Iranian women on the road

The case of Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī in Europe, 1923–27

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This paper deals with Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's (1882–1961) travel experience in Europe during the 1920s, an early-recorded case of an Iranian woman's residence abroad. It examines the ways in which gender affected travelling in terms of identity, self-representation and narrative, thereby focusing on the question of how the traveller's notions of cultural identity and Iranian womanhood shaped her perception of the encounter with Europe and with fellow Iranians along the way. This will be done by reviewing some of the traveller's writings, such as correspondence, speeches, and newspaper articles, produced during her years of residence in Europe. Prior to that, the paper briefly addresses female-authored travel accounts in general and sheds some light on the (as yet unwritten) history of Iranian women on the road.

Gendered travelling

Scholarship on European and North American female-authored travel accounts from the late 17th until the 20th century has repeatedly raised the question of the gendered nature of travelling and whether women travelled and wrote about their experiences differently from their male counterparts.[1] As such, women as travellers are often depicted as somehow exceptional: different both from other, maybe more conformist women and from male travellers, who seem to have travelled to explore while women's ventures often appear to have been a way of fleeing their confined lives at home.[2] While the individual's motives[3] for undertaking a journey were certainly much more multifaceted than stated above, this telling suggestion implies that the public act of travelling was utterly male dominated and that early female voyagers were disregarding a cultural taboo by leav-

1 See for instance Mills (1991), Melman (1995), Pelz (1999), Scheitler (1999), Maurer (1999), McEwan (2000), Siegel (2004) and Habinger (2006). For a general discussion of scholarship on female-authored travelogues see Bassnett (2002).

2 Holländer (1999: 203). Here, the underlying perceptions of womanhood refer to the domesticity ideal of European middle-class women.

3 The motive of a journey obviously depended on certain circumstances such as the purpose of the trip (pilgrimages, long distance family visits, recreation trips, business trips, exploration, or accompanying the husband) while an underlying intention of getting away from daily duties, responsibilities and constraints may have always played a significant role.

ing their traditional social space (Pelz 1999: 174). Those women (and men) who voluntarily ventured into the world were mostly privileged members of society with the necessary means and power to do so, and some of them decided to take on the task of writing about their travel impressions.[4] In studies on travelogues of European and North American women the question of gender's impact on genre, narrative and discourse has become a significant angle of reviewing these sources. It has been suggested that women's travel accounts differed from the works of their male counterparts in specific ways, such as a tendency to be richer in detail and to be more concerned with narrations of social matters and relationships (Robinson 2001: xiv, xvi). However, any attempt at defining fundamental differences between the travelogues of men and women bears the danger of essentializing the role of gender rather than highlighting the diversity of the accounts and the complexity of their authors.[5]

Along with gender, the consideration of determinants such as time, place, status, race, the traveller's destination and contemporary dominant discourses (e.g. colonial, imperialist, nationalist) is relevant for a thorough understanding of a travelogue.[6] Yet in the dynamic interplay with other parameters, gender is undoubtedly a crucial factor, as it not only shapes the author's identity and scope of action in fundamental ways but also determines his or her access to travelled spaces. Women travellers would be admitted to homosocial female spaces (e.g. the Middle Eastern context) which generally remained inaccessible to (foreign) men.[7] Through differences such as these, the gendered nature of travel experience regarding the perception of people and society becomes quite obvious and also raises the question of gendered discourses of alterity. The dynamic process of defining Self and Other may have been affected by the female traveller's search for her own role and identity and may have informed her text in specific ways.[8] Therefore, it remains an important yet difficult task to trace gender's im-

4 It is impossible to determine when (European) women started writing travel accounts, but according to Sara Mills the earliest examples are to be found from the 14th century onwards. However, it is the 18th and 19th centuries which are regarded as a golden age of women travellers and female travel writing (Mills 1991: 27, Holländer 1999: 192).

5 Billie Melman's seminal work on English women travelling the Middle East emphasizes the significance of gender as an analytical category while at the same time acknowledging the multiplicity of related dynamics and diverse contexts that come along with these texts (Melman 1995).

6 Ulla Siebert has convincingly argued for considering the "entanglement" (*Verschränkung*) of different determinants and their layers of meaning in female-authored travelogues (Siebert 1994: 166–167).

7 Meyda Yeğenoğlu discusses the issue of gendered spaces and the limited accessibility for (male) Western travellers to the Orient. Thereby, she problematizes the supplementary nature of women traveller's reports on female space in regard to male-dominated Orientalist narratives (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 68–94).

8 As women were excluded from a tradition of travelling for the purpose of collecting natural scientific or anthropological knowledge and material they had to position themselves and their texts among a male domain – another factor which may have had an impact on

print in travel accounts while avoiding generalizations and to place it within its contextual intersections.

The arguments and questions brought forward above draw upon the rather rich body of European and North American travel literature which has gained increasing scholarly attention among different disciplines during the last thirty years. In the following, I shall direct attention to the Middle Eastern – or more specifically, to the Iranian – context by consulting the travel experience of Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī, an Iranian educator, publisher and feminist activist, who went to Europe in 1923 and resided in Paris for four years. To introduce the scope of Iranian women travelling and writing about it, a brief historical outline will be provided.

Iranian women travelling

When it comes to Iranian travel accounts a comparative approach to the nature of male and female-authored works seems to be a challenging project, especially as scholars are aware of only a few travelogues by Iranian women, and those mostly deal with pilgrimages to holy sites. Afshar and Karāčī mention three travelogues before the 20th century: one pilgrimage to Mecca originating from the Safavid era, which was recorded as early as 1692/93,[9] one pilgrimage to the Shiite holy sites (ʿAtabāt) in 1880/81,[10] and the journey of Bībī Šādlū, who travelled from Boğnūrd to Tehran (around 1899/1900).[11] Recently, the travelogues of Sakīne Solṭān Vaqār ad-Doule, a wife of Nāṣer ad-Dīn Šāh (r. 1848–96), who visited the ʿAtabāt and Mecca in 1899 (Sakīne Solṭān Vaqār ad-Doule 2010) as well as the city of Šīrāz in 1905 (Sakīne Solṭān Vaqār ad-Doule 2005), and the account of Ḥāğğiye Ḫānum ʿAlaviyye Kermānī travelling to Mecca in 1892, have been published.[12]

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the textual representations of their travel experience. Additionally, life on the road differed much from women's lives back home, which encouraged women to re-define themselves (Bassnett 2002: 231–235).

9 See Bānū-ye Iṣfahānī (2007). This lady of Azerbaijani origin lived in Isfahan and was married to Mīrzā Ḫalīl, a secretary to the Safavid court. She travelled to Mecca after her husband's death. Given the poetic form and remarkable length (1,300 couplets) of her travel account it may well be assumed that she belonged to a family of writers and poets. On this account see: Babayan (2008) and Huseynova (2010). A recent work (Mahallati 2011) on the topic of Iranian women performing the *ḥağğ* to Mecca provides an overview on the sources and narratives.

