



## KIĀ, ŞĀDEQ

**KIĀ, ŞĀDEQ** (b. Tehran, 15 May 1920; d. Missoula, Montana, 1 March 2002; [Figure 1](#)), educator, lexicologist, and the president of the second Persian Language Academy (Farhangestān-e zabān-e Irān; see [FARHANGESTAN](#)).

Born Moḥammad-Şādeq to a family with Māzandarāni roots who were in the government service for generations, Kiā studied at Adab and Tarwat schools and then at the Dār-al-Fonun, which he finished in 1938 (ʿĀqeli, III, p. 1300). He intended to study medicine and chemistry but, eventually having decided to pursue his love for the Persian language and literature, he attended the faculty of literature at the University of Tehran and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1941. He pursued his studies at the postgraduate level while working as a high-school teacher. Upon earning a doctorate in Persian in 1944, Kiā was appointed associate professor and began teaching Middle Persian language and literature, among other courses, at the department of literature, and from 1966 at the newly established department of linguistics at the University of Tehran. He also taught at the Teachers Training College (Dānešsarā-ye ʿāli; Keyvāni; ʿĀqeli, p. 1300; Rāšed Moḥašsel, pp. 290-91). Kiā also directed the department of folklore (*farhang-e ʿamma*) of the National Department of Fine Arts (Edāra-ye koll-e honarhā-ye zibā-ye kešvar; later, Ministry of Culture and Art) and presided over the second Language Academy (Golgolāb and Kiā, pp. 19-39) from the year of its inception in 1970 until 1978. Following the Revolution of 1979, in a wholesale purge of the educators associated with the former regime, Kiā was dismissed from all his positions, and, after spending a few months in detention, he remained in seclusion and published no more. Kiā



traveled to the United States to visit his immediate family in December 1991 and spent his last years there; in accordance with his will, his body was cremated and the ashes were scattered in the Caspian Sea (private communication to the author from a member of the Kiā family).

Kiā's primary achievement was promotion and publicizing of a Persian national identity that embraced the pre-Islamic heritage—not atypical of his contemporaries who had received their formal education during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-41). He did so through his teaching and publications, with a largely positive effect that won him some approval in society; this could be one reason why he was appointed the language academy's president. His students remember him as an enthusiastic, polite professor, sometimes passionate and affectionate (Rāšed Moḥaššel, p. 290; Keyvāni). On the other hand, as some of his students recall, Kiā subscribed to certain controversial ideas advocated by the ultranationalists. As the youngest of the three principal members of Anjoman-e Irānvij, an influential private society in charge of publishing *Irānkuda* (18 vols., 1944-68), Kiā was under the influence of his mentors [Dabiḥ Behruz](#) (q.v.) and Moḥammad Moqaddam, men renowned for their pseudo-scholarship in history and language, and for exaggerating Persia's contribution to world civilization, sometimes with gross distortion of history (cf. Sprachman). This xenophobic bias against both the Arabs and Western orientalisks may have been responsible for the language academy's questionable strategy and its low level of overall achievement (M. Borjian and H. Borjian). Nevertheless, eccentric ideas seldom polluted Kiā's own scholarship, which was usually sound and accurate (cf. below for his hypotheses on the roots of Arabic). Moreover, in spite of his advocacy at the Farhangestān for purification of the Persian language, Kiā's own prose is markedly intelligible and balanced. Although he had an obvious preference for the purer Persian words, he avoided the kind of purism espoused by [Dabiḥ Behruz](#) or [Aḥmad Kasravi](#) (q.v.). Kiā also wrote poems, under the pen names Mehr and Tirā, in nearly pure Persian and with patriotic overtones and a focus on morality (for samples, see Borqa'i, II, pp. 949-52; Zamāni, pp. 259-61; Ṭāheri, pp. 780-82; Kalkāli, s.v.).

Kiā published dozens of monographs and articles on various subjects, spanning the fields of literature, lexicology, dialectology, folklore, and history (for a bibliography, see Bahrāmi, pp. 19-30). His expertise in Middle Persian led to the publication of Pahlavi texts in whole or parts (in *Irānkuda*, ser. nos. 7, 16), designed for the general readership. Noteworthy are also the articles

“Sur quelque termes de ‘Xosrow et son page’,” *Hommage universel: Commémoration Cyrus*, Acta Iranica 3, Leiden, 1974, pp. 209-19 and “Soğd-e Haft Āšyān,” *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg*, Acta Iranica, 1975, pp. 471-73.

