



## FRANKLIN BOOK PROGRAM

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**FRANKLIN BOOK PROGRAM** (Mo'assasa-ye entešārāt-e Ferānkīn), an American non-profit corporation seeking to aid development of indigenous book publishing in the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The program in Persia (the first after Egypt) was the largest of the seventeen around the world and was the most varied in the kinds of activities undertaken. Franklin was formed under the aegis of the international committees of the American Publishers Association and the American Library Association. The objective was to help developing countries publish their own books in their own languages, and thus end a continuing dependence on foreign books published in Europe and North America. In the beginning, the board of directors was composed entirely of Americans, but later it included men and women from Brazil, Egypt, England, France, Ghana, India, Persia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sudan.

The first financing was a small grant from the U.S. State Department, but the Franklin board was determined on private control so fund-raising began at once from foundations, corporations, and private individuals as well as from various agencies in the developing countries themselves. When Franklin finally closed down in 1977 after twenty-five years, feeling that much of its mission had been accomplished, the organization's corporate records show that a total of \$113 million had been received and disbursed for the non-profit purpose; and nearly 65 percent of the total was from the developing areas.

At first the emphasis was on assisting publication in local languages of translations from American books. But increasingly—and especially in



Persia—the project included a wide variety of other activities to aid development of reading and the establishment of indigenous publishing.

From the very start the basic Franklin rules were: (1) the operating offices were staffed entirely by local nationals, with no resident Americans; (2) all decisions about what to publish were by local people; (3) Franklin itself was not a publisher but was assisting local organizations and firms; and (4) although Franklin provided some financial help (especially in paying for translation rights and the work of translation), the publishers were required to pay a royalty; thus, from the publisher's point of view, the operations were as close as possible to normal publishing.

Besides Tehran and Tabrīz in Persia, the operating offices were in Baghdad, Beirut, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Dacca, Enugu, Jakarta, Kabul, Kaduna, Kuala Lumpur, Lagos, Lahore, and Rio de Janeiro. So the languages in which Franklin's cooperating publishers worked included Arabic, Bengali, Indonesian, Malay, Persian, Portuguese, Urdu, Spanish, and several African languages.

The directors of Franklin included some of the most famous authors, university presidents, ambassadors, and corporation presidents as well as the heads of leading publishing companies. The board chair when the Persian project started was Malcolm Johnson, executive vice-president of Doubleday & Co. Later chairs, all of whom visited Tehran at least once, included the heads of Houghton Mifflin Co., John Wiley & Sons, and McGraw-Hill Book Co. Datus Smith, who had been director of Princeton University Press, was the Franklin president in the years 1952 to 1967. The last president was John Kyle, who became director of the University of Texas Press.

The Persian project began in 1954, following a 1953 survey by three Franklin board members. Homāyūn Ṣan'atī was engaged as manager of the Tehran office and director of the Persian program. His intellectual creativity and instinctive understanding of book publishing joined with his courage and entrepreneurial wisdom in bringing almost immediate success to the project.

One of Ṣan'atī's most important achievements was in gaining the interest of Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda, at the time president of the Senate and the acknowledged leader of Persian intellectual life of the older generation. With Taqīzāda's help, Ṣan'atī was able to enlist the participation of some of the most outstanding public figures and intellectuals as translators and in other ways.



Among those were Aḥmad Ārām, Sa'īd Aṣfīā, Īraj Afšār, Rezā Aqṣā, Ḥāfez Farmānfarmā'īān, Moṣṭafā Fāteḥ, Moḥammad-Ja'far Maḥjūb, Ebrāhīm K̄vājanūrī, Moḥammād Mo'īn, Ḥamīd Rahnemā, Maḥmūd Sanā'ī, Eḥsān Yāršāteḥ, 'Abbās Zaryāb K̄o'ī, and 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Zarrīnkūb. Ṣan'atī also awakened the interest of younger people of remarkable talent. The group of some hundreds of men and women whom he drew into the Franklin project and who sought to emulate him in creativity and patriotic zeal include his successor as director, 'Alī-Aṣḡar Mohājer; the office manager, 'Alī Nūrī, Manūčeḥr Anwar, Dāryūš Homāyūn, 'Abd-al-'Alī Kārang, Ḡolām-Ḥosayn Moṣāḥab, Majīd Rowšangar, Hormoz Waḥīd, and Ja'far Ṣamīmī. Parvīz Kalāntarī, later one of the most famous Persian painters, was a leader among the illustrators of the books.

Franklin in Persia, much more than the programs in other countries, was determined to treat all aspects of the book complex, from the writing of manuscripts to the finished book in the hands of readers. There were training programs for writers, especially the creators of textbooks and the writers of general reading books for children; projects for expansion and improvement of the country's printing capacity; plans for achieving nationwide distribution of books, for increasing literacy, for creating school and village libraries, and for the preparation of reference books.

