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## IMPORTANT NOTICE

**All written submissions to Persian Heritage with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer's name, address and telephone number.**



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

A year has passed since June 22, 2009, when Iran's citizens demonstrated in the city streets in an effort to have their votes counted. The result of their bravery was devastating. Their government didn't listen. Instead it watched their citizens fall victim to their bullets and executions after speedy trials. The government watched their people cry with pain from the death of a loved one and they showed no remorse. They watched their citizens live in fear of being arrested, thrown in prison and tortured. Nothing has changed positively for the innocent people of Iran, yet they continue their silent struggle for freedom and democracy.

The anniversary of the June 22, 2009 just passed and it too was silent. The 24 hour coverage by the news media, during the event, was reduced to a minute, it was as if nothing happened except for the lack of a better word, "cat fights" erupting between the western powers and the present Iranian administration and greater suppression and oppression for Iran's citizens. New sanctions were imposed by the United States with Iranian "friends" such as Kuwait, UAE, France, Germany and England following. They decreased the number of Iranian airlines from landing in their respective airports and also refused to refuel all in the name of "security." God only knows what will happen in Iran in the weeks to come. How will the west retaliate? What is the future of Iran and Iranians throughout the world?

Thirty years ago there was a revolution in Iran to change the regime. They believed their actions would result in a democracy, that bring to themselves and their country greater human rights and freedoms. The leader at that time was to step in and then continue to Qum where he would deliver spiritual and religious guidance to Iranians. Politics were to be left in the hands of the politicians. As we know this is not how history unfolded for Iran. Instead religion did not enhance the country but ruled. Conditions for most Iranians worsened and rights and freedoms diminished. Those hurt most were the brave women who made so many sacrifices for their country during the years of turmoil. Executions and government terrorism against its own citizens increased. More people were arrested, tortured, beaten and executed. Even those who had already served sentences for "so called" crimes, different political views, were gathered and placed back in prison and eventually executed. It sickens me to see such an abuse of power by a nation towards its own. How

does the fear of change or loss of control make individuals turn into monsters against their own?

The eight-year war with Iraq left millions of its citizens dead or physically and mentally maimed. Instead of the government using the unity of its citizens at that time to build the country and bring it back into the modern world they continued to destroy the image of Iran and its citizens. Instead of trying to erase its negative world image after the hostage taking, they increased their rhetoric and threats. Their action has resulted in the west finding an excuse, the possibility of Iran developing a nuclear weapon, to increase sanctions and pressure on Iran.

This past July additional sanctions were announced increasing the hardships of the people in Iran. More destructive than the sanctions, I fear, are the unknown events that are in the future, such as a military strike. A military intervention in Iran could possibly leave the Iranian people and Iran in the same state as their neighbor Iraq. The people of Iraq were told and believed that with the removal of Saddam Hussein and the arrival of the "Angels of Freedom" that they would live in peace with the west and in a democratic state. As we have seen the best plans of mice and men often do not come to fruition in the time expected. Yes, the immediate removal of Saddam did not come with a great loss of human life but the years that have followed have not been as kind. Destruction continues with little change expected in the near future.

Will Iran be the next to experience such events? Will Iran, as the Shah once said, be broken up and called *Iranestan*. Up until now Iranian patriots have stopped this from happening, but with the present Iranian government giving the west the fuel they need to spark a military strike, Iran may be on the brink of division. Iran could become the next Yugoslavia.

If my fears become a reality, where does one place the blame, on the innocent people of Iran or on the governing body, who every day takes away more rights of its citizens, especially the women? How much of the world knows that women are punished with financial fines for the way they wear their *hejab* and for wearing makeup and painting their nails. These fines are placed in the name of religion. Imposing these religious dress codes and cultures on its citizens is not the way to unify a nation. Nor will having your citizens live in fear of arrest and execution for voicing their opinion or asking for their rights to be acknowledged bring the nation together.



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The present government of Iran is fighting on two fronts, the first battle is against its own people and the second is their rhetorical war with the mighty powers in the west. Do they understand that the west is patiently waiting for the excuse to strike, an excuse that becomes more and more a reality with each of Iran's governmental actions. How much longer can this war of nerves between this government and its people and the west continue? How long will anyone believe that within the country there is tranquility and silence?

On the anniversary of the June 22, 2009 the Iranian government showed their insecurity. In anticipation of a mass demonstration against the government by its citizens the government filled the squares and streets with tanks, police and soldiers. They were ready to again confront the demonstrators, their citizens, with bullets and clubs. Much to their surprise no one came. The demonstrators were silent and what had left for the world to see was the governments "rhetorical" might. The silence and restraint of the Iranian citizens showed on that day resulted in a greater impact than thousands risking their lives and perhaps falling to the bullets of their government.

A few days ago I was driving with my wife and three of our grandchildren. The boys were in the back of the car acting out a Star Wars episode. Each was a separate character and each was trying to destroy the other. My wife turned to them and said that this violence and shouting at each other was not nice. The oldest replied that they were Star War characters and they had to be destructive and violent. Tristen, the youngest, chimed saying that he wanted to be violent too and started shouting. Seconds later he asked my wife what the word violent meant. Here was a four year old child using and acting out a word and did not understand its meaning. Is that what the government of Iran is doing, acting out and not realizing the results of its actions? Do they not remember what happened to Iraq because of Saddam Hussein's acting out about his "weapons of mass destruction?" He thought that the west would run in fear but that was never an option. If this is the position the Iranian government is taking with the west and the powers surrounding them, they are mistaken. They say history repeats itself and this has been proven over and over again. Unless the present government in Iran changes its attitude in all directions I fear that they are, as the Persian expression goes, "playing with the tail of the lion." When the lion or lions decide that they have had enough they will turn and bite, NOT ROAR. I believe the bite will be strong and large. I believe that this bite may very well be the bite that ends Iran as we know it today. To this I say what a sad day for Iran and the world. On the other hand maybe this is what the present leaders want. Maybe they believe that this would give them a legitimate reason to further suppress and place greater burdens on their citizens. Maybe they believe this is a way to prolong their power and reign.

What Iran's leaders need to understand is today the world works in collaboration. Certainly there were times and will be times ahead when the US, China, Western Europe, Russia etc. will disagree. As "civilized" nations problems will be worked out at tables rather than on a battlefield.

Germany was destroyed by the rhetoric of one man. Japan's inability to negotiate resulted in severe destruction. Yet both were able to come out of their dictatorships and rebuild their nations to levels of prosperity. Do the Iranian leaders have these qualities? Have they been able to recover after wars of destruction. A true leader must have the wisdom to lead a country and know when to extend a hand out in friendship without losing its own identity. A true leader will also know how to graciously accept the hand reached out to them. Iran has had ample opportunities to do this but, for unknown reasons they have not used them. So I will continue to pray every night, as I have done since the day I left Iran, that Iran will be spared from division and that the Iranian people, who I love, will live in peace and free from suppression.

*Shahrokh Alesani*



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**A THANK YOU FROM TEHRAN**

Dear Editor:

I would like to take this chance to thank and appreciate you and your team for the hard work on publishing such an excellent Persian journal, which is and will remain as one of the best journals for all those who love Persia and Persian heritage. Please accept Prof. Amin's best regards and greetings from Tehran.

Kind Regards,  
*Hojjat Heydari*  
Executive Director,  
Hafiz Monthly

**APPRECIATION**

Dear Editor:

Your publication is one of the nicest ones out there. Thank you for introducing

our rich heritage so beautifully for generations.

With appreciation,  
*Arma Shahidi*

**CENSUS 2010**

Dear Editor:

Census 2010 and the campaign by more than 30 Iranian Non Profit organizations and IABA, and several other organizations and the cooperation of the US Census Bureau was not for what you have interpreted the cause in your Spring 2010 editorial. Please note that the US Census Bureau has a similar collaboration for Hispanics and others as well. If I am not wrong the US Census has about 300 persons hired in the Bureau to help the Hispanic community. For Iranians, who are numerical-

ly an unknown minority, the US Census Bureau has hired only 3 people in California. All we hear about Iranians is that they are well off and the highest educated minority in the United States.

This is true but Mr. Ross Mirkarimi a senior supervisor of the City and County of San Francisco, who is a possible candidate for Mayor and future Governorship in California, in a discussion had this to say: "I know how many Koreans, Indians, and Hispanics live in my district, but I don't know how many Iranians are in my town." The same story goes for Mr. Mark Ameli who is running for a judgeship position in the county of Los Angeles and would love to know how many Iranians are

in the county and where the concentration of the Iranians are, but the information is vague.

What I am trying to state here is that the campaign by Iranian organizations was to make us aware of the importance of SARSHOMARI. During the last Census in 2000, Iranians did not participate very well and this caused us to be counted as 633,400, do you believe that? The benefits of this Census and to be counted are numerous, whether we are Aryan or not, or Arab or Turk blood runs in our body it is not important for this issue. At this time our heritage is as important as it is, it is history not the reality of life for us as a minority in this country today.

Sincerely, *Reza*



## CENSUS 2010

Dear Mr. Ahkami,

First, I want to congratulate you on the mighty achievement of your 15<sup>th</sup> year publishing the wonderful magazine Persian Heritage. The quality, depth, and integrity of this honorable publication is indeed impressive and as a half-Iranian-half-American fully bi-lingual and genetically 100% Iranian-American, I must commend you on the quality of your English sections, the excellent Persian is of course, a given. This makes it all the more puzzling, when I read your recent editorial. As a faithful reader, I feel it is my duty to point out the more disconcerting areas that I think you should reconsider. Regarding the Census versus Minority Status. The two sirs, are entirely unrelated. The Census and the coalition of 47+ organizations (many of whom you applauded), who have thought about it, and then chosen to encourage their constituencies to support the Iranian-American initiative, cannot be wrong. The simple goal of this coalition has been to ensure that the 338,000 official numbers which you yourself suggest is 1.5 Million, be merely certified by the US Census Bureau. That is it. Nothing has ever been said about linking us to a Minority Status initiative. Since there is no possible way to count Iranians if we mark ourselves "White" we must check the "other" option. Marking "other" is not as you suggested "belittling" us. In fact it will empower us with the responsibility to properly represent our (hopefully larger) number. All of this, is to correctly set the Official Tally. 338,000 are nothing. It is especially un-useful if it is wrong. Especially, an official tally with the concentration statistics provided by the US Census, can help us better identify not only WHO to deliver important Iranian Community programs to (Centers, Schools, and programs for children), but more importantly WHERE (the most Iranians and their children live). While your faith in the generosity of Iranian Millionaires is naively high, and it is true Iranian Wealth has gone to many worthy non-Iranian causes (in some cases literally out of this world!), the fact is that they haven't given much to the US. Primary among the reasons why they don't give, is that they aren't sure the person hitting them up, is honest, and truly represents any large majority or reasonable populace of Iranians. The Census, a 3rd party, non-Iranian venture, can guarantee whom and where we are, best. This will undoubtedly address the trust issue, and help the rich open their wallets, and warm their hearts a bit more than the chilly reception we tend to get from them today.

With regards to Minority Status, keep in mind that a Minority is nothing more than a Sociological Group, smaller than the Majority. I remember a similar argument to the one you made in your piece, 15 years ago, in another discussion on Iranian Minority Status. The argument then, and I think I hear the same Aryan tone now, was that, "Why do we need Minority Status? We're not Black!" I think that we absolutely must gain Minority status. If for nothing more than our own salvation. This misplaced pride, and naive assumption assumes that because Iranians are technically White (a fact that most White people and employers who discriminate, are very surprised to learn!), that they aren't being discriminated against in the US. This kind of thinking unfortunately prevents us from not only getting through the security at airports (and possibly having to avoid traveling through Arizona entirely!), but achieving even more greatness in the US.