His chief scholarly contributions were in the field of lexicology. He compiled glossaries for the Persian words in *Me’yār-e jamāli* and *Meftāḥ-e Abu Eshāqi* (1958), discerned the terminology of games and toys as it appeared in old dictionaries (in *Honarhā-ye zibā-ye kešvar*, 1962, pp. 45-150), and documented historical citations of crown and throne (*Tāj o taḳt*, 1969), as well as that of *Āryāmehr* (1967). Regarding idioms and expressions, Kiā edited the 17th-century Moḥammad-‘Ali Hablarudi’s *Majma’ al-amṭāl* (1965) and published *Maṭalhā-ye fārsi az ketāb-e Šāhed-e šādeq* (1977).

Kiā’s textual studies also extend to the non-Persian languages of Iranian stock, first and foremost his native tongue, Māzandarāni/Ṭabari. He collected and edited the Ṭabari fragments from various historical sources and proposed tentative translations (*Soḳan* 1, 1943-44, pp. 135-36, 344-46, 440-41, 514; repr. in his *Vāža-nāma-ye ṭabari*, Tehran, 1947, 2nd ed., 1948, pp. 9-20, 225-46), commented upon and extended by Monchi-Zadeh (1969) and Borjian (2009, pp. 51-101). Another major work by Kiā on the Māzandarāni language is a critical edition of the mid-19th-century *Nešāb-e ṭabari*, a study that originated from his dissertation and was published as *Vāža-nāma-ye ṭabari* (1947). He rearranged the 853 Māzandarāni words found in the versified glossary into a lexicon and supplemented each entry with the forms documented in Persian dictionaries (Borjian, 2010). Kiā also published the Caspian words in the 17th-century *Toḥfat al-mo’menin* of Ḥakim Mo’men Tonokāboni (in *Honarhā-ye zibā-ye kešvar*, 1962, pp. 151-61) and prepared a series of articles and short monographs that listed the dialect words found in old dictionaries, including *Loḡat-e fors* (1945), *Borhān-e qāṭe’* (1945), *Şeḫāḥ al-fors* (1947), among others (repub. in the booklet *Vāzahā-ye guyeši dar hašt vāžanāma-ye fārsi*, 1976), and in Biruni’s works (*Vāzahā-ye guyeši-e Irāni dar neveštahā-ye Biruni*, 1974). Kiā also compiled a glossary for the Astarābādi or Gorgāni language used in the Ḥorufi scriptures in his *Vāža-nāma-ye gorgāni* (1951; for an assessment, see Borjian, 2008). In the same volume Kiā touches on the history of the Ḥorufiyya (see [HORUFISM](#)), and extends his historical study of the early modern sect of the Noḡṭawiyya (*Irānkuda*, no. 13, 1951).

Living Iranian dialects played a significant role in Kiā’s linguistic pursuits, though they seldom went beyond a lexical level. As his family members recall, Kiā used his annual vacation to travel to the four corners of the country to



collect the lesser-known languages and dialects of Iran. Of these, Kiā personally published *Guyeš-e Āštiān* (1956), but he also supervised documentation of many other vernaculars in both the university and the academy (for a partial list, see Kiā’s introduction to Majidi, p. vi). As the Farhangestān was dissolved after the Islamic Revolution, its archives were transferred to the newly established Mo’assasa-ye moṭāla’āt o taḥqīqāt-e farhangī (Şaffār-Moqaddam, pp. 169-70), which has published some of Kiā’s collection, but without clearly stating the source (e.g., *Guyeš-e aftari*, Tehran, 1997); the same establishment compiled a dictionary from Kiā’s notes on 67 Iranian dialects (*Vāža-nāma-ye šašt-o-haft guyeš-e irāni*, Tehran, 2011). As the president of the Language Academy, Kiā oversaw the project *Farhangsāz*, which was a joint venture between Farhangestān and the Military Geographical Organization, aiming to establish a registry and a national database for all languages and dialects spoken in Iran (Şaffār-Moqaddam, p. 171). Moreover, Kiā published the propaedeutic *Rāhnemā-ye gerdāvāri-e guyešhā* (Tehran, 1961) and is reported to have coined the term *guyeš* for “dialect” (Ruḥbaḳšān). He deserves to be considered as a pioneering dialectologist among Iranians (cf. Barbera).

