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JOURNALISM I. QAJAR PERIOD

JOURNALISM IN IRAN

i. QAJAR PERIOD

The process of gathering, writing, and presenting articles for newspapers gradually emerged and developed in the second half of the rule of the Qajar dynasty, as newspapers began to appear increasingly, and a changing journalistic culture took shape.

DURING THE 19TH CENTURY

For much of the Qajar period, journalism was a state-run domain. Other than the short-lived *Aḵbār* (also known as *Kāḡaḏ-e aḵbār*) that had begun as a private venture under the supervision of Mirzā Ṣāleḥ Širāzi in May 1837, the first official newspaper appeared on 7 February 1851 on the orders of the first prime minister under Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's rule, Mirzā Taqi Khan Amir Kabir (Mirzā Ṣāleḥ Širāzi, p. 21). This was the weekly *Waqāyeʿ-e ettefāqiya* which was published regularly as the only official gazette of the country for 471 issues in the course of ten years. Evidence suggests that it had been inspired by the Ottoman official gazette, *Takvim-i vekayi* (first published in 1831), and like its counterpart it was more of an official bulletin, reporting the goings-on at court, than a newspaper in the modern sense (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, p. 26).

From issue 472 (dated 23 August 1860), the title of the country's only official gazette changed to *Ruz-nāma-ye dawlat-e ʿaliyya-ye Irān*. This change of title

may have had to do with the fact that both the style as well as the patronage of the weekly changed. *Ruz-nāma-ye dawlat-e ʿaliyya-ye Irān* was published under the auspices of the Ministry of Sciences (Wezārat-e ʿolum) as opposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wezārat-e omur-e ḵāreja) which had supervised the publication of *Waqāyeʿ-e ettefā-qiya* (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, p. 27). Furthermore, what distinguished it from its predecessor was the fact that it was illustrated, containing for the most part, drawings of courtiers and statesmen as well as certain events (Parvin, pp. 143-44, 171). Accordingly, the person who was appointed to manage the newspaper was Mirzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Khan Naqqāš (Ḡaffāri), known primarily for his skill in drawing.

By the mid-1860s, the number of official state-owned newspapers that were published in the capital-city had increased to four. In spite of their ostensible aim to educate and inform the public, these newspapers did not distinguish themselves much from the official publications that had come before. That is, like their predecessors, they were addressed at a select audience, and rarely did they reflect the everyday problems and concerns of the people. Furthermore, the sources for provincial news were either the secretaries (*monšis*) or the functionaries (*kārgozār*s) of local governors, that is, people who were neither under contractual obligation nor particularly accountable to the newspapers (Parvin, p. 177). As a result, the newspapers of the 'Nāṣeri' period, by and large, did not prove inspiring or popular, and in order to ensure a readership, government employees and officials were required to subscribe to at least three of the four newspapers. They had to present a receipt from the Ministry of Science as proof of purchase; otherwise, according to state policy, the sum that should have been paid for the subscription, would automatically be deducted from their government salary (Kohan, I, pp. 59-60).

Later, with the political restructuring of the 1870s and the promotion of the spirit of reform that was encouraged by Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošir-al-Dawla during his tenure as grand vizier (*ṣadr-e aʿẓam*; December 1870-September 1873) and his subsequent positions as Minister of Foreign Affairs (wazir-e omur-e ḵāreja; 1873-80) and Minister of War (wazir-e jang; 1874-80), some change was introduced in the journalistic culture (Ādamiyat, p. 386). Whereas official gazettes, albeit under different titles, continued to be affiliated with the Office of Publications, which had been established in a supervisory capacity in March 1871, a number of semi-controlled and reformist-leaning newspapers also appeared for the first time. Among them were *Waqāyeʿ-e ʿadliya* (1871), *Ruz-nāma-ye neẓāmi* (Dec 1876-May 1877), *Ruz-nāma-ye ʿelmi* (December 1877-

May 1880), and *Merriḵ* (December 1878-May 1880). While technically state-owned, they tried to be different. That they were written in simple language, incorporated a small amount of criticism, albeit very subtle, or that they included general articles on topics such as patriotism, civilization, the need for learning, justice and the rule of law have been seen as indications that the press was beginning to see its task as consisting of more than simply reporting the news at court (Ādamiyat, p. 174; Kohan, I, pp. 94-95). This may have been in part because of awareness among some members of the ruling elite in Iran of the discrepancy in quality between the newspapers published in Iran and those in the Ottoman Empire. In a letter written in 1865, several years before he became grand vizier, Mirzā Ḥosayn Khan wrote of his frustration and indignation whenever he read and compared newspapers in Iran with those published in Istanbul (Ādamiyat, p. 387). However, these reformist-leaning newspapers neither reflected everyday concerns nor did they last long enough to bring any permanent change in the journalistic culture. In fact, following their closure, the quality of journalism is generally considered to have further declined especially when a number of newspapers were placed under the patronage of the the Ministry of Publications (Wezārat-e enṭebāʿāt), and censorship administered by Moḥammad Ḥasan Khan Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana (Kohan, I, p. 111).