10 The traveller was Mehr Māh Ḫānum ʿEṣmat as-Salṭane (d. 1888), daughter of prince governor and conservative intellectual Farhād Mīrzā Moʿtamed ad-Doule (1818–88). The comprehensive and ever growing online archive *Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran* (http://www.qajarwomen.org) of Harvard University provides the manuscript of her travelogue online. *Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran.* "Hajiyah Mihr Mah Khanum ʿIsmat al-Saltanah 1882". According to Amineh Mahallati (2011: 838), this account has been edited by Rasūl Ğaʿfariyān in the Persian quarterly *Miqāt-e ḥağğ* (17, 1375 [1996], 57–117).

11 Afshar (2002: 161) and Karāčī (2002: 63–71). For an edited version of this travelogue see Šādlū – Šādlū Boğnūrdī (1995).

12 ʿAlaviyye Kermānī (2007). In Tehran, where she stayed for well over a year after her return from Mecca, ʿAlaviyye Ḫānum Kermānī seemed to have been a kind of 'society lady' and

Yet the dearth of female-authored travelogues – or rather: the dearth of published or known manuscripts – is not to suggest that there were no female travellers frequently moving around inside or outside of Iran, nor that none of those women recorded their experiences and thoughts. Indeed there were numerous women who went on journeys of all kinds, whether they went on the *ḥağğ* pilgrimage, visited the shrines of various saints or imams, met relatives in distant places or accompanied their husbands, brothers, fathers or sons on business, diplomatic or recreational trips.[13] Europe as a destination for Iranian women appears to have been as exceptional as it used to be for men. In fact, before the end of the 19th century, we know only very few examples of women who travelled to Europe. A common reason for their travels was to accompany their husbands or relatives. One prominent and very early case was the Circassian lady Teresia (d. 1668) who was brought up at the Safavid court and who travelled to Europe three times over the course of her life. She was married to Robert Sherley (d. 1628), who functioned as an ambassador for Šāh ʿAbbās (gov. 1588–1629) and was sent on two diplomatic missions to European courts (1608–12, 1616–27) in the company of his wife. After Robert Sherley passed away, Teresia retired to Europe in 1628 and died in Rome forty years later.[14]

About two centuries after the Sherleys travelled to Europe, the Qajar envoy Mīrzā ʿAbū'l-Ḥasan Ḫān Šīrāzī Īlčī (b. 1776) attracted much attention on his second mission to England in 1819 when he brought along Dilārām, referred to as the 'fair Circassian' by the British.[15] Another famous example is the case of several wives of Nāṣer ad-Dīn Šāh, whom the Shah included among his entourage on his first trip to Europe in 1873. However, his plan to bring them along failed after being discouraged by advisors and several clergymen while the Shah and his wives were on the road. Concerns regarding self-representation in this encounter with Europe, and for the preservation of female honour were expressed. Consequently, Nāṣer ad-Dīn sent the women back to Tehran, keeping only his favourite wife Anīs ad-Doule (d. 1896/97) at his side. However, he arranged for her return to Iran from Moscow before continuing his trip.[16] Another documented case of a couple travel-

well-known wedding planner for prominent and royal clients, among them princess Tāğ as-Salṭane (1884–1936). She stayed as a guest among the court ladies and her account provides a unique glimpse into daily life at the royal *andarūn* (harem). Her travelogue covers the years 1892–94.

13 For some examples see: Karāčī (2002: 69).

14 Wright (1985: 3–8) and Eskandari-Qajar (2011). Before being baptized by Carmelite missionaries in Isfahan the young woman's name was Sanpsonia (or Sampsonia), see Eskandari-Qajar (2011: 254).

15 Eskandari-Qajar (2007: 61–77), Eskandari-Qajar (2011). It remains uncertain though whether Abū'l-Ḥasan Ḫān brought Dilārām from Iran or – as rumor had it – from Istanbul as a temporary wife (Eskandari-Qajar 2011: 260–261).

16 Karāčī 2002: 70–71. The same happened on his third trip to Europe in 1889, when he sent two of his wives and a daughter back to Tehran when they reached the Caucasian border (Karāčī 2002: 71).

ling to Europe from Iran during the 19th century is that of the Assyrian pastor Yacoub Yauvre and his wife Mourassa from Urūmiyye. Both were among the first graduates of the American Mission School and travelled to the court of Queen Victoria in 1879 and returned to Iran in 1881.[17] Apparently, Mourassa's knowledge of the English language was far better than that of her husband, which often made her his mouthpiece while residing abroad (Baaba 1998: 22–23).

Another reason for Iranian women to go to Europe was for medical treatment. When Nāṣer ad-Dīn Šāh's wife Amīn-e Aqdas (d. 1893) suffered a severe deterioration of her eyesight, he sent her to Vienna for an operation in 1891. Apparently, she was the first royal Iranian woman travelling to Europe (Nashat 1984).

During the first half of the 20th century however, an increasing number of Iranians travelled to and resided in European cities for different reasons, among them diplomats, princes, intellectuals and students.[18] Naturally, some of them brought their wives and families along, as in the cases of Noṣrat Moẓaffarī as-Salṭane and Malek Manṣūr Mīrzā.[19] Apart from wives accompanying their partners or family members, higher education became a travel motive for women in the early 20th century. Besides the case of Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī, we also have knowledge of further Iranian women who went to the West in order to earn a university degree, as in the cases of Qodsiyye Ašraf (U.S.A.),[20] who left a brief but detailed account of her travel, and ʿEṣmat al-Molūk Doulatdād (Europe).[21] Other than Ṣadīqe Doulatā-

17 Baaba (1998: 11). The couple went to Europe twice. This travelogue covers their first trip.

18 Apart from London and Paris, Berlin was one of the European metropoles that became home to a vivid Iranian diaspora community during the early 20th century. For protagonists and activities see Mahrad (1979) and Epkenhans (2005).

19 The *Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran* collection contains a family picture showing the Qajar prince Noṣrat Moẓaffarī as-Salṭane (d. 1945), his wife Aʿẓam as-Salṭane and daughter on a trip to Europe taken in 1924/25 (1303š). In another case, Gouhar Farmānfarmāiyān, probably Aʿẓam as-Salṭane's daughter-in-law, wrote a letter to Aʿẓam as-Salṭane about her life in Berlin. Although the letter is not dated, it may be assumed that it was written in the late 1920s or in the 1930s. *Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran*. "Nusrat al-Saltanah, Aʻzam al-Saltanah, and Marziyah Khanum, ca. 1924", and "Gawhar Farmanfarmayan to Aʻzam al-Saltanah, 8 January [19--?]". The Qajar prince Malek Manṣūr Mīrzā visited the World Exhibition in Gent (Belgium) in 1913 along with his wife, their son and a nanny. A souvenir photomontage shows the couple with their nanny seated in a propeller-driven airplane with the lettering: "Souvenir de L'Exposition de Gand 1913". *Women's Worlds in Qajar Iran.* "Malik Mansur Mirza and Farah al-Saltanah at L'Exposition de Gand, 1913".

20 Qodsiyye Ašraf (b. 1886) was a Bahāʾī who travelled to Chicago in 1911 and attended classes there until 1919. She apparently composed her travel account many decades later in 1965 (Sulaymānī Ardakānī 1976: 428). The idea of going to the U.S. for education was encouraged by Dr. Susan Moody, an American Bahāʾī who resided in Iran for a couple of years and who – among others – established the Persian-American Educational Society which supported such ventures. For a detailed account see Sulaymānī Ardakānī (1976). This source also contains Qodsiyye Ašraf's own notes on her journey on pages 418–438.

