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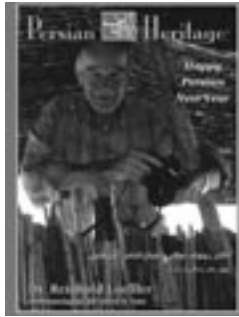
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Persian Heritage

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Spring 2008



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

With each issue of *Persian Heritage* magazine I am honored to address our readers, via my From the Editor's Desk. The *NoeRouz* editorial is always a bit more special because I have the opportunity to wish our readers, advertisers and contributors a happy and healthy Persian New Year. It is also a special time because *NoeRouz* coincides with *Persian Heritage* magazine's anniversary, now in its fourteenth year.

The intent of this magazine is to be a vehicle to unify all Persian speaking people and countries such as; Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Armenia, Iran and Iranian Diaspora. All of us have suffered in our lives, be it personal, financial, political or religious and most of us have survived. Why? It is because of our pride, our will, our culture and our history. We have shown the world that we are a peaceful, loving and committed group; a group, who long for their countries and their governments to be harmonious with its citizens and the world. As Diaspora we have assimilated into our new surroundings, adopting the new, yet never forgetting our past. We have achieved acceptance by our new neighbors and citizens.

Like Persian history, the history of *Persian Heritage*, though short in comparison, has at times been turbulent yet, we stand. We do so because of our pride, our will, our culture, our history, the support of subscribers, readers, staff, advertisers and friends. We have been given the gift of loyal friends from all over the world. There is a saying "Good deeds, good words and good thoughts, return good words, deeds and thoughts." *Persian Heritage* has tried to follow this principle by bringing to our readers good spoken and written words and inspiring thoughts. For the most part our journey as a publication has been positive.

In spite of our often troubled financial hardships, *Persian Heritage* has remained independent from all religious, political and cultural organizations, which in truth could have eased our financial burden. But, we continue to stand by our position that *Persian Heritage* publications should avoid a particular alignment and instead remain a balanced vehicle of conversation, discussion and an educational tool.

Persian Heritage has been defined by our readers as a treasure chest of articles written by people who, without this venue, would have never had the opportunity to express themselves. Another reader, who manages an important institute in Qom, Iran, uses the magazine as a research tool to learn and understand how Iranians think outside of Iran. Even the governments of the countries along the Persian Gulf look to this magazine for opinions regarding the Persian Gulf.

As a publication who prides itself in protecting Persian history and culture, we have an obligation to bring any threat against it, to the attention of the public. We must all unite together against those who wish to change our history. How many of you are aware, concerned or understand the significance of the Persian Gulf being referred to by another name. All of you must understand that a name change to the Persian Gulf is an attack on our history and integrity. It is therefore very troubling when an organization such as *Google Earth*, incorrectly refers to the Persian Gulf by another name. Was it intentional or a mistake? Regardless, how was this allowed? While we should all respect the success of Mr. Omid Kordestani, at *Google*, we must also be disappointed in his oversight of this matter. I urge all of you to sign every available petition or join any rally protesting this *Google* action until it is deleted from *Google Earth*.

We hope we have reached our children and instilled in them, a sense of pride for their culture and heritage. We hope that we have, through our articles, placed our culture and history in a position to be given its deserved respect. We hope we have been able to show the world, in its pages, the importance of our culture and history and the positive impact it has had on ancient and modern civilization.

As our staff celebrates and is encouraged by words of praise and constructive criticism, we are challenged by disparaging words, driven by anger. While constructive criticism has



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PUBLISHED BY
PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.
A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes

Cover Price: \$6.00
Subscriptions: \$24.00/year (domestic);
\$30.00 & 50.00/year (other countries)

Typesetting & Layout
TALIEH PUBLICATIONS

and continues to strengthen our foundation, disparaging words and anger have tried, unsuccessfully, to weaken us. Where is the origin of this anger? Is it from jealousy, an inability to accept another's opinion or complete one sidedness? We must all remember that greatness does not come from anger, it is achieved by understanding and valuing another's constructive opinion and by accepting their political views, religious affiliations, political associations and place of origin.