The books published, about eight hundred altogether, were chosen by the Tehran staff with the advice of a large circle of educational and other advisers; and a publisher willing to take on the book had to be found for each selection. Most of the books were translations of American works, but there were also a number from British sources, few French, and about fifty original works written by Persians. A title-by-title study of the publishing lists shows this approximate division of subject matter:

Literature (fiction, essays, verse)	19%
Children's books	18%
History	17%
Science (including medicine)	15%
Psychology and education	12%
Persian and Islamic studies	9%
Philosophy	7%
Art	3%



Total 100%

More than fifty publishers cooperated with Franklin in issuing the books. Most of the publishing was done in Tehran but some books came out in Tabrīz and a few in Shiraz and Isfahan. The firms with the largest number of Franklin books on their list were Amīr Kabīr (q.v.), Andiša, Bongāh-e Tarjoma wa Našr-e Ketāb (q.v.), Ebn-e Sīnā, Eqbāl, Jībī, Našr-e Ketāb, Omīd Yazdānī, Šafi-‘Alīšāh, and Soḵan.

To suggest the variety of the books published, these are some samples of the books in a number of fields:

Literature: *The Alhambra*; *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*; *The Caine Mutiny*; *The Call of the Wild*; an edition of Robert Frost’s poems; *Gone with the Wind*; *The Great Gatsby*; *Huckleberry Finn*; *The House of Seven Gables*; an edition of Anne Lindbergh’s poems; *Moby Dick*; *My Antonia*; *A Tale of Two Cities*; *Tom Sawyer*; *The Turn of the Screw*.

Children’s Books: *Golden Geography*; *King of the Wind*; *Pinto’s Journey*; *Pictures to Grow Up With*; *Ride with the Sun*; and some dozens of the well-known series of children’s scientific books, especially those by Bertha Parker; and many of the “Portraits of the Nations” (Čehra-ye melal) series of books about other countries.

History: Carl L. and Frederic F. Duncalf Becker, *The Story of Civilization*; Crane Brinton et al., *A History of Civilization*; Will and Ariel Durant, 6 volumes of *History of Civilization*; Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs*; Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*; Robert R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World*.

Philosophy: Isaiah Berlin, *Age of Enlightenment*; Saxe Commins and Robert Linscott, *The World’s Great Thinkers*; John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*; Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; Walter Lippmann, *Public Philosophy*; Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures in Ideas*.

Economics And Political Science: Norman Buchanan and Howard Ellis, *Approaches to Economic Development*; Kerr et al., *Industrialism and Industrial Man*; Robert M. MacIver, *Web of Government*; George H. Sabine, *History of Political Theory*; George Soule, *Ideas of the Great Economists*.



Before Franklin had stimulated reforms, book selling was almost entirely by publishers, as a means of disposing of their own books and some few secured through exchange with other publishers. Occasionally they would take some books on consignment from authors trying to publish their own books. The educational function of booksellers in informing the general public of all books available was virtually unknown.

Franklin made progress in persuading quite a few of the publishers to sell to retailers, and in helping the retailers in turn to build up the book trade. But that in itself was not enough. Most of the country's publishing was in Tehran, and the small amount in other cities did not effectively reach the rest of the country; and even Tehran's books did not achieve actual national distribution. There was clear need for a distribution system similar to that for mass paperbacks in Western countries. So Franklin sponsored a company called Jībī for making books available at points not reached by traditional book selling, and at prices attractive to average readers. The company manufactured hundreds of racks for putting books on sale at such unconventional places as bus stops, food markets, and bicycle shops. The books were in small format and sold at low prices. Publication was by arrangement with the original publishers. The Jībī organization had substantial success in all ways except commercial profit. Soon everyone else wanted to publish books in that way, so Jībī's competition was severe. The hoped-for revolution in book distribution was achieved, though the Jībī investors themselves did not get the profit they deserved.

Some publishers and intellectuals in Tabrīz were anxious to have a Franklin office there for normal reasons. But the decision to open a Tabrīz office came about because of Franklin's effort to import large amounts of book paper for its cooperation publishers, especially those trying to produce the new Franklin-sponsored textbooks. Because Franklin was a non-profit corporation working in the educational field, it was eligible to receive grants from the United States of so-called "PL 480" funds, that is, excess local currencies which could be used for disbursement locally to aid education in developing countries. Franklin applied for and received large amounts (eventually about \$4 million worth) of finnmars which were disbursed in Helsinki. The funds were used for purchase of Finnish book paper which Franklin then imported into Persia. At first the route was out the Baltic to the Atlantic and Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal and up the Persian Gulf to Kōrramšahr. But upon the closing of the Canal the only remaining route seemed to be around Africa, taking months



longer. But an imaginative member of the Tehran staff asked, “Why not the shortest possible route, through the Soviet Union?” With some difficulty that was arranged, with the paper coming in sealed cars to the Persian border. There was great complexity of paperwork getting the shipment out of the USSR and into Persia, so a Franklin office was established in Tabrīz for that clearing operation. The Tabrīz office, under the direction of ‘Abd-al-‘Alī Kārang, performed a useful publishing function of its own at the same time.