Greatness we deserve without the real risk and threat of discrimination. This is not a hand out, this is a right. The very fact that we are Iranian in the US not just requires, but DEMANDS that we claim this right. As a nation, wherever we are, we must stand up for, and represent Iran, just as you have suggested. This means clearly taking our right as a minority in the US, and representing that with honor and pride and responsibility. While we debate and discuss US Sanctions and the possibility of war, we should also be expressing our outrage and demand change back home just as loudly. While there are obvious US Government contract requirements that benefit minority-owned businesses, and it is true that lucrative deals can benefit some Iranian businesses as a result of gaining Minority Status, a majority of Iranians will reap no such benefit. However, their CLEAR (as opposed to currently hidden) presence as Minority Iranians in their companies, and communities will allow the kind of revelation you mentioned (Iranian people being recognized by the world separately from the IRI) to expand and grow, and more importantly clarify what it means to be a true Iranian in the world today. As you said, "We need to learn from the Jewish, Armenian and Bahai communities." Do you know that in the average California School History curriculum, they teach students about Inca, Aztec, China, Greece, Rome, and Egypt, Then skip to US History, then WWI, WWII, and end on "the Clinton years", but that they do not even brush up against the one single culture that spanned all of these combined? I'll give you a hint. It starts the name of your magazine. Now, which way do you think would be easier to get Persia taught in the classroom? With Minority Status or without? It certainly hasn't happened in 30 years without. Now I am absolutely positive that you don't, but even I don't have 30 more years left to wait. "If you want something done right, you've got to get up and do it yourself." Finally, regarding the Persian, Arab and Turk arguing about the spelling of Grape and the NoRooz (correct) NowRuz (very embarrassing spelling) debate. First, your fable is wrong. While I am sure the Persian, Arab and Turk spellings in their native languages were different, the three would most certainly agree that the correct English spelling however is GRAPE. Second, the NowRuz spelling is NOT as you suggested the Afghani spelling. The Yarshater group pressing for this spelling contended that this spelling was an entirely New spelling that offered all of the cultures that share it, a combined new English spelling of NoRooz. As you can see, this makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Never mind, it is yet another example of typical Iranian unauthorized representation. Reckless misrepresentation in this case. NowRuz, does not yield the correct English phonetic pronunciation. NoRooz does. If we want the average English speaker to be able to pronounce it unaided, we must use NoRooz. Thank you for indulging a loyal fan of your publication, I sincerely hope that I have opened your eyes to the possibility that the Census is a valid effort, and some very real and compelling reasons why a discussion on Minority Status might be a reasonable one. As far as NowRuz/NoRooz goes, I'll leave that for next year's annual debate! All I can say is Happy Hanukkah, Chanukah, Hanukah, Hannukah, Chanukah, Channukah, Hanukka, Hanukka, Hannuka, Hannukkah, Channuka, Xanuka, Hannukka, Channukkah, Channukka, Chanuqa!

Sincerely, *Bruce Behrouz Bahmani*

**ARAVANE REZAEI:  
I AM PROUD TO BE IRANIAN**



Newly-crowned Madrid Tennis Masters 2010 champion Aravane Rezaei said she was very proud of her Iranian lineage. Rezaei, who defeated number two Venus Williams with a stunning 6-2, 7-5 victory, wants more prestigious titles in the future. "I want to be number one. In the time being I am training eight

hours a day to prepare for the Roland Garros," the French national Rezaei said. The 23-year-old with Iranian roots added, "I am proud of being Iranian and we speak Farsi in our home. I will return to my motherland after Roland Garros to talk to the Iranian reporters," she added. "I did my best in the Spain tournament and beat all my rivals in the one-week competitions, I am proud of myself for that," Rezaei said. Rezaei had only claimed WTA Tour titles at Strasbourg and Bali prior to Madrid. She gained victories over former world number one's Junstine Henin and Jelena Jankovic in the prestigious tournament.

**NITA FARAHANY  
APPOINTED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL  
COMMISSION FOR THE STUDY  
OF BIOETHICAL ISSUES**

May 11, 2010, Washington D.C. – On April 7, 2010, Iranian American Nita Farahany was appointed to the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues by President Barack Obama. The commission advises the President on bioethical issues that may emerge from advances in biomedicine and related areas of science and technology. The commission works to identify and promote policies



and practices that ensure scientific research, health care delivery, and technological innovation are conducted in an ethical manner. Dr. Farahany is an Associate Professor of Law and Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. Her research focuses on the legal, philosophical, and social issues arising from developments in the biosciences, particularly behavioral genetics and neuroscience. She graduated from Dartmouth College with a B.A. in genetics, cell and developmental biology, and from Harvard University with an A.L.M. in biology. Dr. Farahany earned her J.D., M.A., and Ph.D. in Philosophy of Biology and Jurisprudence at Duke University. (PAAIA)

**A FORGOTTEN IRANIAN LEGACY:  
THE PARTHIAN BATTERY**

A common misconception about the Parthians is that they lacked interest in the development of learning, science and technology. This belief is derived from the paucity of the available evidence, the lack of archaeological studies as well as subjective bias.

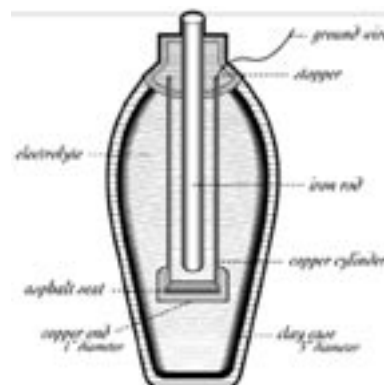
Technology certainly continued to evolve during Parthian rule. A dramatic discovery of a tomb by German Archaeologist Wilhelm Konig at Khujut Rabu (near modern Baghdad in Iraq) in 1936 found two near intact jars dated to the Parthian dynasty (approx. 250 BC-224 AD) which are possibly the world's oldest batteries.

There have been a number of reconstructions of this ancient device in western laboratories and universities.

Nevertheless, not all historians accept Konig's 1940 report that the items were "batteries". What is generally agreed upon is that the "batteries" were used to electroplate items by mainly putting one layer of metal upon another (e.g. gold upon silver). This technique is still in evidence in many traditional metalworking shops of Iran today (i.e. Isfahan, Tabriz).

If the jars were indeed "batteries" in the modern sense, then Count Alassandro Volta's invention of the modern battery may have been predated by 1,600 years or more.

**A Parthian battery. Note the clay jar which featured an iron cylinder surrounded by a cylinder of copper.**



**A schematic representation of the ancient Parthian battery.**

## Iran's Simurgh (the Persian Phoenix) and the Zen Buddhist culture of Asia

The largest statue of the Buddha in the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan as it appeared under repairs circa 1975. This was destroyed by explosives in March 2001 by the Taliban movement. There are serious studies underway to reconstruct and refurbish the site as much as possible. The Iranian kingdom of the Kushans, under Kanishka the Great, did much to promote Buddhism.

(submitted by: Kaveh Farrokh)



## Hot Air Balloons Festival in Shiraz, Iran

Photos by Amir Hossein Zolfaghari, ISNA

For the first time in Iran, 12 hot air balloons flew over the skies of the city of Shiraz in southern Iran on May 28. This international ballooning festival was organized by Shiraz municipality with



the cooperation of other organizations. Professional balloon riders from European countries participated in this festival which was attended by Shiraz residents. The 12 balloons took off at the same time from two spots, Hafezieh stadium and the Medical Sciences University. After flying over the city

for about two hours, the balloons landed at different spots. This festival was held during Shiraz's Cultural Week with the goal of promoting balloon riding and tourism in Shiraz and Iran and creating a recreational



environment for the residents of the city.

## Iran to establish association of businesswomen

Source: Tehran Times, Women's Desk



An association of Iranian businesswomen will be established in order to create more opportunities for women to participate actively in business and social life, the commerce minister announced here recently.

Speaking at a meeting of the Council of Iranian Businesswomen, which was held last week to mark the national women's week (May 28 - June 3, 2010), Mahdi Ghazanfari called for concerted efforts to increase women's participation in different arenas, notably business and economy.

He further put stress on studying women's problems in commercial fields, Iran Women News Agency (IWNA) reported.

On work at home women, the minister emphasized the need for providing them consultation services by the members of the association of businesswomen.

"Women's role in society is of greater importance than men's," Ghazanfari quoted from the late Imam Khomeini's speeches, highlighting women's significant responsibility for training next generation of society.

He went on to say that after the victory of the Islamic Revolution (1979), women have had a greater involvement in public activities giving them pride and self-respect.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister called Hazrat Fatima (SA) as the best role model for Muslim women, and referring to the challenges face women in today's societies, he stressed the importance of providing an existing role model for Iranian girls.

## HIRAD ABTAHI

Hirad Abtahi is the first Legal Adviser of the Presidency of the International Criminal Court (ICC), where he has also acted as Chef de Cabinet in the Immediate Office of the President. Having served the first three Presidency of the ICC, Hirad Abtahi has been extensively involved in this first permanent international criminal court's institution building process. His varying responsibilities include the management of the Immediate Office of the President; advising the President and Presidency on managerial oversight and administration of the court's Chambers (such as budget preparation); coordinating with the Office of the Prosecutor and the Registry on matter of common concerns (such as the preparation and implementation of the ICC's Strategic Plan); as well as representation of the ICC to the outside (conducting the negotiation of international agreements). Prior to joining the ICC, Hirad Abtahi served the Chambers of the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), where he was extensively involved in first ever trial of a Head of State, namely Slobodan Milosevic. Hirad Abtahi was also a legal consultant with the Geneva based International Commission of Jurists, on behalf of which he advised the ICTY Registry on issues such as the relocation of victims and witnesses, the conditions of detention of accused persons and the enforcement of sentences in third countries. He has lectured and published in English, French, and Persian on human rights, humanitarian law, and international criminal law. This has included teaching at The Hague Academy of International Law's 2008 winter session. He has a Diplôme d'études approfondies in international law and has been educated in Iran, France, Canada and England. Hirad Abtahi is an advisory and editorial board member of a number of international law academic publications.

**Worldwide Protests to Mark One-Year Anniversary of Iran's Disputed Election**



(excerpts from the full article [United4Iran.com](http://United4Iran.com) 06/01/10)

Since Iran's disputed election nearly one year ago, over two thousand prisoners of conscience remain imprisoned. They are often denied access to legal representation or their families, and many have been charged with moharebeh, "waging war against God," which can carry the death penalty. Show trials for prisoners – young and old, male and female, rich and poor – are broadcast on state television, with the defendants often gaunt from mistreatment.

**About: United4Iran (U4I)**

United4Iran (U4I) is a non-partisan global network of Iranian and non-Iranian individuals and human rights activists working to promote fundamental human and civil rights in Iran. U4I was formed to help coordinate and amplify the voices of activists, academics, NGOs, artists, and others who work or desire to work on issues related to human and civil rights in Iran.



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corporate mark as a symbol for communications. It was then positioned as an easy-to-read corporate mark in line with the establishment of the brand symbol, in 1997.

The company's name, "Mazda," derives from Ahura Mazda, a god of the earliest civilizations in West Asia. We have interpreted Ahura Mazda, the god of wisdom, intelligence and harmony, as the symbol of the origin of both Eastern and Western civilizations, and also as a symbol of automobile culture. It incorporates a desire to achieve world peace and the development of the automobile manufacturing industry. It also derives from the name of our founder, Fujiro Matsuda.

(taken from the internet)

**INFINITY AWARD in Photojournalism honor REZA for his latest report on Afghanistan**

**"ONCE UPON A TIME, THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE"**

On May 10, 2010, during a gala dinner in New York, Reza received the prestigious Infinity Award of ICP (International Center of Photography) in the category of Journalism for his series of photographs on Afghanistan; "Once upon a time, the Russian Empire."

Infinity Award was created in 1985 and its recipients are photographers whose works invite us to view the world differently.