When I receive a letter to the editor with criticism driven by anger, I try not to react in the same manner- a like response would accomplish nothing. If they lack constructive criticism they are usually discarded. But, every now and then I receive a letter that I must share with our readers. Recently someone wrote and included with the letter a page of Persian Heritage magazine containing a photograph of First Lady Laura Bush. The reader was outraged that she was given such notoriety from *Persian Heritage*, "when she was nothing more than a school teacher, and the wife of a man who seeks to destroy Iran."

First of all she was not put on the cover of this magazine or any other respected magazine to glorify her, she was at the time and remains a news item! Secondly, regardless if you agree or disagree with her husband's politics, interviewing her gave us a chance to expose her to an Iranian, different from the one defined by her husband and his advisors.

In response to this reader's reaction I would like to pose a question to all of you. Why is it that other respected and prestigious journals such as *Time* magazine, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The Economist* etc., have the ability to put a controversial figure on their cover and not be attacked? Why is their action considered "good journalism" but a like action by *Persian Heritage* considered to be a biased political move. Why are we instantly accused of a political or religious alignment? Why are our readers so harshly judgmental?

This type of reaction pains my heart and soul. Why can we not seek to learn from all written words rather than those only in harmony with our own? Why are we so quick to accuse? And, why are we so ready to demand the life of someone with whom we disagree, rather than take a path of reason and discussion? This is a flaw in Iranians that surfaced at the end of the reign of our prestigious leader Cyrus the Great. I fear it is the reason for our present state of affairs. Why do we follow such a path?

My wish to all of us in this new year is that we shed this harsh and judgmental characteristic from our skin. I wish that we learn to be good listeners and debaters, for the common good of all mankind.

This year let us discard and rid ourselves of our differences as we jump over the fire and rid our souls of old pains that constantly plague our hearts and souls. Remember though our points of views may differ we are from the same wonderful Persian root.

Like the beauty and newness of this Persian New Year's *Haft-Sin* table, let our hearts and souls be reborn, filled with love, acceptance and understanding.

Happy New Year

Shahrokh Alavi

Mother's Heart

By: Iraj Mirza

Translated by: A.M. Shapurian

*A beloved her lover told
 "your mother's hatred for me is of old.
 Whenever we meet, she from afar
 "Throws arrows of wrath at my delicate heart,
 From the door she throws me out.
 'Like a stone from a sling shot.
 "As long as your mother lives,
 The joy turns to sorrow in my heart
 "if marrying me is your intent
 "Go to her this very moment
 "Without compassion and devoid of fear,
 "Rent her aged chest asunder,
 "Tear out her heart and bring it-to me.
 "Warm and gory,
 "That it may wipe out
 "The sadness which is in my heart."
 That insane and stupid lover,
 Nay, that shameless, base debaucher,
 Oblivious of love and respect for his mother
 Intoxicated by drugs and liquor,
 Rushed to his mother and knocked her down,
 Rent her chest and cut out her heart.
 But rushing towards his beloved's house,
 Holding his mother's warm and bleeding heart,
 He tripped and fell to the ground,
 Slightly bruising his leg and hand.
 And when he tried to pick up the heart,
 A voice came forth from that gory part,
 "Oh, my son's elbow is bruised,
 "Oh, my son's leg hit the ground."*

GREATEST ISSUE!

Persian Heritage, what a creation. By a baby doctor! Got-ta love it! The football star/doctor – Bakhtiar. Unbelievable. You have to be a doctor. That's the foundation. Everything else is in addition. I would imagine Cyrus was a doctor sometime during his life!

Dr. D. Yeagley

EYE OPENER

I was so fascinated by the interview with Dr. Bakhtiar that I forced my children and friends to read it. I wanted them to understand just how lucky we are. All too often we ignore, or worse do not understand the perils other suffer. He had a happy ending but for many others it was not.

JK

READ AND LEARN

Fatema Farmanfarmar-maian's article was an education in four pages. I thought I

knew all to be learned about the area only to discover in this article the similarities between Persia and Azarbaijan. Keep up the good work.

HN

MISSING

I trust the omission of the continuation of *The Epic* from the winter edition was a mistake. You have left your readers without an end to a very interesting story. Please reinstate it.