The historical phonology of Arabic was Kiā’s primary interest in his later productive years. He hypothesized a common origin for Persian and Arabic, and toward that end he made attempts at formulating theories regarding the historical development of Arabic roots. Central to his studies were the processes of metathesis (*qalb*) and interchangeability (*ebdāl*), on which medieval scholars such as Ebn Jenni (fl. 10th century) had widely commented (Rāšed-Moḥaşşel). Kiā’s first monograph on the subject, *Qalb dar zabān-e ‘arabi* (Tehran, 1961), was succeeded by a series published by the Language Academy on the Arabicized (*mo’arrab*) words in Persian dictionaries. In 1973 Kiā initiated the project “Ṭarḥ-e ebdāl dar zabān-e ‘arabi” in the Farhangestān, and by 1976, the first volume of a dictionary on *ebdāl*, consisting of the first five alphabetic letters, was ready for press (Şaffār-Moqaddam, p. 166). Not surprisingly, these works have gone all but unnoticed by scholars of Semitic linguistics. Kiā’s language theories were obviously influenced by those of his colleagues in the Irānvij circle, which in turn might have been a reverberation of the Sun-Language theory fabricated in the 1930s by the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu), which claimed that most Semitic words had Turkish roots (see, e.g., Çolak)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

This article is partly based on interviews with students, colleagues, and relatives of Şādeq Kiā.

Bāqer ‘Āqeli, *Şarḥ-e ḥāl-e rejāl-e siāsi o neẓāmi-e mo‘āşer-e Irān*, 3 vols., Tehran, 2001.

‘Askar Bahrāmi, ed., *Arj-nāma-ye Şādeq-e Kiā/Essays in Honor of Sādiq Kiyā*, Tehran, 2008.

Gerardo Barbera, “Dialectology in Iran,” Linguistics Department Seminar Series, SOAS, University of London, 2008.

Habib Borjian, “The Extinct Language of Gurgan: Its Sources and Origins,” *JAOS* 128/4, 2008, pp. 681-707.

Idem, *Motun-e ṭabari*, Tehran, 2009.

Idem, “*Neşāb-e Ṭabari* Revisited,” *Acta Orientalia* 63/1, 2010, pp. 39-62.

Maryam Borjian and Habib Borjian, “Plights of Persian in the Modernization Era,” in Joshua A. Fishman and Ofelia García, eds., *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity II: The Success-Failure Continuum in Language and Ethnic Identity Efforts*, Oxford, 2011, pp. 254-67.

Sayyed Moḥammad-Bāqer Borqa‘i, *Soḵanvarān-e nāmi-e mo‘āşer-e Irān*, 12 vols., Tehran, 1994-2005.

Yilmaz Çolak, “Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40/6, 2004, pp. 67-91.

Ḥosayn Golgolāb and Şādeq Kiā, *Farhangestān-e zabān-e Irān*, Tehran, ca. 1976.

Sayyed ‘Abd-al-Ḥamid Kalkāli, *Taḍkera-ye šo‘arā-ye mo‘āşer-e Irān*, Tehran, 1958.

Majd-al-Din Keyvāni, “Yād-e Kiā,” in Bahrāmi, ed., *Arj-nāma-ye Şādeq-e Kiā*, Tehran, 2008, pp. 13-18.



Moḥammad-Rezā Majidi, *Guyešhā-ye pirāmun-e Kāšān o Maḥallāt*, Tehran, 1975.

Davoud Monchi-Zadeh, "Contribution to Iranian Dialectology: Explanation of Verses in Old Tabari," *Orientalia Suecana* 18, 1969, pp. 163-82.

Moḥammad-Taḳī Rāšed-Moḥaššel, "Ġorub-i digar: dar sug-e Doktor Şādeq-e Kiā," *Boḳārā*, ser. no. 23, 2002, pp. 290-93.

‘A. Ruḥbaḳšān, "Sābeqa-ye lahja-šenāsi-e ‘elmi dar Irān," *Nāma-ye Farhangestān* 2/3, 1996, pp. 176-81.

Aḥmad Şaffār-Moqaddam, "Farhangestān-e dovvom," *Nāma-ye Farhangestān* 1/2, 1995, pp. 158-72.

Sayyed Moḥammad Ṭāheri Şehāb, *Tāriḳ-e adabiyāt-e Māzandarān*, Tehran, 2002.

‘Ali Zamāni Şahmirzādi, *Şo‘arā-ye Māzandarān o Gorgān*, n.p., 1992.

Paul Sprachman, "Behrūz, Dabīḥ," *EIr* IV, 1989, pp. 111-13.