



EDITING

EDITING (Pers. *vīrāyeš*, a neologism; Ar.-Pers. *tahdīb*, *tanqīh*, now obsolete; rarely *pīrāyeš*, *pardākt*), the techniques of preparing a text for publication, now widely practiced at the major publishing houses in Persia.

Persian editing techniques are modeled on those of the West and were first systematically introduced in the 1950s, when publishing houses, as distinct from booksellers, came into being (particularly the Institute for translation and publication [Bongāh-e tarjoma wa našr-e ketāb] and the [Franklin Book Program](#) [Mo'assasa-ye entešārāt-e Ferānklin]) and the Tehran University press expanded its publication activities. There had been precedents, however, in connection with the centuries-old traditions of government bureaucracy in Persia and with the introduction of the printing press in the country in the 19th century (see [ĀP](#)). When the first periodicals began to appear in the second half of the 19th century, editing became necessary, though the earliest editors must have done a great deal of writing themselves. Readers of submitted articles made necessary changes (*ḥakk o ešlāḥ* "deletion and correction") before they were typeset or hand-calligraphed for the lithographic press. Those who performed this work were actually functioning as editors. In the late Qajar period the the Wezārat-e enṭebā'āt o dār-al-tarjoma-ye dawlatī (Ministry for publishing and state translation house) was established; it was headed by high-ranking courtiers like [Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E'temād-al-Salṭana](#). Some of the staff writers and translators must also have worked as editors and proofreaders. The term for them is unknown, but it was probably *moṣaḥḥeh* (corrector).



One of the earliest Persian-language publications to have been well edited was the periodical *Qānūn* (Algar; Şadr Hāšemī, *Jarā'ed o majallāt* IV, pp. 96-102), published in London by Mirzā Malkom Khan in the 1890s and circulated clandestinely in Persia. Malkom Khan, who had been educated in France, strove for a clear and simple style, in order to promote his message of political reform. The next important newspaper for which a systematic editing policy was adopted was *Rūz-nāma-ye Īrān-e solţānī*, launched in 1903 by the minister of publications Mirzā Moḥammad Nadīm-al-Solţān. It was announced (no. 1, 2 Moḥarram 1321/31 March 1903; Browne, *Press and Poetry*, no. 180) that he would sponsor an academic assembly (*majles-e ākādēmī*) and would establish a board of editors (*majles-e taşḥīḥ*) to oversee the preparation of books for publication in Persia. During the constitutional period several newspapers had editorial staffs, most notably *Īrān-e now*, launched by moderate social democrats (Afşār, pp. 235-322) in 1327/1909 after the removal of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah (1324-27/1907-09). “[I]t introduced into Persia the journalistic methods of Europe, and became a model for other papers” (Browne, *Press and Poetry*, no. 77). Another well-edited Persian journal was *Kāva*, published in Berlin during World War I by a group of young Persian reformers led by Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda.

As the number of books and daily newspapers increased and illustrated magazines were introduced during the reign of Reżā Shah Pahlavī (1925-41), more people were able to earn their living in the publishing business. Newspaper editors came to be known as *sardabīr* (probably a translation of French *rédacteur en chef*); scholars who prepared editions of Persian literary classics continued to be called *moşahḥeḥs*. One of the finest Persian text editors was Moḥammad Qazvīnī (d. 1949), whose erudition, perceptiveness, and scholarship are still remembered.

Persia experienced a period of volatile political activity after the invasion and occupation by Allied forces in 1941 and the replacement of Reżā Shah by his son Moḥammad-Reżā (1941-79). It was a period of heated controversy and combative journalism, which helped to broaden the political vocabulary but not necessarily to raise editorial standards. Nevertheless, a number of political journalists and activists who later became editors received their first lessons in writing and translation at that time.

The decade following the [coup d'état of 1332 Š./1953](#) was a period of repression that put an end to nascent political and press freedoms. The surviving newspapers adopted a more subdued tone, and poets wrote of black



nights of despair and betrayal. Some intellectuals, frustrated with politics, sought refuge in the translation of literary and philosophical works, and enterprising individuals launched new publishing ventures. The Institute for translation and publication, founded in 1953, emerged as a major literary force. Its directors undertook the first systematic translation of foreign classics into Persian, edition of Persian classics, and a program of publications for [children vii](#). A clear editorial policy was adopted: fidelity to original foreign texts coupled with readability in the Persian translations, adherence to principles of textual criticism in preparation of Persian classics, and simplicity of prose and suitability for the targeted age groups of children's books. In all instances grammatical correctness was a paramount consideration. At first the application of this policy was at the discretion of the editor, Eḥsān Yār-e Šāṭer, or his deputies, as there were no universally recognized manuals of style or even a standard dictionary of the modern Persian language. Some orthographic issues were in dispute (e.g., whether the preposition *be* should be written separately or connected to the word it governs). Eventually a style sheet was developed for internal use, covering mainly orthography and punctuation. Each translation was sent to a reader for review, and not infrequently manuscripts were amended and adjusted, in order to achieve smoother and more accurate prose. Later other collections published by the Institute were handled in the same way.