CS

SWEET & POWERFUL

This is the way to describe your winter editorial. The subject matter was a perfect example of propaganda every nation uses to convince their citizens or persuade their citizens to think as they do. This is what breeds hatred. Lack of understanding is the root of all evil, not religion.

KIS

I AM PERSIAN

I am neither a terrorist nor a wife beater; I don't live in a tent and in the desert and camels are not our ways of transportation. I speak Farsi, not Arabic. Iran is pronounced "EERAUN" and not "I - ran" (it's not track & field).

News flash: Iran and Iraq are two different countries; Middle East is a region and NOT a continent.

Belly dancers are NOT strippers (there is no sex in the Champagne room); Anyway, belly dancing is an Arabic dance, it never came from Iran.

Each time you play a game of chess to improve your intellect, keep in mind that it was Persians who gave you your game.

Iranian women are just as outspoken (if not more) and liberal as the European (western) women.

And what the hell is "soccer" ?? We also call it Football like everyone else in the world (except Americans).

Iran is the first country on earth to have a lion (male) and a sun (female) as its symbol; and the colors red, white, and green for a flag. A beautiful country run by the wrong people, but still it is the best part of the Middle East.

Allow me to introduce myself: I'M A PERSIAN. MY LAND IS IRAN!

Post this if you're proud to be a "PERSIAN;" to all Persians and more!

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WOMEN'S MAGAZINE FORCED TO CLOSE

Iran's most important women's magazine, *Zanan*, (Women) has been forced to close after 16 years of publication, after being accused of painting a "dark picture" of Iran. *Zanan's* founder Shahla Sherkat is considered a prime example of Islamic Iranian feminism. She has been accused of "offering a dark picture of the Islamic Republic through the pages of *Zanan*" and of "compromising the psyche and the mental health" of its readers by providing them with "morally questionable information."

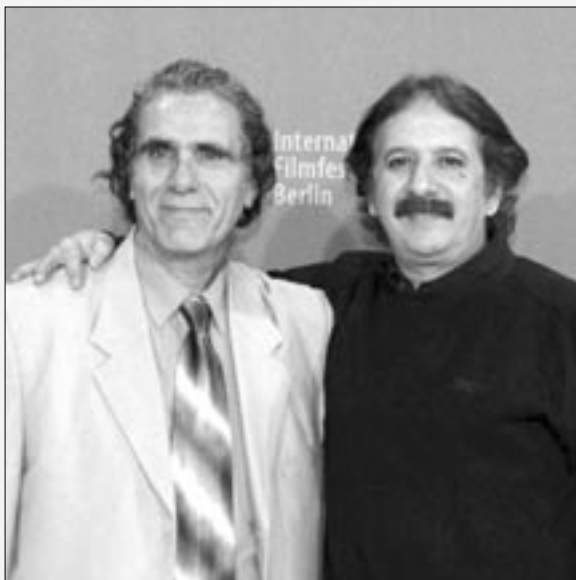
The magazine, has for years been considered a place where controversial topics in Iranian society have been discussed, ranging from domestic violence, to cosmetic surgery and relationships. It has been at the forefront in the fight for fundamental women's rights in Iran. The magazine has also used very subtle and creative language in order to avoid being shut down.

(adnkronos international)

GEORGE CLOONEY'S TRIP TO IRAN

Actor George Clooney, officially designated a "messenger of peace" by the United Nations, told Voice of America's (VOA) Persian News may visit Iran. In a brief exchange with PNN international correspondent Katayoun Beglari-Scarlet at the UN ceremony marking his new role, Clooney added that he had an Iranian friend from Shiraz. The award-winning film actor has spent the past few years campaigning to end the four and half-year war in Darfur and to provide humanitarian assistance to the millions caught up in the conflict. According to the U.N., the actor is the ninth U.N. peace envoy and was selected "for his ability to focus public attention on critical international political and social issues."

