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Abbas Eqbal's Actions in the Academy of Persian Language and Literature

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ABSTRACT

With the establishment of connections with Western countries, the imitation of Turkish reforms, and the spread of nationalist ideas in Iran, the Persian language gained renewed attention as the national language. Some intellectuals, such as Mohammad Ali Foroughi, sought to purify Persian of Arabic, Turkish, and Latin words, believing that Arabs had been the cause of Iran's misfortunes; thus, they aimed to eliminate Arabic words and expressions from Persian. Nationalists endeavored to promote pure writing (writing free from foreign loanwords), which was regarded as a symbol of antiquarianism and a return to Iran's pre-Islamic heritage. Abbas Eqbal and Foroughi were among the founders and permanent members of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature; however, Eqbal considered his membership compulsory and opposed the Academy's activities. The use of the Academy's newly coined terms was mandatory during Reza Shah's reign, and deviation from this rule was considered a legal offense. Eqbal's opposition became more pronounced after 1941 and Reza Shah's abdication. He strongly criticized the Academy's word formation policies and the movement of linguistic purification. The research method used in this study is historical, following a descriptive-analytical approach and relying on library sources. The findings of this research show that Eqbal published his critiques of the Academy's performance in *Yadgar* magazine after the fall of Reza Shah. He believed that the Academy's activities and the promotion of pure writing had led to the impoverishment and inefficiency of the Persian language. The Academy's practice of word creation had rendered the language obscure and artificial, to the extent that others could hardly understand it. The public was unfamiliar with the newly coined terms of the Academy, as they were drawn from Old Persian and had long fallen out of use.

Keywords: *Academy of Persian Language and Literature, linguistic purification, intellectuals, vocabulary*

Introduction

During Reza Shah's era, a number of intellectual elites considered cultural modernization and transformation in the field of culture as one of the solutions to the nation's backwardness. From their point of view, language and literature, as fundamental elements of national identity, played a crucial role in shaping the structure of culture. Language and literature were the connecting threads between different generations of Iranians and were expected to evolve in accordance with the demands of the modern age. Centralization, which had already dominated the realms of politics and the military, extended into the cultural domain as well. Cultural reforms in society were aimed at eliminating traditional and religious culture and replacing it with Western culture. Reza Shah's regime, through a



superficial and external understanding of modernization, eradicated the foundations necessary for the growth of civil society. The establishment of the Academy in 1935 resulted from nationalist efforts inspired by the statutes of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*.

The Academy's Efforts Toward Iranian Identity

While serving as Minister of War, Reza Shah, following the suggestion of intellectuals such as Mohammad Ali Foroughi (Zoka al-Molk), laid the groundwork for founding the Academy. At the Ministry of War, he formed a committee composed of four scholars and seven educated officers, including Habibollah Nobakht, Zabih Behrouz, Dabir A'zam Bahrami, Colonel Riyazi, and Colonel Ahmad Nakhjavan. Their objective was to find Persian equivalents to replace Arabic, Turkish, and Latin military terms.

No. 854

April 7, 1935

Ministry of Education, Endowments, and Fine Arts

As you are aware, some individuals who are deeply interested in the Persian language have considered the idea of creating words and expressions for meanings that presently lack proper Persian equivalents or whose Persian forms are no longer in use. However, it has often been observed that such efforts are unmethodical and lack sound reasoning and refined taste. This matter has drawn the attention of His Majesty the King, who has instructed me to ensure that a thoughtful and reasonable approach be adopted so that this important and inherently good undertaking does not deviate from the proper path. Since this issue fundamentally falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, and as I have noticed the Ministry's own interest and attention to this matter, I hereby convey His Majesty's approval that the necessary measures for the successful implementation of this purpose be studied and carried out promptly. I am also ready to exchange views and participate in this work and await the report of the results.

Prime Minister – Mohammad Ali Foroughi

Between October 1924 and December 1925, this committee compiled a list of 300 new words. For example, the Arabic word *tahjiz* was replaced with the Persian *basij kardan* ("mobilization"); *tajhizat* ("equipment") became *basij*; *tayyareh* ("airplane") was replaced with *havapeima*; and *tayyareh meydani* ("airfield") was substituted with *forudgah*.

