



## RIAHI, MOHAMMAD AMIN

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**RIAHI, MOHAMMAD AMIN** (Moḥammad Amin Riāḥi, b. *Ḳoy*, 1 April 1923; d. Tehran, 4 April 2009), prominent scholar of Persian classical literature, statesman, and professor of Persian language and literature.

i. Life

ii. Works

i. *Life*

Mohammad Amin Riahi was born in the city of *Ḳoy*, in Western Azarbaijan, where he pursued his primary and a portion of his secondary school education in the *Ḳosravi* School. He moved to Tehran in 1942 and continued his studies at Teachers Training School (*Dānešsarā-ye moqaddamāti*). He subsequently entered Teachers Training College (*Dāneš-sarā-ye ‘āli*), and graduated at the top of his class with a bachelor’s degree in Persian literature in 1948 (*Ḳaṭibi*, p. 464). Commencing employment with the Ministry of Education, at the same year, he pursued his graduate studies, and in 1958 he received his doctorate from the University of Tehran in Persian Language and Literature. His dissertation, written under the guidance of *Badi‘-al-Zamān Foruzānfar* (1903-1970), was an annotated edition of Najm-al Din Rāzi’s (*DĀYA, NAJM-AL-DĪN ABŪ BAKR ‘ABD-ALLĀH*) *Meršād al-‘ebād* for which he graduated with distinction. Significantly, it was one of the few dissertations Foruzānfar accepted to oversee in his forty years career. Riahi also benefited greatly from his contact such figures as *Moḥammad-Taḳī Malek al-Šo‘arā’ Bahār*



(1886-1951), Jalāl-al-Din Homā'i, 'Abbās Eqbāl Āštiāni (1896-1956), Ebrāhim Purdāvud, 'Abd-al-'Azim Qarib, as well as distinguished scholars in the second generation, Eḥsān Yāršāter, Moḥammad Mo'in, Parviz Nātel Kānlari (1914-1991), and Ḍabiḥ-Allāh Šafā. During his years as a high school teacher in Qom, Gorgān, Qazvin and Tehran, Riahi also, at times, accepted the position of headmaster, and in Gorgān he also served as the head of the *Dāneš-sarā-ye moqaddamāti*. From 1956 through 1961 Riahi served on the editorial board of *Loḡat-nāma*, an encyclopaedic dictionary of the Persian language founded by the eminent scholar and poet, 'Ali-Akbar Dehḡodā (DEHḡODĀ, MĪRZĀ 'ALĪ-AKBAR QAZVĪNĪ). During this same period, he served on the board of directors of the Society of Graduates of the Teachers Training College. In June 1961 he was appointed as the head of the Publication Bureau at the Ministry of Culture. In this capacity, he devoted his efforts to creating consistency and uniformity in secondary school textbooks, a mission that would pit him against text book writers and publishers alike. It was only with the founding of *Sāzmān-e ketābhā-ye darsi* (see EDUCATION xvi. SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS), an independent entity affiliated to the Ministry of Culture in 1963, that he was able to implement his plans for promoting uniformity in text books. The Organization, in collaboration with Mo'assasa-ye entešārāt-e Ferānklin (see FRANKLIN BOOK PROGRAM), not only took a major step in enhancing the intellectual worth of primary and secondary school textbooks, but also proved to be effective in lowering the market price of those books down to 80% (Riahi, 1998, pp. 60-81; For further details see 'Abd-al-Raḡim Ja'fari, *Dar jost o ju-ye šobḡ* II, p. 763-842).

Riahi's vivid accounts of his involvement with the scholastic books were first published in several issues of the *Majalla-ye āmūzeš o parvareš*, and later, as a book entitled *Dāstāni be nām-e ketābhā-ye darsi* (A story called scholastic books, Tehran, 1963; see also Moḥammad Amin Riāḡi, "Mājarā-ye ketābhā-ye darsi," *Boḡārā*, No.2, Mehr-Ābān 1377 Š./1998, pp. 60-81). Throughout this period, he continued to take on greater administrative and executive duties. From 1963 to 1968 he served as Iran's Cultural Attaché in Turkey, and taught at Ankara University. Upon his return, he began teaching at Tehran University, and from 1971 to 1975 served as Secretary General for the Public Libraries Board of Trustees. In this capacity he masterminded the opening of three hundred new libraries throughout the country, and spearheaded an initiative to purchase titles from publishers and place them at the disposal of the public through the library system, a program that benefited writers and publishers as well.