IRANIAN ACTOR REZA NAJI WINS BEST ACTOR SILVER BEAR



From left: Reza Naji and Majid Majidi

BERLIN, Feb. 17 – Iran's Reza Naji has won the Silver Bear prize for best actor at the 58th Berlin Film Festival for his role in director Majid Majidi's "The Song of Sparrows". In the film, Naji plays the role of Karim, who is a worker at an ostrich farm in the suburbs of the town of Shahriyar. He is quite content with his life and his small house, but he is fired from his job after making a bad mistake. He is thus forced to travel to the big city of Tehran for work, and then several incidents occur which greatly affect his life.

"I would like to express my thanks to the Berliners, who are lovers of art," Naji said in his acceptance speech after he received the Silver Bear statuette at the closing ceremony of the 2008 Berlinale, AFP reported.

"I am dedicating this prize to my country, which I love, and its cinema." "For me, the message is that we shouldn't keep asking for more and more, or make too many demands which will only lead us to ruin," Majidi said after a press screening in Berlin.

The film's screenplay was written by Majidi and Mehran Kashani. "The Song of Sparrows" also won four awards at the 26th Fajr International Film Festival, which was held in Tehran from February 1 to 11.

At the 2008 Fajr Festival, the film won the Crystal Simorghs for Best Director (Majid Majidi), Best Editor (Hassan Hassandust), Best Composer (Hossein Alizadeh), and Best Makeup Artist (Saeid Malekan).

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THE MEETING OF MEHR SOCIETY

The meeting of Board of Trustees of Mehr Humanitarian Society took place on Sunday Jan. 27, 2008 at Marriot Hotel at Glen point, Teaneck NJ. At presence of .Dr. Hossein Ameri, president, Mr.Jalal Moien, vice president and the following Board members; Mrs.Freshteh Daraghi, Anousheh Dargahi, Dr.Rasoul Hasheminasab, Mrs. Zohreh Hasheminasab, Mrs. Lilli Moien, Dr.Afsaneh Shaybani, Mr.Alireza Shaybni and Mrs. Nasrin Vosoughian. At this meeting Dr. Hasheminasa and Mrs. Vosoughina were the Joint chairperson of Scholarship Committee. The applications of five students who applied for scholarship were reviewed and discussed. After the recommendation of Chair persons of Scholarship committee to The Board of trustees, the proceeds of Mehr HS's, from Jan.12, 2008 at Miller theater fund raising were awarded to five students. Among these students, one of them is studding Law in Florida, one is studding Medicine in Michigan, one is studding Engineering in Colorado, one is studying pre-dentistry in New Jersey and the last one is studding Graphic Art in New York.

18 MILLION AND GROWING

According to Mehr News Agency over 18 million Iranians are connected to the internet at home, office or school. Over 1218 cities and 5,426 villages are now on line and connected to the Internet Service Providers. This figure represents 27% of the entire population.

DID YOU KNOW?

Thirteen percent of the crimes committed in Iran are done so by foreign nationals. Seems like that is the case throughout the world. In Iran foreign nationals make up 1/20th of the population.

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**THE PASSING OF
DR. AHMAD FAEGHI SHARIF**

On February 2, 2008, Dr. Ahmad Faeghi Sharif, the husband of Mrs. Rafat Moayyed Ghorashi and the father of Azar, Nozar, Setareh, Mohammad, Reza and Hooshang Sharif passed away in Mashhad, Iran.



Our father was a strong man, physically and emotionally and stood strong to the very end even in his dying bed, weakened, but not defeated; reduced, but not fallen. He did not ask for help and endured what was granted to him, all in his usual grace and everlasting resolve.

A day after my dad died, I got on a Turkish Airline flight to Iran, flying over the North Western regions of Iran, almost entirely over the snow-capped mountains and the hilly land, interrupted only by small patches of light emitting from the villages and towns on the way. I had a total of 15 hours to think about my dad. His feelings, hopes, dreams, desires and that he loved us so very unconditionally. He was a "Baba" to be proud of, and one to be inspired by. I admired how he made a life for himself, almost without the help of others. I admired how he kept us shielded from all harm, at all costs.

And I kept thinking that he must be cold in that frozen ground.

