



## EMAMI, KARIM

---

**EMAMI, KARIM** (Karim Emāmi, b. Calcutta, 1930; d. Tehran, 9 July 2005), noted translator, editor, publisher, critic, journalist, and lexicographer (FIGURE 1).

Emami was two when his parents, who had a trading business with India, moved back to their hometown of Shiraz, where Emami received his elementary and secondary school education. He earned a bachelor's degree from Tehran University in 1952, and a master's degree from the University of Minnesota in 1955, both in English language and literature (Emami, 1993, pp. 173-79). He married Golroḡ Adib-Moḡammadi (Goli Emāmi), a noted translator and journalist, in 1966. They had two daughters: Hedyeh (1969), and Hasti (1972).

Emami took an early interest in contemporary Persian art and literature. In 1959, before starting his career as a journalist and translator, he worked as a photographer and filmmaker at the film studio of Ebrāhim Golestān (b. 1922), modernist writer and director (Emami, 1993, pp. 217-19). In 1962 he joined the Tehran-based English language daily, *Kayhan International*. During his years at *Kayhan* (*Kayhān*, 1962-1968) he translated the works of contemporary Persian poets and short story writers into English. These were also published in several other periodicals besides *Keyhan*. His numerous commentaries on novels, poems, films, and works of art soon earned him prominence as a discerning and avant-garde critic (Golestān, p. 365). His articles on "Saqqā-kāna Paintings," a term he coined to describe a particular genre of painting and sculpture, which combined religious imagery and traditional decorative



elements with modern painting techniques, played a significant role in drawing the attention of the media and art connoisseurs to the genre (Bakhash, p. 409; Yazdāni Korram, p. 421).

In 1968 Emami began working as an English language editor and cultural director at Franklin Publishing House (Mo'assasa-ye entešārāt-e Ferānklin; see [FRANKLIN BOOK PROGRAM](#)). He was later promoted to the position of chief editor, and played an instrumental role in the publication of quality books, training a younger generation of writers and editors, and setting high editorial standards (Bakhash, 2005b).

In 1974 Franklin Publishing House went out of business and Emami joined the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRTV), where he established the Soruš Press, and also developed several editing and book publishing training programs (Emami, 2004, pp. 353-55). While at Soruš, Emami invited a European research organization to conduct a study of the print and publishing industry in Iran. The study led to the introduction of linotron image-setters and significantly increased the technical and print capacities of Soruš Press.

During the 1970s, he was also associated with the literary journal *Ketāb-e emruz*, although his name has not been recorded as its managing editor. The journal, of which only eight issues were published, served as an important forum for literary debates and analyses, and emerged as a model for a number of literary journals in subsequent years (Mirzā'i, p. 26).

In 1978, at the outset of the Iranian revolution and during the first wave of institutional purges, Emami was dismissed from his position at the behest of Šādeq Qoṭbzāda (1937-1982), the revolutionary activist and the then president of the National Iranian Radio and Television, who was executed in 1982 (Emami, 1993, p. 229). In 1979, together with Goli Emami and several other professionals, Emami founded Zamina Publishing House in the north of Tehran (Ma'šumi Hamadāni, pp. 371-2). Zamina's criteria for the selection, preparation, printing, and publication of books were inseparably linked to Emami's name; policies that formed what was later known to many as the "Emami School" (Āzarang, 2006, p. 9). Noted among Zamina's publications, although few in number, are *Mošaddeq va masā'el-e hoquq o siāsat*, a collection of nine essays on legal and political issues by Moḥammad Mošaddeq (ed., Iraj Afšār, 1979); *Mavāne'-e tāriki-e rošd-e sarmāyadāri dar Irān: dowra-ye Qājāriya* (Historical obstacles to the development of capitalism in Iran: the Qajar period, Aḥmad Ašraf, 1979); *Ruzhā-ye kun, ruzhā-ye ātaš* (Days of blood, days



of fire, ed. Karim Emami, 1979), an account of the 1979 Revolution in pictures, photographed by Bahman Jalāli; and *'Akkāsi-e siāh o sefid* (Black and white photography, ed. Karim Emami, 1981).