In 1975 he assumed the Deputy Directorship of The Iranian Academy of Literature and Art (Farhangestān-e adab va honar-e Iran), which was established in 1972. He served as the Acting Head of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, and the advisor to the Minister of Arts and Culture from 1976 to 1978. Riahi's short-lived appointment as the Minister of Education in the cabinet of Šāpur Baḳtiār, during which his ability to move his agenda forward was limited, put an end to his government service. He refrained from participation in any cultural associations or governmental organizations, and instead devoted the last thirty years of his life to research, as well as writing and editing books and articles. Many of his previously published works were reprinted during this period. Riahi married Nik-Aḳtar Zarneḡār in 1952. They had a son, Bahman, and a daughter, Afsāneh.

Riahi died on April 15 2009 and was buried in the section allotted to the scholars and artists in Tehran's Behešt-e Zahrā Cemetery. Memorial ceremonies were held in Tehran, Tabriz and Ḳoy in which many of his friends, students and scholars of Persian language and literature participated. *Boḳārā*, an acclaimed journal of Iran devoted a special section to his memory, to which such eminent scholars and cultural figures as Iraj Afšār contributed articles (For details see *Boḳārā*, 71, Ḳordād-Šahrivar 1388Š./June-September 2009, PP. 75-94).

## ii. Works

### ii a. Books and Essays on Persian Literature

### ii b. Critical Edition of Classical Texts

### ii c. Other Works

### ii a. Books and Essays on Persian Literature

Riahi was a devoted scholar and a prolific writer. Several of his works remain reliable sources for students and researchers of Persian language and literature. Even when burdened with administrative responsibilities, he continued to write and publish over the roughly seventy year period since his first article appeared in 1939, when he was still a student at Ḳosravi school in Ḳoi, in *Armaḡān*, a monthly literary magazine founded in Tehran in February 1919 by Ḥasan Vaḥid Dastgerdi.

A significant portion of Riahi's work returns to Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*. To



prepare a critical edition of the epic poem, he proposed the founding of *Bonyād-e Šāh-nāma-ye Ferdowsi* (The Foundation for *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsi) to the Ministry of Culture and Arts. The Foundation was established in 1971, with Mojtabā Minovi as the President of the Foundation's Board of Trustees. The purpose of the Foundation was to conduct comprehensive studies on the literary, historical, social and linguistic merits of the *Šāh-nāma*, and to prepare a new critical edition of the book. Riahi took over the responsibilities of the Secretary General of the Foundation's Board, and succeeded Minovi after his death in 1977. In October 1977, Riahi arranged a national colloquium on the *Šāh-nāma*, in which several scholars participated and presented papers. Twenty of them were published in a volume entitled *Šāh-nāma-šenāsi* (Tehran, 1978). The Foundation was dissolved in 1979.

Riahi's *Sar-čašmahā-ye Ferdowsi-šenāsi*, a critical survey on the books and articles available on Ferdowsi's life and work, was published in 1993. The book enjoyed high critical acclaim and is widely regarded as a reference book on the subject. It was followed by the publication of *Ferdowsi, zendagi va še'r-e u*, a well researched and comprehensive book on the life and poetry of Ferdowsi in 1996. A collection of Riahi's own writings on *Šāh-nāma* and Ferdowsi has been published as *Pāydāri-e ḥamāsi* (The glorified resistance, Tehran, 1379). He was instrumental in the reprinting in 1990 of Julius Mohl's edition of *Šāh-Nāma*, to which he contributed a comprehensive introduction.

Riahi's dedicated study of Persian literature, and his systematic consultation with the classical texts are well manifested in *Golgašt dar še'r o andiša-ye Ḥāfez* (An excursion through the poetry and philosophy of Hafez, Tehran, 1995), and *Kesā'i Marvazi: zendagi, andiša va še'r-e u* (Kesā'i Marvazi, his life, philosophy and poetry, Tehran, 1367), in them he meticulously scrutinizes the available sources and dispels many of the unfounded myths associated with their life and poetry, and points out those verses attributed to them that were, in fact, the work of other poets (see J. T. P. de Bruijn, *KESA'I MARVAZI*; For Riahi's other works on Kesā'i and his recently found religious qaṣidas, see bibliography). *Čehel Goftār* (Forty essays), a selection of Riahi's most acclaimed articles on Persian poetry and literature was published in Tehran, in 2000.