**Iranian American City Council Member Spurs Largest Tree Planting Initiative in N. Texas History**

May 4, 2010, Richardson, TX - For Richardson City Council member Amir Omar, a simple idea has turned into a massive campaign. While running last summer, Omar took note of the lack of shade on certain trails in his city and decided to do something about it. With widespread support from corporate sponsors, nonprofits, and volunteers, Amir Omar's simple goal of providing shade has turned into the largest tree planting initiative Northern Texas has ever seen.

**BILL TARGETING IRANIANS SEEKING VISAS STALLS IN CONGRESS**

The Stop Terrorists Entry Program (STEP) Act, a controversial piece of legislation targeting Iranians seeking American visas, appears to have stalled in Congress in the face of vocal opposition from the Iranian-American community and harsh media criticism.

**ADMIRABLE**

Dear Editor.

Bravo to your Poem; it was fluid, heart warming and picturesque. Your editorials are always good, although I do not necessarily agree with some of your thoughts.

The magazine constantly improves. It is admirable how you can do this, both in English and Persian. It takes TONS of dedication. Thank you.

*Jahangir Jon Sedaghatfar*

# Stolen Statues Spark Conspiracy Theories

Tehran swirling with rumors about who lies behind theft of bronze monuments.

BY RAHA TAHAMI - IRAN

INSTITUTE FOR WAR & PEACE REPORTING (IWPR), (May 10, 2010)

In the febrile political atmosphere of Tehran, the disappearance of at least ten large bronze statues is being blamed on religious radicals, revolutionary guards, even British art dealers, according to which rumor you listen to.

The disappearances began in March and were regarded by city officials as petty theft. But the thieves would have needed cranes and heavy equipment to dislodge and remove the statues and yet no one saw anything, even though they were in streets and parks and mostly on open view.

On May 3, when the number of stolen statues in Tehran had reached nine, the municipality finally called in the police. Tehran police chief Hossein Sajedi said, "The thieves used special equipment to pull off these heists and this is an organized crime."

The statues were mostly not more than 20 years old and are said to be worth 10,000 to 12,000 US dollars each.

Some of the missing items were busts of prominent Iranian revolutionary figures from the early 20th century, like Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan. Other targets included prominent linguist, researcher and writer Mohammad Moin; Ali Shariati, an intellectual who played an important role in the 1979 Islamic revolution; and Persian physician and philosopher Avicenna. A bust of 10th century mystic and poet Abu Saeed Abolkheir was also among the stolen pieces.

The Sattar Khan bust had sat in front of the security post of the city park of the same name. Park maintenance staff initially claimed it had been taken away for repairs but later admitted it had been stolen. The Mohammad Moin bust had only been in place for a month.

One attempted theft - that of the statue of the 10th century astronomer Abdolrahman Sufi - was foiled by municipal workers when it was spotted by traffic control cameras. The culprits got away.

As the thefts mounted, speculation and conspiracy theories began to swirl.

Tehran mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who was previously the police chief, insisted rather cryptically that the motive for the crime was not the bronze of the statues, "Ordinary people would not commit such an act. The issue is more complicated than it appears."

Hossein Bonyadi, the deputy head of Tehran city council, seemed to agree that these were no ordinary crimes, "How is it possible that a 400 kilogram statue is easily stolen with a crane and nobody finds out?"

Hamid Shans, a prominent sculptor, wondered pointedly why the police had not been able to arrest anyone in connection with the thefts, "It is interesting that the police with their level of surveillance and authority in municipal security have never encountered the thieves."

Most were installed in locations close to surveillance and traffic control cameras and one was near a police station.

The Fars News Agency, which is said to be affiliated with the Iranian Revolution Guards Corps, IRGC, subscribed to another theory - that the hidden hand of Britain was behind

the thefts and claimed British art dealers were involved.

Many Tehran citizens, however, believed the crimes were the work of a radical religious group with links to the IRGC and the Basij militia, a conviction rooted in an incident in the city of Isfahan in 2002. Statues there were either stolen or set on fire and a radical paramilitary group headed by a young cleric was declared to be responsible.

While Islam has forbidden, and in some cases banned, sculpture, seeing it as a form of idolatry, Iran has not had any problem with this form of art. The installation of statues first began under the secular reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Statues of him were removed after the 1979 Iranian revolution, but other sculptures were left intact despite opposition from fundamentalist groups. A statue of the great Persian poet Ferdowsi was beheaded after the revolution but was restored after a public outcry.

Pressure from radical clerics caused sculpting to experience a decade of stagnation after the revolution but that has eased and the art form flourishes now. Tehran has more than 500 statues and more are being installed.

Rumors that fundamentalist groups affiliated to the IRGC and Basij militia and working to orders from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei were responsible for the monument thefts spurred the authorities into action.

Jahannews website, which belongs to conservative lawmaker and former head of the student Basij Alireza Zakani, republished a decree by Khamenei permitting sculpture.

"If the statues were the embodiment of a haram (religiously forbidden) act, then the Supreme Leader as the Just Jurisprudent would issue the necessary decree [banning statues and sculpting]," it said.

However, this website also did not rule out the possibility that the crimes could be the work of an autonomous group, and went on to say, "But [those behind the thefts] must know that their actions have no religious justification based on the decree of the Supreme Leader."

Notwithstanding the regime denial of any involvement in the thefts, some analysts believe that elements within the administration had staged the crimes with the aim of further unsettling the population.

"It appears that the theft of the statues is part of a psychological warfare campaign to test the endurance of society," said one political analyst, who preferred not to be named. "This creates fear and terror to some extent. It shows that even statues lack security. The interesting part is that the police, with their silence, have made matters more complicated."

The affair has even sparked dry humor from a poster on the website Balatarin, who linked the thefts to last June's controversial re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, "The one behind stealing the statues in Tehran is the same one who stole our votes last year."

*Raha Tahami is the pseudonym of an Iranian journalist and social affairs analyst in Tehran.*

On February 12, 2008 a very powerful car bomb exploded under a sports utility car in which Mughniyeh was riding in Damascus, Syria. As we mentioned in the previous article he was the most wanted terrorist in the world before Osama Bin Laden. He was also the most wanted and elusive terrorist, a man with an FBI price tag of \$5 million dollars on his head, which was increased to \$25 million. He had masterminded many of Hezbollah's operations beginning in the 1980's and 1990's forward. The most devastating attacks were the attacks of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, 241 Marines died and many more were wounded. At the same time they also bombed the French Embassy leaving 58 soldiers dead and they bombed the US Embassy.

Robert Stephem, a Navy diver was beaten to death and his dead body was left on the tarmac during the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847. He was later moved to Iran where he was tortured and killed in the mid-1980's. Twenty-nine people died in the 1992 bombing of Israel's embassy in Buenos Aires and 85 more killed in the 1994 bombing of Jewish Center in BA as well. According to many reports Mughniyeh died in a car bombing, probably orchestrated by Mossad, though Israel denied it. It would be nice to think the CIA was up to this, but we have our doubts. The location of his killing is of special note, and the private intelligence agency staff reports said that he died as he was leaving a meeting at a Syrian intelligence office.

Syrian officials surely knew of his whereabouts and could have arrested him if they really wanted some accommodation with the U.S. At least Mughniyeh will kill no more. Many theories are circulating inside U.S. intelligence agencies on who killed notorious Hezbollah terrorist Emod Mughniyeh. One theory popular

in the Middle East is that the hit was an Israeli intelligence operation. This is possible but unlikely since even though Israel's Mossad has a long arm, the bombing took place in the Syrian capital, considering a very difficult intelligence operating area. A prime suspect is Syria itself, specifically Syrian intelligence agents who would have known Mughniyeh's personal security measures and travel. Syria's government is investigating the killing and recent reports from the region state Damascus is blaming Saudi Arabian agents for the killing, a charge Riyadh has denied. Iran also is suspected. Despite its decades long backing of Mu-

ports. This made it extremely difficult for intelligence operatives to find him and follow him. This guy also orchestrated the war of 2006 between Hezbollah and Israel. His death was very similar to the death of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon. Many believe that the Lebanese Government was extremely upset and might have been involved in Mughniyeh's death, but blaming Israel would not completely satisfy everybody since Israel was not alone to want to see Emod Mughniyeh dead. More than 3-dozen countries including the U.S., which held him high on its most-wanted list. Sean McCormack, State Department spokesman in

thorough, and he was a wicked man, which made him very dangerous.' Mr. Kuperwasser and others, including current U.S. intelligence officials, also said the Hezbollah leader served as a vital emissary between his group and Iran, as well as Hezbollah and Syria. He also maintained significant contact with Palestinian terrorist groups and allegedly oversaw training from some Shiite militiamen fighting U.S. forces in Iraq. "There are a lot of things that only he knew," said Mr. Kuperwasser.

Hilal Khashan, a Lebanese political analyst and professor at the University of Beirut, said Mr. Mughniyeh was more important than the group's better known, spiritual leader Hassan Nasrallah. Emod Mughniyeh was the key military player during the 2006 war with Israel and Hezbollah. Israel naturally was quite concerned that the rockets again would start flowing from Hezbollah over its territory. The Buenos Aires attack, along with the bombing of the Israeli Embassy there, were in retaliation for Israel's assassination of Sayyed Abbas Moussawi. Hezbollah yesterday reminded its followers of Mr. Moussawi's death, and its response.

The former CIA agent that tracked Hezbollah for decades said, "its operatives regularly conduct surveillance of the U.S. embassies in Europe in anticipation of the need for retaliatory strikes.' The U.S. also is concerned. "Whenever there's an event like this involving Hezbollah, we always worry about reaction either in the Middle East or in other theaters," said a senior Bush administration counter terrorist official. The U.S. at the time was still involved to find out more information about another attack on January of that year against the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. In that attack no Americans were killed in the bombing. In recent years the FBI has rolled up Hezbollah's fund raising operations in the States like Michigan and

## HISTORY OF TERRORISM

### PART XVIII

# The Demise of the Heart of Darkness #1

Emod Mughniyeh

DAVID YAZDAN

"if you live by sword, you die by sword."

Unknown

ghniyeh, Tehran, and the theory goes, was not happy with Mughniyeh and wanted him out of the way. This is very unlikely since Mughniyeh was hand picked by Ayatollah Khomeini to do his dirty work. When someone asked who killed Mughniyeh, Mark Kimmitt, deputy assistant defense secretary for the Middle East, said in a brief interview recently that he knows at least 15 theories on the death of this guy, who has been blamed for killing more Americans than anyone else until September 11, 2001.

