



## FARAHVAŠI, BAHRĀM

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**FARAHVAŠI, Bahrām** (b. Urmia, Iran, 30 March 1925; d. San Jose, U.S.A., 29 May 1992; [Figure 1](#)), scholar and professor of ancient Iranian languages at the University of Tehran.

Bahrām Farahvaši was born into a family with a long tradition of literary and scholarly pursuits. His father, ‘Ali Moḥammad Farahvaši (1875-1968), was one of the pioneers of education reform in the early 20th century and established modern schools in Tehran, Zanjan, and Azarbaijan. He was the author of *Dastur-e dāneš*, a textbook for primary schools. Its first part was published in 1912, and the second part in 1913 (Moḥammadi and Qāyeni, III, pp. 341-42). He also published translations from French under the pen name Motarjem Homāyun and taught his son French at an early age. His translations included the memoir of the Czarist diplomat and Orientalist Vasiliĭ P. Nikitin (1885-1960).

During his early childhood the family moved repeatedly from town to town. Farahvaši spent his childhood and teenage years in Isfahan, where he received his primary and secondary education. In 1944, after two years of study at the Normal School in Isfahan, he moved to Tehran. He studied French and Persian literature at the University of Tehran, while he worked as a school teacher. Farahvaši became a student of the famous scholar Ebrāhim Purdāvud (1885-1968), the founder of the Anjoman-e Irān-šenāsi, the first professional Iranian Studies organization in Iran.

In 1957, with the encouragement of Purdāvud, Farahvaši went to Paris to



study with Émile Benveniste (1902-76), Jean de Menasce (1902-73), Henri-Charles Puech (1902-86), and Henry Corbin (1903-78) at the Sorbonne, École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE). In 1962 he received a doctorate in ancient Iranian religions, languages, and civilization from the Sorbonne with a dissertation on the *Dēnkard* (*Denkart, Livre VI*). Afterwards he also spent under a year in Bern, Switzerland.

From 1962 until 1982, Farahvaši was a professor in the Faculty of Letters and Humanities (*Dāneškada-ye adabiyāt va ‘olum-e ensāni*) at the University of Tehran, where he taught ancient Iranian languages and culture, while also collaborating with the Institute for Translation and Publication (*Bongāh-e tarjoma va našr-e ketāb*, BTNK); he was also director of the University of Tehran’s Publications (*čāp va entešārāt-e dānešgāh-e Tehran*) and of the Iranian Center for Historic Research (*moasesa-ye pažuhešhā-ye tāriki*). In 1971 he became director of “Farhang-e Irān Zamin,” an educational program on Iranian state TV.

Farahvaši was keenly interested in Zoroastrian studies, and between 1967 and 1973 he published a Pahlavi-Persian dictionary in two volumes, the result of his many years of study of the Middle Persian texts and the first dictionary of its kind to be published in Iran. In his review of the first volume, Mark J. Dresden (1969, p. 829) considered the *Pahlavi-Persian Dictionary* “somewhat of a disappointment,” since it failed to cite its sources. In a more positive note, he stressed that its compilation had not been “a minor undertaking since it presupposes thorough familiarity with the available texts, their interpretation, their vocabulary and the relevant scholarly literature.” In addition to this lexicographical work with an explicitly pedagogical purpose, Farahvaši prepared an edition, transcription, and translation of the Middle Persian text *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr Pābagān*. He also published a study of the dialects of *Ḳur-Biābānak*. In 1976 he published *Jahān-e farvari: baḳši az farhang-e Iran-e kohan*, a study of ancient Iranian culture. In 1986 he published a collection of his more important articles concerning pre-Islamic Iran.

Among his side activities was the establishment of a printing house called *Ātaškadeh* and publication of some of Purdāvud’s works. The latter, in the introduction to *Yāddāsthā-ye Gāthā* (Notes on the *Gāthās*), acknowledged the assistance of his former student (1958, p. 15). In 1976, when, on the occasion of the 2,500th anniversary of the foundation of Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, the Iranian government published a series of 46 facsimile editions of Pahlavi manuscripts, Farahvaši belonged to the editorial committee that



supervised and coordinated this complex project (Dresden, 1979, p. 360).

Farahvaši was interested in translating from French, and throughout his career he translated into Persian a number of works—both fiction and scholarly books—from that language. Among his translations from scholarly works, he published his translation of Roman Ghirshman’s *Parthian and Sasanian Art* (Tehran, 1972). His last translation was a collection of letters by French Jesuits about their stays in Iran (Tehran, 1991).

In 1967 Farahvaši married Homā Gerāmi (b. 1943), a poet, whom he had first met as a student at the University of Tehran. They had three children, two sons Mitridat, Surena, and a daughter, Nargol, who live in the U.S.A.

In December 1991, after a long struggle with cancer, Farahvaši sought medical treatment in California, where he passed away a few months later. Following his will, his body was returned to Iran for burial. He was buried in Behešt-e Zahrā cemetery near Tehran on 18 June 1992.

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