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## Shāmlū, Aḥmad

**Aḥmad Shāmlū** (b. Tehran 1925, d. Karaj 2000), whose pen name was A. Bāmdād, was an *engagé* Iranian poet, translator, and folklorist. Shāmlū was also one of the foremost promoters of literary culture and intellectual life in Iran in the twentieth century. Due to his father's employment as an army officer, Aḥmad Shāmlū lived in several cities in Iran during his childhood and thus became acquainted with the diverse linguistic and cultural traditions of his country. This experience inspired the author in the years around 1938 to begin a systematic collection of beliefs, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions of the various peoples and ethnicities of Iran, that was to give rise later to an encyclopedic work on Iran's popular culture, *Kitāb-i kūcha* ("The book of the lane"), which he would continue to work on tirelessly until his death with the collaboration of his wife, Āydā Sarkīsiyān (Sarkīsiyān, 635–50).

Since his youth, Shāmlū had been a passionate reader of non-Persian works. In the 1950s he began a prolific translation activity, mainly from French and Russian, which exercised a strong influence

on his poetry, not only in terms of content but also from a formal and stylistic point of view (Barāhinī, 336). After his first experiments in the footsteps of the poet Nīmā Yūshij (1897–1960) with the so-called "new poetry" (*shī'r-i naw*)—which, between the two world wars, saw the introduction in the Persian poetic landscape of the free verse, which used strongly symbolic language and included innovative content—Shāmlū developed his own original poetic expression (Langrūdī, 1/14–38). In fact, he invented a different pattern of poetry (only partially derived from Nīmā's), which was intended to revolutionise the form more radically and which would later be known as *shī'r-i shāmlūī* (Shāmlūyan poetry). One of the peculiarities of this revolution is that it is based on the principles of the so-called "*shī'r-i sipūd*" (white poetry), mostly in prose form and of European inspiration, a poetry which, although with some scanty precedents in Iran (Barāhinī, 350; Kadkanī, 52–3), matured with Shāmlū and later became canonical in contemporary Persian poetry.

Experimentalism in Shāmlū's poetry manifests itself also in lexical experiments, for example, in the valorisation of