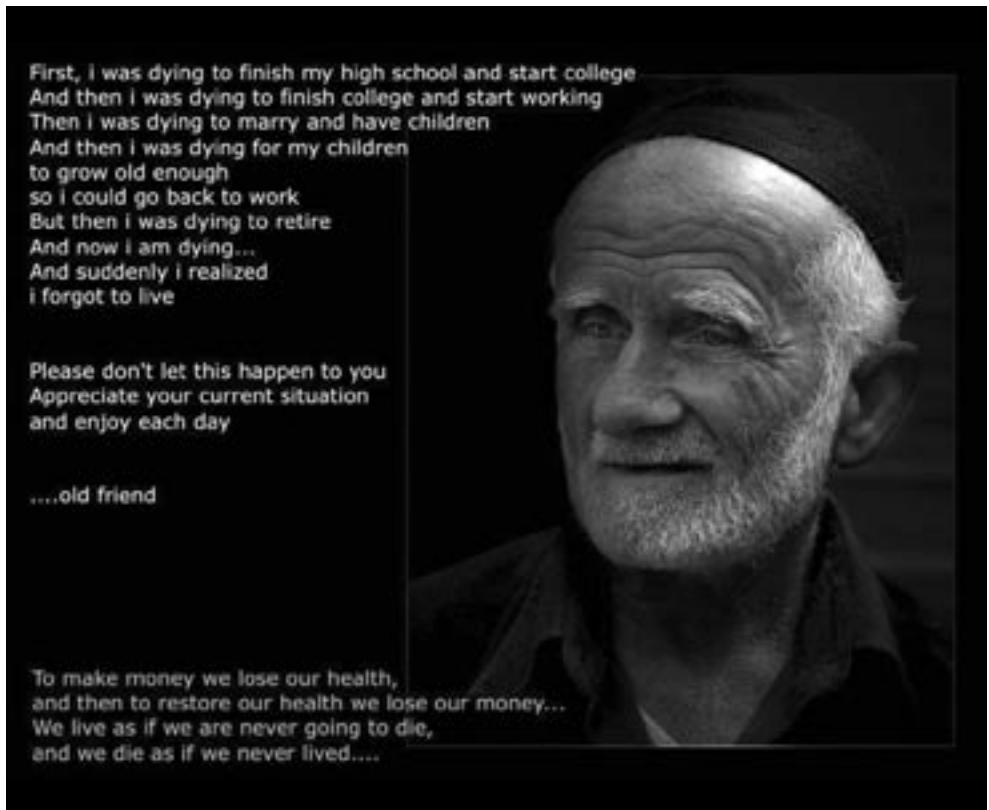
Emod Mughniyeh, a shadowy figure who was among the worlds most wanted men had plastic surgery on his face, changed his name many times and had many different pass-

Washington said, "The world is a better place without this man in it." The Bush administration reintroduced the assassination to U.S. policy after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Senior U.S. counter terrorism officials refused to either confirm or deny an American role in Mughniyeh death. But they hailed it as a major step forward in the fight against terrorist groups. Yossi Kuperwasser, who retired in 2006 as the chief of analysis for Israeli Military intelligence, said Mughniyeh's deadly skills were unmatched amongst all the terrorist. He had an innovative mind, always working out of the box, coming up with new ideas," said Mr. Kuperwasser, who is a retired brigadier general. "He was very creative, very



North Carolina. But many U.S. officials doubt Hezbollah would seek to execute strikes against the U.S., because of concerns of large-scale American reprisals and fear of losing its U.S. revenue stream. Israel however, has a different policy and it has long wielded assassination as a tool of state policy and has had to live with the repercussions, raising a question among many Israelis.

If this was another assassination, will it do more harm than good? The last time Israel killed such a senior Hezbollah official was on Feb. 16, 1992, when an Israeli missile strike assassinated the group's then leader, Abbas Musawi, in his motorcade in southern Lebanon. Following Mr. Musawi's death, Israeli got what many see as far more dangerous adversary, Hassan Nasrallah replaced the slain cleric, according to Israeli analysts and former intelligence officials.



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Human beings are creative vehicles. We are born to create. Our senses are the most precious tools, when dedicated to the grand performance of creative art. We are a species of consciousness that connects us above and beyond mere earthly existence. Our senses constantly reaffirm our existence, "I feel thus I am..." I believe we all are born to do certain things in this world. I was born to suffer and write about it. The moment I laid my eyes on her, I knew my life would change forever. Those eyes, those captivating Persian eyes, took my last breath of life. Those eyes, those eternal stars, had completely encapsulated my entire being. How could I keep aloof from that hidden pain?

I wanted her to know that I felt her presence all these years and believe in eternal love. She has been thunderstruck at this declaration, a declaration of words and actions which are indicative of the most violent emotional experience. And this drama continues to play out in the good old earth. And I watch the drama unfold right in front my own eyes and I start to yearn for eternal happiness.

I am alone in this bodily temple, yet, I am able to watch the wandering clouds that are moving quickly from one side of the sky to the other, and streams, oh so peacefully are flowing in the direction of the sun. I am watching leaves falling incessantly and flowers scattering all around the field. Then why do I feel such emptiness at the bottom of my heart? Why such ironies in life? Have I come to understand them all and pass the knowledge to others?

Moments and memories are incredibly forming in my head and strangely moving right in front of my eyes. I am trying to visualize the future. I feel I have become a little kid again and sometimes I go out of my way and write poetry, like I used to back in Iran. In this second, I am not contemplating anything except my beloved, and with my stillness, I am trying to put my focus on bringing Roya (dream) back to life, back to the same scene and underground passages of our childhood. I appear to be shivering, numbed and suffocated, in the midst of the darkness an overcrowded memory.

I have not yet forgotten the first time I saw Roya, and how I learned to love her. It was many years ago, in one of those neighborhoods in Northern Tehran, where the sweet and the bitter complimented each other at every corner of the



street; where the tender loving Persian poetry was the language of love; where our loving country was illuminated and was bright, like new pottery, all a-glitter on flowery old-tales and astoundingly beautiful love stories yet, very bitter-sweet. My love for her was of a different kind, a kind that stays with you for eternity and becomes your shadow and perhaps a dreadful experience like when you try to dig out a tomb. It produces a painful thought that grabs a hold of you for the rest of your life.

Oh you, Love, the single most important element in all of creation. "Love is the only bow on Life's dark cloud. It is the morning and the evening star. It shines upon the babe, and sheds its radiance on the quiet tomb. It is the mother of art, inspirer of poet, patriot and philosopher. It is the air and light of every heart -- builder of every home, kindler of every fire on every hearth. It was the first to dream of immortality. It fills the world with melody -- for music is the voice of love. Love is the magician, the enchanter that changes worthless things to Joy, and makes royal kings and queens of common clay. It is the perfume of that wondrous flower, the heart, and without that sacred passion, that divine swoon, we are less than beasts; but with it, earth is heaven, and we are gods."

Love needs to flow in many ways among all mankind and all creation, among humans and between humans. We need love in order to function, in order to exist. And very naturally, we long to love and be loved and long to live. But to imagine that she would be able, from sheer rebellion of her senses, to fall into the arms of another man was utterly devastating.

Oh, I speak with such high-flown

words. I only invented them so that I will be able to appease my tormented soul and to appease this insatiable craving for a very distant past. Oh poor men, not knowing that women can be poisonous. And they are bored unless there is a man to entertain them. Yet, I loved her. She was not like any ordinary woman. She was as rare as blue diamond. She was an angel.

My heart beats high in expectation of its fancied joy of, perhaps, seeing her once again. My imagination paints, in alluring colors, her face and her dress. I recoil at the thought of forming a connection between my other-half and me. I must either quit the whole thing or leave myself to the exercise of my free will, which perhaps may coincide with my present wishes.

I sat on a cliff like an innocent bird in an unknown land, and tried so hard to bring her for the last time into my sight. I wanted to jump over the cliff and sacrifice what was left of me, upon her arrival. It was as though my mind had frozen up and resisted this act. So I decided to run away from that place, because I had started to feel nauseated. So, I started to walk aimlessly, but I had not advanced a few steps when suddenly, in front of my astonished and stupefied eyes, I saw her coming toward me with her usual bittersweet smile. She stopped within a few steps of me. This time I had lost myself and didn't know what to do. I wasn't sure whether she was a real person or only a dream! Maybe I was asleep and this was really a dream! It was very confusing because I did not even squeeze my eyes to make her appear. However, I could clearly see her in the same soft, rosy-gray garment, like the sky that one sometimes sees at twilight in winter, the pink of the sunset veiled by the gray of the snow clouds. It was of a supple, shining cloth, simple in cut, graceful in lines.

It was an incredible feeling. It was exhilarating. Nervously, I looked at her beautiful, soft, shoulder-length silky hair, which complemented her bright, pure pearl-white teeth. I seemed like a baby who had found his pacifier and was content and happy with just having that, yet, I was confused and bewildered. Just imagine being in a place where you are stuck in the middle of an island watching a hurricane moving in your direction with such intensity, only to lift you up and bring you down again. It was a suffocating feeling. I was standing there, utterly

voiceless and motionless. Nothing was uttered between us.

It was as though nature and all its surroundings had been immobilized. A combined feeling of love and a romantic melancholy, clearly had encapsulated the ambiance. It was a moment of celebration of the adored and adorer. It was a momentary glimpse of life in the spirit of imaginary horizons of nostalgia for a past love. It was a picturesque moment of preoccupation with a delightful mysterious trend toward the irrational and the supernatural.

I finally advanced towards her but this time my soul had penetrated her mind and had made her stand still. I stopped a few steps away from her and looked at her carefully. Her big brown eyes widened and they were blinking like the stars. It seemed to me that I had never seen her before. But, how could this be possible? Nevertheless, all the trifles upon which the memories and feelings of my childhood depend were standing right in front of me. I was not sure whether I should admire her or detest her? I thought this was only a vision of her, but it did look like her a bit...a very far and distant resemblance. I wasn't sure if my arm muscles were under my control or not. I assumed if I stretched my arms toward her, they would go right through her body. I was feeling the same old fear again, fear of myself, of my shadow, of her and of death. Suddenly I gathered my strength and uttered these words to her:

*You once said:*

*'I love you'*

*And in this altar,*

*I found love!*

*And I set up the empty space*

*of my childhood,*

*Next to your cradle!*

*Oh! How peaceful*

*and proud it all passed.*

Suddenly I started to touch her hair, hands, and feet and even rubbed her fingers against my body. That gave me such a soothing feeling. In order to get into her mind, I closed my eyes. I wanted to enter her heart and fly away with her to a different planet and never return to reality. I simply wanted to vanish with her into a whirlwind of never ending love and happiness. That feeling ... that feeling of warmth and love filled me up temporarily and I just wanted to rest my head and die on her bosom. The desire to govern my feelings seemed absurd. I

wanted to melt in the ocean of love and be with her for eternity. In the midst of the delirium of passion I was experiencing, the preposterous notions of love, of eternal happiness, seemed unreal. The whole thing seemed anticlimactic.

The feeling of pure joy passed into every vein in my bodily desire. If you took the one thousand best things that ever happened to you in your life and multiplied them by a million, maybe you could get close to this feeling I was having. My heart was palpitating very hard. I could feel my body temperature rising. My life will never be the same. I must find a way to stop the tears for the time being. I must find a way to be strong and support my beloved. I am not sure how many minutes or how many hours passed. When I opened my eyes, I saw her walking away from me. My legs were completely frozen and I couldn't move. I saw her getting farther and farther away from my stagnant eyes and I couldn't do a thing about it. She finally disappeared from my sight. I wondered whether I should cry or if it was a sin to cry! I didn't feel like crying. I just wanted to be alone.

I have had several opportunities in the past to converse with her. But, I have always avoided it until this very moment. I wasn't able to introduce the favorite subject of my heart. Indeed she seemed to be trying to avoid noticing me and that truly disturbed me. Adieu, adieu my love.

I stood a few moments, considering what course to take, though shame and regret had almost taken from me the power of thought. An unusual sensation possessed my body, the sensation of indulging myself in the ocean of grief for a lost love and failure upon failure has come over me. The melancholy, the gloom, had depressed my spirits, and paled every enjoyment of life. So I say farewell to her and everything around me!