21 ʿEṣmat al-Molūk Doulatdād began her studies at the Free University of Brussels in 1918. Upon her return to Iran she dedicated herself to social services in the field of education, specializing in kindergarten level. She became the head of the kindergarten department of the Ministry of Education under Reżā Šāh Pahlavī and was also involved in women's work

bādī's and Qodsiyye Ašraf's notes though, there are hardly any other female-authored written accounts or documents available (or known at the time of this writing) that would shed light on Iranian women's travels and sojourns in the West during the first decades of the 20th century. Nonetheless, for some Iranian women Europe especially was a desirable place to see and functioned as a significant point of reference in regard to lifestyle, education and gender relationships.[22]

The paucity of female-authored travelogues in general and accounts on Europe in particular has to be understood within the context of the general development of women's prose writing[23] (e.g. autobiographies, satire) emerging during the late 19th century: The few available examples resemble rare and precious pearls among a broad sea of male literary expression. Some female-authored works of different genres may be lost, some destroyed, while other unidentified manuscripts may still be waiting for discovery in dusty archives. So if we wish to study women's travel accounts or use comparative methods, some very basic work needs to be done. The first and very obvious step would be a thorough search for manuscripts in libraries and private collections in Iran and elsewhere. Given the presumably small number of women who travelled *and* wrote about it – just as not every travelling man took down notes – such intricate research will require plenty of patience, funding and travel to different locations. However, the recent publications of female travelogues mentioned earlier indicate that such an effort may provide most satisfactory results and will undoubtedly add to our knowledge of Qajar society and women's lives within it.

In the meantime, I suggest looking for alternative available documentation of travel accounts by women recorded in other ways than through the classic travelogue genre[24]: one common site for the expression of female voices throughout the early 20th century was the press as well as personal letters. In examining these sources we might be able to get an idea of how gender affected female travelling, thus opening up the stage for a whole range of different questions that may be applied to the texts. At this point, Sara Mills' call for contextualizing a travelling

among the *Kānūn-e Bānovān* ("The Ladies' Center", est. 1935) (Bámdád 1977: 110f., Qavīmī 1973: 207).

22 This is expressed in two early examples of female Persian prose: Bībī Ḫānum Astarābādī's satirical work *Vices of Men* (1894/95) and the memoirs of the Qajar princess Tāǧ as-Salṭana composed around 1914 (Tâdsch os-Saltane 2010 and Javadi – Floor 2010). For the edited Persian version of Bībī Ḫānum's piece see Astarābādī (1993). Additionally, with the emergence of the women's press in Iran (*Dāneš* 1909–10 and *Šekūfe* 1912–16 being the first two publications) a new medium of female expression was established, where views and news on European culture were presented and discussed (Salṭane – Kaḥḥāl 1999).

23 Unlike prose literature, female poets and poetry have a long tradition in Iran (Kalbasi 2008 and Ḥeǧāzī, 2003).

24 The discussion of prevalent challenges and difficulties that occur with postulating specific parameters of the genre of (female) travel writing goes beyond the scope of this paper. For more insight on genre debates and definitions see: Scheitler (1999), Campbell (2002), Hanaway (2002) and Sohrabi (2012).

woman's identity and her text weighs in remarkably as we do not only deal with the complex specifics of a life path and its social, cultural and economic determinants, but also with different types of genre and therefore distinct audiences (Mills 1991: 36–39). In an analysis of Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's travel experience this becomes a crucial point as she shared her views and impressions partly in newspaper articles and speeches and partly in private letters and official correspondence.[25] Hence, before turning to the details of her travel account, it is necessary to set the historical context of her trip to Europe by briefly shedding light on the traveller herself, who was a key figure of Iranian (women's) history.

Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī: Bending boundaries, breaking taboos

Feminist activist, educator, and publisher Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī (1882–1961) is considered a pioneer of the Iranian women's movement in the 20th century.[26] Born into a prominent religious intellectual family in Isfahan, she benefited from private schooling and a broadly liberal upbringing. Her father, Mīrzā Hādī Doulatābādī (1832–1908), was a respected local authority holding the rank of a *moǧtahed* (scholar of Islamic law) and known to be the leader of the local Azalī-Bābī[27] community, which was regarded heretic by the dominant religious discourse. Along with constant power struggles among leading Isfahani politicians and clerics, his Azalī-Bābī affiliation was one reason for many troubling years for his family members. Experiencing persecution and constant conflict, the family finally settled in Tehran in 1889/90. Here, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī became actively involved in the nationalist fight for a constitution and a parliamentary system of power in Iran around the turn of the century and thereafter. Much of her engagement took place within the networks of several Tehrani women's societies which were preoccupied with female education, charity work and patriotic nationalist campaigns.[28] Two of

[25] The writings of Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī have been compiled and edited in three volumes by her niece Mahdoḫt Ṣanʿatī and historian Afsāne Naǧmābādī (Harvard University) (Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998). Much of its original material can be accessed at the Amsterdam *International Institute for Social History* and in the digital archive http://www.qajarwomen.org.

[26] For references and sources on the following biographical outline see my own work on Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's life and work (Khosravie 2012).

[27] The Bābī are followers of the religious leader ʿAlī Moḥammad Šīrāzī (1819–50), referred to as the *Bāb* ("gate"). The teachings of this messianic religious community are influenced by the *Šayḫī*-school of the late 18th and early 19th century, which propagated new interpretations of certain theological and legal aspects within a new cycle of Islam. In the late 1860s, the community divided into the Bahāʾī and the smaller group of Azalī-Bābī. While the Azalī-Bābīs believed in the designation of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī Ṣobḥ-e Azal (1830–1912) as the *Bāb's* successor, the majority of Bābīs followed the teachings of his half-brother Mīrzā Ḥoseyn ʿAlī Nūrī Bahāʾollāh (1817–92) and became known as Bahāʾī. On the historical development and teachings of both groups see Amanat (1989), Bayat (1982: 87–113) and Cole (1998).

[28] The multifaceted relationship of women's movements and nationalist projects during the 19th and 20th century has been discussed at length. See for example: Yuval-Davis – Anthias (1989), Blom – Hall (2000), Mayer (ed.) (2000) and Najmabadi (2005).

Doulatābādī's brothers, Yaḥyā (d. 1939) and ʿAlī Moḥammad (d. 1923) were well-known reformist-minded figures who were deeply inspired by the constitutionalist movement and served as members of the parliament during different legislative periods. After moving back to Isfahan around 1914, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī established two girls' schools with limited success, as they faced harsh local opposition. By contrast, her founding of a women's business cooperative in the textile industry in 1917 proved more promising. The project Doulatābādī became particularly famous for was her publication of a controversial newspaper named *Zabān-e Zanān* ("Women's Voice"[29]) from 1919 until 1922 (and subsequently 1942–45).[30] This newspaper featured several characteristics: it was the first women's newspaper to be published outside of the Iranian capital; it made use of the word *zanān* "women" in its title; it openly announced it would only accept female authored contributions; and it addressed sensitive social, cultural and political issues. *Zabān-e Zanān* faced severe opposition by local authorities for challenging unfavourable policies regarding education, women's rights and national sovereignty. Although Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī suffered personal assaults, countless threats, and nightly attacks on her home, which at times functioned as the newspaper's office, she did not surrender to the pressure and only stopped writing when her newspaper was banned in early 1921 for repeated interference in political matters. After this she decided to return to Tehran, where she managed to re-publish *Zabān-e Zanān* as a women's magazine dealing with motherhood, marriage, morality, and housekeeping. Nevertheless, the tough-minded patriot and feminist Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī continued to be engaged in the various activities of a prominent women's society in the early 1920s.

