



LEXICOGRAPHY VI. SHIFTING PARADIGMS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

vi. Shifting paradigms and recent developments

Several large and learned dictionaries grace the late Qajar and early Pahlavi period in Iran. The *Farhang-e nafisi* (5 vols., Tehran, 1938-55) of Nāẓem al-Aṭebbā (d. 1902) for the first time employs Latin transcription as a pronunciation guide. Nevertheless these works are the products of individuals and of the traditional methodology of building upon the work of earlier lexicographers. They are notable as monuments to a renewed interest, both popular and official, in the national language as part of a conscious cultural and political enterprise, a rite of passage for an emerging nation. Some of them, indeed (e.g., *Farhang-e nafisi*), supported the cause of national myth-making by perpetuating the spurious Avestan vocabulary of the *Dasātīr*, introduced into Indo-Persian lexicography by the *Borhān-e qāṭe'* (cf. Tavakoli-Targhi, pp. 87-88, 106-7).

The era of modern collaborative lexicography in Iran begins with the monumental *Loġat-nāma-ye Dehḵodā*. Structurally an alphabetical-initial Persian citation dictionary, based on the corpus of Classical Persian poetry and citing classic Persian and Indo-Persian dictionaries, it was begun by the gifted journalist and statesman 'Ali-Akbar Dehḵodā (1879-1956) while he was in



hiding among the [Baḵtiāri tribe](#) during World War I with little more than a *Larousse* French dictionary for leisure reading. In 1945 the Iranian parliament voted funds for its publication. It was completed only in 1975, printed in folio fascicles, and has since appeared in a revised edition (15 vols., Tehran, 1993-94) and successively in microfiche, CD-Rom, and online formats.

Still clinging to a quasi-encyclopedic content and to Classical Persian poetry for its sources, the more manageable 6-volume *Farhang-e Moʿin* was published in Tehran between 1963 and 1973. This was principally the work of the eminent scholar Moḥammad Moʿin (1918-71), who had collaborated with Dehḵodā from 1946 on the *Loḡat-nāma*. He visited a number of established European printing houses, such as Brockhaus and Larousse, which had each developed their own range of dictionaries and encyclopedias targeted at a mushrooming market of educated middle-class citizens. Moʿin ushered in an era of popular Persian lexicography in the distinctive style of the *Petit Larousse illustré* (Paris, 1961), with its multiple thumbnail illustrations and separate section of selected short biographies and toponyms (*ʿalam*, pl. *aʿlām*). He added another section on foreign words and phrases in common usage. Smaller popular dictionaries imitating the *Larousse* format, which had already been adopted in Beirut and was spreading throughout the Arab world, were soon being issued in the 1960s and 1970s by commercial bookstores-cum-printing houses in Tehran (e.g., the *Farhang-e Amir Kabir*, 1965).

With the growth of a modern Persian literature incorporating colloquial and dialect vocabulary since the first quarter of the 20th century, and again during the puristic language movement between the 1930s and the 1950s, which rejected Arabic as a lexical source and accepted both European loanwords and native neologisms, Iranians sensed the need for up-to-date dictionaries of a more rapidly evolving native lexicon. This required a more radical paradigm shift: a fundamental change in methodology. Classical lexicographers had relied excessively on the inbred dictionary tradition at the expense of personal research and field observation, uncritically copying the same lemmata and citations with diminishing accuracy and dwindling relevance to the contemporary language, whether of poetry, prose, or speech. This scholastic approach had to be abandoned in favor of data-based dictionaries in which, as some 18th-century Indian scholars had recommended, the content and context of current writing and speech were mined for collocations and phrasal metaphors, rather than isolated words, as the basis for entries (Bateni, p. 6). Tehran printing houses now specializing in usually collaborative



contemporary dictionary projects are *Farhang-e Mo'āšer*, *Soḵan*, and *Āgāh*.

Appropriately, compilations of popular sayings, proverbs, and catchphrases led the way. The earliest of these was Dehḵodā's *Amṭāl va ḥekam* (4 vols., Tehran, 1931; compiled from at least 1915), which included many etiological myths and jokes that had reputedly launched these collocations. Early dictionaries of colloquial Persian were based mainly on such proverbs and adages: *Farhang-e 'āmiyāna* by Yusof Raḥmati (preface by Sa'īd Nafisi, Tehran, 1951) and *Farhang-e 'avām* by Amir-qoli Amini (Isfahan, n. d., [1960s]). Or they documented dialogue usage as exemplified in the fiction of [Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh](#) (1892-1997), [Sadeq Hedayat](#) (1903-51), and other modernist writers: *Farhang-e loḡāt-e 'āmiyāna* by M.-A. Jamalzadeh (ed. M.-J. Maḥjub, Tehran, 1962). Both types were still serving the traditional purpose of the Persian dictionary as a literary tool. The transition to a field data-based corpus, including regional material and featuring representations of colloquial pronunciation in both Persian and Latin transcription, was made by the poet Aḥmad Šāmlu (1925-2000), assisted by his wife Aida Sarkisian, in *Ketāb-e Kuča* (Tehran, 1st ed., vol I-, 1978-; 2nd ed., vol. I-, 2001-). This monumental undertaking, still unfinished and continuing since Šāmlu's death under the direction of Sarkisiān, reached volume XV (3rd impression) in 2008. A more recent exemplar, the *Farhang-e fārsi-e 'āmiyāna* of Abu'l-Ḥasan Najafi (2 vols., Tehran, 1999), covering both spoken and general literary Persian, is based on fictional writing and conversational Tehran Persian, with citations going back eighty years (Batani, p. 4). A single-volume work explicitly acknowledging the infusion of informal styles into contemporary Persian prose is the *Farhang-e loḡāt-e 'āmiyāna va mo'āšer* by Maṣṣūr Tarvat and Reżā Anzābineżād (Tehran, 1998).

The first systematically “contemporary” dictionary was the *Farhang-e fārsi-e emruz*, produced between 1981 and 1990 by Ġ.-Ḥ. Šadri-Afšār, Nasrin Ḥakami, and Nastaran Ḥakami, which won a national award. It has been almost annually revised, under varying titles, up to a 5th edition, called *Farhang-e mo'āšer-e yek jeldi*, in 2008. The same team also compiled, as a supplement, a *Farhang-e fārsi-e a'lām* (2005) of 14,000 entries. A larger collaborative production, the result of eight years' work and one hundred contributors, is *Farhang-e bozorg-e Soḵan* (editor-in chief Ḥasan Anvari, 8 vols., 2002). The sources for its 80,000 main entries and 40,000 sub-entries include current periodicals and 450 literary works. As well as being up-to-date, this work aspires to fill the role of a historical dictionary in a more systematic way than



the Dehkodā, with copious citations ranging from the 9th to the 21st centuries and examples of semantic change, making it “the best Persian dictionary available at the present time” (Bateni, p. 5).

A reverse dictionary of Persian of over 74,000 words is Ҷосrow Kešāni’s *Farhang-e Fārsi-e zānsu* (Tehran, 1993), based on the first 4 volumes of Mo’in and an additional 4,000 words from spoken Persian, with Latin transcription, and a French introduction. A boon to linguists, this will furnish data on historical and contemporary morphology and etymology, and for quantitative and literary studies. The emergence of an independent Tajikistan has inspired a collaborative dictionary of this Central Asian variety of Persian in Perso-Arabic script, as distinct from Cyrillic: *Farhang-e Fārsi-e Tājiki* by Moḥammadjān Šakuri and Moḥsen Šojā’i (Tehran, 2006).

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