*Farewell to the mountains,*

*To the springs,*

*That flew in my mind!*

*To the trees,*

*That blocked the sun from my sight!*

*To the waterways,*

*Which were the long threads*

*of my thoughts!*

*I say farewell,*

*To the pebbles of the streets,*

*That rolled under my feet!*

*I say farewell,*

*To the clamor of the rain,*

*That murmured the song of my love!*

*To the memories,*

*Which were my empty spaces,*

*To the people,*

*Who resembled me!*

*Today, the sound of farewell,*

*Is heard from the sanctuary of God!*

*Like a blossoming flower,*

*Comes out of a cage,*

*And at night with*

*a hundred thousand calls I tell myself,*

*I will say farewell to all these:*

*To the stars that sat on the edge*

*of the roof,*

*And stared at my loneliness,*

*With its fences guarding life*

*and love within!*

*To the bubble filled with water!*

*And to the familiar breathe*

*of my beloved,*

*That slipped in my breath!*

*I say farewell,*

*And in the dust of my notebook!*

*The grief of farewell will be marked!*

*Farewell,*

*To the day that would never come!*

*Farewell,*

*To the grief that would always come!*

*Farewell,*

*To the world that was entrapped in me,*

*Farewell!*

*To the love that would never come!*

*Farewell,*

*To the colorful blossoms*

*of the flowerbed!*

*Farewell,*

*To the graciousness of love!*

*Farewell,*

*To the hair that cast a shadow over me!*

*Farewell,*

*To the dreams that would never come!*

*Farewell*

*To my dream girl "Roya"*

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## Silver Anniversary

**ALI MODABBER (OREGAN)**

*You were sitting on a stool  
Looking like a doll and beautiful.*

*My eyes turned to your face  
Found a thousand reasons  
to chase.*

*My heart no longer  
Under my command  
Jumped towards you for a demand.*

*Using all the strength in my throat  
Softly "hello"  
I invited you for a dance  
It turned out  
to be an eternal invitation.*

*At the end of that night  
You disappeared  
under the moonlight  
With the stolen heart.*

*When I went to my room that night  
Laid down on my bed  
Turned over and over in my mind.*

*From that day thinking of you  
Became my pleasure  
I kept the memory of that night  
Like a treasure.*

*Your simple manner  
Your honest open face  
Your bright intelligent eyes*

*When you became  
my affectionate friend  
You revealed to me  
a whole new world of joy  
I chose you as my true companion  
On the road of life.*

*We walked together  
Around the sun twenty-five times.*

*Like the ocean and the rock  
Like the cloud and the field  
Like the rain and the river  
Like the dawn and the breeze  
Like a song and happy tears*

*We will always be two lovers.*

## Precious Fruit

**A SHORT STORY BY: ALI MODABBER**



Digging into the soft surface of my vegetable garden and shoveling the dirt with my hands to plant seeds is my best summer time hobby. One early morning, as I was taking a bow in front of the garden box and enjoying the precious smell of the soil, while my fingers were dancing with worms, I noticed the bright color of some early tomatoes. There were beautiful contrasting colors in the canvas of my garden. I reached and picked the largest and the ripest one. I gently detached the tomato from its vine. I held the tomato in my hands and asked secretly: what are you, where did you come from, what is your origin, why are you red, why are you so good to me?

The sweet and the pleasant scent of this perfect round red thing had an incredible aroma. There must be some magic in nature that makes this fruit so useful to us. Water, dirt, and insects are the causes of all forms of vegetation growing on the earth. With a few glasses of water, a handful of dirt, and a few thousand underground insects life can begin in a place as small as the size of a teapot. Today, nature's instrument brought me a gift that no man could have given to me.

When I was making a sauce with this delicious tomato that day, the smell of cooked tomato took me back fifty years to my childhood memories. Every summer my mother and the neighborhood women got together in the biggest house in our alley to make tomato paste for their families and relatives to consume for the year to come. Boxes of ripe tomatoes were squeezed and boiled in a giant pot in the backyard all day. The pot was heated by charcoal. Every woman took a turn stirring the pot with a wooden snow shovel until the final reduction of all the tomato juices in the pot. What was left in the pot was poured into all sizes and shapes of jars for storage. The jars were sealed the next day after all the paste cooled off completely.

The most interesting part of this group work by all the women in our small community was the joy and pleasure that they had while making organic food together. They would talk about simple events in their lives, tell stories, exchange laughter, and made plans to do other things together for upcoming seasons. Everyone had a complete knowledge of each other's life, their children and hobbies. If there was a problem in someone's life, she would discuss with the others and then help was always there.

As I was enjoying this good memory of my childhood in Iran and the wonderful smell of my garden tomato, it made me think again about all the elements in nature that were involved in the cycle of life to create this red thing. My observation of a tomato made me appreciate nature even more. Thank you Mother. And, thank you for reading sisters and brothers.



### Did you know?

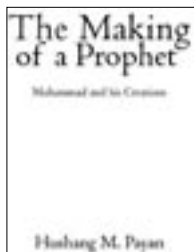
Olive oil was once used for washing the body in some Mediterranean countries. It is still, however, a lot more seldom practiced today.

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**THE MAKING OF A PROPHET,  
MUHAMMAD AND HIS CREATION**  
Hushang M. Payan

Word Association Publishers 2010

If one is not familiar about the creation of Muhammad and his rise to being a prophet, this is the book for you. Without cluttering your read with minutia the author feeds you digestible information on the development of Muhammad. The book also introduces you to the true meaning of the Quran, with its purpose and the reasons it became the main read of the faith.

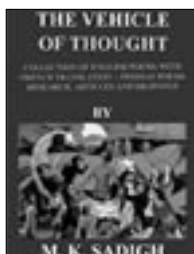


**THE VEHICLE OF THOUGHT**

M.K. Sadigh

Wordclay 2010

If you have read any other writings by this author you know you are in for a wonderful experience. This book is no different. It is a collection of English, French and Persian poems accompanied by brilliant drawings. Sadigh does not just write, he researches and this book is a perfect example of his efforts. Though the subject matter is definitely reader specific it is unique and I am certain most will believe it to be an excellent find.

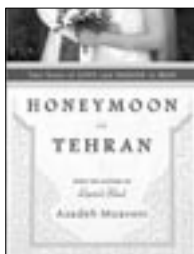


**HONEYMOON IN TEHRAN**

Azadeh Moaveni

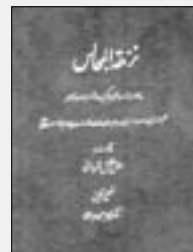
The author's new book, Honeymoon in Tehran (2009), paints a far less optimistic portrait of the country. In this book, Moaveni uses her own experiences as a prism through which to view political developments in Tehran and paints a highly personal picture of Iran's social and political evolution.

Azadeh Moaveni has reported on Iran since 1999 for Time magazine and other publications.



**THE NOZHAT OL MAJALES:  
A MAJOR DOCUMENT PROVING  
THE PERSIAN LEGACY OF  
AZARBAIJAN AND ARRAN**

The Nozhat ol Majales or the "Joy of the Gatherings" is a major document that adds further weight to the history of the Persian legacy in Azarbaijan and the Caucasus. For a Persian language introduction to the Nozhat ol Majales see معرفي نزهه المجالس by Shahrbaraz. This is essentially a compilation of 4,100 quatrains organized in 17 chapters. The book can be downloaded in its textbook form here: Nozhat ol Majales (in pdf). The book was preserved for posterity during the 14th century (circa July 1331) through the efforts of Ismail b. Esfandiyar b. Mohammad b. Esfandiar Abhari.



**A RARE DOCUMENT OF  
PERSIAN QUATRAINS**

The Nozhat ol-Majales is highly significant as it bears very rare quatrains from Iranian savants such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and famous Persian poets such as Fakhreddin Asad Gorgani and Nezami Ganjavi. There are even references to Fariborz III Shirvanshah of the Caucasus and the Seljuq rulers.

**THE PERSIAN LEGACY OF  
AZARBAIJAN AND THE CAUCASUS**

Of major importance is that the Nozhat ol Majales contains the Persian language works of at least 115 poets from Iran's Azarbaijan province in the northwest of Iran and the eastern portion of the Caucasus. The latter region was historically composed of former Iranian territories such as Shirvan, Arran, Ganja, etc.

Ganja for example is represented by 24 Persian poets in the Nozhat ol Majales. Other Persian poets from the Caucasus include Bakhtiar Shirvani and Kamal Maraghi. It is also highly notable that many of the Caucasian poets were women, including Dokhtar-e-Salar and Razziye Ganjai. Unlike many other parts of Greater Iran, most of the Caucasian poets originated from the regular working class and not from elite courts.

This adds further evidence to the fact that Persian was a common language of the ordinary people in the Caucasus and Azarbaijan before the gradual linguistic Turkification of the region. Persian was not simply a language confined to select elites in the Caucasus and Azarbaijan – this was the popular language of the mainstream populace.

Full-fledged linguistic Turkification in the eastern Caucasus and Azarbaijan began from the 16th century AD with the arrival of the Safavids. The latter were supported and joined by large numbers of Shiite Turcomen Qizilbash supporters from Anatolia who migrated into the province of Azarbaijan in Iran. What is significant is that Persian was still in force in the 13th century AD, in both Azarbaijan and the Caucasus, two centuries after the arrival of the Seljuk Turks.

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**An Interview with**

**LAYLA DIBA**

**Curator and Islamic Art Advisor**

**By: Shahrokh Ahkami**

*Thank you for accepting our invitation to be interviewed for Persian Heritage magazine. I understand your schedule is very hectic. Would you start by giving our readers some background about your parents, childhood, and education.*

I was born in New York City to an Iranian father and American mother. I left New York City at the age of 2 and was educated in various schools in Europe, including schools in Italy, England, Switzerland, France, and briefly in Iran. As a child I was fortunate to travel widely in Europe which resulted in my speaking five languages. The greatest influence in my formative years was my education at the Lycée Français in New York and Paris from which I graduated in 1968. Subsequently I received a Bachelor of Arts from Wellesley College (1970)

and M.A. (1973) and PhD from New York University Institute of Fine Arts in (1994). I had the honor to be a Wellesley Scholar and Phi Beta Kappa and my dissertation "Persian Lacquerwork and its Relationship to Persian Painting, won the award for best dissertation of the year from the Foundation of Iranian Studies in 1994.

*You are the product of a very close family who are deeply rooted in Persian culture and the arts can you give us information on how this interest began with your family?*

The interest in Persian culture and arts is found on both my father's side of the family and my late husband's family. My aunt Ezzat Malek Soudavar is a collector and philanthropist who continued the interests of her father Haji Malek of Khorasan.

His foundation is still active in Iran today and houses a rich collection of Persian manuscripts and art. After my return to Iran in the 1970's my aunt Ms. Malek Soudavar shared with me her passion for Persian art and in particular, Persian lacquerwork which eventually influenced my choice of doctoral dissertation. My cousins on the Soudavar side are also active collectors and supporters of Persian art and culture, particularly through the activities of the Soudavar Memorial Foundation.

My late husband's family, the Diba family, is well known for their involvement and patronage of Persian art and culture, most particularly his second cousin Queen Farah the Shahbanou who was the main patron of art in Iran in the 1970's. Other members of her family were involved as museum directors such as Kamran Diba and Nazi Diba, respectively Directors of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) and the Carpet Museum.

My own involvement with Persian culture actually developed in the early 1970's independently of my Iranian family when I was a graduate student in New York working with Richard Ettinghausen at the Institute of Fine Arts. There I became interested in Iranian and Islamic art, and particularly the art of the Qajars.

*How did your mother and father meet?*

My parents met in New York City where my mother was an opera singer who was also working part-time as an assistant to my father. My father was a business man who had settled in New York after World War II and was involved in exports to Iran. When he returned to Iran with his brothers he established the firm of Mercedes Benz Manufacturing known as Khavar.

*Where did you receive your high school education and what activities were you involved with during this educational period?*

My high school education was at the Lycée Français as I mentioned and during my high school years my main interests were history and literature.

*When did you leave Iran and when and why did you return to Iran?*

I was not born in Iran, I returned to

visit Iran as a child in the 1950's and 1960's and after my father's death in 1968. I returned to Iran in 1973 when I married my husband the late Mahmoud Diba and stayed there until 1979.

***How has the art of today changed, if any the direction, of art in Iran as we know it today?***

Do you mean: How has international contemporary art changed the direction of art in Iran?