"Reza Shah regarded linguistic unity as one of the pillars of national unity and was deeply committed to purifying Persian of heavy foreign words. In this endeavor, he pursued two essential goals: first, he sought to make the reformed Persian language the creator of Iran's literature and art; and second, he wanted the language to evolve and modernize in harmony with social change and cultural progress" (1). However, this view, attributed to Ebrahim Safaei, overlooks that the formation of the nation-state was a consequence of World War I, when European countries sought to promote this concept in Iran and the Middle East. In essence, this transformation stemmed from external developments, and in Iran, Western-oriented intellectuals aimed to establish a nation-state. The coup of 1921, Reza Shah's rise to power, and the establishment of a powerful military state were all part of this process. The nation-state was defined by components such as language, race, and geography, and the creation of the Academy—replacing historical Arabic, Turkish, and Latin words with new Persian equivalents—was one of its manifestations. Intellectuals such as Mohammad Ali Foroughi and Ahmad Kasravi were among its advocates.

Reza Shah ordered that new words be used in all army units, and any negligence in this regard by a unit or commander was subject to punishment. Once, when a senior Khuzestan official used the English term “foot” (unit of length) in a telegraphic report, the Shah became so infuriated that he ordered the official’s dismissal, saying that the “foot” had diminished the man’s worth (2). In May 1925, Foroughi raised the issue of establishing the Academy in the Cabinet, obtained its approval, and subsequently a commission under the supervision of Ali Asghar Hekmat, Minister of Culture, was tasked with preparing the necessary groundwork. The Academy’s charter was drafted under Foroughi’s supervision, and its activities began in a rented building on Lalehzar Street, Nakisa Alley. Ra’di Azarakhsh was appointed as the Academy’s secretary. Its members included Hossein Vosuq, Hossein Samiei, Hasan Esfandiari, Ali Asghar Hekmat, Hossein Gol-Golab, Dr. Valiollah Nasr, Ali Parto A’zam, Seyed Mohammad Fatemi, Seyed Nasrollah Taghavi, Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, Malek o-Sho’ara Bahar, Saeed Nafisi, Seyed Kazem Asar, Rashid Yasemi, Badi’ozzaman Forouzanfar, Dr. Shafagh, Dr. Hesabi, Isa Seddiq, General Nakhjavan, and Colonel Moghtadar.

The first session was held on June 3, 1935, with the attendance of its members. In later meetings, individuals such as Dr. Matin-Daftari, Dr. Ghasem Ghani, Abbas Eqbal, Seyed Mohammad Tadayyon, and Masoud Keyhani joined as well.

Isa Seddiq writes: one of the outcomes of the Ferdowsi Millennium Celebration in 1934 was the awakening of national sentiment and pride among the people, particularly the youth. A group resolved to purify the contemporary language and eliminate foreign words, especially Arabic ones, striving to express their thoughts in pure Persian. They became excessively zealous in this effort; in their writings and correspondence, when they failed to find equivalents for Arabic words, they used obsolete ancient words and artificial or fabricated terms (3).

According to Article 2 of its charter, the Academy’s responsibilities extended beyond purifying Persian and selecting specialized terms in various fields of science and literature. It was also tasked with collecting vocabularies and folk tales, compiling a comprehensive Persian dictionary, authoring and translating useful books, encouraging poets and writers to create valuable works, publishing classical texts, and guiding public opinion toward a proper understanding of Persian literature and style. However, in the process of word selection, the Academy fell into tastelessness and extremism. For certain reasons, Reza Shah temporarily dissolved the Academy in April 1938 (4).

In line with his radical nationalism, Reza Shah also decided to change the names of several places: for example, Bandar Anzali became Bandar Pahlavi; Arabistan became Khuzestan; Urmia became Rezaiyeh; Astarabad became Gorgan; Aliabad became Shahi; Soltaniyeh became Arak; and Mohammerah became Khorramshahr.

In 1934, encouraged by the Iranian Embassy in Berlin, the Shah ordered that the name *Iran* replace *Persia*. The decree explained that the term *Persia* (and *Persian*) was associated with the corrupt legacy of the Qajar era and referred only to one part of Iran—the province of Fars. These actions were intended to link the monarchy to the identity of Iran and emphasize modernization through the revival of ancient Persian grandeur. Since the Constitutional Revolution, the renewal of Iran’s ancient greatness had become an ideal, and nationalism during this period served as one of the regime’s ideological foundations.

Ali Akbar Dehkhoda and Seyed Hassan Taqizadeh believed that the names of tools and inventions imported from Europe should be used in their original foreign forms and that no Persian equivalents should be coined for them. After Iran was occupied by Allied forces in 1941, the Academy was closed, and many of the approved words appearing in textbooks were removed, replaced once again by the older vocabulary.