Even though under Nāṣer-al-Din's son and successor, Moẓaffar-al-Din shah (1897-1907), the state-owned newspapers continued publication under the supervision of the Ministry of Publications, what distinguished the state of the press at this time was that a number of privately owned newspapers were tolerated and allowed to emerge. The first and most well-known among these was *Tarbiat*, a weekly published in Tehran between December 1896 and March 1907, which gained the respect of many for providing substance at a time when most other newspapers were considered tedious and uninteresting (*Ṣur-e Esrāfil*, 29 Ramażān 1325/ 7 November 1907, p. 5). *Tarbiat* tried to distance itself from the Nāṣeri newspapers of the past in a number of ways. For example, it asserted from the outset that there was no compulsion on anyone either to buy or read it. Instead it was "optional (*eḵtiāri*); it was neither assigned to anyone by force, nor was it handed out free of charge" (*Tarbiat*, 7 Rajab 1315/ 2 December 1897, p. 1). Also, for its news gathering, it no longer relied exclusively on the secretaries of local governors. Rather, it established a system of correspondents who were based in different provinces, and were held accountable for the veracity of the news that they sent. In one instance, for example, *Tarbiat* admonished a correspondent and publicly issued a

warning to the others in the following way: "One of the reporters (*waqāyeʿ-negār*) has sent us a baseless piece of news, unaware of the fact that its refutation will be made public, and that the seeker of truth will find the truth and will not remain in ignorance and confusion. Since this was the very first time, we did not say anything [but] tolerated it and did not publish the name of the liar. I mentioned it for the purpose of the attention of our friends and colleagues. However, from now on, if someone does something similar, let him know that we will publish his name and details, openly and without ceremony" (*Tarbiat*, 18 Zu'l-ḥejja 1315/ 10 May 1898, p. 4).

That *Tarbiat* was allowed to publish had, in part, to do with the standing of its publisher, Moḥammad Ḥosayn Khan Zakāʾ-al-Molk, a literary man who, himself, had already had much experience as secretary to Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, in previous years. In other words, Zakāʾ-al-Molk's close familiarity with the workings of the Ministry of Publications; together with the rumored liberalism that surrounded the early years of Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah's reign was what enabled the former to walk the tight-rope between appeasing the sensitivities of the authorities of the time and offering an element of novelty that differentiated his weekly from the competition (Nabavi, 2007, p. 233). Furthermore, the publication of *Tarbiat* is often said to have led to the publication of other privately-owned newspapers in the provinces, among them *al-Ḥadid* (1897), and *Eḥtiāj* (1898), both published in Tabriz (Kohan, I, pp. 183-86).

There were also specialized newspapers that did not deal directly with political matters, and focused instead on issues that were thought necessary for bringing about progress. Among such publications, there was *Maʿāref* (1899-1900), which addressed matters related to schools and education, and was published in Tehran by Anjoman-e Maʿāref (Society of Learning). Others included *Adab* (1898-99), a weekly published in Tabriz whose aim of promoting learning took the form of publishing translations of learned scientific articles together with pictures of celebrated scientists, and *Kamāl* (1899-1903), a fortnightly also published in Tabriz, whose statement of purpose described its objective as "discuss[ing] some sciences in a straightforward and simple language so that little by little, scientific expressions and modes of civility can become familiar to the people of Iran" (Kohan, I, p. 190). It was also at about this time, namely 1900, that the very first satirical newspaper, *Toluʿ* appeared in the southern city of Bušehr. This was followed later by *Moẓaffari* (1901), another progressive fortnightly in the same city. That such a variety of

publications was tolerated may have been a result of a number of factors that included an openness that came about with the premiership of Amin-al-Dawla (1897-98), who was known as a proponent of new learning, an end to the state monopoly over publications, and the changing times (Dawlatābādi, I, p. 183). The fact that by this time, for example, a number of Persian-language newspapers had appeared in London, Istanbul, Cairo and Calcutta, capturing imaginations and gaining increasing popularity among a readership, was no insignificant matter. If the press within the country was to retain any credibility, newspapers had to appear a little more diverse than before, even if they continued to require the authorization and approval of the Ministry of Publications.

