parvin, pp. 698, 701, 702, 704, 706).

*Zafar-e 'Erāq* was a propaganda organ of the British forces that contained lengthy editorial commentaries on politics and numerous short news articles. It was published in Baghdad from summer 1917 until summer 1918 (the first issue was published under the title *Irān*). Şokri al-Fazli, a Kurdish literateur who was fluent in Persian, served as the editor of the newspaper. An issue of *Zafar-e 'Erāq* is available at India Office Library of London (Ebrāhim, p. 47; Parvin, pp. 700-702, 704, 706).

3. *Pro-German and pro-Ottoman newspapers.* To launch a propaganda campaign against the British forces, three pro-German and pro-Ottoman newspapers were published in Karbalā' and Baghdad from summer 1915 to fall 1916. The main figures in this campaign were Mirzā 'Ali Āqā Şirāzi, Labib-al-Molk, and Ebrāhim Pur-Dāwud (Parvin, pp. 698, 700).

Labib-al-Molk, publisher of the *Możaffari* newspaper in Buşehr (Şadr Hāşemi, no. 1020) who lived in exile in Karbalā', published a nationalist, anti-British newspaper with religious leanings under four titles in different periods: *Entebāh* (q.v.), *Haqāyeq*, *Enteqām*, and *Ġayrat-e Kar-balā'*, which were distributed among residents of the holy cities, Rabī' II 1333–Şa'bān 1334/July 1915–June 1916. The writing style of these newspapers was appealing to



Persian residents of the holy cities, and particularly to religious students. A few copies of these titles have survived. These lithographed papers were printed on 2 to 8 pages, and their publications were supported by Ottoman forces (Şadr Hāšemi, nos. 216, 218, 840; Parvin, pp. 698-700).

*Rastkiz*. Although both Labib-al-Molk and Ebrāhim Pur-Dāwud cooperated with the National Committee of Berlin (Komita-ye melliyun-e irāni dar Berlan), the religiously oriented nationalism of Labib-al-Molk held no appeal for Pur-Dāwud's ardent romantic nationalism. Pur-Dāwud, a prominent member of the National Committee of Berlin, published the *Rastkiz* newspaper on 4 to 8 pages, 26 Ramažān–17 Du'l-qa'da 1334/27 July–5 September 1916 in Baghdad. The majority of *Rastkiz* was devoted to Pur-Dāwud's own articles; other sections included a poem by Pur-Dāwud, letters from Tehran, and news. During its publication *Rastkiz* was supported by the German forces. Issues of *Rastkiz* have survived at Majles Library I (Parvin, pp. 700, 702, 704-6).

*Sadā-ye Eslām* was first published in Turkish and Arabic from July 1915; it began its Persian edition in October 1915 and continued its publication until the fall of Baghdad in late 1916. This newspaper was published by the Ottoman forces and advocated the idea of Islamic unity against the British occupation forces (Hāšani, p. 60; Parvin, pp. 700, 704).

4. *A marginal Kurdish-Persian newspaper*. Also published during the post-war period was a Kurdish newspaper by the short-lived autonomous government of Shaikh Maḥmud in Solaymāniya under two titles: *Bāng-e Kordestān*, and *Rōž-e Kordestān*. *Bāng-e Kordestān* was published from 2 August to 1 November 1922 and *Rōž-e Kordestān* from 15 November 1922 to 3 March 1923. Intended to disseminate political news, this newspaper was published in Sōrāni Kurdish (70 percent), Persian, and Ottoman Turkish (each 15 percent). The newspaper supported the movement of Esmā'il Āqā Semitqu for self-determination and called on the Kurdish people of Iran to contribute to the publication by writing national (*melli o waṭani*) articles and by subscribing to the paper. Moṣṭafā Pasha, war minister of Shaikh Maḥmud, served as publisher, and M. Nuri served as the editor of the Persian section. Complete sets of *Bāng-e Kordestān* and *Rōž-e Kordestān* are available at the Library of SOAS, University of London, and Cambridge University Library (Kāzānadār, 1974; Hāšani, p. 84; Ebrāhim, no. 118; Parvin, pp. 701, 704).



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