It's a fascinating development that in spite of political and cultural isolation, due to a number of factors, Iranian art is more global today than it has ever been. This is due in my opinion to three factors: First, the ability of Iranian artists to travel to exhibitions and conferences, Second, the availability of the internet which is widely used by Iranian youth and has opened up windows onto the world to them, particularly onto the art scene, and Third, the emergence of the Arab states in the Persian Gulf with a significant number of very active Iranian art collectors has provided a platform for Iranian artists and also affected the types of art produced in Iran today. And there is certainly also the influence of the marketplace which has resulted in a variety of styles and a very daring range of themes that characterize contemporary Iranian art. But I do think that there is a particular interest in photography among Iranian artists today and that this is the result of local and not international developments. Contributing factors include the great success of Iranian films as well as the teaching of photography in Iranian universities and the emergence of photojournalism associated with the 1979 Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. While international influences can clearly be seen in the art of Farhad Moshiri, other artists such as the photographers Shadi Ghadirian or Kaveh Golestan reflect an indigenous Iranian approach to photography and subject matter. On the whole, Iranian art today is vibrant, diverse, and challenging, and is becoming increasingly appreciated internationally for these qualities.

***I think your activities in the art world should be divided into three parts one your activities with art in Iran, one with your activities in art in the United State and one the present time. In each of these categories you have been an inspiration***

***to others. You have never been passive in any projects you take. No one should ever forget your dedication in the creation of the Qajar Dynasty Exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. Despite political obstacles at the time, the hostage taking, you persevered. In the end it was one of the greatest exhibitions of that museum. What difficulties did you face in mounting this exhibition?***

First of all, in response to this question, I want to thank Dr. Ahkami for saying that I've been an inspiration to others. It is true that I've always hoped that I would serve as an example to my compatriots to value their culture and hope they will devote their considerable talents to the promotion and preservation of Iranian culture, which has always been my life's work in one way or another. So if you like, I would just comment briefly on my activities in the three time periods you mention.

I went back to Iran as a young Iranian American conversant in the methodologies of museology and art historical research that were current in America in the 1960's and 70's. In 1973 I began working in the Private Secretariat for the Shahbanou as an art advisor and had the privilege to work on modern exhibitions, and international conferences. From 1975 to 1979 I worked on the establishment and direction of the Negarestan Museum of 18th and 19th century Persian art, of which I was Founding Director. Chronologically, this was the first museum opened under Her Majesty's patronage. The nucleus of the museum collection was 63 Qajar paintings from the collection of the English diplomat Julian Amery that the Shahbanou had made tremendous effort to acquire through Sotheby's. The Shahbanou convinced Sotheby's not to sell

them at auction since they were part of Iran's history and should be displayed at a museum. The purchase price was 2 million dollars which is a fraction of their worth today. The Shahbanou selected the palace of the Queen Mother in downtown Tehran to be renovated. This building was near the Marble Palace, which was also turned into a museum of the Pahlavi dynasty. The Palace of the Queen Mother was renovated by Professor Yaroslav Fric, a well-known Czech photographer and filmmaker. Professor Fric designed galleries specifically to display paintings of rulers, landscapes and dancers. He also designed cases for objects, a Treasury room, and produced a slideshow of Qajar paintings for the museum. The vitrines were used to display donations to the Museum of the lacquerwork collection of Gholi Nasserri and the treasury contained many beautiful examples of enameled jewelry donated by Ali Rezaei. These donations were made in honor of the Shahbanou and Her support of the arts in Iran.

Once I was named Director I devoted all my efforts toward developing a competent staff and managing the museum according to modern museological standards, which was quite an undertaking in Iran at the time due to lack of trained staff. I was fortunate to work with Iranian scholars such as Ms. Hoori Ehtesam, on an exhibition and publication of Persian wedding contracts and with Dr. Hadi Hazavei, our Director for Art Education, and other collaborators who went onto distinguish themselves in the arts field such as Asieh Ziai, Mary McWilliams, and in the field of social sciences, Juni Farman Farmaian.

In my work at the Negarestan I was particularly interested in developing audiences and reaching out to local populations; urban populations who had never visited museums before. We also created a children's center which was very popular. Towards the end of my tenure, plans



were underway for the construction of an underground cultural center by architect Manouchehr Iranpour. Unfortunately, after the Islamic Revolution, the paintings and artworks were dispersed to different locations and the center was given over to the Guardians of the Revolution. The most innovative exhibition that I'm proud of having organized was entitled "Religious Inspiration in Iranian Art". My last exhibition, devoted to Turkoman silver jewelry and textiles, unfortunately was scheduled to open in December 1978 just before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 took place, and had to be canceled.

When I returned to the United States in the 1980's, I began lecturing on Persian art, but felt my education was incomplete and that it was important, in order to embark on a successful museum career in the United States, to finish my dissertation. So I returned to graduate school in the 1980's and after I was engaged by the Brooklyn Museum of Art as Associate Curator of Islamic Art in 1990, I continued work on my dissertation, which I completed in 1994. In the Brooklyn Museum I was again very fortunate to work with wonderful colleagues such as Amy Poster, the Curator of Asian Art, and a superb collection with particular strengths in later Persian art. That collection eventually led to the development of the Royal Persian Paintings exhibition. As you mentioned, I have never been passive in my projects and have always pursued them with passion and a determination to complete them despite many obstacles. I was gratified that my Iranian American friends became involved with the Qajar exhibition, with the Brooklyn Museum itself, and that they were encouraged, I hope, to continue to participate in the American art scene. I have sometimes heard from young Iranians that the exhibition became a benchmark for them to aspire to.

You asked me what difficulties I faced during the exhibition. I would not use the word difficulties in the planning of the exhibition, but rather challenges in finding the support for an exhibition on Persian art. But the topic of Qajar art was one of such great appeal that my work was greatly facilitated. The topic was so new that it immediately found wide acceptance among major philanthropists and important American foundations. Again I think the period of the 1990's was a period of great interest in Iranian art and in Iran itself perhaps because of the very political difficulties you mentioned. In any case, it was a more positive period for cultural

exchanges than the decade after September 11, 2001. Persian culture has always been an avenue of communication and a means for establishing a dialogue between Iran and its neighbors and Qajar art was no exception. In fact, the 19th century aroused great interest because it represented the beginning of Modernity in Iran and foreshadowed many events which lead to the Islamic revolution of 1979.

The feasibility of such an exhibition and its success was due to the important collections of Qajar art outside Iran that were made available to us. I particularly mention the collections of The Hermitage in Russia, the Louvre and the Victoria & Albert Museum. And equally important was the enthusiastic cooperation of Iranian collectors abroad who were interested in the art of the Qajar period.

***Presently what is the scope of your activities?***

Today I am involved with many institutions and projects devoted to Iranian art and culture. I work as an independent scholar and writer, advisor to institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum, the Iran Heritage Foundation, and the Encyclopaedia Iranica. I am increasingly devoting my efforts to independent curatorial projects such as the exhibition East-West Dialogues: Mysticism, Satire and the Legendary Past which I curated in 2008 for the Leila Taghinia Milani Heller Gallery and Selseleh/Zelzeleh: Movers and Shakers in Contemporary Iranian Art which I co-curated at the Leila Taghinia Milani Heller Gallery in 2009. I also have several projects focusing on 19th and 20th century Iranian art in the planning stages, including a publication and exhibition of Turkoman silver jewelry from the Marshall and Marilyn Wolf Collection for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Through all my activities I aspire to support and promote Persian culture and I particularly devote my energies to act as a catalyst for modern Iranian art and contemporary Iranian artists.

***The Iranian artists in Iran, the United States and abroad have been receiving an enormous amount of attention, in your eyes what is the future of Iranian artists?***

As you say, there is considerable interest largely due to political events in 2009/2010 Iranian art became a mirror of change

and of the reforms that Iranian youth were demanding so it has been a pivotal moment for the future of Iranian artists. Many artists now live abroad as well as in Iran. Until now artists within Iran have been largely left free to explore their ideas and have had relatively little interference in their artistic practice. Nevertheless the extent of self-censorship remains a question and it remains to be seen with the increasing conservatism of the political climate whether Iranian artists will continue to be free to produce in their own country or if they'll find it too confining and emigrate abroad. It is my hope that the art patronage and the art market in the Persian Gulf will continue to provide them with support and exposure and equally important, that the international art scene, particularly in the United States, will be more receptive to the presentation of contemporary Iranian art and that barriers such as the embargo will with time be lifted.

***Despite the successes in your life you faced a great tragedy, the loss of your husband in a tragic airplane accident, can you tell us about him and the impact he had on your life while alive and in his passing?***

I am so happy that you've asked the question about my husband because he was truly my inspiration for all of my life and my partner since I met him at the age of 22. My late husband's family was also very welcoming, from his parents to his cousins, and most especially his second cousin Shahbanou Farah. From the very beginning, I was very honored to serve her and to help in my own small way to implement her vision for the arts in Iran. It was through my husband, Mahmoud that I was able to return to my Persian roots and through him that my interest in the world of Iranian art was further encouraged. His own interest in Iranian history and literature was also inspiring to me and formed a very strong bond between us. Without his encouragement I might have never finished my dissertation. Above all, he was a nationalist and it was his love for his country that influenced me in my endeavors and continued to do so after his death. The Qajar exhibition probably meant as much to him as it meant to me and this gave me the strength to continue and persevere in developing the exhibition and organizing the tour of this exhibition after his death in 1998. I think his spirit today still guides me in my work.



## “A BOLD HAND” MAKING A MARK IN THE ART WORLD

Negar Ahkami's paintings combine Persian elements and Western sensibilities

BY JEFF BARON, STAFF WRITER,

[www.america.gov](http://www.america.gov)

**Negar Ahkami says she brings “a punk rock mentality” plus a Persian love for color and details to her painting.**



Washington, May 21, 2010 — Negar Ahkami's canvases are packed with detail, vibrant with color, layered with acrylic and sometimes accented with glitter to bring out their three-dimensionality. When other artists were making names for themselves with minimalism, Ahkami was unheedingly going for maximalism.

Her artistic influences, drawn from her Iranian roots and American upbringing, are just as rich and complex: Persian miniatures, calligraphy and tiles, plus the work of Ardeshir Mohassess — “I grew up knowing and meeting a lot of Iranian artists,” she said — but also expressionism, pop, baroque and fauvism.

In an era of growing attention and



prestige for Iranian artists, Ahkami said she understands that people will put her in the Iranian-American category, and she won't complain about that.

“I understand the need to put people in a box. It doesn't upset me. I just hope over time it's not the only box I'm put in,” she said. “It's a privilege to be making art at all, and if that means that I'm going to be in a box, that's fine.”

But ask her where she puts herself, and she says: “I'm very American. I consider myself an American artist first and foremost.”

As for her style, Ahkami said she uses “a bold hand.” “I'm not punk rock in appearance or in my daily behavior, but when I'm painting, I have a punk-rock mentality,” she said.

At 39, Ahkami is no rock star, but she has achieved a measure of success in the art world, with solo and group shows at galleries in New York, where she lives, as well as in other U.S. cities and Zurich, Switzerland. She said her career really took off when she was pregnant with her daughter, who is now 2 1/2 years old — “I think she's my good-luck charm,” Ahkami said — and she has had to get used to not having her paintings around her because they tend to sell.

Ahkami has taken a bit of a roundabout route, artistically and personally, from drawing classes in childhood to painting in her home studio in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up in the New York City suburb of Clifton, New Jersey, and her father would take her for classes at the Art Students League of New York. She said that even then she grew restless with simply drawing the models in drawing class; she would add ornate backgrounds out of her imagination.

Ahkami studied Middle Eastern lan-

guages and cultures in college and soon after went off to law school, but she had not left art behind. “I pretty much went to law school knowing that this was not what I wanted to do,” she said. After leaving a job at a large law firm, she worked as a staff attorney for a New York museum and painted in her spare time. But after a couple of years, it was clear that the painting was more important.

“It got to the point where I couldn't do both anymore,” Ahkami said. So at about age 30, she switched: She became a full-time artist and practiced law on the side, just enough to pay the bills. She still keeps her law license up to date, but said she hasn't used it for a few years.

Her artistic journey, meanwhile, took her away from Iranian art before she returned to embrace elements of it. “It's the aspect of my heritage that I've been most proud of,” she said. “I loved the jewel-like qualities.”