The unstable political circumstances in Iran and the process of nation building, re-shaping Iranian political and cultural identity during the first two decades of the 20th century influenced Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's work and thoughts in many ways and inspired her to pursue different projects as a publisher, educator and activist. The ideals and achievements of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1906–11) stood on shaky ground due to political corruption, the negative effects of World War I and imperialistic attempts by the two competing powers of Russia and Great Britain to undermine Iran's sovereignty. Modernist discourse therefore was keen to create social and political notions of stability by mapping out a distinctive national identity, thereby delineating the Self from the hege-

29 Literally, *zabān* means "tongue, speech, language". In the case of this newspaper title, I opted for a translation as "voice" since Doulatābādī explicitly excluded any male contributions from her publication in order to make women's voices be heard. In doing so, I follow Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī herself who apparently translated the title as *The voice of the women/La voix des femmes*. See: Invitation to Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's lecture *Les relations Franco-Persanes et la vie de la femme en Perse*, "The blossoming of a Persian feminist", *Equal Rights* 36/13, 23th October 1926, both in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 42, 623).

30 For details on the story of *Zabān-e Zanān* see: Ḫosroupanāh (1381 [2002]: 236–243) and Khosravie (2012).

monic Other (i.e. Europeans). Here, Iranian womanhood became a contested symbolic terrain of debates on modernity and tradition, thus reflecting the various discursive attitudes towards Iranian cultural identity.[31] Ever since Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī entered the stage of public activism and journalism she continuously pointed out social and political shortcomings, criticized those in charge, and participated in debates on women issues regardless of personal danger or breaking taboos. Her notion of modern Iranian womanhood in those years focused on the ideal of an educated mother and wife with certain duties (such as the responsibility of educating the next patriotic generation) as well as rights (suffrage, participation in social and economic life). In her view, men were to blame for women's ignorance, low morality and lack of education, which she identified as the crucial burdens hindering Iranian society's progress. This perspective reveals binary stereotypes of a traditional vs. a modern Iranian womanhood, which functioned as common symbols loaded with distinct ideas of Iranian national identity. Interestingly, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī herself did not fit either of these images and represented quite a different kind of woman: She was divorced after a childless and unhappy marriage and was involved with all sorts of professional activities not belonging to the realm of home and family. Yet she took over a mother role in fostering her two much younger half-sisters, Faḫr-e Tāǧ (1906–83/84) and Qamar-e Tāǧ (1908–92) after their father's death in 1908.

During her years of intense activity Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's health, which had been weak since her childhood, regularly forced her to take recovery breaks. In early 1923 her condition worsened noticeably and she was advised to travel to Europe to find a cure for her disease, making her trip one of medical necessity. After her return from Europe in fall 1927 Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī did not return to journalism but accepted the long-offered post in the Ministry of Education as an inspector (*mofatteše*) for girl's schools in Iran in 1928. During her absence, significant political changes had taken place and she found herself working under new conditions dictated by the modernist agenda of the autocratic ruler Reżā Šāh Pahlavī (r. 1925–41).[32] A year later, she was promoted to head inspector of girl's schools and she continued to play an influential role among the increasingly state-controlled women's movement. The state's desire to control any independent political, social

[31] A binary attribution of the attitudes regarding different aspects of Iranian cultural identity as "reform-oriented modernist" and "traditional-minded Islamist" would obscure the heterogeneous multitude of discourses and their various intersections and common viewpoints. Nevertheless, it is necessary to refer to certain contrasting poles of discourse just as the antagonists themselves used certain terms to signify each other. Thus, I make use of terms such as "modernist" or "traditionalist" in the full awareness of the rich intellectual diversity of political and cultural debates during this constitutive period of Iranian history.

[32] The beginning of Reżā Pahlavī's reign is usually set with the British-backed *coup d'état* of February 1921. He initially held the office of the Minister of War in 1921–23, became prime minister from 1923–25, and was finally crowned Šāh in 1925. In 1941 he was forced to abdicate in the face of the allied invasion of Iran. For compact insights to the rule of Reżā Šāh see Atabaki – Zürcher (2004) and Cronin (2003).

or cultural activity culminated in the founding of an institution called *Kānūn-e Bānovān* (The Ladies' Club)[33] in 1935, which henceforth propagated the modernist state feminism. From 1936 on, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī functioned as the director of *Kānūn-e Bānovān,* promoting all the aspects in accordance with Reżā Šāh's *Nehżat-e Bānovān* project (Women's Awakening Project),[34] including female education, patriotic motherhood, unveiling and heterosocial public life. Unlike the time before her departure to Europe, this phase of her life gave her the opportunity to work towards achieving long-fought-for goals in a position of authority.[35] In this context, it is important to understand the state-promoted feminist policies of the Pahlavi era as a continuation of the ideas and debates that activists had been preoccupied with since the 19th century.[36] After the Šāh's abdication in 1941 she kept up *Kānūn-e Bānovān* and even published a new version of her magazine *Zabān-e Zanān* (1942–45) as the club's mouth-piece. Although *Kānūn-e Bānovān* and its promoted views increasingly lost importance among the resurgent feminist and political organizations and their publications, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī remains to this day an honoured icon of the Iranian women's movement.[37]

En route: Shifting relations between Self and Other

When retrospectively looking at Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's stay in Europe, which she prolonged for about four long years, one is tempted to suggest that the prescribed curing of her malady was – to say the least – helping to fulfil her long-cherished dream of going to Europe for further education.[38] So a medical trip turned out to

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33 On *Kānūn-e Bānovān* see Fatḥī (1383 [2005]).

34 I follow Camron M. Amin's translation of the term as it reflects the underlying stereotypes of the project (modern women/awake vs. traditional women/asleep). See his work for more insight on the scope of the project's agenda (Amin 2002: chapter 4).

35 On the activities of *Kānūn-e Bānovān* under Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī and her specific role among the women's movement as well as her relation to the Pahlavī regime see Khosravie (2012: chapter 3.3).

36 This point fits into the larger critique by Cyrus Schayegh regarding state-centered Pahlavi historiography (Schayegh 2010).

37 A women's library in Tehran was named after her and the 'Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī Book Award' has been granted annually since 2005 to significant books related to feminist issues. The celebratory ceremony is always held on the International Women's Day (8th March). As an act of protest against censorship in Iran, the 'Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī Book Award' jury did not grant the book prize to any book in 2009. http://www.campaignforequality.info/spip.php?article3806.