The tense political atmosphere of those days, however, made it increasingly impossible for Zamina to survive. Before long, the publishing house was transformed into a bookstore. Located in a tree-lined street in the north of Tehran, Zamina Bookstore soon became a lively meeting place for writers, intellectuals, and the interested public (Bakhash, p. 409). It introduced a new chapter in operating small neighborhood bookstores in Iran (Azarang, 2006, pp. 12-13). As a guide to readers, Emami and his wife published *Fehrest-e zamina* (Zamina list), a monthly descriptive list of newly published books, which often contained amusing and witty remarks. It soon emerged as a valuable bibliographic source, and played a significant role in introducing new books to the public in the 1980s (Ma'sumi Hamadāni, p. 372).

Emami's familiarity with English language and literature, and his challenge to convey, as much as possible, the author's original narrative style in a clear and flowing language soon earned him critical acclaim (Bakhash, p. 407; Kazā'ifār, p. 404). However, his translation of *Look Back in Anger* (1956), by the English playwright and screenwriter John Osborne (1929-1994), entitled *Bā kašm be yād ār* (Tehran, 1963) was published at his own expense (Emami, 1993, pp. 217-19). In subsequent years he translated Scott Fitzgerald's (1896-1940) *The Great Gatsby* (1925), as *Gastby-e bozorg* (Tehran, 1965); *The Persians Amongst the English* (1985), by Sir Denis Wright (1911-2005), as *Irāniāndar miān-e Inglisihā* (Tehran, 1987); and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1891-2), by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), as *Mājarāhā-ye Sherlock Holmes* (Tehran, 1993-1998, 4 vols.). He also translated into English works of many cotemporary Persian poets and writers, including [Foruḡ Farroḳzād](#) (1935-1967), Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad (1923-1969), Ebrāhim Golestān, and Ḡolām Ḥosayn Sā'edi (1936-1986), among others (Emami, 1993, pp. 247-56). Work over the years on the poetry and painting of Sohrāb Sepehri (1928-1980) resulted in the publication of *Payāmi dar rāh: Nazari be še'r va naqqāši-e Sepehri*, a volume of essays on Sepehri's poetry and painting, which also features a comprehensive bibliography of his poetry (Tehran, 1980), and *'Āšeq hamiša tanhāst* (The Lover Is Always Alone, Tehran, 2003), a bilingual edition in which the Persian and English versions of the poems appeared in facing pages. An account of Emami's friendship with Sepehri appears in his introduction to the book.

Emami's English translation of 72 of Omar Khayyam's (1048–1123) quatrains,



the first by a Persian translator, was published in *The Wine of Nishapur: A Photographer's Promenade in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, (1988, Paris), which also included the Persian calligraphic transcriptions, and the French translation of poems, as well as Šāhroḡ Golestān's (b. 1930) photographs in front of each poem. The translation, as commented by a critic, is more marked by Emami's studied effort to stay loyal to the Persian original of the quatrains than to render Khayyam's impressively flowing language into English (Āšuri, p. 163).

The first volume of the collection of his articles on the craft of translation, written in a simple and engaging language, was published in 1993, entitled *Az past o boland-e tarjoma* (The ins and outs of translation). The book also includes a comprehensive list of Emami's translations from and into English (pp. 250-55). His translation of Khayyam's poems is also reprinted in the book with an introductory note (pp. 134-70). A kind of handbook for students and other practitioners of the craft, it has been reprinted several times. The second volume of the book was published posthumously in 2006 (Sepehr, p. 3). The collection of Emami's articles on publishing, editing, and copyright, written during a period of more than 30 years, is published as *Dar gir o dār-e ketāb o našr* (Caught in the mêlée of books and publications, Tehran, 2006). Emami's contributions to the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* include: "[ART IN IRAN xi. POST-QAJAR](#)," "[COPYRIGHT](#)," "[EDITING](#)," and "TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH LITERATURE INTO PERSIAN" He has also written the chapter "Modern Persian Artists," in *Iran Faces the Seventies* (ed., Ehsan Yarshater, New York, 1977, pp. 349–64).