The Expatriate Press and "night letters" (šab-nāma). The Persian-language newspapers that were published abroad from the late 1870s onwards represented an independent press that could not have come into existence within the country as a result of the restrictions imposed (See below). That they were beyond the reach of court censors and free to express what was banned inside the country, meant that newspapers such as *Aḵtar* (q.v.; Istanbul), *Qānun* (London), *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* (q.v.; Calcutta), *Ḥekmat* (q.v.), *Ṭorayyā*, and *Parvareš* (Cairo) not only provided a forum for the discussion of new ideas and raising political consciousness, but they also emerged with the purpose of effecting reform and change within the country. They did vary in their degree of radicalism, however. *Qānun*, one of the most popular and perhaps revolutionary of these newspapers, whose possession alone became a criminal offense (Abrahamian, p. 68), was published in London by Mirzā Malkom Khan in 1890. It stated its aim unequivocally in its first issue: "In Iran, there are many with a sense of conviction and [good] ideas. However, the ideas of individuals that are each isolated in one corner, will never result in anything. Unless useful ideas are all assembled in one place, they will gain no power, and the assembly of ideas is not possible except in a newspaper" (*Qānun*, February 1890, p. 1). In a similar vein, *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin*, a more moderate and enduring example of the expatriate weeklies published in Calcutta by Sayyed Jalāl-al-Din Moʾayyad-al-Eslām, wrote some years later, that "newspapers provoke nations and compel governments to take certain measures. Newspapers inform people of some shortcomings and irregularities, and make them aware of the actions, habits, talents and strengths of others" (*Ḥabl-al-Maṭin*, 17 Rama-żān 1316/ 29 January 1899, p. 6). In this way, to lesser and greater degrees, the expatriate press gave increasing recognition to the role of newspapers in shaping public opinion, which in turn was thought to be

able to bring about change.

While there are no definitive figures about the circulation of these publications (which at times had to be smuggled into the country), memoirs and anecdotes point to their prevalence and influence among progressive circles. Mirzā Ḥasan Rošdiya, the founder of modern primary schools, for example, is said to have been inspired to go to Beirut to learn about modern methods of teaching after having read an article on this subject in *Aḵtar* (Kasrawi, pp. 40-41). Similarly, Nāẓem-al-Eslām Ker-māni writes how the Calcutta *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* was read together with the *Siāḥat-nāma-ye Ebrahim Beg* in the sessions of the Anjoman-e maḵfi or secret society which brought together a number of reformists who had set themselves the task of 'awakening' the populace (Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermāni, I, p. 260).

Another type of popular publication was the *šab-nāma* or 'night-letters.' They tended to be handwritten declarations, often in opposition to the government, and were circulated clandestinely and put up on street walls at night (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, 1988, p. 19). They seem to have appeared for the first time in the latter part of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's rule, and more specifically on the occasion of the Tobacco *Régie* in 1890-91 (Kohan, I, p. 142). They generally gained currency during times of oppression, since they were not subject to censorship. Other than the period of the first constitutional era (1906-08) when newspapers were relatively free (see below), *šab-nāma*s represented one way of expressing ideas that were banned in official channels. As a result, *šab-nāma*s increased in number whenever there was an injunction on the press, both before and after the granting of the constitution.

*Šab-nāma*s became particularly pervasive on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution, when secret societies, proliferating throughout the country, often used them as a medium to communicate their viewpoints (Nāẓem-al-Eslām, II, p. 1002). They varied in style; at times, they were no more than one-page proclamations, at others, they appeared in the form of a dialogue between individuals discussing the developments of the day (Nāẓem-al-Eslām, I, pp. 382-84). Style aside, a feature they all shared was that they were written in an accessible and easy fashion, so as to be comprehensible to a wide public and allow their contents to be transmitted by word of mouth (Kohan, I, p. 238). At times, *šab-nāma*s even found their way to the court of the king, who in turn "read [the content] without being aware of the identity of its writer or courier" (Kasrawi, p. 25).

*Šab-nāma*s, however, were not specific to pro-constitutional elements. In view of the popularity and accessibility of this type of publication, anti-constitutional groups, too, produced their own 'night-letters' to counter the liberal voices (Kohan, I, p. 243). In the long term, however, other than voicing uncensored public opinion, *šab-nāma*s did play a part in giving shape to a new journalistic culture that was concerned, first and foremost, with ordinary people, and tried to appeal to as wide a readership as possible. This form of journalism became increasingly prevalent in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution (see below).

DURING THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

It is following the Constitutional Revolution that the journalistic culture underwent a major transformation in a number of ways. In the first place, newspapers proliferated in an unprecedented way at this time. Whereas in the previous seventy years (that is, from 1837 when the first newspaper, *Aḵbār*, was published) at most 91 publications had been issued in Iran, in the one year that followed the constitution alone, some 99 newspapers were published (Qāsemi, 1993, p. 28). More specifically, following Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah's decree in August 1906, granting permission for the establishment of a National Consultative Assembly or Majles, an end, even if temporary, was brought to the many restrictions on the press. This was in part because of the general atmosphere of hope and possibility prevalent then, but also because in early 1907, the Ministry of Publications was abolished and part of its duties, which concerned the supervision of printing-houses and issuing of licenses for newspapers, passed on to the Ministry of Sciences (Qāsemi, p. 28). In fact, it was no accident that Moḥammad Ḥosayn Khan Zakāʾ-al-Molk, the publisher of *Tarbiat*, had decided to publish his last issue in March 1907. This was because, in his view, his cautious style of journalism seemed no longer appropriate for the times (*Tarbiat*, 29 Moḥarram 1325/14 March 1907, pp. 1-3). Similarly, the publishers of *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* decided to set up a Tehran daily, arguing that the monthly Calcutta *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* no longer sufficed. That so many other newspapers were published inside the country meant that people did not have the same need to read the Calcutta *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin*, especially since it took one month to arrive, by which time it was out-of-date (Parvin, 1993, p. 473). So Mirzā Sayyed Ḥasan, Moʾayyad-al-Islam's brother who was in Tehran at that time, founded the Tehran *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* with the help of Shaikh Yaḥyā Kāšāni. Its first issue appeared on 29 April 1907.