In the 1970s, in connection with the launching of *Dāneš-nāma-ye Īrān wa Eslām*, the Institute published a short manual on writing articles (*Rāhnamā-ye ta'līf-e maqālāt*, Tehran, 1354 Š./1975), a similar manual for translation of articles (*Rāhnamā-ye tarjoma-ye maqālāt*, Tehran, 1355 Š./1976), and a supplement to both (*Mokammel-e rāhnamā-ye ta'līf wa tarjoma*, Tehran, 1356 Š./1977), all embodying two decades of experience in dealing with editorial issues. The concern for accuracy was exemplified by the offer of a prize to anyone who could find a typographical error in any of its publications. The most notable collection published by the Institute was the Persian Text Series, edited in conformity with procedures established in the West and first applied to Persian texts by such scholars as E. G. Browne, R. A. Nicholson, Helmut Ritter, and Qazvīnī. All the publications in the series were based on the oldest or most reliable manuscripts; variants were recorded, with critical apparatus.

The Franklin Book Program also encouraged and influenced the development of editing skills in Persia. A nonprofit organization created to disseminate American culture abroad, especially in third-world countries, it opened a



branch in Tehran in 1954 and sponsored Persian translations of a number of American classics. Its editors were often recruited among veteran translators and teachers of composition. They checked the translations against the original texts, in order to identify errors and omissions. Attempts were also made to improve the translators' style, especially by replacing Arabic words and constructs with Persian equivalents. A uniform orthography was adopted.

A particularly influential editor in this period was Gōlām-Ḥosayn Moṣāḥab (1910-79), a professor of mathematics who took charge of editing the first modern encyclopedia in Persian, based on a translation of the one-volume *Concise Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia* (see [DĀYERAT AL-MA'ĀREF-E FĀRSĪ](#)). Īraj Jahānšāhī (1926-91) also played an important role as editor-in-chief of *Peyk*, a series of mass-circulation magazines for young people (see [CHILDREN](#) vii). Other publishers, too, gradually adopted a policy of editing submitted manuscripts. The Amīr Kabīr publishing house took the lead, under the direction of 'Abd-al-Raḥīm Ja'farī.

The establishment of Sāzmān-e ketābhā-ye darsī-e Īrān (Persian textbook organization) in the Ministry of Education in 1963, with the help of the Franklin Book Program, was a milestone in the history of publishing in Persia; it held a monopoly of textbook publishing. A newly established offset-printing company was charged with production of all school textbooks. A by-product of these developments was the compilation by a committee of scholars of a new set of orthographic rules (*rasm al-kaṭṭ*) for authors, editors, and proofreaders at both the textbook organization and the Franklin Book Program.

Initially there was no Persian word for the editorial function. Arabic terms like *tahdīb* or *tanqīḥ* or English terms were used. Some effort was made to find or coin Persian words that would describe the new function and its practitioners. Both *dabīr* and *ketāb-pardāz* were suggested for "editor." Two neologisms, *vīrāyeš* for editing and edition and *vīrāstār* for editor, suggested by Professors Moḥammad Moqaddam and Šādeq Kīā, finally gained wide acceptance, though they were resisted by some people (see Yarshater). The first recorded use of the word *vīrāstār* occurs in Kīā's preface to his edition of Šams-e Fakrī Ešfahānī's *Me'yār-e jamālī*, a glossary of classical Persian (Tehran, 1337 Š./1958).

Even though the Academy of Persian language (see [FARHANGESTĀN](#)) was expected to issue guidelines, at least for orthography, and some publishers set forth house rules and principles for editing and copy editing, no detailed



standard acknowledged by all editors and publishers has ever been established; various suggestions continue to be made. Since the revolution of 1979 the methods adopted by publishing houses in the 1950s and later are still being used by a third generation of editors in Tehran and culturally active provincial centers like Isfahan, Mašhad, Shiraz, Tabrīz, and Rašt. At a conservative estimate the number of active editors and copy editors is about 500. Furthermore, editorial training is becoming institutionalized. Having begun as a kind of apprenticeship scheme, it is gradually evolving into short- and medium-term training courses. Some have proposed turning these courses into a university-level curriculum, and Markaz-e našr-e dānešgāhī (University Press Center) is already offering year-long, four-term courses to would-be editors.

Periodical and newspaper editors not only supervised the style of writing of the articles they received; they also had the task of choosing, rejecting, or amending articles. Considering the tight control that Persian governments exercised over the content of Persian publications and the prevalence of [censorship](#), editors have necessarily exercised self-censorship in order to be able to continue, making sure that nothing explicitly contrary to government policy and ideology is printed. At present the Ministry of Islamic Guidance (Wezārat-e eršād-e eslāmī) is officially in charge of supervising the content of publications in Persia and refuses to issue publication permits if it finds the writing subversive or inimical to the purposes of the government. A number of authors and books are banned, and the publication of many books is discouraged or delayed indefinitely.

Recently the Persian academy has been completely reorganized and is actively pursuing various goals that, it is hoped, will bring order and harmony to the style of writing, orthography, punctuation, and vocabulary of Persian. It also publishes a quarterly journal, of which four issues had appeared at the time of writing.



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