38 In 1908, at the age of 26, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī had already plans for going to Europe for higher education. Her idea was strongly supported by her sick father, whom she wished to take along, but who died during the same year. The next time she made plans to go to Europe was around 1917. Here, she was discouraged from following up by her family as they thought Ṣadīqe's half-sisters to be too young to accompany her. Doulatābādī's alleged motive then was the same as in 1923 (medical therapy) but regarding her constant concern of her sisters' education and the course of her actual stay in Europe later on it seems le-

become the eventful journey of a middle-aged Iranian woman in her forties travelling to several cities in the neighbouring Arab countries and to Switzerland, Germany and France. She finally settled down in Paris to study education sciences at Sorbonne University in order to gain a teacher's diploma. Metaphorically speaking, Europe not only offered her a cure for her physical ailments but also of a cure for her mind by acquiring a university degree she would not have been able to get back home.[39] Her degree opened up a career in the Ministry of Education later on, allowing her to improve her social status back home.[40]

Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī was not the first Iranian woman to travel to Europe, but what makes her exceptional is her undertaking of the journey without the company of any male relative. Nonetheless she could tap into a social network in Europe that was linked to her brother Yaḥyā, who had travelled there in 1911 and 1914, as well as to the existing diaspora communities of Iranians. Additionally there was Dr. Roland, her French physician and friend of the family, who accompanied her on the road from Iran to Europe,[41] and Ẕakāʾ ad-Doule Ġaffārī, the wife of the Iranian representative in Switzerland with whom she stayed for a while, as well as the British Orientalist Edward Granville Brown (1862–1926), with whom she exchanged letters. She was also in contact with various other Iranians in Berlin and Paris.[42]

In March 1923 Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī set off for Europe via Baghdad, Aleppo and Beirut, from which she took the sea route heading to the port of Marseille. She continued her journey to Switzerland by train until she reached her destination,

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gitimate to suggest that she might have had some other intentions for herself and the children. *Letter to Faḫr and Qamar 28th December 1923*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 75).

39 Although there had been an institution to educate (primary) schoolteachers (*Dār al-Moʿallemāt*) since 1921, it was only in the late 1920s and 1930s that educational professionals were systematically trained in Iran (Yaǧmāʾī 1997). In many cases of female travelling one reason for the journey was that it was only far from home that women could strive for further education and self-fulfillment (Holländer 1999: 204).

40 In 1924 the Iranian government approached Yaḥyā Doulatābādī suggesting that his sister should proceed with her education abroad in order to serve educational reforms in Iran upon her return. Apparently, the government partly sponsored her last two years of studies in Paris. (*Letter to Faḫr und Qamar 14th February 1924*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998: 84).

41 Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī travelled in a small convoy of Europeans up to the Iranian border. Dr. Roland provided medical treatment when necessary during the journey. (Kalām, *Bānuvān-e nāmī-ye Islām va-Īrān*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998, 610–618: 616).

42 *Letter to Faḫr and Qamar 31st May 1923; Letter from Edward Brown 14th October 1924*; Notes from a trip to Europe, *Zabān-e Zanān* 1/25, Farvardīn 1321š [March 1945], 13–15, all in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998, 43–45: 43; 39; 405–407: 407). For her newspaper articles in *Īrānšahr* (Berlin, publ. 1922–1927) see Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 241–255). While in Berlin she delivered a speech on the event of the *Īrānšahr* publishing house opening ceremony and in Paris she lectured on different occasions. See: editor's introduction to Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's article "The significance of health care for women", *Īrānšahr* 1/2, 18th September 1923, 18–19; invitation to Ṣadīqe Doulatābādīs lecture *Les relations Franco-Persanes et la vie de la femme en Perse*; the speech of Ms. Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī at the Women's Society, *Īrānšahr* 10/4, 23rd December 1926, 606–610, all in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 241, 42, 253–255).

Bern, after about fifty days on the road. As borders crossings often go along with crossing boundaries defined by cultural, social and political structures, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's unescorted[43] trip appears to have tackled a whole array of such boundaries. Throughout her trip, gender dynamics shaped her interaction with her surroundings and her own perception of them. The first "gender hurdle" Doulatābādī had to face was in leaving her homeland at all. Without any male relative and instead in the company of a French physician, she was detained from travelling once in Karand and again at the Iraqi border in Qaṣr-e Šīrīn by several Iranian army servicemen, who became suspicious and denied her passage even though she held an official travel permit.[44] She was harassed, arrested, and separated from her doctor despite her visibly bad condition. In an outraged report[45] to military and government authorities Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī gave vent to her anger about this treatment, which she clearly saw as harassment and gender discrimination by ignorant and rude military servants, some not even literate and therefore unable to read her travel permit. Doulatābādī's description of her arrest in Karand provides a glimpse of her situation:

> "I slept in my room under the blanket when Major ʿAlī Akbar Ḫān opened the door with great haste, entered my room and left me utterly surprised with his behaviour. Given the fact that an hour before a deputy had made his appearance, asked for my name and personal details, had seen my travel permit and went away, I did not expect that any further disturbances would be necessary. I asked him: What is the reason for your sudden appearance and who are you? He replied: My name is ʿAlī Akbar Aḥmadī and who are you? I said: I am Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī [*felān kas*] and I have presented all the documents, my travel permit [*tazkere*], the decree [*ḥokm*] of the Foreign Minister and the letter of the doctors to your deputy. I am a sick person and I travel because of the need for medical treatment. He began to mock me and said: Your talk is not acceptable. Give me your travel permit so I can see it. I assumed the man was literate and gave him the travel permit and the documents. But he gave them to another person to read. Thereupon he said: These [documents] have nothing to do with me at all. If you have a letter from the Minister of War, then show it. I said: I don't have it since my travel permit is valid and I have the decree of the Foreign Minister, therefore, I didn't obtain a decree from the Minister of War. He said: I don't accept these [documents] and I will confis-

43 That is without any male family members accompanying her.

44 Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī had obtained a travel permit (*tazkere*) which fulfilled the function of a passport issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It also included a statement on the purpose of her trip and the necessity of Dr. Roland accompanying her. *Letter to the military authorities of Qaṣr(-e Šīrīn) 14th April 1923*, in Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 28). Elsewhere she notes that according to Iranian law single women in those days were not allowed to travel unless they were over thirty years old or suffered from a sickness that needed medical attention abroad. Kalām, *Bānovān-e nāmī-ye Eslām va-Īrān*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 615). Although she was 41 years old at the time of her departure, in this quoted source from the 1950s (Kalām), Ṣadīqe claims to have been only 26 but still managed to follow up with her plans. Hereby, she constructs yet another "hurdle" to her narrative of travel which adds to the exceptionality of her trip. Ibid.: 616.

45 *Letter to the military authorities of Qaṣr(-e Šīrīn) 14th April 1923*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 28).

> cate them. With great surprise, I said: How is it that you can do that? He said: I'll just do it, you'll see. I said: Well, then give me a letter that my travel permit and my decree are with you and take them. He said: I won't give you such a letter, and besides, you are arrested. We will also take the car and the doctor into custody. The army major walked away with my travel permit and my decree. (...) I spent the night in the room under the supervision of two soldiers. In the morning when I needed to relieve myself I stepped in and out of the room in the company of an officer."[46]

In Qaṣr-e Šīrīn, Dr. Roland was arrested once again and Doulatābādī was forced to appear at the local barracks, bypassing a group of men shouting nasty things.[47] Later, she wrote that at both checkpoints she was confronted with the same question: "How could an Iranian woman all by herself go to Europe in the company of foreign men?"[48] While she was apparently aware of the fact that some officers acted this way expecting that they would be offered a bribe, she still knew her treatment was very different. Travelling alone was one thing; to take off with a foreigner was quite a different one. This touched the boundaries of patriarchal, religious and nationalist concepts of Iranian womanhood and male guardianship. To frame it in the context of gender relations: In the notion of women as keepers of cultural identity and re-producers of new generations, female sexuality became a crucial matter of male protection with the implicit objective of preserving ethnic purity (nationalistic discourse) and female honour (patriarchal concept legitimized by religion). Male regulation of female mobility, latitude and appearance has been an important way of controlling and subduing women's lives in patriarchal societies. Leaving one's homeland and one's nation without an appropriate male guardian then becomes a subversive venture requiring powerful intercession. Female travelling appears thus to be much more about the company kept by the woman than about the traveller herself. In Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's case, her brother and parliament deputy ʿAlī Moḥammad Doulatābādī intervened through a telegraph exchange with the border forces. Still, it took a total of three days before she was allowed to resume her journey.

As Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī moved on to Iraq, Syria and then Lebanon, she had to have her travel permit stamped by the local Iranian consulates. Here again, she experienced some unpleasant encounters with her fellow countrymen and heard about the bad reputation of particular consuls. This travel episode was published in a Tehrani newspaper as a letter to the editor titled "From Iran to Switzerland" (Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998: 526–531). Besides exploring the foreign destinations along her route, she seems to have been particularly interested in observing the Iranian representatives' performances:

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46 *Letter to the military authorities of Qaṣr(-e Šīrīn) 14th April 1923*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 28–30). All quotations in this paper are originally in Persian language and were translated by me.

47 *Letter to the military authorities of Qaṣr(-e Šīrīn) 14th April 1923*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 32).

48 Kalām, *Bānovān-e nāmī-ye Eslām va-Īrān*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 616).

> "While on the road, I made sure to get informed about the behaviour of government officials both inside and outside Iran and whether they behaved in accordance with the constitutional laws and whether they preserved the dignity of the country or not."[49]

In her account, the official representatives of Iran are depicted as politically ignorant, corrupt and dishonourable – much the same as the Iranian checkpoint officers and their behaviour earlier. Her judgment of the consul general in Iraq shows her disapproval:

> "Muʾtaman as-Salṭane is a sick old man who has old-fashioned and selfish views [*dārā-ye ʿaqāyed-e kohne va-ḫodparastī*]. He is a money-loving man of aristocratic rank without any clue about politics. Why does the state appoint such a person as consul general in an important place like Baghdad?"[50]

She then goes on to recount a detailed report given to her by local Arabs on the Iranian representative in Damascus, who seemed to resemble the profile of his colleague in Baghdad. In Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's narration these men represent every aspect of the 'old' system of Iran and of the traditions the nationalist movement tried to overcome. Her perception of fellow Iranians while on the road is marked by conceptualizing them as the Other, thereby locating them in the past as defenders and representatives of an outmoded system. To draw the line sharply, she contrasts them with the deposed Iranian consul in Beirut, a young, honourable medical student with a decent behaviour, thus standing for the normative Self and the promoted modern, enlightened Iranian nation that Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī herself related to. The 'other' consuls, representing the impotence of governing institutions back home, appear to be mere objects for the projection for the new envisioned Iranian Self. Doulatābādī did not mark the Arab populations as the Other but was mainly preoccupied with 'othering' fellow Iranians abroad as this was the intended focus of her narrative. The Self always defines itself in relation to the Other, while the identification of who the Other is may vary based on the specific context. The depiction of the Other then becomes a telling blueprint of the Self.

Although not relevant at first sight, gender does play a distinctive role in the above-cited letter to the editor, as it tells Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's story of travelling to Europe while remaining silent on the author's gender. It is only signed "traveller" (*mosāfer*), and certain elements of the narrative (e.g. taking an evening walk with a random Arab soldier, [Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998: 529]) suggest that the audience was supposed to believe in a male narrator or, more precisely, male authorship.

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49 "From Iran to Switzerland", *Mīhan-e Youmiyye* 30/5, 13.12.1341q [28th June 1923], in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 527). Apparently, a previous newspaper article in *Čehrenamā* gave the impulse of going public with her experience of encounters with Iranian representatives. Contrary to her own impressions, *Čehrenamā* praised the consul in Syria, whom she considered incapable, whereas the deposed consul in Beirut, whom she favoured, received harsh criticism. (Ibid.: 531).

50 "From Iran to Switzerland", *Mīhan-e Youmiyye* 30/5, 13.12.1341q [28th June 1923], in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 528).

The moments of interaction with men also do not hint to the author's female identity in any way. Thus, her experience with the border forces is told in a gender-neutral way and much less detailed than in her letter of complaint to the authorities. She described the inacceptable arbitrary nature of the military's behaviour, leaving aside the gender-related harassment she had experienced (Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998: 527–528). This fulfilled two functions. First, it was a tool to add to the authority of the text; and second, taking into account that a lone female Iranian on the road was a novelty, this could have sparked criticism which would have distracted the reader from the underlying message of the story: the distinction of her modern Iranian Self from the traditionalist and ignorant Iranian Other and the importance of "clearing" state service positions of ineligible individuals.

By looking at two different kinds of sources, a complaint report to authorities and a letter to the editor, this section has shed light on the ways in which gender affected Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's journey to Europe both in regard to travelling itself and in reporting about her trip. Furthermore, it revealed how Iranian authorities became objects of othering in her writings.

Positioning the new Iranian woman

In this section, the focus of attention will be on how notions of modern Iranian womanhood and gender in relation to the Self and the Other are reflected in Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's encounter with Europe.

Envisioning modern Iranian identity also involved new notions of gender. Here, the emerging nationalism played a key role in the construction of gender and likewise in discourses of alterity. These reciprocal processes had a significant impact on power dynamics and offered women a certain scope of action for negotiating their own status within the nation. However, although the nation was conceptualized as a feminized entity, it remained a male-dominated concept based on prevalent patriarchal structures (Mayer 2000). The nationalist ideal of an educated mother and housewife as a patriotic comrade to her reformist husband was contrasted with images of a traditional womanhood, marked by ignorance, superstition and immorality.[51] With such a view of ideal womanhood, female education using new curricula in modern schools was among the main objectives promoted both by Iranian reformists and the women's movement. In this regard the image of the European woman played an important but ambivalent role. While being depicted as a role model in terms of a civilized and disciplined upbringing, she also served as a deterrent example of immoral and promiscuous behaviour. The European woman thus represented both the desired outcome of modern reforms and the feared and con-

[51] For insight into these concepts of Iranian womanhood, their dynamics and roots see the works of Camron M. Amin (2002) and Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005: chapter 7).

demned effects of new female freedom. Defining the modern Iranian woman therefore remained a delicate act of balance weighing multifaceted positions, concerns and anxieties. Here, the dialectic nature of the concepts of identity and alterity reveals itself as an ever changing, debatable frame based on the cultural, social and political narratives of identity and the determination of its boundaries. For Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī, as an advocate of modern education and scientific motherhood, the perception of Iranian womanhood implied rather clearly defined characteristics nourished by the nationalist discourse. Her views on Europe and Europeans in general were deeply influenced both by personal encounters with European residents in Iran and her collaboration with them, and by the imperialistic politics she protested against. As a fervent patriot she held a strong basic claim for the national sovereignty of Iran free from any foreign powers' interference, but she nevertheless favoured alliances and cooperation for the sake of progress in Iran, particularly in the fields of education and economy.[52] In her encounter with Europe this ambivalent relationship in many ways defined her perception of the surroundings and the dynamics of representing identity (and thus alterity). Thereby, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's concept of the Self was challenged on two levels: first by the biased, often colonial attitudes towards (female) life in Iran brought forward by the Other (Europeans), and secondly by the struggle to position Iranian womanhood inside and outside Iran, for which she sought coalitions. In the following section, I will show the underlying dynamics of identity building and narrative while residing abroad by looking closely at the reports of two occasions during Doulatābādī's stay in Paris where notions of identity, gender and womanhood played a significant role.

Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī entered the public European stage making sure everybody acknowledged her as a well-known Iranian publisher and women's rights activist.[53] In that way, she remained the person she was and did not – as it was the case with many other female travellers – try to become someone who she hadn't been back home or to take on a different role (Bassnett 2002: 233–235). On the event of the

[52] Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī repeatedly advocated the idea of sending Iranian students and teachers-to-be to European universities for education. She also strongly supported an economic cooperation in different areas between France and Iran. *Letter to ʿAbdolḥoseyn Ṣanʿatīzāde 9th February 1924*; "The honorable executive board of the Society of Patriotic Ladies", *Nesvān-e Vaṭanḫᵛāh-e Īrān* 7/8, 1st yr., 1303 [1924]: 41–43; "France and Iran", *Mīhan Youmiyye* 33/6, 6th November 1342q [10th June 1924]: 2; as well as the French version: "Perse et France", *L'Asie Française* 224, July/August 1924: 286–288. All documents in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 82–83, 535–537, 531–535, 236–240).

[53] She signed certain articles with the additional information that she was the publisher of the magazine *Zabān-e Zanān* and a delegate of an Iranian women's rights society. In other cases, newspaper editors added a foreword to her articles where she was introduced in the same way. See for example: Editor's introduction to Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's article "The significance of health care for women", *Īrānšahr* 1/2, 18th September 1923, 18–19; "Perse et France", *L'Asie Française* 224, July/August 1924: 286–288, both in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 241, 236–240: 240).

10th Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance[54] in Paris in 1926 she officially represented Iran as a delegate of the Patriotic Women's League (*Ǧamʿiyat-e Nesvān-e Vaṭanẖvāh*).[55] After the event she wrote a letter to her sister Qamar back home, expressing a mixture of joyful pride and anger.[56] Whereas the Congress Board members had been extremely pleased to welcome an Iranian representative for the first time ever, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī was taken aback by the blunt ignorance displayed by the European feminist community of Iran and Iranian women. In the letter, she refers to an incident at the reception lunch where the international delegates were introduced to each other. When Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī entered the room holding the Iranian flag, her national identity was not recognized by the others. Instead, she was taken for an Italian! Even after clarifying this misconception, the women still assumed that Doulatābādī must be European and was only representing Iranian women at the congress. This is when she awoke to the fact that these women had utterly different ideas about how an Iranian woman could possibly dress (they were expecting a veiled woman), speak and behave. So she explained to them that Iran had quite a lot of educated and capable women.[57] Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's frustration increased when after she had finished, an English delegate ridiculed her report by suggesting that Iranian men would never approve of this development of Iranian women and thereby questioning the reliability of Doulatābādī's words:

> "In the end, an ignoble Englishwoman said: What country are you from? We know the Iranians quite well and their men are still not familiar with such things, are you sure you have married an Iranian?"[58]

As a reply to this sarcastic comment an indignant Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī elaborated in full on Iranian women's progress, modern schools, and other reforms which had a positive impact on the conditions of female life in Iran. During the next

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54 The *International Woman Suffrage Alliance* arose from the *International Council of Women (ICW)* in 1902 and was formally established in 1904 in Berlin. The *IWSA* perceived itself as a representative of an international forum of women's movement activists for exchange, cooperation and coordination with a liberal feminist agenda. At the Paris congress in 1926, which was chaired by the Englishwoman Margery Corbett Ashby (1882–1981), the organization decided to rename itself into *International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship* (IAW 1926: 122).

55 *Representation mandate letter issued by the Ǧamʿiyat-e Nesvān-e Vaṭanẖvāh 29th December 1923*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 34). The *Ǧamʿiyat-e Nesvān-e Vaṭanẖvāh(-e Irān)* was a powerful Tehrani women's society founded in 1922, which was well-known for its large-scale activities and controversial events. Most board members and many followers were teachers and school headmistresses. Some of the most prominent members of the society were married to socialist intellectuals and politicians. On the *Ǧamʿiyat-e Nesvān-e Vaṭanẖvāh* see Ḫosroupanāh (1381 [2002]: 184–194).

56 *Letter to Qamar 9th June 1926*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 110–113).

57 She does not refer to the exact content of these details. *Letter to Qamar 9th June 1926*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 111).

58 *Letter to Qamar 9th June 1926*, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 111).

couple of days attending the congress, she was busy 'setting the record straight' and informing the international feminist audience on Iranian women's advancements. Her official speech at the congress highlights Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's narrative of Iranian identity, which she strongly linked to the age of pre-Islamic Iran when women were strong ruling members of Iranian society:

> "The history of Iran shows that women are capable and powerful. As you know, ancient Iran had energetic and enlightened [*monavvar al-fekr*] women, such as the daughters of Ḫosrou Parvīz [gov. 590–628], Šahrbānū, the daughter of Yazdegerd [gov. 632–651] and many more, some of whom ruled the country and did commendable work for the country in their time. After certain events had happened a few centuries ago, the women lost their place in political and social affairs and men took the seats in the front row."[59]

By contrasting ancient Iran with the era of Islam as a time of continuous deterioration of women's status, Doulatābādī also distinguished Iranian identity from other Middle Eastern (Arab Muslim) 'sisters'. She did not directly refer to 'Islam' or religion as such at any point in her speech, thus neglecting (or even rejecting) religious affiliation as an identity marker, which otherwise was a significant frame of analysis for Europeans viewing and judging Iranian society. While acknowledging general issues such as being excluded from suffrage and male domination of political life, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's account for the European public draws an overall positive picture of increasing female power in Iranian society while elsewhere she expressed great alarm to fellow Iranian feminists about the poor social condition of Iranian women in comparison with other countries and "even countries like Egypt or Algeria".[60] Here, the dominant paradigm of colonial discourse, which saw the only solution to Muslim women's misery in European intervention to civilize (and/or to evangelize) the subordinate Other, was rejected by Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī, while still trying to find a rightful place among the transnational network of female solidarity. However, representations of independent and educated women like herself threatened European attitudes, as they questioned the legacy of foreign presence in the Middle East, which was often directly connected to the liberation of women.[61] Hence, the idea of *global sisterhood* was deeply intertwined with dynamics of inequality and subordination: there were 'sisters' who knew, and those who needed instruction. In Paris, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī became well aware of 'Who was Who' in this game. The same dynamics also apply to the relationship between the 'modern Iranian woman' (like Doulatābādī herself) and the 'traditional Iranian woman', with the former being

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59 "The speech of Miss Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī at the Women's Society", *Īrānšahr* 10/4, 23rd December 1926: 606–610, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 254). This article is the Persian version of Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's official speech at the congress, which was most likely held in French.