At home, things were hectic, from arranging for the funeral, flowers, food, putting announcements in the paper, receiving hundreds of people and phone calls to dealing with the loss. It was extremely important to have my brothers and sister and their families, my aunts and uncle and cousins to help us cope. On the first day of my arrival, my brother and I went to his room and looked at his clothing, books, pictures and his medical diagnostic instruments and cried.

I brought back with me his scarf, his magnifying glass and a few of his pictures. For a man who worked for 55 years, served tirelessly the communities of Ghoochan, Mashhad and Darood and had a successful medical practice, only a few books and some items of clothing remained.

My dad gave to the poor and to his children to assure their advanced education. He was fiercely protective of us and believed in living with dignity and with financial independence. He wished that for his daughters as strongly as for his sons. It is my dad, who encouraged me to come to the U.S. for higher education. I owe my life direction to him.

I speak for my family in thanking God for him and in celebrating his life. I know he is in heaven now, in the company of his mother and his beloved brother, Mohammad. I know that, as I have dreamt of it.

Setareh Sharif, Ph.D., MPH, MBA
New York City
February 2008

a message about

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IRAN SEEKS UNESCO YEAR OF FERDOWSI

Iran's cultural heritage organization hopes that UNESCO will evaluate naming an international year in honor of the Persian poet Ferdowsi. The Iranian poet is renowned for his magnum opus *Shahnameh*, or 'Book of Kings'. He devoted over 35 years of his life to this treasure which has a unique place in Persian literature. Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* abounds with depictions of the Persian Empire, neatly presented within the beautiful poetry. It tells of the Kings and warriors that made the land of Persia an empire throughout the ages. Simultaneously, it brought back to life the Persian language, which was Ferdowsi's primary goal. Ferdowsi is revered for his efforts to regenerate Persian and Iran's cultural traditions after the Arab conquest of the seventh century.

NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Leila Heller, owner of one of New York's top art galleries, Leila Taghina-Milanai Heller Gallery, is about to launch another exhibition at her new location, 39 East 78th St., at Madison, NYC. The inaugural date is February 28, from 6 to 9 PM. *Persian Heritage* is proud to announce that one of the artists that will be part of the exhibition is Negar Ahkami. Ms. Heller has a gift in organization and talent in picking out an art collection. If you have not, to date, had an opportunity to see one of her exhibits take advantage of this one.

IRAN'S FIRST FEMALE PHYSICS PROFESSOR



Alinush Terian is the first female Iranian professor in physics. She was born in 1920 to an Armenian family in Iran and studied physics at the University of Tehran. After the Second World War she graduated and applied for a scholarship to study in France, but it was rejected because she was a female. Public opinion, at that time, was physics and science education in general, was a male business. In 1956 she gained her doctorate from the Academy of Science in Paris. She was offered the professorship from the Sorbonne, Paris but rejected it, because, "The whole reason I came to France was to study and go back to Iran and be at the service of my country." She returned to Iran and was appointed professor of physics at Tehran University. Later she was appointed the head of the newly established astrological research center in Tehran.

IRANIAN INVENTOR'S GADGET MAKES BOOKS AUDIBLE

Iranian inventor Ramin Sedighi made a small device that turns silent books into speaking ones. The gadget is a useful computer system that pronounces, translates and explains pictures and words of a book located on it when its electronic pen touches them.



The device can provide a very effective method for teaching foreign languages to children between 4-16 and will be available in early 2008. It contains a USB port, audio output, electronic pen, 512 megabyte memory for storing 15 books and a SD card which can store 60 books as its flash memory. It works with electricity or battery, is as big as a 13-inch laptop and is light enough to be portable.

Tehran, Dec. 26 (ISNA)

PLACES TO GO IN 2008

Iran is listed as one of the top ten places to visit in 2008, according to a New York Times travel article. Next year the Silver Sea, a luxury cruise line is expected to make a stop in the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. If that is not enough another company is offering an eighteen day trip which starts in Tehran and visits Shiraz, Isfahan and other once "forbidden" countryside towns. This one is by a company called Distant Horizons.

