



KAYHAN

KAYHAN (*Kayhān*, lit., “the universe”), a leading daily newspaper published in Tehran under the aegis of Moṣṭafā Meṣbāḥzādeh (1908-2006) from 1942 until the 1979 Revolution. At the beginning of its publication in 1942, *Kayhan* appeared in the format of four six-column typeset pages of 32 × 48 cm, and in the 1950s-70s it was enlarged to 28-32 typeset pages of six to eight columns, measuring 60 × 42 cm. Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, it has been published under the patronage of the Islamic Republic’s supreme leader. *Kayhan* of London also was founded by Meṣbāḥzādeh in 1984 as a weekly newspaper; it has been published by his confidants as a monarchist newspaper for Iranians in Diaspora. *Kayhan* was, like *Eṭṭelā’āt*, a semi-official daily newspaper founded on modern journalistic principles.

This entry deals only with the daily *Kayhan* newspaper during its publication from 1942 to 1978. Further entries will be published online, dealing with the later *Kayhan* newspaper, *Kayhan* of London, and other publications, including *Kayhan International* in English, *Kayhan International* air edition also in English, and the daily air edition (*Kayhān-e hawā’i*), as well as the weekly magazines: *Kayhān-e haftagi* (general news) and those for focused groups, through which its influence was especially strong: *Kayhān-e bačahā* (for children), *Zan-e ruz* (for women), *Kayhān-e varzeši* (sports), *Kayhān-e farhangi* (cultural weekly), and *Ketāb-e hafteh* and *Ketāb-e sāl* (for the intelligentsia).

Foundation. Apparently, the idea of founding a daily newspaper friendly to the monarchy following the forced abdication of Reza Shah (r. 1925-41) on 15



September 1941 was conceived by Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, powerful twin sister of Mohammad Reza Shah (r. 1941-78). She first contacted Mesbahzadeh through her husband 'Ali Qawām, who was his old friend, for conducting a search to find a prominent journalist to launch the newspaper. He introduced 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Farāmarzi (1903-72, q.v.), who was his former teacher and family friend (Mesbahzadeh, pp. 46-48). As the princess relates later, "I had often thought, during the months in Africa [where her father lived in exile in Johannesburg from 1942-44], of how much we needed a means of reaching the people and mobilizing popular support for my brother. A strong, well-produced newspaper seemed to be one of the answers, and I met with an experienced editor [Farāmarzi in early 1942] who said he could produce such a paper with financial assistance" (Ashraf Pahlavi, pp. 75-76; tr., p. 98). Then she arranged for Mesbahzadeh's audience with the new shah to seek the royal financial support for publication of the daily newspaper. Finally, the newspaper began publishing on 27 May 1942 through the partnership of Mesbahzadeh and Farāmarzi (Mesbahzadeh, pp. 46-48; Farāmarzi, p. 44). The foundation and rapid growth of Kayhan newspaper was not feasible without the financial support of the late Mohammad Reza Shah and credit facilities provided by Ja'far Etteḥādiyeh, a prominent merchant and Mesbahzadeh's father-in-law, not to mention the administrative capability and skillful public relations networking of Mesbahzadeh himself and the editorial ability of Farāmarzi—a gifted and well-experienced journalist. The shah first granted some 500,000 rials to Meṣbāḥzādeh to initiate the publication of a professional daily newspaper that would occasionally contain articles demonstrating the valuable services of Reza Shah to Iran's modernization and refrain from denigrating the royal family, as was widely practiced by many newspapers during the years 1941-53. Two years later the shah granted Meṣbāḥzādeh another 1,500,000 rials when he decided to buy an old printing machine for the newspaper (Meṣbāḥzādeh, pp. 44-54; Fardust, I, pp. 131-33).