Secondly, the new journalism that emerged in 1907 distinguished itself from

the old in several ways. To begin with, the background of the individuals who set up the newspapers was quite different from those like Moḥammad Ḥosayn Khan Zakāʾ-al-Molk. For example, Sayyed Ḥasan Kāšāni, Mirzā Jahāngir Khan Ṣur-e Esrāfil, and Moḥammad Reżā Mosāwāt, the publishers of the three most popular newspapers published in the capital-city, *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin*, *Ṣur-e Esrāfil* and *Mosāwāt* respectively, not only came from relatively modest backgrounds but they could also be regarded as activists of sorts since they each had been involved in pro-constitution secret societies of one kind or another in the months leading up to the granting of the constitution (Nabavi, 2007, p. 235). Secondly, in the optimistic mood that followed the constitution, newspapers had to strike a chord with these new times, and so their aim had to extend beyond publishing generally informative articles about the advantages of learning or the achievements of scientists abroad. Instead, they became actors. They were not satisfied with the simple reporting of news- rather in a manner that was not dissimilar to the *šab-nāma*s of previous years, they took the side of the 'underdog' and the common man and aimed to promote the concepts that were thought essential to these new times, namely "freedom, equality and brotherhood" (*ḥorriyat*, *mosāwāt*, *oḵowwat*). Newspapers, in other words, for the first time generated a new kind of politics, with the aim of both mobilizing public opinion in support of the new order and also in an attempt to make sense of the new era.

Accordingly, newspapers made a deliberate effort to appeal to as wide a readership as possible. They tried to popularize new concepts by discussing them in an accessible and at times colloquial manner. As one newspaper, *Nedā-ye waṭan* put it, "if this nation has remained in the abyss of ignorance, it is because such and such a preacher talks for two hours, citing Hadiths and [Qurʾānic] verses one after the other, and such and such a journalist writes columns of rhymed prose, so that neither the listener understands anything from what the preacher has said, nor the reader from what the journalist has written" (*Nedā-ye waṭan*, 25 Ḏu'l-ḥejja 1324/9 February 1907, p. 4). A new approach, therefore, was necessary. It was in the interest of all that the discussion be carried out in as matter-of-fact a way as possible. It was in such a context that gazettes like *Šerāfat* (Nobility) emerged. This was an example of pamphlet journalism par excellence. It was published irregularly for 29 issues between March and July 1908 by Āqā Sayyed Ḥosayn, a little-known bookseller. However, in as much as it stated its purpose to be the "awakening of the common folk," (*kolāh-namadi*) it made a point of appealing directly to the public by writing in the colloquial language of the street (Nabavi, 2005, p.

315). Also as part and parcel of the attempt to make newspapers readily available to a larger readership, regardless of whether it was obscure gazettes like *Šerāfat* or celebrated weeklies like *Ṣur-e Esrāfil*, newspapers adopted a policy of selling single issues on the streets and in public places rather than mailing them to potential subscribers, except when they were asked specifically to do so. Many, furthermore, made a conscious effort to make themselves available for as low a price as possible in order to be affordable to a large audience. *Šerāfat*, for example, made a point of saying that its aim was not to make a profit, and therefore it was sold at its cost of production (*Šerāfat*, 27 Muharram 1326/1 March 1908, p. 1).

That the constitutional press was popular among the ordinary public, despite a low level of literacy, is evident through numerous anecdotes. For example, in a letter to E. G. Browne, written by a correspondent residing in Tehran at the time, "everyone" is said "to read a paper now. In many of the coffee-houses (*qahvaḵānas*), professional readers are engaged, who instead of reciting the legendary tales of the *šāh-nāma*, now regale their clients with political news" (Browne, 1995, p. 143). Moreover, that newspapers increasingly published letters from groups, *anjomans* (q.v.), as well as in dividuals–men and women, writing from different towns and provinces across the country, with a range of demands and complaints, is further indication that newspapers had succeeded to some extent in engaging a more diverse readership who had come to view newspapers "at the very least as a platform and outlet for their many grievances" (Nabavi, 2005, p. 317).