But she also admired the fierce emotional power of the expressionists. She said she couldn't imagine herself in the role of the classical Persian artist who hides himself in the beautiful details and for whom the work is not primarily a means of self-expression or of showing the anguish of the world.

The more she explored, the more she found that she wanted to form “a messy kind of Persian art that wasn't about beauty and that maybe had some satire in it as well,” she said.

Ahkami said she borrows freely from the Persian tradition — “I seriously love the way rocks are painted in Persian miniatures,” she said — and revels in the connections she can create between Eastern and Western art. Persian paintings might not have had any influence on early Amer-

ican landscape painters such as Thomas Cole, but Ahkami said she loves the way both genres use trees, and she has drawn from both in some of her works.

The subject matter of her art also reflects the links between her two cultures. "I am embracing the absurd aspect of what I've been dealt with my Iranian heritage," she said: what she called the absurdities of Iranian politics and of American perceptions about Iran, in contrast with the glories of its culture that inspire her with pride.

Ahkami said her work is political because she is so deeply pained by the rift between the United States and Iran. "I'd love to create art that didn't have anything political in it," she said.

As for American perceptions, she said, "it used to be that the only images people saw were this 'death to America' thing." Now, she said, she has noticed a hopeful change in that Americans seem to be developing an understanding of Iran's politics and history that they lacked in the decades after the revolution of 1979.

"It's been healing for me that people over here are finally getting what's going on in Iran," she said.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT ... THE OLDEST WINDMILLS

### WERE IN ANCIENT PERSIA?

Since early-recorded history, people have been harnessing the energy of the wind. Wind energy propelled boats along the Nile River as early as 5000 B.C. By 200 B.C., simple windmills in China were pumping water, while vertical-axis windmills with woven reed sails were grinding grain in Persia and the Middle East.

New ways of using the energy of the wind eventually spread around the world. By the 11th century, people in the Middle East were using windmills extensively for food production; returning merchants and crusaders carried this idea back to Europe. The Dutch refined the windmill and adapted it for draining lakes and marshes in the Rhine

River Delta. When settlers took this technology to the New World in the late 19th century, they began using windmills to pump water for farms and ranches, and later, to generate electricity for homes and industry.

American colonists used windmills to grind wheat and corn, to pump water, and to cut wood at sawmills. As late as the 1920s, Americans used small windmills to generate electricity in rural areas without electric service. When power lines began to transport electricity to rural areas in the 1930s, local windmills were used less and less, though they can still be seen on some Western ranches.

Windmills Make a Comeback in the Wake of Oil Shortages. The oil shortages of the 1970s changed the energy picture for the Country and the world. It created an interest in alternative energy sources, paving the way for the re-entry of the windmill to generate electricity. In the early 1980s, wind energy really took off in California, partly because of State policies that encouraged renewable energy sources.

## Marriage Solemnizer, Official Translation Services

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Arma has a very interesting and touching life story. She smiles and says, "I still remember my dad telling me to always remember that I am a Shahidi and we are descendents of FathAli Shah e Ghajar. My father reminded me that the Shahidi's have always been well educated and influential in their community." That is the sense of pride that surrounded her as she was growing up, the only girl of four children. Her mother, Soudabeh Baharloo, was a world-renowned fine artist who passed away when she was only 42 years young. She was not only stunning on the outside but also an amazing lady on the inside. She was a talented, smart, strong lady, and always ahead of her time. It was not long after she passed away that Arma stepped into a parenting role that she was not ready for. She had an amazing father as well as three brothers on her side through happy and hard days. Arma states that, "perhaps this is why I believe it is never too late to have a child!" She continues, "ask me in next 15 years, I may change my mind!" After her mother died she learned that nobody lives forever and that she needs to rely on herself more. She decided to make her mother proud each time she had to overcome life's challenges. That was the promise that Arma made to herself. She says, "I am blessed to have had my mom and to have my wonderful dad. In every obstacle, I remember my dad and how he managed work and raising four children without the love of his life beside him. His courage makes me stronger. If he can do it at his age I should be able to do it even better."

Ten years ago, Arma took a leap of faith and moved to this beautiful country. She was a naïve and cautious young woman who left her loving family to begin an adventure and a new life. Growing up

in Iran, Arma and her friends saw many American movies, which helped her understand the new culture she was about to enter. Movies of course are not always like reality. Fortunately the American culture was much better than what the movies portray.

Arma's move to the United States was not only a cultural change but also a trial. Looking back she says, "I would not be willing to change these experiences even if I were able to do it over again". These trials made her the woman that she is today and made her realize what freedom represents. They helped her not only become stronger but also to realize that life is only as beautiful as you want it to be. These trials made her believe even more in God and trust in his will fully. She says, "I experienced the truth behind Karma, your worthiness is measured by who you help not what you have, and the more you give the more it comes back to you. I realized how true it was when my parents said, "the most fruitful tree is the most humble one."

Arma's move to America was a very hard transition in the beginning. She was an accomplished fine artist in Iran. She states that, "One day I was considered a well-known active artist with having over twenty five national and international exhibitions and awards to my credit, and in a matter of a 23 hour flight I was a nobody in a new country where I didn't even speak the language well." Not knowing English fluently was only a small part of it. She remembers the first week she arrived and finding a job at an art gallery. She had to memorize each sentence the clients would tell her, and then run to the back of the store and repeat the sentence the best she could remember to her colleagues. Then, she would memorize an answer to tell the clients. Somehow she still managed to sell paintings.

## Armaiti Shahidi Fitzgerald



She would walk 45 minutes to work in the Dallas heat in her high heels!

Running into unkind and unfriendly people was another aspect of her trials. She says, "I was so blessed that for every one bad seed, God put three angles in my path to help me get my bearings. These trials and tribulations made me a stronger woman. I cannot tell you how blessed I feel to have gone through that time in my life. Now that I can look back, I praise the lord for giving me this second chance." Despite all the hardships, she decided to make the most of every opportunity that came along. She decided that she wanted to be the voice for every woman

whose voice has been silenced, and to absorb every opportunity in behalf of the ones whose chances have been taken away from them.

One of the decisions that she made was as a result of her dad's restless efforts to have her continue her education. She feels that, "My education helped me gain part of the self-confidence that I left behind when I moved to this beautiful country, and now I know I will never leave it behind again. My education made me realize my strengths and forget my weaknesses. It was a hard road, being bullied by other classmates and not understanding my professors at the beginning. Despite all of this, I man-

aged to graduate Magna Cum Laude and achieved The Most Outstanding Design Student at The University of North Texas. Who would have thought this would happen to me ten years ago?" Soon after graduating from school Arma started her Graphic design and advertising studio, Armaiti Design Studio. She is also an associate professor at Collin County Community College District. She says, "I strongly encourage my students to always dream high and reach higher. It still bothers me to see talented kids who drop their course for no reason or seeing a smart kid dropping out of school. I learned that education could not only take you places it also helps you develop into a better, stronger person."

Arma remembers, "Sometime down the road after days of crying and praying for God to send me my soul mate, he granted my wishes and introduced me to my loving husband Lee. Meeting my wonderful husband has opened up beautiful gates in my life. Now I know what it means when my dad used to say, "Only the sky is the limit." I know how important choosing a spouse is. I experienced that a bad spouse can ruin your life no matter how successful you are, and a good spouse can lift you up to reach the skies even if you don't feel you have wings to fly."

Arma's mother would tell her children that they are all here for a calling. She used to ask her mother what her calling was, and she would simply reply with her twinkling eyes as she brushed her fingers through her daughter's hair, "You will know when you grow up." Arma always thought that she would follow her grandfather's tradition and start a charity or a non-profit in her lifetime as she states, "We have a family tradition of giving and helping others as my grandfather and his fathers before him have built schools

and hospitals for charity." She had no idea this dream would come true in her thirties. She decided to start her Fight Oral Cancer Foundation after losing a very dear friend to oral cancer. Arma started researching the causes of oral cancer, and before she knew it she was spending endless hours to learn more. She then started an educational website and was granted 501-C3 status which recognized her foundation as a national charitable non-profit foundation. Arma says, "Knowing that one person dies from oral cancer every hour of every day in the U.S. was too serious to ignore. With my design and advertising background and a supportive husband who happened to be a dentist I knew that I had all the tools and support to make a difference. My dream of starting a non-profit became a reality; however, instead of being in my 50's my dream came true in my 30's."

Arma has had her share of fame ever since she was sixteen years old through her fine art. However, there is nothing in this world that gives her more satisfaction than a thank you letter from a mother with three children whose oral cancer was detected early enough to be treated, as a result of joining her Fight Oral Cancer organization. She will now get to see her children grow and make memories with them. Arma states, "There is no other reward greater than making a difference in other's lives. After all that is why we are here in this world! As Saadi, an infamous Persian poet says, "Human beings are members of a whole, in creation of one essence and soul. If one member is afflicted with pain, other members uneasy will remain. If you have no sympathy for human pain, the name of human you cannot retain." This poem graces the entrance to the Hall of Nations of the UN building in New York.

As a result of Arma's determination and dedication, the Fight Oral Cancer foundation has over 2000 member internationally. In order to raise awareness for oral cancer Arma became involved with the International pageant system and on July 18th she was crowned as Mrs. International 2009. She will travel nationally and internationally to promote her cause and raise awareness about oral cancer through out her reign. For the list of upcoming speaking arrangements, free oral cancer screenings, volunteer oppor-

tunities and foundation events you can visit [www.FightOralCancer.org](http://www.FightOralCancer.org).

Arma will be one of the featured women in a book set to release in January 2010 titled *Inspired Entrepreneurs, An Inspirational Collection of Female Triumphs in Business and Life*. In the book she tells the story of her amazing journey to the United States and how she has overcome many odds to be a successful business owner and community leader. Arma is an inspiring speaker and speaks at a variety of events.

## Wall Paintings and Mosaic Mural of LALEH ESKANDARI,

in the crossing of Hemmat Highway & Sattari Highway, Tehran.

She is a film and television actress as well.



I looked at my reflection in the mirror. Surprisingly, I couldn't recognize myself. How much I'd changed. It amazed me. I compared myself with how I was before. Now the past was sitting before me so vivid, bright and clear. I felt I was still living in it. With admiration, I looked through myself, my whole self, the way I was. I looked, I thought, and finally at the way I behaved then and responding now toward others. I had such a nonsense trust in everyone around me. I wondered why?

What happened to me? How and why did those changes come about? Who taught me to learn my lesson so well? I realized that I was the one who should be blamed for my shortcomings, the one who was responsible for obeying blindly, for such a faith and trust I had for even total strangers

Now, I know why they say, "We need two lives to live, one to experiment and the other one, to use the experimentation." I experimented, through the true story of. "Kiss Me Farewell"

"Kiss Me Farewell," that incident still off and on, bugs my memory. It was one of those odd, strange and unforgettable incidents which one couldn't easily erase from the mind. Especially when the matter of surviving is involved, when there is no choice but to surrender. In such a situation, I had no clue of knowing what to do, but to stay calm and cool. I learned this through the training in the Department of Social Services of Baltimore City how to survive like the firemen who survive in the flames of furnaces. Otherwise, who will discover how or why the people disappear or vanish, from the face of earth, but Sherlock Holmes?

No doubt, being young and immature, with no sense of recognition of the people whom I trusted so blindly regardless of their color, race, religion and national origins, was the main cause of my failure, which finally victimized me.

I recall, due to my status problem with the Immigration Office, I had to resign from my position as a Social Worker Assistant in Baltimore to return to my favorite city D.C. to solve the problem. My supervisor promised to rehire me if and when the Immigration Office clear my status.