#### ii b. *Critical Edition of Classical Texts*

Apart from his many articles on Persian poetry and literature, Riahi has edited and annotated several classical texts, of which Najm-al Din Rāzi Dāya's *Meršād al-'ebād*, one of the most significant Sufi texts in Persian, is of particular



significance. Initially submitted as a doctoral dissertation in 1958, and further edited by Riahi over the course of fifteen years, the book was published in 1973, and received the Royal Award for the best book of the year (Kaṭibi, p. 464).

His edition of *Ālam ārā-ye Nāderi*, the memoirs and eyewitness accounts of *Moḥammad Kāzem Marvi*, a courtier to Nāder Šāh Afšār, was published in 1983. It was followed by the publication of *NOZHAT AL-MAJĀLES* (Tehran, 1996), an anthology of over four thousand quatrains from roughly three hundred poets, compiled by Jamāl-al-Din Ḳalil Šarvāni in the middle of the 13th century. *Nozhat al-majāles*, as noted by Riahi in his comprehensive introduction to the text, reflects the full spread of Persian language and culture in the North Western areas of Iran, where, due to the change of language, the heritage of Persian literature has almost entirely vanished today. It is a very valuable source for identifying the authors of many quatrains, including a number of poets whose collected works are no longer extant (*Nozhat al-majāles*, pp. 12-14). It also includes 37 quatrains attributed to ‘Omar Ḳayyām (q.v.), which is one of the earliest known records of Ḳayyām’s quatrains. Riahi has contributed the entry on *Nozhat-al-majāles* to the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

It is noteworthy that Riahi draws a line between *‘Erāqi* and *Ḳorāsāni* styles, and the poetry primarily in coinage in Azarbaijan and Arrān, which as he argues, is tinged with both regional and linguistic traits, and is abundant in Christian imagery ranging from monastic customs and clothing to other symbols of Christian faith. To distinguish the type of poetry and to identify it as a particular style, he proposes the employment of *sabk-e Arrāni*.

Riahi has also edited *Jahān-nāma*, a 13th century historical geography by Moḥammad b. Najib Bakrān Ṭusi (Tehran, 1963), and *Meftāḥ al- mo‘āmelāt*, a book on mathematics from Moḥammad b. Ayyub Ḥāseb-e Ṭabari (Tehran, 1970). His edition of *Rotbat al-ḥayāt*, the sole extant treatise by *Abu Ya‘qub Yusof b. Ayyub Hamadāni* (1048-1140), a significant figure in the history and development of Sufism in Iran and Central Asia, and *Resālat-al-ṭoyur* by Najm-al Din Rāzi Dāya, were published in one volume in Tehran in 1983. Mention should also be made of *Ma‘refat al-aṣṭorlāb, aka Šeš faṣl*, a treatise by Moḥammad b. Ayyub Ḥāseb-e Ṭabari (Tehran, 1992).

*Gozida-ye Meršād al-‘ebād* (Selections from *Meršād al-‘ebād*) was published in Tehran, in 1982 and underwent several reprints in subsequent years. *Bogšāi*



*rāz-e ʿešq* (Unravel the mystery of love), Riahi's selection of *Kašf al-asrār wa ʿoddat al-abrār* (Unveiling of mysteries and provision of the righteous), a monumental Persian Sufi commentary on the Qurān, by Abu'l-Faẓl Rašid-al-Din Meybodi (MEYBODI, ABU'L-FAẒL RAŠID-AL-DIN), the early 12th century mystic and Sunni scholar, was published in 1995.

ii: c *Other Works*

Riahi's lifetime engagement with his birthplace and the region's long history and culture, culminated in the publication of *Tāriq-e Koy* (The history of Khoy) in 1999. Based on extensive consultation with the available sources on the death and disappearance of Šams-e Tabrizi, Riahi also published two articles in support of the hypothesis that Šams was in fact buried in Koy. The articles which further discredited the unsubstantiated assumption that Šams is buried in Konya, where Rumi and his descendants lay in rest, drew a long held dispute over the issue to a closer end (For Details see *Čehel goftār*, Tehran, 2000).