TOP TEN MEDICAL LIST

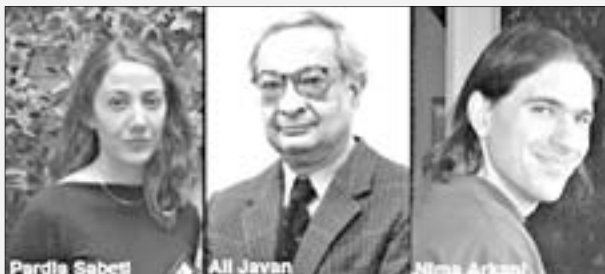
Panacea Pharmaceuticals has created a lung cancer diagnostic blood test, the LC Detectms . It has been named as one of Time Magazine's top ten medical discoveries for 2007. The company was founded by Mr. Kasra Ghanbari who served as COO and President through 2004. Today he is Chairman of the Board and CEO of VEI Studio's Inc.. Also founding the company is Mehdi Hatamian, PhD. who has a background in engineering and information technology. The blood test is simple and can be drawn or ordered by any physician. The sample is then sent to a Panacea for testing. It is designed to facilitate the identification of lung cancer, even in very early stages in comparison to CAT scans and chest x-rays.

Exercise Your Right Vote This November!

BLOCK THE NET

The BBC is concerned with the recent blocking of the BBC Persian website's access in Iran. They believe the block would curtail outside information and facts from reaching the people within Iran. They have made attempts to contact Iran's leaders in the hopes of reinstating the access to normal numbers. The BBC, however, rather the BBC World Service has secured government funding to go ahead with its plans to launch a TV program in Persian. According to Nigel Chapman, director of the BBC World Service, "audiences in the Middle East and Iran will have multi-media access, through television, radio and online, to trusted journalism of the highest standing and increased opportunity for dialogue and debate. He further stated that this programming would be of great importance to its audiences in the troubled region.

3 IRANIANS AMONG THE TOP 100 LIVING GENIUSES DR. JAVAN, DR. ARKANI-HAMED, DR. SABETI



The top 100 living geniuses were compiled by a panel of six experts in creativity and innovation from Creators Synectics, a global consultant firm. Each genius was then awarded scores out of ten, against criteria which included: paradigm shifting; popular acclaim; intellectual power; achievement and cultural importance.

Two Iranians were listed: they are Professor Ali Javan, currently the Wight Davis Professor Emeritus of Physics at MIT, founder of the first major research center in the field of lasers, ranked twelfth and Dr. Pardis Sabeti, biological anthropologist, ranked forty-ninth.

SYMPATHY

We share the loss of our loved and dearest friend Faith Iman. She was a devoted wife to Nasrollah, loving mother of Susanne, Shahram, Marcene, Ali, Kevin, Markela and Cameron and grandmother of Darian, Dariush, Roxanna, Sophia and Samir and the Khosrowshai families, all relatives and friends.

Persian Heritage, Nahid and Dr. Shahrokh Ahkami, Dr. Bernadette and Garnik Azarnia and all friends will miss our friend Faith Iman.

PERSONAL LOSS

Persian Heritage and the entire Ahkami family are deeply saddened by the loss of Dr. Ahmad Faeghi Sharif. He was not only part of our family but also a devoted friend.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his family.

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IRAN OR PERSIA

In Avesta the ancient document and the most historic book of Iran the term “a-eer-ya-nemva-ee-jo” used to describe the land of the Aeers’. The terrain and plateau, which the Indo-European (Iranian) first settled.

The term “Aeer” later was changed to “Ar”, “Er” or “Ir” , the Avesta uses the term synonym to NOBLE. Noble means AzAdeh in today’s Farsi.

“Arien” or “Aryan” was race of people who settled in the plateau of Iran. Nothing much is know of the history of Parthian”which they have settled in north east part of the plateau of Iran.

Parthia while it was part of a satrapy of the Achaemenian Empire joined to Hyrcania (present Gorgan, Iran) the two remained together as a province of the Seleucid kingdom.

Parthian (247 BC-ad 224) established a powerful empire during which dominated Roman many times. Finally, the new dynasty of the Sasanians, under the leadership of Ardashir I (reigned 224-241), overthrew the Parthian princes, ending the history of Parthia.

Both Aryan and Parthian races have settled in different parts of Ancient Iranian Empire stretched between Gang River in India to the north part of Egypt, including part or whole Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Israel, Turkey, Lebanon.