Biography of Eqbal (1897–1956)

Eqbal Ashtiani, son of Mohammad Ali, was born in Ashtian in 1897, and his family moved to Tehran during his childhood. He completed his education at the Dar ul-Fonun School and began his cultural career working at the Public Library of the Ministry of Education and teaching at Dar ul-Fonun. He later taught literature and geography at the schools of Political Science, Military Science, and the Higher Teachers' College (5).

In 1925, he accompanied an Iranian military delegation to Paris as secretary, where, while fulfilling his administrative duties, he earned a bachelor's degree in Persian literature from the renowned Sorbonne University. In Paris, he became acquainted with the scholar Mohammad Qazvini (6). He was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to conduct research in Paris museums and libraries and to send reports to Iranian authorities on the educational conditions of Iranian students in France (6). After returning to Iran, he began teaching at the Faculty of Literature as a professor (7).

He also taught at the Central Teachers' College, later known as the Higher Teachers' College (Afshar, 1955: 278). In 1934, with the help of Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Foroughi and Minister of Education Ali Asghar Hekmat, he represented Iran at the Conference on the Preservation of Industrial and Historical Museums in Madrid (ibid., 339). During his stay in Paris, he authored a dissertation and, in 1935, submitted it to the Minister of Education for approval by the University of Tehran Council as his doctoral thesis. The council approved Eqbal's dissertation as equivalent to a doctoral degree in Persian literature. In December 1938, he was appointed as a full professor at the University of Tehran and became a permanent member of the Iranian Academy in the same year (8).

Eqbal undertook scholarly journeys to Germany, France, the Vatican, and several Arab countries, producing significant historical and cultural research on Iran (8). He passed away on February 10, 1956, in Rome, and was buried beside Allameh Qazvini in the courtyard of Hazrat Abd al-Azim's shrine, in the Abul-Fotuh Razi chamber.

Iranian Identity and Nationalism in the Works of Abbas Eqbal

Among Abbas Eqbal's undertakings was the publication of the journal *Yadgar* in 1944–1945, which he shut down in 1949–1950 following the passage of a law prohibiting journalism by government employees (6). After *Yadgar* was closed, he accepted the position of Iran's cultural counselor in Turkey and Italy and remained in that post until the end of his life (9). In *Yadgar*, he reviewed and critiqued numerous books.

Although his works lack the components of antiquarianism, an emphasis on political power as a centralized phenomenon and on the idea of nationalism is evident throughout. A kind of holistic outlook appears in his writings, influenced by the discourse of the time. In the preface to *History of the Mongols*, he maintained that historians should look upon all issues and periods with a general, comprehensive perspective (10). Earlier historians narrated political events from the beginning of creation to their own day on the basis of religious beliefs, whereas replacement historians such as Abbas Eqbal structured their research through a general view of affairs grounded in the geography of the Iranian realm. The same method is visible in writings on the history of Iran from the beginning to the fall of the Sasanians, or from the advent of Islam to the Mongol invasion, and similar works. Thus, earlier historical research was not subject-based; rather, it was period-based and organized around broad political divisions. He accords particular attention to political occurrences and events; history is, in his view, a continuous, unbroken narrative of happenings belonging to our ancestors (10). The glorious saga of great forebears is precisely what Eqbal has in mind. From Eqbal's perspective, Pirnia, by addressing the history of ancient Iran and the lives of

the forefathers, rendered them a great service. Eqbal sees the function of such history in awakening national pride, dispelling the mass of indolence and self-indulgence among compatriots, and encouraging emulation of one's great ancestors (*ibid.*). On this basis, Eqbal considers the historian's task to be the recording and preservation of a glorious past. He refers to kings such as Cyrus and Darius with the epithet "of great stature." Eqbal also addresses the impact of the Mongol invasions and foregrounds particular issues within his historical narrative. The Mongol domination, he argues, led to the diffusion of the Persian language in East Asia and marked a distinguished period of Persian literature. He converts nationalist values—such as Iran-centrism and patriotism—into the values of the figures under discussion and analyzes their conduct accordingly. He emphasizes such matters as the scientific character of history, the discovery of truth and its articulation, impartiality, and scholarly fairness, yet he offers no argument concerning their theoretical soundness or practical feasibility. Eqbal's emphases are largely admonitory and, in certain instances, prescriptive. He does not concern himself with whether the discovery of reality is possible; rather, he earnestly demands that the Iranian historian pursue it (5).