Finally, the newspapers that were published at this time were varied. Other than those that dealt with political developments, there were also the satirical ones like *Kaškul* which made increasing use of cartoons to communicate their message, as well as ones like *Tiātr* which used plays and drama to "bring attention to the injustices of oppressive systems in everyday language . . . and to encourage moral refinement" (*Tiātr*, 5 May 1908, p. 2). Newspapers, then, were generally thought to be vehicles that could discuss issues that were at times considered too sensitive to be articulated openly, even in such bodies as the Majles. In one instance, for example, when some parliamentary delegates felt that it was "too early to have a discussion" about issues relating to women, they suggested "newspapers as a suitable forum" (Afary, p. 194). Furthermore, influential papers were not limited to the capital city alone. According to one study, in the year that followed the granting of the constitution, in addition to the 64 newspapers that were published in Tehran, 9 were published in

Isfahan, 7 in Rašt, 6 in Tabriz, 4 in Hamadān, 2 in Lāhijān, 2 in Urmia and one each in Kermānšah, Shiraz, Mashad, Bandar Anzali, and Šahr-e Ray (Qāsemi, p. 28; Najmabadi, 1998a, p. 187).

The coup d'état of Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah on June 23, 1908 put an end to this brief moment of expression as most newspapers were shut down and their publishers and editors either persecuted, executed or forced to flee the country. There were a few who tried to defy the new order by continuing to publish their old titles, albeit in different locations. Tabriz, Rašt, and Isfahan, which had become centers for fighting the autocracy of Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah, thus provided the base for a number of newspapers. Among them, *Kaškul* transferred publication from Tehran to Isfahan, the daily Tehran *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin*, to Rašt, and *Mosāwāt* to Tabriz (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, p. 196). Other opposition papers were able to publish a few issues in exile; among the most celebrated were *Ṣur-e Esrāfil* in Yverdon, Switzerland, *Ruḥ al-qodos* in Paris, *Šams* and *Soruš* in Istanbul. Otherwise, apart from the many *šab-nāma*s produced clandestinely in opposition to the autocratic rule, there were few newspapers that were officially tolerated.

Following the triumph of the constitutionalists in taking over Tehran and the subsequent abdication of Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah in favor of his son in July 1909, a second constitutional era got underway. Many nationalists, including renowned pro-constitutional journalists returned to the country, although they did not all continue with their journalistic activities. ʿAli-Akbar Dehḵodā (q.v.) and Moḥammad Reżā Mosāwāt, for example, the author of *Ṣur-e Esrāfil*'s satirical *Čarand parand* columns, and the editor of Mosāwāt weekly respectively, joined the ranks of the parliamentarians, albeit on opposing factions, in the second Majles. However, in this short interval, which lasted from 1909 to 1911, with the lifting of the ban on the old newspapers, a number of them like *Majles*, *Nedā-ye waṭan*, *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin*, and *Tamaddon* resumed publication. To this list, new ones were added across the country. Among the most well known were *Irān-e now*, *Šarq*, *Barq*, and *Esteqlāl-e Irān*, published in Tehran; *Ḵorāsān*, *Ṭus*, and *Now-bahār* in Mashad, and *Šafaq* in Tabriz (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, pp. 163-65). Once again, newspapers had to adapt to the changing circumstances. In as much as in this period, more specifically, from 1910 onwards, political factions came into being and political contestation became a fact of life, newspapers, for the most part, affiliated themselves to one or the other of the parties. *Irān-e now* became the organ of the newly-established Democrat Party; *Šurā* and *Majles*, the organs of Eʿtedā-liyun or Moderate party,

and *Esteqlāl-e Irān*, that of the party of 'Unity and Progress' (*Ettefāq wa taraqqi*; Ṣadr Hāšemi, I, p. 25). By and large, however, newspapers at this time no longer shared the enthusiastic and earnest idealism that had characterized the press of the first constitutional era. In a similar vein, the letters published in the pages of the newspapers seem to suggest that people, too, did not read the newspapers with the same passion as before (*Irān-e now*, 14 Moḥarram 1326/26 January 1910, p. 4).

Nevertheless, some of the new publications were noteworthy in their own right as they adopted a novel style of journalism and a fresh approach to content. *Irān-e now*, a daily that first appeared in August 1909, and has been recognized as the "most celebrated and influential newspaper" of the second constitutional era (Kohan, II, p. 618), for example, boasted about being the "first Persian-language newspaper that has been established following the constitution in the shape of European newspapers" (*Irān-e now*, 28 Šawwāl 1328/ 31 October 1910, p. 1). Not only was it published on broadsheet that was then common in Europe, setting the standard for other new newspapers thereafter to publish in the same format (Ṣadr Hāšemi, I, p. 345), but it also considered itself a liberal and impartial publication where journalists had to be "objective and fair and to explain and write down that which occurs truthfully, accurately, and in a detached manner." (*Irān-e now*, 5 Safar 1328/17 February 1910, p. 1). With regard to content, *Irān-e now* was original in that it not only incorporated "social and political analysis" in the course of its articles, but also put forth a "series of social democratic programs to reform the nation" (Afary, pp. 257-58). In addition to publishing reports from different parts of the country via its correspondents, *Irān-e now* also served as a medium to write about rarely-discussed issues such as class distinctions, ethnic and religious prejudice, and the discrimination of women in society (Afary, p. 274). It, for example, published a number of articles and letters by women challenging the patriarchal culture of the time, as well as announcements publicizing the opening of new girls' schools, and the meetings of women's associations.