In much of today’s World Wide Web, and literature, the terms Persia and Iran have often been used interchangeably to refer to a vast geographic area that has extended from India to Mediterranean. These two designations refer to quite different geographic, political and cultural entities.

Persia is derived from the word Pars, or Persis, as it was known to the ancient Greeks, and has a narrow and specific connotation. It refers to a mountainous region to the northwest of the Persian Gulf, where the city of Shiraz and province of Pars (Present Iran) and the Achaemenid palace, Persepolis, are situated.

However the etymology of the word Iran is Aryan and refers to the Indo-European people and language, which spread throughout a region, connoting a much larger geographic and cultural domain. The term Iran has been in use since the Achaemenid period (ca 550- 331 B.C.)

Although the use of Persia as the designation for the country is less current, it is still used in its adjectival form, that is Persian to refer to language and culture. Therefore using term “Persia” referring to the Ancient and/or today Iran not historically nor geographically would be correct.

Using term Persia or Persian it corresponds to the small part of Empire of Iran. This word may help to describe a certain kind of product or species such as Persian Rug or Persian Cat, but certainly would be insufficient and unprofessional to name Iran, anything less than “Iran”.

The epic of Kings (Shahnameh) mentioned Iran 720 times, Irani and Iranians 350 times, therefore the name Iran have irrelevant connection to certain individuals or dynasty. Therefore it is highly recommended to use “Iran” term when is referred to the History of Iran, Land and its People.

taken from: peymanmeli.org

THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS, NOVEMBER 23, 2007

To the Editors:

On Friday, August 19, 2005, in my letter to the editor of Iranian (a non profit publication in the Washington Metropolitan) among others I praised Mr. Ganji for his endurance to supporting some of Iranian writers in the confinement. However, when I came across his published letter in The New York Review of Books on November 22, 2007 which was, originally, sent to the Secretary General of the United Nations, I decided to bring up a couple of important remarks. First of all I believe that Mr. Ganji has arrogated to himself as one of the leaders of Iran’s Nation; as in his letter a few times he becomes spokesman of the people of Iran.

Mr. Akbar Ganji was not, and he still is not a leader of any kind of political or social group inside, and outside of Iran. Publishing his letter with the signatures of some of respectful scholars brought me disappointment. With all my respects this is the same story that happened in the time of the Vietnam War, Invasion of Iraq, and the Darftir Massacre. It reminds me of the funeral days of Modernism; that, songs were beautifully articulated the movement of humanity, and the opponents of the Vietnam War were in a deep ecstasy. Though there was no solution to the destruction. However, later on, those powerful authorities behind the powered machine of the America’s foreign policy put their effort in a even more- high gear and high tech. Not just that they found better ways to harness the people who supposedly were in the position to resist the war plans of the administration, but also they started to threaten countries which might have had tendencies not to support America’s Foreign Policy. Ganji’s letter is filigreed by the scholars of letter. My question is if they know what will be the consequences of an open door process in an effort to implementation of the American way of democracy? Do these scholars have the power to guarantee a smooth transition? Is it, really, what America’s Foreign Policy is about?

There are also Persian language publications where they gets funds in US Dollars just because they are writing, in some ways wrong, and, in some ways right against the Iranian government.

Iranian people, just like many millions of other nations have been witnessing the bloody efforts of America for implementation of democracy to Iraq. Therefore, for an Iranian like me who has been dismissed from, (I was employed in the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) his government-position back home by the Revolutionary Guard, it is wiser to stay behind the Islamic Republic of Iran then allow his homeland to become an invasion place for others. In such a situation, none of these beautiful signatures of respectful scholars could possibly bring justice, and help to the people of Iran.