On the basis of received ideas, he speaks about the relationship of history with other domains of the humanities and about history's need to draw upon those fields. However, he neither demonstrates the nature of this relationship nor applies it in practice. Eqbal attended to scientific methods in history and regarded history, like other sciences, as possessing general laws and an inferential method; he believed that historical research should benefit from other sciences as well. He considered history a science that leads to the discovery of truth and to the expression of pure reality, and he deemed the attainment of truth possible through method and scientific procedure. He does not merely recount historical material and the writings of earlier authors, nor does he accept them uncritically; rather, he critiques historical books and uses them only after evaluation. The progress of historiography in the Pahlavi era is indebted to Eqbal. Many have regarded Eqbal as the founder of the historical discipline in Iran. Although for him and his followers within the university system, history was an occurrence whose events had to be reported, he and his like-minded colleagues edited and published many historical books and texts from manuscript sources.

Eqbal disseminated in Iran the modern scientific methods he had learned at the Sorbonne. He criticized earlier historiography and grounded the principles of education on a scientific basis. He promoted clear, fluent prose and refrained from employing European words and expressions that had become fashionable as signs of intellectualism, as well as from using difficult Arabic vocabulary and obsolete Turkish and Persian phrases. Abbas Eqbal defined Iranian identity on the basis of national culture. He believed neither in the superiority and authenticity of the Aryan race nor in assigning greater value and dignity to antiquity in assessing Iran's civilizational heritage. Eqbal regarded the civilization and culture of this land as a process that has evolved from pre-Islamic times to the present. The 1927–1928 decision of the Education Commission to compile a comprehensive series on the history of ancient Iran, and the 1928–1929 action of the Ministry of Education to author a complete history of Iran as a secondary-school textbook, were aligned with national culture.

Abbas Eqbal Ashtiani's contribution, if not greater than Pirnia's, is at least not less. He is a product of the discourse of that period, and one may examine his oeuvre through this lens. Although his works lack the markers of antiquarianism, an emphasis on political power as centralized and on the idea of nationalism is discernible, shaped by the discourse of the time. He believed that historians should adopt a general perspective on all issues and historical periods. The predominance of political history over other facets in this era is a significant matter, and it appears clearly in Eqbal's works as well. Eqbal accords special attention to political happenings and events. He sought scientific historiography in the working methods of European historians and emphasized scholarly benefits,

general laws, and inferential method. Eqbal rejected all forms of prejudice in historical methodology and considered unscientific the approach of those who turn to historical evidence to prove their ideology. The insufficiency and ineffectiveness of the research infrastructure in Eqbal's time prevented him from grasping that prejudice—willed or unwilled—is an inseparable part of every historical narrative and that its elimination in historical research is impossible (11).

Because of his familiarity with certain powerful figures of the era—Abolhassan Khan Foroughi, Abdolhossein Khan Teymourtash—and with cultural personalities such as Rashid Yasemi and Saeed Nafisi, it was determined that he prepare a history of Iran from the beginning to the proclamation of the Constitutional Revolution. While reporting events with precision, he never sacrificed historical truth to the nationalist aims dominant under the first Pahlavi. From his writings it can be inferred that Eqbal sought to breathe a spirit of patriotism into students. The role of Iranians in preserving their identity and culture despite political defeats is entirely evident throughout his work.

Although he lived in a cultural atmosphere steeped in extreme nationalism, he never allowed his historical perspective and his thought about Iranian culture to be tainted by it. He defined Iranian identity—or, in other words, national identity—on the basis of national culture. He did not believe in the superiority and authenticity of the Aryan race, nor did he assign greater value and dignity to antiquity in analyzing Iran's civilizational heritage; rather, he considered the civilization and culture of this land to be a continuous process that has evolved from pre-Islamic times to the present. He sees being Iranian as the product of the geographic condition of this land and the historical events accompanying it. By Iran, Iranian, and similar terms, he intends the culture that has emerged from this land, whose most important and prominent representatives include Ferdowsi, Hafez, and Sa'di. The three constitutive elements of the Pahlavi-era discourse were, first, nationalism, second, antiquarianism, and third, an emphasis on the concentration of power (11).

Eqbal's Role in the Academy

Eqbal was a permanent member of the Academy, but he considered this membership compulsory. By writing several articles, he explicitly declared his opposition to the Academy. From the outset of his career, he adopted the path of plain prose and strongly opposed neologism and *sareh-nevisi* (purist writing). In a statement of principles at the beginning of *Yadgar*, he writes: our first effort is that whatever we say and write—and whatever we accept for publication in this journal—be in a language intelligible to ordinary people of this country and to foreigners who have become acquainted with the language of Ferdowsi, Sa'di, and Hafez through study and instruction. To the same degree that we shall avoid rhetorical flourish, we shall fight the coining of words (12).