The first issue of *Kayhan* published on 27 May 1942 listed Meṣbāḥzādeh as director and editor-in-chief (*modir va sardabir*) and 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Farāmarzi as the publisher (permit holder/*ṣāḥeb-e emtiāz*). Six months later (at the time of *Kayhan*'s 160th issue), on 17 Āḍar 1321 Š./8 December 1942, a bloody bread riot burst out in Tehran. The protesters attacked the parliament and the premier's mansion, and pillaged and destroyed shops and buildings. Scores of them were injured and killed during their encounter with security forces. The prime minister, Aḥmad Qavām (Qavām-al-Saltāna), declared martial law and banned all 35 newspapers published in Tehran. The ban



lasted about four weeks; *Kayhan* resumed publication on 23 Dey 1321 Š./13 January 1943 (*Gāh-nāmeḥ* I, pp. 226-27; Āqeli, 1991, pp. 520-22; idem, 1995, I, pp. 352, 354). At this time the permit for publishing *Kayhan* was re-issued in Meṣbāḥzādeh's name as publisher and director (*ṣāḥeb-e emtiāz wa modir-e mas'ul*), and Farāmarzi assumed the task of general editor—primarily in charge of the editorial lead article (*sar-maqāla*)—the position he continued to hold until his death in 1972 (*Kayhan*, 13 January 1943, no. 161, p. 1; Mošfeq Hamadāni, pp. 227-32; Pirniā, pp. 84-94). From its beginning in 1942 to the 1977-79 Revolution, five journalists served as managing editors (*sardabirs*) of *Kayhan*: Rabi' Mošfeq Hamadāni (1943-49), 'Abd-al-Rasul 'Aẓimi (1949-53), Mehdi Semsār (1953-61 and 1965-73), Sayyed Ḥosayn 'Adl (1961-65), Amir Tāheri (1973-78; see Mošfeq Hamadāni, pp. 215-32, 259-61; Qāsemi, pp. 135-37; Pirniā, pp. 82-98; and various issues of *Kayhan*).

Editorial policy. Three distinct phases are manifested in the development of *Kayhan* as one of the two major daily newspapers of Iran. The first one began in 1942, when *Kayhan* emerged as a popular counterpart of *Eṭṭelā'āt*, and continued until the 1953 coup d'état. The second phase was the period of rising rivalry with *Eṭṭelā'āt*, which culminated in 1961, while the third phase is marked by close cooperation between the two dailies from 1961 to the 1979 Revolution. *Eṭṭelā'āt*, the daily newspaper of longest standing in Iran (founded in 1926), attempted, in semi-official garb, to present itself as the mouthpiece for the government. Its editorials were often considered to be representing the viewpoints of the government. The order in which the news was presented and the wording employed in most sections tended to further reinforce this presumption. In other words, while ostensibly non-partisan and neutral, it was a conservatively managed paper that found it advantageous to move cautiously and in tandem with the policies and direction of standing cabinets (see *Eṭṭelā'āt*; Barzin, 1966, pp. 27-28).

First phase of rising popularity. During this phase, Farāmarzi's powerful and no-holds-barred editorials quickly won the hearts and minds of the middle-class readers, and it soon overtook its rival, *Eṭṭelā'āt*. *Kayhan* began with leftist leanings, which lasted until the fall of the pro-Soviet Azarbaijan government in 1946, when it changed its direction towards a populist and nationalist, anti-Soviet posture (Abutorābiān, pp. 135-36).

Second phase of bitter rivalry. During this period, especially after 1958, *Kayhan* was highly regarded by many people. It repeatedly sought popular approval and made efforts to prove itself superior to its one rival, *Eṭṭelā'āt*, in the



compilation of news and articles, in its approach to controversial issues, in taking the national perspective in the points it made, and in using the services of young and progressive journalists. In this respect, it did not always comply with the wishes of the standing cabinets, thereby enhancing its assertions of neutrality. As a result, *Kayhan*'s circulation showed an upward trend until 1961, such that at one point it attained almost 120,000 copies. A long period of competition between the two leading newspapers culminated in 1961; even their provincial reporters tried to surpass one another in breaking news and stories. In 1961, at a time when their conflict had reached exaggerated proportions, both starting a series of unexpected and virulent attacks. *Eṭṭelā'āt*, taking greater initiative in this conflict, went so far as to publish a booklet containing a collection of its defamatory articles against *Kayhan* (Barzin, 1966, p. 28; Pirniā, p. 94; Forqāni, p. 539).