Emami's interest in language, usage and meaning of words is also evident through his lifetime engagement with Persian lexicography. Other than editing the *Haim Persian-English Dictionary* (see [ḤAIM, SOLAYMĀN](#)), Emami compiled *Farhang-e mo'āšer-e kimiā: Farhang-e Fārsi-Ingelisi* (Tehran, 2006), a Persian-English dictionary that took into account the substantial expansion of the Persian language and the incorporation of neologisms to reflect new ideas and concepts (Ḳazā'ifar, p. 405).

Throughout his career Emami also taught various courses in English language, as well as the history and development of publishing, editing, and translation industries at the Tehran College of Decorative Arts (Honarkada-ye honarhā-ye taz'ini), as well as the Soruš Press, the University Publishing Center, the Islamic Revolution Publishing and Educational Center, and the Publishers' Guild.

Emami participated in numerous international and national conferences and lectured on a multitude of subjects, including Persian contemporary literature and publishing industry in Iran. In 2000, he delivered the keynote speech on the state of book publishing in Iran at the Third Biennial Conference of the International Society for Iranian Studies. He was also known as a skilled chess player (Raḥim Kāni, p. 428).

His loss received wide coverage both in Iran and abroad. He was remembered as “one of Iran’s leading men of letters” (*Newsletter*, p. 11), a “prominent translator and editor who for more than 50 years devoted his life to Persian literature and art,” (*The New York Times*, p. 16), and as a “pioneering figure in the development of editing industry in Iran,” (Afšār, p. 130; Dowlatābādi, p. 24; for more information on his life and work, see “Yād-nāma-ye Karim Emāmi,” *Bukhara* 43, Summer 2005, pp. 356-434).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Selected Works.

### 1. Books in Persian:

*Payāmi dar rāh: Naẓari be še’r va naqqāši-e Sepehri*, (A message on the way: A collection of three essays by Dāriuš Āšuri, Ḥosayn Ma’ṣoumi Hamedani and Karim Emami), ed. Karim Emami, Tehran, 1980.

*‘Akkāsi-e siāh o sefid* (Black and white photography), Karim Emami et al., Tehran, 1981.

*Panj negāh be kāk* (Five ways of looking at the earth), a collection of 63 pictures by five Iranian photographers: Mehdi K̄vānsāri, Bahman Jalāli, Yaḥyā Dehqānpur, Maḥšid Farahmand, and Karim Emami), ed., Karim Emami, Tehran, 1982.

*Čeguna film-e ‘arusaki besāzim* (How to make animated movies), Karim Emami



et al., Tehran, 2000.

2. Translations into Persian:

Arthur Charles Clarke, *Man and Space* (1968), as *Ensān o fazā*, Tehran, 1970.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, as *Mājarāhā-ye Sherlock Holmes* (1993-1998), 4 vols.

Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), as *Gatsby-e bozorg (Ṭalā va kākēstar)*, Tehran, 1965.

Alex La Guma, *Apartheid*, ed., Tehran, 1981.

David Lodge, *Graham Greene* (1966), Tehran, 1974.

John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (1956), as *Bā kašm be yād ār*, Tehran, 1963.

Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting* (1956-74), as *Tāriḳča-ye naqqāši-e novin*, forthcoming.

Sir Denis Wright, *The Persians Amongst the English* (1985), as *Irāniān dar miān-e Engelisihā*, Tehran, 1987.

3. Translations into English:

Jalal Al-e Ahmad, "Crisis in Education: The School Principal," Michael Hillmann, ed. *Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad*, Kentucky, 1988, pp. 80-88.