Besides aiding in the import of book paper from Scandinavia, Franklin also sought to encourage and assist development of a local Persian paper industry. For that purpose it helped to create a Persian corporation, the Pars Paper Co., which undertook production using local materials, most notably bagasse, the residue left after the sugar juice had been extracted from sugar cane.

The Franklin office in Kabul, indeed the whole Afghan operation, resulted from approaches by the Afghan government to Franklin in New York. But the Americans recognized at once that the real possibility of success would be through their Persian colleagues. The first Afghan request was for Franklin to print Afghanistan’s textbooks in Tehran, for which they would pay dollars in New York. That was arranged, and a representative of the Afghan Ministry of Education lived in Tehran for a year, editing and proofreading the Afghan textbooks being printed in Persia. But the Afghans’ long-term goal was to establish in Kabul a modern printing plant capable of producing all the country’s textbooks. Franklin was commissioned to take over the Ministry of Education’s dilapidated printing plant in Kabul and rebuild and reequip it and train an Afghan working force to operate it. This was all accomplished under direction of Franklin branch in Tehran. Twenty-five Afghans lived in Tehran for a year and received basic training in printing. Twenty-five Persians went to Kabul and were put up in a hostel created for them and helped modernize the Afghan plant and train Afghans in its operation at the same time.

The Afghan project had direct influence in Persia also. Because of the demands of Afghanistan on the already-overburdened Persian printing capacity, there were understandable protests from the Persian publishers. They urged Franklin to do something to help develop more printing capacity. It was in that way that a plan started for creating a large new printing establishment in Tehran. Much of the financing for the new organization, called *Šerkat-e sehāmī ofset*, associated with Franklin but not actually part of it, was by publishers and a few public figures; but Franklin made loans to it at the critical early period. The entire planning of the organization (and of the later



letterpress plant called Maṭbū‘āt) was by Ja‘far Ṣamīmī, a Persian who had received German training in the graphic arts.

The most impressive feat of Šerkat-e ofset was its reproduction in full color of the manuscript of the Bāysonḡorī *Šāh-nāma* (q.v), but the most useful achievement was its production of the millions of copies of the new textbooks. Perhaps the most unusual printing operation of Tehran Franklin was its assistance to Franklin programs in other countries in dealing with their color-printing problems. With the help of Franklin in New York, plans were made for six Franklin offices to do the same books with four-color illustrations, and with Tehran doing the printing for all of them. “Joint runs” were made for three of the colors, and then a separate printing for the black plate, with the text supplied in its own language, for each office. Because of the different directions in which the languages read, it was necessary for Tehran to do one run for Persian, Arabic, and Urdu, and then “flop the negative” for the left-to-right languages of Bengali, Malay, and Indonesian.

Before Franklin there had been very few reference-works for general readers or for school use; and that condition was more or less paralleled in the other languages in which Franklin worked. In a broad approach to this problem, Franklin acquired translation rights to the *Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia* (based on the *Columbia Encyclopedia*), and informed all Franklin offices of the availability of the work for local adaptation. The Arabic edition in Cairo was the first of these Franklin-sponsored translations and adaptations, but Tehran Franklin went far beyond that. Under the editorship of Ġolām-Ḥosayn Moṣāhab the work received extensive adaptation and sophisticated editing, and it finally appeared as a basically Persian work. That was the chief Persian reference-work under Franklin sponsorship, but there were also dictionaries, atlases, and historical compendia, creating an entirely new literature for general readers and for schoolchildren.

After twenty-five years in existence the director of Franklin Book Programs, Inc. decided to dissolve the corporation, a process completed in 1979, and the remaining assets of the corporation (only about \$8,000) were given to the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. Before that the Franklin assets in Egypt were given to an Egyptian non-profit organization to continue Franklin work there, and the assets in Persia (valued at about \$10 million) to a Persian non-profit organization to continue the Tehran program—which it did until its takeover by the new government at the time of the 1979 revolution.



*Sources:* The library of more than three thousand books translated in all languages (many of the titles in several languages) is in a special collection at the Library of Congress. The complete corporate records and files of Franklin Book Programs Inc. are in the Princeton University Library's Archives of American Publishing. The consecutive correspondence files (between New York and all other offices, including Tehran) are in the library of the University of Texas in Austin. A history of Franklin/Persia, written in English by Maria Nagorski LeClere under the title *Let Us All Share in the World of Books*, was published in Tehran by Franklin. A description of Franklin's origin, rationale, and methods, written by Datus C. Smith, Jr., was published in the Summer 1993 issue of the *Library of Congress Quarterly*.