Third phase of intimate cooperation. The tempestuous years of the second phase were followed in 1961 by a period of calm that was brought about through the mediation of some notable individuals. Starting in 1961, the two dailies increasingly became like one another not only in their news reports, but also in descriptions and analysis, advertisements, and even rates per column inch. The competition between *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* diminished, and their reporting of news and presentation of issues became so similar that they were considered as one newspaper printed under two different names. The parallelism of editorial procedures, as well as headlines, advertisements, reporting of foreign news, and other contents, made *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* virtually indistinguishable—so much so that they were referred to as twin giants (*ḡulhā-ye doqolu*). The first result of this rapprochement was the fall in *Kayhan*'s circulation (Barzin, 1966, pp. 29-30; idem, 1976, pp. 49-70; Pirniā, p. 94).

Media network. *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* were the only private media organizations that employed their own vast news networks. Each had large staffs of writers and translators, and each subscribed to the global news networks so as not to be dependent on news from government sources, as the other publications were. However, there were matters that depended predominantly on the news received from the Pars News (government news organization) bulletins or, in the 1970s, the news bulletins of the National Iranian Radio and Television network. This exchange was at times reciprocal, with news generated exclusively by *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* being used by the national news organizations. Ironically, in the 1940s and until the late 1950s,



Radio Iran received most of its evening news from *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt*. Both dailies had reputations as hands-on, practical training centers in communications. The number of reporters, even in the 1970s, who enjoyed in-job training in these organizations and for various reasons left and found employment in other newspapers and magazines was considerable (Barzin, 1966, p. 20; idem, 1976, p. 58).

During the period of the 1960s-70s, the contents of no two newspapers were as similar as *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt*. For instance, if one of the two considered an item in domestic news inappropriate to print, the other one also would withhold from publishing it. Even though *Kayhan* published more foreign news, it was not as well organized as *Eṭṭelā'āt*. With its management, administration, and extensive experience, *Eṭṭelā'āt*, was more systematic in the organization of articles throughout its pages. In other words, there was a place designated for every news topic, and the readers knew exactly which column contained the articles they were seeking (comparison of several issues of the two dailies).

Frequency of various subjects. During the period of 1960s-70s, approximately one half of the *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* newspapers was devoted to advertisements (e.g., 51.5 and 46 percent for 1964 and 1974; see [Table 1](#)). An overall comparison of the percentages in the two columns of Table 1 reveals a number of points concerning the gradual trend of the two newspapers over a ten-year period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s: (1) Advertising diminished from 52.5 to 46.0 percent, although at times it increased to nearly 60 percent. (2) Social issues received greater interest, increasing from 2.5 to 6.0 percent of the total space. (3) Arts, culture, and sports received more attention, such that arts and culture experienced a fivefold, and sports more than fourfold, increase. (4) Business, which constituted 5.0 percent of the subject matter in 1964, declined to 1.0 percent in 1974, as what used to be called the business page was removed and business subjects were distributed in other news categories. (5) While domestic news and commentaries, for the most part, increased substantially from 14.5 percent to 21.0, foreign news and commentaries declined from 13.0 percent to 9.0 percent. (6) The space devoted to accidents and crime stories decreased slightly, from 6.0 percent to 5.5 percent, but the mode of writing such reports deteriorated to the point where it offended the readership. For example, a rape report would include the name and address of the victim but not the identity of the perpetrator (Barzin, 1976, pp. 61-63).



Domestic news. Domestic news items were prepared by the reporters of the two dailies either in Tehran or in field offices located outside the capital. Each paper had foreign and domestic news departments addressing such areas as business, political, parliamentary, or sports news, each one under a special editor. The editor was assigned some number of reporters, based on the relative importance of the work load for each area. The bulk of the news was provided by reporters from outside the central office, and the balance was received over the telephone. There was little commentary on and interpretation of domestic news in these two dailies, apart from what was addressed in editorials, due to the strict censorship of the domestic news (Barzin, 1966, pp. 30, 36).