Zarrinkoub writes: Eqbal had the utmost zeal for Iranian culture and literature. He showed no interest in the Academy's coinages, nor in "new poetry" and such things (13).

In his 1933–1934 article "Artificial Persian," Eqbal sharply criticized the purist writers and deemed the language of earlier authors such as Ferdowsi and Sa'di to be eloquent and expressive. He likened their language to a richly patterned and beautiful brocade, the maker of which had placed each of its warps and wefts, after careful choice, in the proper position and place (10). Eqbal laments: alas, these immortal masterpieces have been consigned to oblivion, and the misfortunes of the ages and the poor taste of a handful of self-regarding people have cast the dust of indifference over their faces (10).

Eqbal's View of the Academy's Actions

Eqbal lashes out at those who, in the name of *pure Persian* and with the unfair razor of the pen, set upon Persian vocabulary without knowledge of the language and culture:

Some contemporary writers have not only shown indifference to the works of the ancients and consigned them to oblivion, but a group of extremist purists who claim to be reforming the Persian language, with rough and trembling hands, scratch the delicate faces of the fine productions of the ancients in the name of reforming Persian. Some, with the merciless shears, pull out its subtle warps and wefts at random and, with the tasteless awl, thread black and white cords through it. Others, with the unfair pen-knife, rub away the life-giving patterns and colors of the ancients and, in the name of *pure Persian*, with the brush of house-painters, smear the soot of disgrace over the countenance of the Persian language—whose beauty the most skillful adorners of the fair beloved, namely Sa'di, had rendered worthy of ascending to the highest ranks of splendor and glory (12).

According to Eqbal, the actions of the purists and those seeking to revive ancient languages have produced deficiencies in Persian. He regarded their language as *artificial Persian*, unintelligible to others. "In every age and time, the speaker or writer must speak or compose in a language whose components are already familiar to his compatriots. And if he is inventive and a craftsman of words and wishes to express himself in what is called a more literary manner, he must do so in such a way that at least the men of letters of that language can grasp his discourse." (ibid.)

Eqbal also condemned the tasteless and ludicrous Arabicizing of that seminarian who asked a firewood seller, "This *wa qir khutab* you have borne upon the back of this donkey—at what legal dirham can it be purchased?" The woodcutter replied, "If you want firewood, pay and talk like a human being; if you want to flaunt your learning, go to the madrasa." (12) He deemed the language of the coiners of words a bland *shal-e qalamkar* whose makers would not dare offer it to anyone (12).

Eqbal states that the current Persian should be preserved, not rendered obscure and weak through word-coinage, for the weakness of the language leads to the weakness of the Iranian nation. He writes:

We, in the hope that the word-coinage, word-wrecking Academy is dead and will never rise from the pillow of death, beseech the true men of letters of the country and the honorable authorities of the state no longer to circle around the Academy's misguided fancy and its likes. Let them strive, as far as they can, to defend this very Persian language and literature that is intelligible to Persian speakers the world over. Day by day, let them increase its vitality and power of diffusion by means that are rational and common throughout the world. Let them be certain that the strength and power of this very Persian language is the strength and power of the Iranian nation. Any crack that, at the hands of malefactors or the ignorant, creeps into its foundation is a deadly axe-blow struck at the life of the Iranian nation (12).

After September 1941 and the fall of Reza Shah, Eqbal, on various occasions that arose, openly declared his opposition to the Academy's measures. Perhaps the reason was that, in the suffocating atmosphere of Reza Shah's era, he did not dare to oppose the Academy openly—for example, in 1944–1945, when the use of the Academy's words had created chaos in classroom instruction. A circular was issued by Minister of Culture Isa Seddiq stipulating that the words previously used in Persian and in textbooks be employed. The issuance of this circular provided an opportunity for Eqbal to publish it in *Yadgar* and to mount a fierce attack on the Academy and its performance with his sharp criticisms.

... For the above reasons, the mathematical terms that have entered the new textbooks and have caused difficulty in comprehension and disorder in instruction, the Academy of Iran—while reviewing the approved equivalents, determining the correct mode of usage, and separating them from derivatives and improper equivalents current outside—has, owing to the urgency and importance of the matter, decided with regard to mathematics textbooks that those mathematical words and terms that have a precedent in the Persian language, and for which new words have recently been employed in their stead, shall, as before, remain customary and in force (10).

