



DĀYERAT AL-MA'ĀREF-E FĀRSĪ

DĀYERAT AL-MA'ĀREF-E FĀRSĪ, the first general encyclopedia in Persian compiled along modern lines. It includes about 30,000 entries translated from the *Concise Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia*, supplemented by approximately 10,000 original articles on Persia. Although originally planned for two volumes (*Dāyerat al-ma'āref* I, p. 2), it is now scheduled for three, each measuring 31 x 21 cm, in a triple-column format based on that of its American model. The first two volumes (*alef-sīn* and *sīn-lām*) were published in 1345 Š./1966 and 1356 Š./1977 respectively; the third volume was still in preparation in early 1373 Š./1994.

In 1335 Š./1956 the [Franklin Book Programs, Inc.](#), of New York undertook production of the encyclopedia at its Tehran office; the first editor was Ġolām-Ḥosayn Moṣāḥab (1289-1358 Š./1910-1979), who oversaw publication of the first volume and preparation of the work up to the letter *ḡayn* in the second. Moṣāḥeb held a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Cambridge and was interested in both modern and traditional sciences, including the Islamic sciences (Aqṣā, p. 2). Among the innovations that he introduced into Persian typesetting in *Dāyerat al-ma'āref* were special attention to word spacing, the use of numerals and scientific symbols, and a comprehensive system of abbreviations that helped to limit the size of the volumes considerably. He also adopted strict rules for linking Persian characters, precise use of punctuation, and the International Phonetic Alphabet, albeit with some arbitrary variations (e.g., *a_i* and *ō* for the diphthongs *aw* and *ow* and of *s**š* for *šīn*), in order to show the precise pronunciation of words; every



article was carefully edited for overall accuracy and consistency. Particularly significant was the systematization of entries, in which Persian and Arabic names were given in a strict order (given name, patronymic, title, family name), with extensive cross-referencing. Under Moṣāḥab's direction a special committee, which included Aḥmad Ārām, Moṣṭafā Moqarrabī, Ṣafī Aṣfīā', and several other literary and scientific figures, introduced a considerable number of neologisms and scientific terms into the Persian language, particularly in the fields of geography, physics, and mathematics (Aqṣā, p. 2). Some of these neologisms were adapted from scientific terms in English (e.g., *yūnīdan*, *yūneš* "to ionize, ionization") or based on Persian nouns (e.g., *qoṭbīdan* "to polarize" from *qoṭb* "pole").

Moṣāḥab's extensive introduction to the first volume includes an explanation of the methodological principles and innovations embodied in *Dāyerat al-ma'āref* and provided useful guidelines for subsequent encyclopedic undertakings. After Moṣāḥab resigned in 1355 Š./1976 Reżā Aqṣā became editor (Aqṣā, p. 6).

Dāyerat al-ma'āref may be criticized for the preponderance of foreign entries, especially biographies, that are of little use to the average Persian reader. The quality of the Persian articles in the compilation is uneven. The abundance of abbreviations relative to the size of the encyclopedia complicates the reader's task. Nonetheless, *Dāyerat al-ma'āref* can be considered the forerunner of modern encyclopedic compilations in Persian and is quite useful as a desk reference.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

R. Aqṣā, "Marḥūm-e Doktor Ġolām-Ḥosayn Moṣāḥab. Tadāwom-e talāš-ī bozorg barā-ye enteḡāl-e 'elm," *Keyhān-e farhangī* 7/6, Mehr 1368 Š./September-October 1989, pp. 1-6.