Among the other new publications that appeared at this time were the daily *Šarq*, later replaced by its reincarnation, *Barq*. They were both published by Sayyed Żiāʾ-al-Din Ṭabāṭabāʾi in September 1909, and October 1910 respectively, and followed the model of *Irān-e now*, not only in format but also in adopting a critical approach. However, *Šarq* was considered a far more 'sensational' newspaper (Kohan, II, p. 562), as it aimed to reinforce the

constitutionalist spirit by publishing scathing articles against various ministers, but this in turn led to its closure on multiple occasions (Kohan, II, p. 562). Newspapers at this time, in comparison to those of the first constitutional era, by and large contained a greater measure of political news and devoted more space to investigating and commenting on the developments of the day.

It was also at this time, more specifically, in September 1910, that for the first time, a weekly was published by a woman whose aim was to address women's concerns. It therefore defined itself as a journal particular to "the science of house-keeping, child-rearing and husband-keeping; useful for girls and women. It will completely avoid any talk of national politics" (*Dāneš*, no. 1, September 15, 1910). As a result, its articles discussed different aspects of household management. While short-lived, and seemingly elitist and traditionalist in its choice of subject-matter, it was important because it contributed to a shift in the definition of what it meant to be a 'mother' and a 'wife' and moreover, it set a precedent for other women's publications that were to appear in subsequent years (Najmabadi, 1998b, pp. 91, 110).

THE PERIOD OF 1911-25

In the remaining fourteen years of Qajar rule, Iran underwent many cataclysmic upheavals: the Russian Ultimatum in November 1911 that led to the disbanding of the second Majles, the First World War and the subsequent aggression and interference of the warring parties, the migration of parliamentary deputies and members of government to Qom and Kermānšāh, and the 1921 coup d'état (q.v.) of Reżā Khan that in time resulted in the removal and replacement of the Qajars with the Pahlavi dynasty. At every turn, the journalism in the country was affected as it tried to adapt to the new circumstances.

Following the ultimatum issued by Russia in November 1911, the second Majles was disbanded by the regent, Abu'l-Qāsem Khan Nāṣer-al-Molk. As in the aftermath of the 1908 coup d'état, this time too, the closure of the legislative body gave rise to the shutting down of many newspapers across the country, and the exile, persecution, and at times, execution of journalists, publishers and editors, especially in the northern cities of Rašt, Anzali, and Tabriz (Kohan, II, pp. 596-600). In the subsequent three years of closure which have been referred to as the dictatorship of Nāṣer-al-Molk (Kohan, II, p. 608; ʿĀqeli, p. 66), the newspapers that appeared were either government-backed or tended to be conformist and merely appeasing the Russian and British

embassies whose presence had become more palpable as their powers had increased. At the same time, however, there was some continuity from the past. For example, *Šokufa*, a women's monthly which like *Dāneš* before, was run and edited by a woman, and for the most part, steered away from politics, began publication in November 1912. Similar to its forerunner, *Šokufa* adopted a didactic tone, and had for aim the endorsement of women's learning, and promoted the idea of women's schools. It continued publication for some four years until August 1916.

With the announcement of the elections for the third Majles by Aḥmad Shah on 26 Šaʿbān 1331/31 July, 1913, the grounds for a gradual revival of political life came about (Etteḥādiya, pp. 159-60). To some measure, this took the form of a larger number of newspapers reporting on the parliamentary elections in an attempt to encourage people to participate. The daily *Raʿd*, for example, wrote how twelve of its reporters had been given the task of following the electoral process (*Raʿd*, 12 Rabiʿ I 1332/ 8 February 1914). Even though the third Majles, itself, did not last for more than eleven months, its opening in December 1914 did usher in a fresh, albeit short-lived phase in journalistic activity. On the one hand, a number of well-known journalists gained seats in the third Majles, thus allowing them to resume the publication of their newspapers, which had been banned in previous years. Malek-al-Šoʿarāʾ Bahār, for example, was able to publish a new series of his daily *Nowbahār*, which had first been published in Mashad in 1910, but which had been banned for its anti-Russian stance. It was now published in Tehran and took the place of *Irān-e now* as the organ of the Democrat party (Ārianpur, II, p. 223). Similarly, Nāṣer-al-Eslām Gilāni, the publisher of a moderate weekly, who had been exiled to Qom following the closure of the second Majles, resumed the publication of his newspaper, *Šurā*, upon securing a seat in the third Majles (Kohan, II, pp. 571-73). On the other hand, a number of new newspapers appeared at this juncture. Among them were the daily *Setāra-ye Irān*, and the weeklies *ʿAṣr-e enqelāb*, and *Bāmdād-e rowšan*. Whereas each of these publications had its own leanings with *Setāra-ye Irān* being pro-republican, *ʿAṣr-e enqelāb*, pro-German, and *Bāmdād-e rowšan*, supportive of pan-Islamic ideas, what all these publications had in common was their stance against British and Russian aggression. There were of course exceptions, among them *Raʿd* and *ʿAṣr-e jadid*, which openly took the side of one of the two powers, namely Britain and Russia respectively (Kohan, II, p. 653).