News layout. Both newspapers reported the most important domestic news in the first column of the last page, with the exception of any news photograph of the shah, which would appear on the front page, as would be expected. With respect to the layout, the upper half of the first page was taken up by a banner headline, usually reporting foreign news, unless an extremely important domestic event had taken place, such as the assassination of a prominent political figure. Below the banner appeared the nameplate and the headlines for the most important news of the day, which were often followed by a few paragraphs on each, and, in the case of *Kayhan*, a portion of the editorial. The lower portion of the front page was taken up by advertisements. In *Eṭṭelā'āt*, the first column of the second page was dedicated to the editorial, and the balance of the page was taken up with death announcements, condolences, and advertisements of a cultural nature. *Kayhan* occasionally placed the editorial on the second page or, barring that, on the next to last page. The announcements and advertisements on the second page were the same for *Kayhan* as for *Eṭṭelā'āt*. Pages three and four of both newspapers were devoted to foreign news and its analysis. The fourth page from the end was devoted to domestic news. The page facing it was dedicated to news articles and interviews continued from the front pages. The third page from the end featured accidents and crime stories of the more lurid variety (e.g., murders), and the page preceding it was devoted to articles continued from the front pages.

Essentially, each issue of the paper consisted of two segments. One segment was comprised of four or eight inner pages on domestic issues, which were usually printed at night for dissemination the following day; the other included the eight outer (first and last) pages, which went to print at noon. The



first few thousand copies were intended for the provinces and were sent by train or private bus lines. Any time there was any new and important piece of news received by 3 o'clock, the front page and last page would change slightly (Barzin, 1966, pp. 30-32; Pirniā, p. 114; and comparison of various issues of the two dailies).

Foreign news. The global news networks, as well as European and American newspapers and magazines, were the sources used by the two papers for gathering foreign news. Both *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* were equipped with teletype machines and subscribed to the Associated Press, Reuters, United Press, and news agencies in France and Germany. The translation department would convert the news into Persian and place it in the hands of the political editor. The decision as to its importance and any other steps necessary in pulling the story together rested with him. It was also the editor who determined the banner headline of the front page in consultation with the editor-in-chief. In *Eṭṭelā'āt* these banner headlines tended to reflect the essence of the news, while in *Kayhan* they were rather sensational.

It should be noted that *Eṭṭelā'āt* provided a daily commentary on the world's political events, which *Kayhan* lacked. The commentaries written by Daryoush Homayoun (Dāryuš Homāyun; 1928-2011) carried weight and attracted readership. After his departure from *Eṭṭelā'āt* in 1962, this section lost its significant appeal. Both *Kayhan* and *Eṭṭelā'āt* also included commentary translated from foreign sources, namely, Germany, the United States, England, and France. Newspapers and magazines were received from other countries, but very seldom did their articles appear in these two dailies. Of the above-mentioned countries, the German daily papers did not have much of a following, and only occasionally were articles from *Die Welt* and *Der Spiegel* featured in *Kayhan*. Of the American papers, the *Herald Tribune*, the *New York Times*, and *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines featured prominently. The interest in the *Herald Tribune* was for its political commentary by Walter Lippmann, and that in the two magazines was for their printing of the latest news from the American point of view. Of the English press from which articles were translated, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, *The Economist*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Sunday Express* are most notable. From the French press *Le Monde*, *l'Express* (weekly), and *Figaro* occasionally had articles that were to the taste of these two newspapers and were translated and printed (Barzin, 1966, pp. 34-36; Pirniā, p. 106).

Provincial news. From the 1950s onward, the two pages that were devoted to



news and advertisements for Tehran and the surrounding areas also included news from areas outside the capital. Most of this provincial news was dated, unimportant, and prepared with a great deal of caution when it concerned local government officials. Beginning in the 1970s, based on opinion polls and the responses received from readers in the provinces, *Kayhan* made changes in its approach. It increased the number of pages that dealt with the areas outside the capital to eight, of which one page had news that affected the provinces collectively, and one page took a national perspective with each province under its own rubric, including Tehran. Business news and social interest stories continued to be reported under their own sections for the entire country.

In *Kayhan*'s organization, local photographers received formal training in photography, and reporters were separated from distribution and advertisement so that the news would not be influenced (as in the past) by financial and business considerations. *Kayhan* had representatives in 670 locations other than Tehran. In 86 cities it had at least one reporter and one advertisement salesperson, besides five distributors. In sum, the workforce in the provinces came to 1,800 people. The number for Tehran was 65 people in marketing, 72 to 120 distribution coordinators, and 3 to 5 people in each distribution line (Barzin, 1976, pp. 68-69; Forqāni, p. 538; Pirniā, pp. 114-20).

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(The main part of this entry is based on selected sections of the works on *Kayhan* by Mas'ud Barzin [1966 and 1976], translated by Cyrus Samii.)