



## FARHANG-E MO'IN

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**FARHANG-E MO'IN**, an important Persian encyclopaedic dictionary published in six volumes in Tehran between 1963 and 1973. Most of the work was compiled by the eminent Persian scholar and lexicographer Moḥammad Mo'īn (1918-71). His work on lexicography began in 1946 with his collaboration with 'Alī-Akbar Dehḵodā (q.v.) on the monumental Persian encyclopedic dictionary *Loḡat-nāma*. Later, he prepared a critical edition of the 11th/17th century Persian dictionary *Borhān-e qāṭe'* (q.v.). Before his death in 1956, Dehḵodā appointed Mo'īn to supervise the Dehḵodā Institute and its publication of *Loḡat-nāma*. While directing the Institute, and before he suffered a stroke in 1966 which left him in a coma for the five remaining years of his life, Mo'īn had undertaken a vast lexicographic project involving the production of several Persian dictionaries of varying sizes and scope, including some thematic ones dealing with technical terms of different disciplines such as art, medicine, and biology. However, only one work in this detailed project, *Farhang-e fārsī-e motawasseṭ*, referred to as number 3 in the series of "Mo'īn Dictionaries" on the title page of each volume and in the long introduction to the first volume (pp. 46-47) was partially produced and printed during his lifetime. The *Farhang-e fārsī-e Mo'īn*, as the dictionary is usually entitled, has therefore had a checkered publishing history. The first three volumes were published under Mo'īn's own supervision between 1963 and 1966. They covered the definition of words from the beginning of the alphabet to part of the letter *M* (as far as *ma'lūma*). The fifth volume, dealing with proper names from *AÚ* to *Fījān*, which came out in early 1967, had also been edited by Mo'īn. In the two remaining volumes, four and six, Sayyed Ja'far Šahīdī, who



undertook the completion of the project, used material ready for publication as well as less organized information from Mo'in's surviving notes and papers. The prefaces to the fourth and sixth volumes, which came out in 1968 and 1973 respectively, delineate meticulously the contributions made by Šahīdī and other contributors to the project. The sixth and last volume ends with a succinct biography of Mo'in and a list of his publications.

In his 105-page introduction to the dictionary, Mo'in explains how he had visited several European institutions concerned with the publication of dictionaries such as Brockhaus in Wiesbaden and Larousse in Paris (introduction, p. 44) and provides a list of contributors and consultants (pp. 81-88). He describes his method as an eclectic one, drawing on existing dictionaries in Arabic, Persian, and European languages, and declares his preference for the *Petit Larousse illustré* (Paris, 1961) "which has become very popular among Persians" as a convenient model to emulate (introduction, p. 48). This affinity is apparent in the format and sub-divisions as well as in the choice of illustrations accompanying the text. The introduction also presents a general historical, morphological, and syntactical discussion of the Persian language and provides a list of textual sources. Like the French *Petit Larousse Illustré*, the *Farhang-e fārsī* includes foreign words and phrases in common usage in a separate section that consists of 317 pages in volume IV. Although words from Arabic, English, French, and Turkish appear, most of these foreign entries are compound Arabic terms that are often also individually presented in the vocabulary section under their Persianized forms. For example, for the definition of *jehād al-akbar* (the great holy war), the dictionary directs the reader to the vocabulary section under *jehād* for the Persianized version of this compound term.

The section on proper names spans volumes V and VI. These include brief biographical entries for important historical figures, geographical entries, books, and entries for key historical events totaling 2,357 pages. Although the dictionary gives priority to Persian and Islamic proper names, it covers a great number of prominent figures of the past and contemporary periods from around the world.

The dictionary provides a transliteration of each entry using the Latin alphabet with diacritics and hyphenation resulting in a valuable modified version of the international phonetic alphabet. *Farhang-e fārsī* also separates the root of a word from its suffix and prefix. This feature further aids the pronunciation of the words derived from foreign stems.