The life of the third Majles came to an end with the migration of a number of

deputies to Qom and then Ker-mānšāh. Once again, with the closure of the Majles, censorship intensified. That is, with the exception of *Raʿd* and *ʿAṣr-e jadid*, most other newspapers were closed down. Towards the end of the war, as some of the '*mohā-jerin*', including some Democrats returned to Tehran, a number of old newspapers resumed publication, and as the press once again tried to play a part in the political scene, a variety of publications came into being, with many like *Kowkab-e Irān* taking an anti-imperialist and anti-establishment stance (Kohan, II, p. 672). It was also in this period that "the most openly political women's journal and the first women's newspapers to use the word "woman' in its title" appeared in the shape of the bi-weekly *Zabān-e zanān* (the voice of women) which was published in 1919 in Isfahan. This newspaper has been described as one which "engaged in polemics with men and focused its debates on freedom and autocracy rather than on men and women and the specific women's issues" (Shahidi, p. 72). Otherwise, a number of lasting literary journals also emerged at this time, among them, *Dāneškada* in Rajab 1336/April 1918, *Armaḡān* and *Adab* in 1919 (Kohan, II, p. 711).

The 1921 coup d'état once again led to the closure of newspapers. Even though Sayyed Żiāʾ-al-Din Ṭabāṭabāʾi, one of the perpetrators of the coup, had himself been the editor of a string of influential newspapers, namely *Šarq*, *Barq* and *Raʿd* between 1909 and 1915, when he got to power himself following the coup that he carried out with Reżā Khan, one of the first measures that he took was to close down all newspapers (Ṣadr Hāšemi, I, p. 27; Kohan, II, p. 562). However, three months after his removal, with the opening of the fourth Majles, a number of new publications with "varying ideological stances" were published (Gheissari, p. 17). Among the more celebrated and influential ones were ʿAli-Akbar Dāvar's *Mard-e āzād*, ʿAli Dašti's *Šafaq-e sorkò*, and Farroḵi Yazdi's *Ṭufān*. *Irān-e now*, too, had another stint when it resumed publication in 1923, after thirteen years of closure, this time as the organ of the Ferqa-ye Demokrāt (Ṣadr Hāšemi, I, p. 348). However, by this time party politics had lost much of its appeal and effectiveness, and people had lost their trust in the power of the press. Furthermore, the assassination of Mirzāda Ešqi (q.v.), the editor of *Qarn-e bistom* in 1924, for allegedly having mocked Reżā Khan's republican ideas, heralded a new wave of repressions on freedom of expression in the ensuing years (Ṣadr Hāšemi, ii, pp. 106-7).

CENSORSHIP

With the growing number of newspapers both inside and outside the country

from the 1850s onwards, keeping publications in check became a major concern of the Nāṣeri court. To this end, the Ministry of Publications (Wezārat-e enṭebāʿāt) was established in 1871 (see CENSORSHIP). Within this ministry, there was an office whose specific task was to oversee all material that was to appear in state-sponsored newspapers prior to publication (Kohan, I, pp. 113-14). However, it was as a result of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's displeasure at the disparaging accounts of his rule published in the Persian language press abroad that an Office of Censorship (Edāra-ye sānsur) was established, at the suggestion of Moḥammad Ḥasan Khan Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, 1889, p. 117). This new bureau, which was launched on 19 Rabiʿ I 1302/6 February 1885, and came to be run by Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana himself, was also part of the Ministry of Publications (Parvin, p. 180), and was charged not only with the task of keeping an eye on what was published in the exile press, but also with banning their entry into the country should it be necessary (Kohan, I, pp. 123-24).

Censorship continued under Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah, although its degree of severity depended on the Premier in government. Whereas during Amin-al-Dawla's tenure (1897-98), censorship relaxed allowing a number of semi-independent newspapers to operate, under his successors this was not necessarily the case. ʿAli-Aṣḡar Khan Amin-al-Solṭān's premiership (1898-1903), for example, coincided with a renewed time of rigorous censorship. This was to the extent that on his orders, all matters regarding the press had to be referred to him. It was during his term as grand vizier that the Calcutta *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* was ban-ned and prohibited from being distributed within the country (Kohan, I, p. 219).