Riahi's years of stay in Ankara as Iran's cultural attaché culminated in the publication of *Sefārat nāmāhā-ye Iran* (Tehran, 1989) and *Zabān o adab-e Fārsi dar qalamro-ye ʿOtmāni* (Persian language and literature in Ottoman Turkey, Tehran, 1990), in which he has extensively written on the history and development of Iran-Ottoman political and economic relationships and the vast influence of Persian language and literature in the region. Riahi's other contributions also include *Divān-e Ostād Ğolām-Rezā Rašid Yāsami* (Tehran, 1947).

*Selected Publications:*

*ʿĀlam ārā-ye Nāderi*, ed., Tehran, 1987.

*Bogšāi rāz-e ʿešq* (Riahi's selection of Abu'l-Faẓl Rašid-al-Din Meybodi's *Kašf al asrār*), Tehran, 1995.

*Čehel Goftār* Tehran, 2000.

*Dāstāni be nām-e ketābhā-ye darsi* (A story called scholastic books, Tehran, 1963.

*Divān-e Ostād Ğolām-Rezā Rašid Yāsami*, ed., Tehran, 1947.



- Ferdowsi, zendagi va še'r-e u*, Tehran, 1996.
- Golgašt dar še'r o andiša-ye Hāfez*, Tehran, 1995.
- Gozida-ye Meršād al-'ebād*, Tehran, 1982.
- Jahān-nāma*, by Moḥammad b. Najib Bakrān Ṭusi, ed., Tehran, 1963.
- Kesā'i Marvazi: zendagi, andiša va še'r-e u*, Tehran, 1988.
- Ma'refat al-aštorlāb, aka Šeš fašl*, by Moḥammad b. Ayyub Hāseb-e Ṭabari, Tehran, 1992.
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- Meršād al-'ebād*, by Najm-al Din Rāzi Dāya, ed., Tehran, 1973.
- Nozhat al-majāles*, by Jamāl-al-Din Ḳalil Šervāni, ed., Tehran, 1996.
- Pāydāri-e ḥamāsi*, Tehran, 2000.
- Rotbat al-ḥayāt* by Abu Ya'qub Yusof b. Ayyub Hamadāni, and *Resālat-al-ṭoyur* by Najm-al Din Rāzi Dāya, ed., Tehran, 1983.
- Šāh-nāma-šenāsi*, Tehran, 1978.
- Sar-čašmahā-ye Ferdowsi-šenāsi*, Tehran, 1993.
- Sefārat nāmahā-ye Iran*, Tehran, 1989.
- Tāriḳ-e Ḳoy*, Tehran, 1999.
- Zabān o adab-e Fārsi dar qalamro-ye 'Oṭmāni*, Tehran, 1990.

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J. T. P. de Bruijn, KESĀ’I MARVAZI, [www.iranicaonline.org](http://www.iranicaonline.org)

‘Abd-al-Raḥim Ja‘fari, “Sar o sāmān dādan be ketābhā-ye darsi”, *Donyā-ye Soḳan*, no.34, Mehr 1339 Š./1990.

Idem, *Dar jost o ju-ye šobḥ* (Looking for the dawn), Tehran, 2004.

Abu’l-Faẓl Ḳatibi, “Riāḥi, Moḥammad Amin,” *Dāneshnāme-ye Zabān o Adab-Fārsī*, III, Tehran, 2009, pp.264-65.

Moḥammad Amin Riāḥi, “Mājarā-ye ketābhā-ye darsi,” *Boḳārā*,

No.2, Mehr-Ābān 1377 Š./1998, pp. 60-81.

Idem, “Qaṣida-i az Kesā’i Marvazi,” *Yaḡmā* 22/10, 1969, pp. 441-49.

Idem, “Pišrow-e Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow,” *Yaḡmā*, 27/10, 1974, pp. 561-71; repr., “Kesā’i, pišrow-e Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow,” in *Yād-nāma-ye Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow*, Mašhad, 1976, pp. 234-45.

Idem, *Kesā’i Marvazi: zendagi, andiša va še‘r-e u*, 7th ed., Tehran, 1996.

Jamāl Ḳalil-e Šarvāni, *Nozhat al-majāles*, ed. Moḥammad Amin Riāḥi, Tehran, 1987.