... It is necessary in the current academic year to employ all of the Academy's approved equivalents in the field of mathematics with reference to the previously customary words. For example, when teaching the topic of *afzayesh* (increase) in arithmetic, they should remind students that in this case the word *jam'* (addition) can also be used, so that the minds of students will gradually become more familiar with the previously current words that some imagined must be entirely abandoned. Let them know that even in the use of the Academy's newly approved equivalents there is absolutely no compulsion, and let it also be explained in simple language that the purpose of choosing Persian equivalents for scientific terms was not to prohibit the use of previously current words, but rather that the adoption of most of these equivalents was only for the purpose of designating synonyms, not with the intent to forbid the use of earlier words (10).

Eqbal, in a critical tone, wrote in response to this circular: ... In this directive, after ten years of axing at the roots of the language of Ferdowsi, Sa'di, and Hafez—or, in the terminology of this circular, “coining equivalents”—the Academy now, as a result of the ill effects produced by this vandalism, permits the continued use, as before, of words and terms that have a precedent in Persian; and in truth, with this permission, it apologizes for and repents of this lapse without confessing it (12).

Eqbal, by citing an example, explained that the terms coined by the Academy were unfamiliar to the public mind because those terms had been current in ancient Iran and later disappeared. For example: ... The drafter of this circular writes that “we have coined the word *afzayesh* so that, gradually, the minds of students will become more familiar with the previously current word, namely *jam'* (addition).” Eqbal replies: ... “Has the Iranian mind—from the grocer to the *Mostowfi-ol-Mamalek*—for a thousand years been more familiar with the word *jam'*, or with the word *afzayesh*, which has never, in Persian, been customary in place of *jam'*, that is, the well-known arithmetic operation? It is possible that in the bureaucratic accounts of the Sasanian period Iranian secretaries called the operations of addition and subtraction *afzun* and *kast*. But with the fall of the Sasanian state this terminology vanished, and no one thereafter ever used it.” (14).

In one part of the circular it was stated that students are free in using the Academy's approved words and that there is absolutely no compulsion. Eqbal felt gratified by this action of the Academy. Yet he reminded readers how, in Reza Shah's time, the use of the Academy's approved words had been imposed upon the people through circulars. He shows that under Reza Shah the use of the Academy's words was compulsory and that noncompliance amounted to disobedience of Reza Shah's commands.

He writes:

..... “In this circular it is stated that students should know that even in the use of the Academy's newly approved equivalents there is absolutely no compulsion..... We are very pleased with this acknowledgment by the honorable members that there is no compulsion in using the words of that institution and that their aim was not to prohibit the use of previously current words. But if our memory is not as short as that of the Academy's members and functions correctly, we recall how many severe circulars, as they call them, were issued concerning the necessity of using

the Academy's approved words and the threat to the people in case of infraction—so much so that, in order that people like the present writer should not dare to violate them, they took the matter so far as to have the Academy's approved words countersigned with the royal signature, so that no one would any longer dare oppose them." (ibid., 4)

In late 1946, after the formation of the Academy's Literary Society, Eqbal once again severely criticized the Academy in *Yadgar*. He writes: "The present writer is among those who, unwittingly and unwillingly, was chosen for membership in an assembly founded on word-coinage—and one of those very words is *Farhangestan* (Academy)—but since I was opposed to this foundation from the outset, I rarely participated in its meetings; and whenever I was present there, I left the session without anger and annoyance." (14).

Eqbal stated the reason for his anger as follows:

"The reason for this anger and annoyance was, first, that we had never seen or heard of an association—heterogeneous and composed of all sorts of people—sitting together to coin words for others, or to change, according to their crooked tastes, words that for centuries had been customary among native speakers and employed by the princes of Persian eloquence, who had bestowed upon them immortal life. Second, that in coining words and replacing customary vocabulary with artificial and unintelligible terms, they trampled every kind of sound argument, evidence, and logic underfoot; with standing and sitting and by securing a majority of votes, they seated their absurdities upon the chair of acceptance. And so that no one would dare oppose them, they exploited the simple mind and fervent patriotism of the late Sovereign, contriving to have their approvals, with a special trickery, reach the royal signature, and by force they crammed them down the people's throats." (14).

Eqbal regarded the use of the Academy's approved words and membership in the Academy as compulsory, and he considered the Academy's establishment to be the work of nationalists and extremist purists who exploited the patriotic sentiments of Reza Shah and other state officials to create the Academy.