60 "The honourable executive board of the Society of Patriotic Ladies", in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 536).

61 For a critical examination of the complex relationship of Western feminists and Iranian women see Naghibi (2007) and Weber (2001).

called to guide and discipline the latter.[62] Whereas here, social class is an important marker of identity, this did certainly not apply to the relationship between Western and Eastern feminists in the same way. In fact, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī had probably much more in common with the German, French or Argentinean delegates than with a fellow working-class Iranian woman in terms of socioeconomic status, family background, education and professional life. Yet, in the close encounter with European feminists Doulatābādī experienced being 'othered' and struggled to narrate Iranian identity in terms that would contradict these conceptions and thereby blur the boundaries between a European Self and the Iranian Other. At the same time, she must have been well aware of the fact that European attitudes towards Iranian women were quite in line with Iranian nationalist discourse and its stigmatizing of traditional womanhood, in which she herself engaged as well.

An earlier occasion where Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī took a stand regarding issues of identity and gender took place in 1924 when the Iranian diaspora newspaper *Īrānšahr* (publ. 1922–27, Berlin) asked whether mixed marriages between Iranian men and European women were legitimate and in what ways Europeans were preferable to Iranian women. Doulatābādī's contribution to the passionately unfolding debate revealed her rather low opinion of male Iranian residents in Europe and also displayed an interesting view of European women and the relationship between class and morality.[63] She condemned marriage between her fellow Iranian residents, who were mostly well educated and of noble family backgrounds, and European women for two reasons: First, a European mother represents a threat to Iranian cultural integrity as her children would never become real patriots, and second, those European women Iranian men were usually falling for were ordinary, uneducated and lower-class individuals. Hence, instead of going for a 'classy', educated and decent Tehrani girl, Iranian men would rather wander off with 'pleasure-seeking' European girls.[64]

> "The European girl, who has lived chest to chest with young men from diverse backgrounds since the age of twelve, who has been enjoying herself from early age on and who has had all kinds of pleasures available to her, will, after she dances and celebrates every night till break of dawn until the age of about twenty to thirty years, grow tired of pleasure-seeking and think of marriage. Of course it is more fun to sleep with her and lay one's head upon her chest than with an innocent Iranian girl, who was barred from an early age even from regular games and who is married off to a stranger at the age of fifteen or twenty."[65]

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62 Meyda Yeğenoğlu has pointed towards the significant role of indigenous elites within the dynamics of orientalism and colonialism (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 122).

63 "The opinion of Miss Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī", *Īrānšahr* 11/12, 2nd yr., 19th August 1924: 702–708, in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 247–250).

64 "The opinion of Miss Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī", in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 247, 249).

65 "The opinion of Miss Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī", in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 247).

She then continues her complaint:

> "Oh, how tyrannical the Iranian men are! There are two thousand girls with a higher education diploma and no husband in Tehran, but our young men in Europe can't restrain themselves from marrying maids, laundresses, ironers and coffeehouse waitresses."[66]

Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī had nothing positive to say about Iranian men in Europe, whom she described as short-sighted, unpatriotic and focused on (sexual) joys, nor does she have anything nice to say about the majority of European women, whom she depicted as promiscuous and utterly immoral. The few educated European women who had 'class' were not the ones who would take up with an Iranian man, she stated (Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998: 249). However, Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī approved of marriages between Iranian women and European men and, moreover, regarded ethnic mixing as valuable for the Iranian gene pool as long as the mother is Iranian and thus preserves the cultural integrity of her children (Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī 1998: 250). The complex issues of her statements brought forward in this letter-to-the-editor deserve detailed attention. It is a telling piece on the entanglement of identity, gender, class and nation. Her disapproval of Iranian men's marriages with European women centres on the loss of Iranian cultural integrity, thus making such marriages an unpatriotic act on the part of her fellow Iranian "brothers" who ought to do their patriotic duty and marry an Iranian girl. Doulatābādī displayed an ambivalent notion of Iranian manhood shaped by its relation to European culture and women. As seen before, she portrays her fellow Iranian men on the road as Others by denying them affiliation with modern Iran since here they were betraying the national concept of the new Iranian woman and modern gender relations. However, unlike before, the Iranian men she refers to here have all the assets of being patriotic reformers whose ambition should be to work for the benefit of the nation. Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's disappointment with and anger over her fellow Iranians' behaviour in Europe finds explicit expression in her lines. Whereas back home she had promoted higher education abroad for the progress of the nation, she now witnessed the disconcerting outcome of the encounter between two different sets of moral standards and the mixing of classes.

This brings us to the significance of class, gender and its relationship with the Other. Doulatābādī's depiction of European women is strongly connected to their specific social status: those with low morals resemble lower-class girls and those who are educated and respectable belong to higher social classes. In her view, it was absolutely unacceptable to 'lose' noble Iranian men to lower-class non-Iranian women. Anxieties about European women as rivals of the modern Iranian women are unveiled here. Furthermore, she sexualizes the Other just as orientalist representations of the sensual, voluptuous Oriental woman do.[67] In

[66] "The opinion of Miss Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī", in: Ṣanʿatī – Naǧmābādī (1998: 249).

[67] On orientalism and its representations of the female see: Lewis (2004) and Yeğenoğlu (1998).

Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's concept of the modern Self, religion seemed to be no remarkable signifier of identity. Again, there is hardly any reference to religion in her argument other than briefly mentioning (faithless) European men converting to Islam just for the purpose of taking an Iranian wife. Rather, her frame of reference for defining identity is centred on Iranian nationalism and patriotism. Given that, it is remarkable – and probably meant to provoke the audience further – how Doulatābādī openly endorses marriages of Iranian women with 'other', non-Iranian men despite nationalist-masculine and religious (in case of non-Muslim men) concepts of honour which would generally disapprove of such relationships (Najmabadi 2005: chapter 8).

Final remarks

Reading Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's travel account through her letters, speeches and publications reveals a highly multifaceted picture of an eventful journey and residence in Europe. The fact that she wrote for diverse audiences with distinct intentions and for different purposes makes her travel experience all the more intriguing. In contrast to a formally composed travelogue or diary, this heterogeneous source material includes discursive dimensions otherwise likely to disappear. As a female traveller Doulatābādī does not quite fit into the topoi, mentioned earlier, of a woman on the road. Her trip cannot be simply labelled as a flight from home, nor did she, when abroad, try to be someone substantially different from who she had been back home. She remained the same confident activist and publisher and her feminist consciousness marks her travel account. However, life in Europe undoubtedly opened up new opportunities for her, such as admittance to university and enjoying heterosocial public life.

During her stay in Europe Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's notions of cultural identity, womanhood and gender relations shaped her perception of encounters with non-Iranians and Iranians alike. At the same time, they were challenged on many occasions and levels. By interacting and moving within a foreign space she was confronted with the dynamic relations of Self and Other, which led to differentiated approaches to and representations of certain aspects of identity. Ṣadīqe Doulatābādī's travel experience can be viewed as a kind of search for a new place for the modern Iranian woman among fellow Iranians and Europeans within contested sites of contemporary discourses on cultural identity, concepts of gender and transnational feminism. It was a constant act of balance and of negotiating shifting boundaries that defined the Self and the Other.

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