## *Kiss me, Farewell*

part one

**MAHROKH (MIMI)  
POURZYNAL**

Let me to escape all the miseries, which fell upon me on the road to my destination, Washington D. C.. The shortest way to Washington was the Washington-Baltimore Parkway, which was approximately forty-five miles. It was late October in the afternoon when I hit the road with a bad cold and running nose. The thunderstorms and slippery roads also added to my problems and good luck

Finally, I found myself on M Street at Georgetown, the most crowded area, especially on a Saturday night in D. C.. I found a parking place on one of the side streets and parked.

At first, I pulled the window (next to my seat) down. Then, I closed it up to rest for a while and I fell into a deep sleep. When I woke up it was quite late, but, the trace of daylight was there.

I looked into the mirror, combed my hair. Then I put some lipstick on. After I locked the doors, and closed the windows of my car I walked to the main street of Wisconsin Avenue to find a cafe or a restaurant. I was quite hungry and needed a bowl of hot soup to relieve my bad cold.

That's it, the "Fountain Cafeteria." I knew that place very well. So often I had breakfast and lunch there when I used to work in a woman's fashion boutique "Lustrega" which means, the "Witch". Its owner indeed looked like a witch and claimed that she was. Anyhow, I walked in the cafeteria and looked for a seat to sit down.

Finally, I got one of those red revolving chairs of the cafeteria to sit, and ordered a cup of split pea soup. The waitress got the order and disappeared. The water from my nose was dripping down over my lips, like rain which runs into the rain sprout. Embarrassingly, I reached for the napkin to blow my nose. Someone next to me tried to hand it to

me. I turned around to see who it was, to say "thank you". Oh! God, for bid I see that face again for what I saw was shocking!

I felt dizzy. The whole blood circulation of my body jumped into my head, and I became cold as a dead body. When I revived, I was afraid of opening my eyes up to his face again.

Could it be him? Had I seen those cruel and keen eyes before? Wasn't that ugly face familiar? I flashed back, to fifteen years ago to an incident that happened before my own eyes, I remembered the exact date.

It was the summer of 1967 when my sister called to give me the good news of her employment. She was hired as a registered nurse at the OB section of City Hospital in Baltimore City. She joyfully added, you've got to move here too, your application has been approved as a Social Worker Assistant, in the Children's Division, congratulations!"

At that time, I was working for my Masters at the American University, Department of Psychology. It was summer and I decided to take the job. Baltimore was a wild old town in comparison to D.C., which never appealed to me. I gathered all of my belonging, which could fit in my small VW and headed to Baltimore, and started to live and work there.

A few days later our classes started. At the beginning, due to the language barrier, I had hard time keeping up with other students, but fortunately I was able to catch up with the others and succeeded. Eventually all the adventures on the highways, getting lost on the roads of the field trips or running into pathways to escape the accidents, became second nature to me.

Our instructors in a short time, were trying to teach us everything that they packaged for us with their heavy case loads and expected to make experts out of us in a wink. We learned everything about foster homes, foster parents, foster children, home evaluation, child care, giving psychological tests, or how to deal with addicts, alcoholics, mental disease, poverty, prostitution, crime and so forth.

The time was rolling on. Summer was almost over. I studied and completed the forty cases - loads success-

fully. But regretfully, as I mentioned earlier, due to my visa problem, I had to resign my position, with the hope of getting it back as soon as I solved the problem with the Immigration Office. I accepted their offer and headed home to broadcast the news to my sister.

When I got home, I changed my mind and decided to hide the news in my chest, regardless of how much it could hurt me. The following morning was bright and sunny. Then all of the sudden it turned to be as dark as my world, when my sister Cible entered in my room, crying, "It's over, it's all over." What's over?" I asked. "Everything every thing in my life, I'm going to California." "What happened?" I asked. "What else did you expect happen?," she said. "That bastard, Nader married the girl in his university. I've got to run a way as far as possible. I'd hate to see his ugly face again."

How strong one could be not to break down with all of those piled up problems? I guess some kind of power was holding us up. She started to pack and over a night flew to the fresher air of California, not knowing what happened to me, and a word about my resignation. She loaded me, as usual, with her problems and put her naughty little boy Tony on my shoulders

I didn't realize, how long my mind was occupied with this incident that happened years ago until I heard the waitress say, "Your soup is getting cold. How long do you wish to sit here and think? It is three past ten. We are closing. Would you please pay your bill!"

"Oh, I am so sorry, I was in another world. Here it is." I said.

I paid the bill, yen looked to see if he was still there. The cafeteria was empty. He was about to leave with a young beauty with blond hair. I got my bag, sharpened my ears and opened up wide the eyes of my confused mind. I could hear his voice.

"Where did you park your car?" he asked. "It's there, at the corner, it is the red car." she replied. I could hardly see or read her plate number under the dim light of the street. Then I saw nothing but heard their foot steps, which were disappearing into noisy Georgetown.

"Did they just meet in this Cafeteria?" I asked myself. The sense of curi-

osity was killing me. I felt so desperate to know whether or not he was the same man that I thought he was. I have no doubt at all I knew why the sight of even a glance of his face terrified me. I knew what caused the chills to run through me. His resemblance revived the past before my eyes once more.

I flashed back, to late October 1967. The night was young and was rolling in slow motion. The trees were whispering with the wind and the silence was in rull, at the noose of the darkness. I clearly remember that night. I decided, to go to bed early in order to wake up early before traffic. I was worried about my job interview. After I read few pages of (Abnormal Psychology) my text book my eyelids fell closed gently. The world of reality and awareness was replaced by the dream world of abstract and unreality.

The next morning as I intended I woke up early. The morning sun was tiptoeing over the window pane. I wanted to be on time for my interview, so I dressed fast and rushed to get out without breakfast. I was headed to the Freedman Hospital. I had no idea where it was. The advertisement in the Washington Post only printed the announcement of the opening position in the Unit of Psychology. I got a map to find the direction. There is a proverb saying "one may eventually reach to mecca by asking" I found mine in two hours. After I returned to D. C. the first thing I had to do was solve my problem with the Office of Immigration and I did it I obtained their statement of confirmation in my case and the Green Card, which I would receive soon. That was a great relief. The second problem was to seek a place to live for a while. I stayed in The International Student House in Connecticut Avenue. I thought it was expensive even with breakfast and dinner for someone like me who is unemployed and has no sources of income except for a small savings. So, I moved from one motel to another and faced all kinds of problems such as a rape attempt. Lucky me I was able to rescue myself from all kinds of dangers after all. I trapped in to my own negligence. I don't remember what kind of a day it was on that day was that day, sunny or gloomy. Perhaps it made no difference.

I called, my Avon Lady to get help She was a kind and open minded lady. After I told her about my problem she talked about her cousin who became rich by marrying a wealthy Italian man the same day, she introduced me to them.

With opened arms they welcomed me, I agreed to rent their daughter's beautiful room, which was furnished in pink. She recently married and moved to Texas. That is why they were overwhelmed to have me for filling her empty spaces. The house was beautifully furnished. The beautiful blue tiled swimming pool, which was shimmering under the ray of the sun, added to its beauty. I felt I was the luckiest person in the whole world? How long would this sunny day last, I wondered?

The man of the house used to smoke in the washroom but his wife was against it. It was quite late that evening when, I reached home from school and grocery shopping. The outside light was on as usual, but I noticed the whole house was in absolute darkness I was about to come out of the car when I noticed a shadowy figure moving towards my car. After I screamed. I heard I heard my landlords voice saying, "Don't be afraid. It's me. Come out hold my arm and walk with me. I walked with him and then asked him what was going . He told me to hush so not to wake up the neighbors. "You'll find out soon." Under the flashlight I could only see, charcoal, charcoal, charcoal, scattered everywhere, the whole house turned into ashes. I stayed with this couple in a hotel for two month, then I got my own place. All my belongings also burned except for my documents. All the offered me (with the excuse of not being covered in their insurances was a hair dryer. How did I survive? Sometimes I wonder. The advice's of my late father always echoed in my ears Living is hard, so, live and cope with its hardship, or die now. What other choice did I have but to live and cope with the hardship. That's what I have done anyway to go along with the life and living. My next step was seeking employment in Washington and ended up at the Freedman Hospital, which was the next mission that the hands of so called "Destiny" were molding for me.

*(to be continued)*

**AN INTERVIEW WITH**

## **BAHMAN GHOBADI**

**Iranian Director and Filmmaker**

**OF "no one knows about Persian cats"**

**BY: HALLEH NIA**

*Good day Mr. Ghobadi. First I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to hold this interview. So, please tell us who is Bahman Ghobadi?*

I am a 41 year old IranianKurd, in search of my destiny. I was born February 1, 1969 in Baneh, Kurdistan. My father was a policeman from Sanandaj, who later joined the police force in Baneh, and my mother is a housewife from Baneh. I come from a family of 7 children. I was the fourth child. My parents divorced when I was 18 and that placed a great responsibility on my shoulders, taking the burden of providing for myself and at times for my family.

*Do you have a family of your own, are you married?*



No, I have not had the time. I have been so involved in my own ventures that the thought of having the responsibility of having a family of my own has not even occurred to me. All my thoughts and desires have been to be able to support my immediate family (parents and siblings) and make a comfortable life for them.

***So where did it all start? When did you fall in love with making films and voicing your stance on social issues through the lens of the camera?***

It's a funny story. In our small village of Baneh, we only had two movie theatres. But, what attracted me to the theatre was not the actual film experience, it was the sandwich buffet next to the theatre. My love for food, their specialty sandwiches wrapped in paper was what took me to the theatre. To me the experience of biting into those delicious sandwiches while watching the films was a fulfilling experience that to this day remains a clear picture in my mind. So bottom line you could say cinematography was not my first love, but the satisfaction and pleasure and the whole movie experience is what encouraged me to pursue the art of film.

***That is a great story and not too many people can say that their desire for delicious food was key to their success. So what happened next?***

I moved to Sanandaj, where my father lived. Because I was familiar with the "Sourani Kurdi" language. I was able to get a job at the local TV station. Eventually a friend of my fathers who was an artist saw my talents in photography and encouraged me to pursue making an 8-millimeter film, which I sent to a Film Festival. I earned first place and a gold medal for my first animated film. It was then that I started attending the University of Film and Culture but, I never ended up getting my degree.

***So I guess it has been a long journey! Your exposure to Film was limited because of your demographics but how did you come about becoming such a famed filmmaker and what motivated you to get involved with your latest***

***film "No one knows about the Persian Cats"?***

Yes, you are absolutely right. I had lots of limitations when it came to pursuing the art of film making, but I guess my passion concerning social issues and the events happening in Iran naturally attracted me to discovering this underground forum for music lovers, those who had been oppressed by the regime because of the genre of music, as well as many other factors, forced them to go underground with their music. It all started by accident there is a lot of truth to the story of the characters in the film. It was a friend of mine, Mr. Mohamad Hossein Abkari, who helped me follow their story and the underlying message behind the film. I am not politically motivated and have never had an interest in politics. In Iran, however, the social structure and the momentum of events naturally forces one to address political issues. This film opened my eyes to the harsh systematic process of the oppressive society that Iran has claimed for itself. I love Iran and never thought for a moment that I would be leaving that soil and not look back, but under the circumstances that this film delivered, I had to give up this right of going back home.

The truth is that young Iranians are caged in their own country, government of Iran and no one can deny this fact.

***Has this film "No One Knows About the Persian Cats" been on the cinema screen in Iran, or better yet seen by any one in Iran?***

No, not officially. The film is banned in Iran due to its political statement, but I am sure that the people have had the opportunity to screen it on the internet or through the underground film industry in Iran.

***Where do you reside at this time and what are your plans for the near future?***

I am a wanderer, I am all over the place. I can say that I probably spend most of my time in Kurdistan, Iraq. I also spend a lot of time in Berlin, Germany. I am in the process of getting my Green Card and eventually would like to have a residence in NY. As an artist you can place the images that you foresee for the people of your motherland on the screen and it is my wish that these images can become part of the reality of life at some point in time.