Even though in the aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution, the Ministry of Publications was abolished, the press was recognized as a pillar of constitutionalism, and greater leniency applied to the many restrictions on the press, rarely was the press given free rein to publish whatever it deemed pertinent. That is, immediately after the granting of the constitution, the task of censorship was transferred from the Ministry of Publications to Moḵber-al-Salṭana, the Minister of Sciences. This new arrangement did not discourage the temporary banning of publications that were thought offensive, a predicament that affected most constitutionalist newspapers. Furthermore, as the tone of the newspapers became somewhat more radical and confrontational, the authorities, including a number of delegates in the first Majles, argued successfully for more press restrictions. As a result, the Press Laws were

passed on 5 Moḥarram 1326/8 February 1908 in an attempt to define the boundaries of acceptability. According to this new set of laws, the "fabrication of news and subversive articles was banned (Art. 32); the publication of articles that were [considered] harmful and damaging to religion and religious beliefs was subject to the payment of fines (Art. 33). Insulting the kings of friendly nations was completely prohibited and in such a case, the culprit would be prosecuted with the punishment ranging from a fine to an imprisonment of up to one year" (Art. 41, Kohan, II, pp. 350-51).

However, radical constitutionalist newspapers were not dissuaded from their ways, but further protested the new set of laws by ridiculing it. *Mosāwāt*, famously protested the Press Laws by publishing the weekly in an old-fashioned manner, using ornate and inaccessible language with much praise of those in authority reminiscent of the court-sponsored newspapers of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's days. In this way, it made the point that observing the Press Laws would be tantamount to going back to the highly restrictive and uninspiring journalism of the past (*Mosāwāt*, 3 Rabiʿ I 1326/5 April 1908). *Šerāfat*, too, mocked the passage of this set of laws by means of provocative symbolism. In a 'tongue-in-cheek' passage, it wrote, "the Shiʿites should be given the good news that the press laws have been signed by 88 members of parliament and endorsed by the king. [According to these laws], the expression of provocative words, whether in writing or in oral form, has been banned. The speaker and writer of provocative words will receive serious punishment. It is good that these laws had not been passed in earlier times for His Excellency, Imam Zayn-al-ʿĀbedin [the fourth Imam] was able to make a passionate speech before the blessed Yazid, the son of the deceased Moʿāwiya. Don't ask me why I have spoken so respectfully of Yazid and Moʿā-wiya. According to the Press Laws, anyone who insults the king of any country will be punished. Yazid and his father, Moʿāwiya were also kings and one cannot oppose the law (*Šerāfat*, 14 Rabiʿ I, 1326/16 April 1908, p. 2).

In spite of such protests, censorship continued in a more effective way in subsequent years. It was in the second constitutional era, for example, and more specifically in August 1909 that the celebrated daily, the Tehran *Ḥabl-al-Maṭin* was forcibly shut down and its editor, Sayyed Ḥasan Kāšāni, arrested and tried for allegedly insulting the ulama (Kohan, II, pp. 518-27). Following the closure of the second Majles, the method of censorship reverted back to one that had been used under Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's rule. Just as during his rule newspapers could only be published with the approval of the grand vizier and

the shah himself, so did newspapers in post-1911 require the sanction of the members of the government, bypassing that of the Ministry of Sciences (Kohan, II, p. 668).

In fact, it may have been as a result of the pervasive censorship which was put into effect throughout these years, to greater or lesser degrees, that a culture of resistance developed to censorship. At times, this took the form of collective protests and acts of solidarity among newspapers. For example, in May 1910, when *Šarq* was closed down, a statement of protest was signed by a number of newspapers, including *Irān-e now*, *Divān-e ʿadālat*, *Polis-e Irān*, *Tamaddon*, *Esteqlāl-e Irān*, beyond party lines. Interestingly enough, in this particular instance, the protest seems to have forced the government to give in and allow *Šarq* to resume publication (Ṭabā-ṭabāʾi, p. 163). At other times, resistance expressed itself by means of acts of defiance such as the publication of reincarnations of the newspapers that had been banned. Examples abound. When *Šarq* was shut down for the fifth time in October 1910, its editor, Sayyed Żiāʾ-al-Din Ṭabāṭabāʾi published *Barq*, which followed the same style and format as *Šarq* (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, pp. 163-64; Kohan, II, pp. 560-66). Similarly, when *Barq* was shut down after a few issues, it was replaced by *Raʿd*, yet another reincarnation with a similar-sounding title (Ṭabāṭabāʾi, p. 164). Or when *Now bahār* was shut down for the first time for its alleged anti-Russian stance in May 1910, its editor, Malek-al-Šoʿarāʾ persisted in his standpoint by publishing *Tāza bahār* (Kohan, II, p. 610; Ṣadr Hāšemi, II, pp. 98-99). This pattern of defiance was not only visible across the country but has continued throughout the decades, as evidenced by the reformist press' persistence in the face of adversity in the late 1990s.

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