



ZABĀN-E ZANĀN

ZABĀN-E ZANĀN, the title of a newspaper and a magazine published in Isfahan and Tehran, respectively, by [Şeddiqa Dawlatābādi](#) (1883-1961), a pioneer advocate of women's rights in Iran.

The newspaper. *Zabān-e zanān*, the third women's newspaper ever published in Iran, ran from 20 Šawwāl 1337 to 21 Rabi' 1339 Š./18 July, 1919 to 1 January, 1921, a total of 57 issues altogether. It started as a biweekly paper but became a weekly after its first year. Most of its editorials and articles dealt with issues concerning women, but it also carried a serialized novel called *Dāstān-e reqqatangiz* (A heart rendering/pitiful story). The historical significance of this newspaper was in its avant-garde progressive stand for the rights of women. It was the first newspaper founded and published by a woman in Iran that forcefully addressed the question of women's rights in articles written by women, and also the first journal that used the word *Zan* (Woman) in its title. It is also noteworthy that *Zabān-e zanān*, starting with the sixth issue, attempted to use Persian terms for current Arabic words. This approach did not, however, amount to a forced purified Persian style, and some of the substitute equivalents used were invented terms found in the *Dasātir*.

Zabān-e zanān attracted the hostility of some fanatical reactionaries from the very outset of its publication. They attacked both the journal and its publisher in anonymous clandestine notices (*šab-nāmas*), and by spreading rumors and writing hostile articles in other newspapers. Both the publisher's residence and the journal's office came under repeated attacks by fanatics, who threw stones, invaded the premises, and even used firearms (*Zabān-e zanān*, no. 21, 3



Şafar 1339 Š./15 October 1920). Dawlatābādi moved to a new house for safety and managed to go on publishing the paper under the protection of the police (Şadr Hāšemi, pp. 9-10).

Zabān-e zanān had taken an actively critical stand against the [Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919](#) and the policies of Prime Minister Mirzā Ḥasan Woṭuq-al-Dawla, nor did it take a more favorable position with his successor. Eventually on 15 Dey 1299 Š./5th January 1921, Sepahdār A'zam Moḥammad-Wali Khan Tonokāboni, the new prime minister, dispatched a harsh telegram to the provincial governor of Isfahan, ordering him to ban the publication of *Zabān-e zanān* (Bayāt and Kuhestāni-nežād, eds., I, pp. 581-82, 584-85). Efforts by Dowlatābādi to reverse the ban had no effect. A fanatic cleric called the removal of the ban an act against Islam and religious ordinance (*monāfi-e Eslām wa šari'at*; *ibid*, p. 583). Moḥit Ṭabāṭabā'i (p. 174) and Şadr Hāšemi (p. 10) have wrongly suggested that the ban on *Zabān-e zanān* was a consequence of the [coup d'état of 1921](#).

Zabān-e zanān was printed at Ḥabl-al-Matin printing house in four double-column pages of 21 x 34 cm and carried no illustrations. The annual subscription rate was 12 and 30 krans for the biweekly and weekly editions, respectively. Female students received a discount. Incomplete sets of *Zabān-e zanān* are available at the Central Library of University of Tehran, the Central Library of the University of Isfahan, and the Ebn Meskuya Library in Isfahan.

The magazine. Twenty-six months after the ban on the newspaper, Dowlatābādi embarked upon the publication of a monthly magazine with the same title in Tehran. This magazine was published from Farvardin/March-April (rather than from June as Şadr Hāšemi, p. 10, has recorded) to Āḍar 1301 Š./November 1922, or a total of six issues. The magazine published articles, translations, and news items about women, but contrary to its predecessor in Isfahan, did not concern itself with political issues and events.

The first three issues were lithographed in Malek-al-Ḳaṭṭāṭin Šarifi's pen at Marvi printing house in 32 single-column pages of 12.5 x 21.5 cm and carried no illustrations. Subsequently it was typeset at Iran printing house, including the note that its previous use of lithograph was to improve the handwriting of schoolgirls. The annual subscription was set at 20 krans.

The complete set of *Zabān-e zanān* magazine is available at the National Library in Tehran, and scattered issues are kept at the Central Library of the



University of Tehran, the Central Library of the University of Isfahan, and the Central Library of Fārs.

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