"Everyone knows that the Academy was not born of the late Sovereign's idea; rather, a group of word-coiners, who had undertaken this business either out of incompetence or out of trickery, persuaded certain authorities—whose patriotism and purity of intention might not have been in doubt, yet who knew nothing of literature and language—that word-coinage and writing in *pure Persian* are essential components of patriotism and an inseparable part of love for Iran, and that, now that reforms had been set in motion, this reform should not be neglected. The late Sovereign, full of patriotic zeal and, because of being occupied with other important matters, paying little attention to such issues, took their guidance for benevolence and did not oppose it, and the gentlemen did whatever they wished in his name." (14).

From Eqbal's perspective, words that are needed should be coined by people of taste, not by the Academy and imposed on the public. Just as in the past, the necessary words were coined by gifted and tasteful writers and were accepted by the people without imposition or coercion.

".... Language and literature belong to the people and were established by the people; only, among them, those who were masters and exemplars stamped words with the die of their acceptance and poured the products of their talent and taste into molds of verbal beauty and semantic perfection, making them acceptable to discerning minds without any compulsion or coercion. Otherwise, no academy or learned or literary society has ever been able to create language and literature for the people or to force upon them, in the name of language and literature, what the public does not want and does not approve." (14).

Eqbal considered the Academy's duty to be the preservation of words coined by people of taste and the safeguarding of the works of the ancients for the defense of the Persian language—not the coining of words and imposing them on the people.

Elite Perspectives on the Academy's Measures

Although in European countries language academies were products of the growth of nationalist concepts and their manifestations, the establishment of the first Academy of the Persian Language in Iran arose largely from excessive *sareh-nevisi* (purist writing). At the time of its founding, diverse opinions were expressed by intellectuals regarding the Academy's creation and performance. Some writers and thinkers of that era regarded the Academy as one of the necessities of society at the time and believed that it rendered important services to the Persian language and literature. Others considered the establishment of the Academy futile and a factor in the deterioration of Persian. They held that the Academy focused on only one of its tasks—coining new words—and that this had, on balance, harmed Persian language and letters. Of course, the opposition of these intellectuals was not uniform.

Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Isa Seddiq, Ali Asghar Hekmat, and to some extent Ra'di Azarakhshi were among those who deemed the establishment of the Academy necessary and essential for the preservation and development of the language at that time; accordingly, they helped lay the groundwork for its formation, drafted its charter, and for long periods assumed its presidency. They believed the Academy had performed important services for the Persian language—though later these very supporters and founders also criticized its performance.

Most of these intellectuals agreed with the Academy's charter, not with its performance. Foroughi, one of the Academy's founders, regarded its purpose as the reform and completion of language and literature. He stated that the Academy should not be viewed as a “word-manufacturing factory” intent on expelling all foreign words and coining Persian substitutes for them. In 1936 he felt that, in finding equivalents for foreign terms, the Academy was acting contrary to the principles and rules of its charter; he therefore wrote the article “My Message to the Academy” to guide its members. After September 1941, when he again assumed the Academy's presidency, he revised words that had been coined in haste.

Seddiq maintained that the Academy was an institution “brought into being by necessity, not by whim and fancy” (3). In his view, the Academy's most important services to Persian language and literature included the following: the Academy of Iran prevented the actions of extremists who believed that all Arabic words should be expunged from Persian; it revived a number of elegant Persian terms and coined several correct new scientific terms, all of which gained general acceptance and are now current in speech and writing.

It prepared plans that could be used by writers and scholarly, literary, and technical societies—such as plans for compiling a dictionary of the Persian language; for pruning Persian of unsuitable foreign words; for reviewing scientific terminology; and for collecting geographical names, proverbs, poems, and the like. It compiled two valuable dictionaries—*Farhang-Nameh-ye Parsi* by Sa'id Nafisi and *Farhang-e Tazi be Parsi* by Badi'ozzaman Foruzanfar—and established a library for the compilation of the Persian language dictionary (3).

Although Seddiq, together with Foroughi and Hekmat, was among the earliest and principal founders of the Academy and considered it the source of significant services to language and literature, he later criticized its performance. During his presidency of the Academy—from September 1941 until Dey of the same year (December 1941–January 1942)—he effectively halted its word-selection work. Since under Esma'il Mer'at equivalents had been coined rapidly and without sufficient care, disrupting instruction in schools, he issued a circular giving authors

and teachers the choice of using either the new terms or the previously current ones. (ibid.) Hekmat also believed that the Academy had performed important services ... “In its early years, by order of the great Shahanshah, the Academy undertook many tasks and endured countless labors, including the writing of several dictionaries for the Persian language. A number of leading figures and men of letters were chosen as regular and associate members of the Academy and delivered highly significant talks and speeches about the Persian language” (3).