Forugh Farrokhzad, "Another Birth," Michael Hillmann, ed. *A Lonely Woman: Forugh Farrokhzad and Her Poetry*, Washington D. C., 1987, pp. 111-13.

Omar Khayyam (72 quatrains), *The Wine of Nishapur: A Photographer's Promenade in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, Paris, 1988.

Sohrab Sepehri, "Water's Footsteps," *Iranian Studies*, 15/1-4, 1982, pp. 97-116.  
Idem, *The Lover is Always Alone*, Tehran, 2003.

Emami compiled several exhibition catalogues, including *Art in Iran* (Iran-America Society, Tehran, 1965); *A Collection of Saqqā-kāna Paintings* (Iran-America Society, Tehran, 1967); and *Modern Iranian Art: A Retrospective Exhibition* (Iran-America Society, Tehran, 1976). He published numerous

articles on literature, cinema, art and archaeology in *Keyhan International*, including: “Crucial Test for Iranian Cinema,” (August 12, 1964, p. 6), “Contemporary Iranian Literature in the Mirror,” (May 21, 1965, p. 5), “An Eyeful of Art in Goethe’s Garden,” (June 6, 1968, p. 6), and “Contemporary Iranian Literature in the Mirror,” (May 21, 1965, p. 5).

Sources. Iraj Afšār, “Tāzahā va pārahā-ye Irānšenāsi,” *Bukhara*, 53, Summer 2006, pp. 130-67. Sirus ‘Alinežād, “Meṭl-e Aḳavān, meṭl-e Foruḡ, meṭl-e Emāmi,” available [online](#) (accessed 20 July 2009).

Dāriuš Āšuri, “Šarāb-e Neišābur,” *Irannameh*, 8/1, winter 1989.

‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Āzarang, “Pišgoftār,” in Karim Emami, *Dar gir o dār ketāb o našr*, Tehran, 2006.

“Idem, Jāygāh-e Karim Emāmi dar našr o virāyeš,” *Bukhara*, no. 53, Summer 2006, pp. 493-7.

Shaul Bakkash, “Yād-e doust,” *Bukhara* 42, 2005a, pp. 406-11.

Idem, “Karim Emami: 1930-2005,” 2005b, available [online](#) (accessed 20 July 2009).

Karim Emami, *Az past o boland-e tarjoma* (The ins and outs of translation), vol. I, Tehran, 1993; vol. II. ed. ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Āzarang and Možda Daqiqi, Tehran, 2006.

Idem, “Az Kayhan, Farnklin, va Soruš,” *Tāriḳ-e šafāhi-e našr-e Iran* (Oral History: Publishing Industry in Iran), ed. ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Āzarang, and ‘Ali Dehbāši, Tehran, 2004.

Idem, *Dar gir o dār-e ketāb o našr*, Tehran, 2006.

Nazila Fathi, “Karim Emami,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 2005.

Ebrāhim Golestān, “Pāyān-e in nemād-e niki-e bihamtā,” *Bukhara* 42, Summer 2005.

‘Ali Ḳazā’ifar, “Az šomār-e dow čašm yek tan kam,” *Bukhara* 42, Summer 2005, pp. 399-405.

Ḥosayn Ma’šumi Hamadāni, “Bāḡbān-e ketāb,” *Bukhara* 42, Summer 2005, pp.



368-73.

‘Ali Mirzā’i, “Karim Emāmi: k̄edmatgozār-e ketāb o šan‘at-e našr dargodašt,” *Negāh nou*, 2005, pp. 24-27.

Parviz Rahimk̄āni, “Ostād Karim Emāmi-e šatranj-bāz,” *Bukhara* 42, Summer 2005, pp. 428-29.

Kāyvān Sepehr, “Marg-e čonin mard,” *Ketāb-e hafta*, 253, 2005, p. 3.

Mehdi Yazdāni-Korram, “Gastby-e bozorg dargodašt,” *Bukhara* 42, Summer 2005, pp. 420-22.

(Abd-al-Ḥosayn Āzarang and EIr)

July 20, 2009