Despite its impressive achievements, the dictionary suffers from several drawbacks. Unlike its avowed foreign prototypes, *Farhang-e fārsī* has not, as yet, been revised periodically and extensively to accommodate natural changes in the language and the coinage of new words. This is particularly regrettable at a time when changes to the language are occurring at an unprecedented rate. In some instances, the dictionary squanders space by displaying outdated drawings of items such as laboratory equipment and common appliances (e. g. *bādsanj*, *oṭū*). Similarly a number of the black-and-white line drawings, especially those of fauna and flora, are too indistinct to be useful.

*Farhang-e fārsī* is uneven in its presentation of the head-words and often lacks consistency. Occasionally it defines one word extensively coupled with many examples, while another word of the same complexity receives much less attention. Some common verbs such as *tamām šodan* and *tamām kardan* do not have separate entries, while some terms that could have been defined as a group under a head word do receive separate entries. *Otomobīl rāndan*, *otomobīl rānī*, *otomobīlro*, *otomobīl sāzī* could all have been gathered under *otomobīl*.

Jahāngīr Afkārī points out that the dictionary lacks “the definitions of words such as *pākkon*, *jang āzmūda*, *bad-aqlāq*, and *čangak* while it defines obscure and obsolete words such as *čamūm* and *partīyāt*” (Afkārī, p. 22). He has noticed that sometimes the dictionary presents certain plural forms of dozens of words such as *este'lāmāt*, *estemdādāt*, *esteḡfārāt*, and *estekmālāt* and at other times leaves out the most important derivative forms of words such as different forms of *ḳoreš*. Afkārī also enumerates several badly defined words such as *pašandī*, *barq*, and *eqtešād* (Afkārī, pp. 23, 25).

‘Alī Ašraf Šādeqī (pp. 744-45) has also made critical comments about the dictionary. He points out that the dictionary is not consistent in its presentation of the pronunciation of the words and does not always place them in their historical context. For example, it fails to point out that the word *nošḳvār* was pronounced *nušḳvār* in the past. The definitions, Šādeqī adds, of certain words such as *pala* are limited to their archaic meanings and ignore their contemporary usage. Moreover, it only gives one out of several possible definitions of certain words such as *hošyār* or *paḏīreš*. And it does not define commonly used foreign words such as *kopīa* or *vāksīnāsīūn* but adopts a prescriptive tone in the introduction, proposing that they should be avoided altogether (Šādeqī, pp. 744, 747, 756). Šādeqī also objects to the way the



dictionary gives superfluous French or English definitions of a Persian word. He cites the entry under *čērā na* for which the French equivalent *pourquoi pas* is given as an illustration (Šādeqī, p. 746). However, it could be argued that the Persian phrase might well be a calque on the French, in which case there is some justification for mentioning the French origin. In addition, the dictionary has conjugated some regular verbs needlessly adding to its bulk (Šādeqī, p. 748).

In general, *Farhang-e fārsī* lacks controlling limits, resulting in a loss of focus. What constitutes a word is itself not clear, leading to the inclusion of separate entries for compound words such as *del koš kardan*, *ḡedā kordan*, and *ḡedākōr* (*Farhang-e fārsī*, pp. 1550, 2393) or the inclusion of an excessive number of entries that are made from a prefix like *bā* (e. g. *bā enzebāt*, *bā kodā būdan*, and *bā kod*; *ibid.*, p. 434). The dictionary, therefore, has occasionally failed to classify the vocabulary into main words or head-words (single words, radical or derivative, and compound words), subordinate words, combinations, and derivatives. The dictionary does not restrict itself to a specific span of history, a strategem by which it could have avoided the inclusion of an immense number of Old and Middle Persian words or obsolete Arabic words that did not survive the medieval period. However, these shortcomings, and the occasional errors and inconsistencies, do not diminish the significance of this work which still remains, after more than two decades, the best available, medium-sized, comprehensive dictionary in Persian.

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