From Hekmat's perspective, although the establishment of the Academy helped preserve Persian, in word-selection it went to excess between 1939 and 1941; for this reason some of the Academy's words did not gain general acceptance (3).

In assessing the Academy's performance, Ra'di Azarakhshi writes: “... The mere establishment of the Academy at that moment quelled the feverish crisis that had afflicted Persian. If the institution could not directly render a positive service to Persian by carrying out its major tasks, it at least succeeded in wresting the reins from the hands of a group of extremists and prevented the spread of thousands of fabricated and unfamiliar words” (9).

From the viewpoint of these intellectuals, the Academy of Iran at minimum succeeded in taking control away from extremist purists and performed the service of preventing the diffusion of thousands of spurious and baseless words—even though it itself strayed from the principal aims stated in its charter and, in practice, found itself compelled to devote a large part of its time to one task, namely choosing equivalents for foreign words (15).

Figures such as Taqizadeh, Mokhber-al-Saltaneh Hedayat, Eqbal Ashtiani, Habib Yaghma'i, and Ahmad Kasravi believed that the Academy did more to damage Persian than to defend and preserve it—though the opposition of these intellectuals was not uniform. Some denied the Academy from the ground up; others opposed its performance and procedures in Iran. These thinkers declared their opposition more openly after September 1941 and the fall of Reza Shah—perhaps because, in the atmosphere of repression during his era, no one dared to oppose his decrees. The lack of uniformity in the positions of the intellectuals of that period shows that the Academy's working methods were not a matter of consensus and approval for a significant portion of the intelligentsia; even some who endorsed and supported it were not very pleased with some of its activities. Of course, many critiques and oppositions were expressed openly only after Reza Shah's fall. In addition to the repression of Reza Shah's era, many elites gradually reached maturity, prudence, and moderation and changed or corrected their earlier positions. A review of the historical trajectory of the historical articles written by these intellectuals demonstrates this reality.

Because Reza Shah pressured the Academy to coin many words, and because the words that were approved had to be presented to the Shah, the use of those words was then declared compulsory by circular; intellectuals expressed varied reactions to this interference by Reza Shah (15).

Other intellectuals, like Foroughi, acted very cautiously in the face of Reza Shah's pressure to coin new words. During his tenure as president of the Academy, he sought—through prudent measures and by coining military terms, which particularly attracted Reza Shah's attention—to some extent to win the Shah's satisfaction despite the Academy's slow pace, and he did not allow words to be coined rapidly and inappropriately.

Conclusion

Eqbal Ashtiani, while one of the Academy's regular members, was also among its opponents; he considered his membership compulsory and seldom attended meetings. With sharp criticisms, he targeted the Academy and its performance. He regarded the establishment of the Academy as a factor in undermining the very roots of the Persian language and considered the work of word-coiners a bland *shal-e qalamkar*. He saw the Academy's creation as an

action of extremist nationalists who exploited the patriotic sentiments of Reza Shah and other state officials to found this institution. In his view, rather than contributing to the vitality and preservation of Persian, the Academy rendered it vacuous and destructive. Some even held that its establishment became a vehicle and pretext for fighting Islam.

The Academy of Iran answered the needs of the day in the sense that, on the one hand, extremist purists in government offices and newspapers, in the name of writing in Persian, were coining incorrect and meaningless words and introducing them into the language—so much so that even within a single office several supposedly Persian words were coined for one and the same concept, and matters had reached the point where no one understood what another had written. On the other hand, society needed scientific terminology and new expressions; during Reza Shah's era, with the increasing influx of industrial products and the spread of foreign terms and their often Arabic equivalents, this need reached its peak. Another factor influencing the Academy's establishment was Reza Shah's nationalist thinking and his strong interest in promoting the culture and language of pre-Islamic Iran, viewing the rejection of foreign and Arabic words and their replacement with *pure Persian* as one of the ways to achieve his goal. However, because of inexperience in the art of word-coinage, an inclination toward purism, and Reza Shah's quantitative pressure, the Academy was compelled to coin new words—some unsuitable and incorrect—that were never accepted by the people; just as some were rightly accepted, and others, although incorrect, were also accepted. The Academy's word-coinage proceeded to such an extent that some men of letters and scholars—who themselves were members and founders—began to criticize its functioning.

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All authors equally contributed to this study.

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Transparency of Data

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