Firouz Hejazi,

Iranian-American, teacher and a freelance writer

IRAN

A BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY RULED BY WRONG PEOPLE

PART ONE

BY: IMANOEL KOHANIM



In the aftermath of yet another humiliating agreement against Iranian people, in which Russia has just signed a joint agreement with Kazakhstan over dividing the **Caspian Sea** under-water resources, Iranian people while observing this development cautiously, remember the two most humiliating treaties ever, signed between Imperial Russia and Persia. The first was, Treaty of Gulistan, signed in 1813 and the second was, the Treaty of Turkmenchey, signed in 1828. In these two treaties, Iran lost to Russia, today's Azarbaijan, Georgia & Armenia plus many other smaller territories, not mentioning the non-territorial but equally Humiliating concessions. To some accounts, Iran lost over 35% of its then entire land over to Russia. In exchange, Russia promised to support Abbas Mirza as successor to the Persian Throne after the death of Fath Ali Shah (which did not happen anyway). These treaties while a disgrace in the eyes & minds of Iranian people, were in fact, proved to be, a new beginning to bring about a unified opposition that finally brought about the first Iranian Constitution over 100 years ago (1906). Now the question is this, is history going to repeat in this region again?

Is Russia, as is now driving to regain its super power status, going to deprive Iranan people from their 50% right of ownership to the vast resources of the Caspian Sea. In return, Russia to continue maintaining its shameful support of the Islamic regime. There are now talks underway that the Caspian Coastline be divided into five sectors in proportion with the length of the coastline of the (on shore) states, (Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azarbaijan). If this happens, which in fact is a proposal on the part of Kazakhstan, Iran would end up with merely 10% of the Caspian resources, compared to 50% share of ownership that it enjoys now. Considering the enormous potential resources of

the Caspian Sea, including, by some estimates, more than 10% of the world's oil reserves and enormous reserves of natural gas plus the ever growing strategic importance of the Caspian after the fall of Soviet Union, the 40% decrease of ownership for Iranian people would be disastrous. Even if Russia happens to accept the regime's proposal to treat the Caspian as a single unit jointly administered by the five (on shore) states, Iran would only receive 20% of the Caspian, still a big loss for Iranian people. I should also note that the major international oil companies have been investing in the Caspian region since more than a decade ago without participation of Islamic Republic. It is noteworthy that the republic of Azarbaijan is already pumping oil from what it considers as its own zone.

Now let me direct the reader's attention to another important subject which is the **Persian Gulf**. After the rise of Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism in 1960's, some Arab states began to dream of a name change to Persian Gulf. With the emergence of Iran's Islamic Republic, the dream became widespread. Some Arab states altered the maps and erased the word "Persian" from the Persian Gulf. After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 some people in Islamic groups suggested the use of "Islamic Gulf." While the originator of the term Islamic Gulf is not known, some people suggest that prominent figures of the early years of the Islamic republic including Ruhollah Khomeini, and Sadegh Khalkhali have supported the idea. What do the current prominent figures of the regime done in opposing the name change? Absolute silence. All this political concessions or inaction on the part of Islamic government is because of the selfishness of the regime to gain Russian support so as to stay in power a few more days.

On economic side, the Regime's radical foreign policy have brought hardship to its citizens, to say the least. The Regime's ballistic-missile and nuclear programs along with Mr. Ahmadinejad's blunders are incapacitating Iran's economy. Iran is still heavily dependent on oil revenues and the economy not yet diversified. Inflation is now about 15% and unemployment, some expert suggest, to be also near 15%. The Regime has discredited local state owned banks such as Bank Sepah & Bank Saderat, by having them finance terrorism. Bank Sepah is already blacklisted by the United Nations. Bank Saderat is cut-off by the U.S. financial system. As a result more & more international banks are refusing to deal with Iran. France is already asked its largest firms to halt their bid for projects in Iran. Sadly enough, recently, the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, has increased Iran's risk classification for the likelihood that the country pays its external debts to worst-ever rating, equal to Gabon, a small west central African country with a population of only 1.3 million. The anti-American rhetoric, have also not been any help to average Iranians. America, once a closest ally to Iran, have been pushed back by the Regime's steady anti-American sentiments from the start. Hostage-taking, harsh rhetoric, & non-stop blunderings are only a few examples. One other major concern is that due to Ahmadenijad's mismanagement and excessive spending, Iran's oil stabilization fund, which is designed to pay for long-term infrastructure, is now used to pay for more immediate needs, ie. Government subsidies, etc., to keep the masses quiet.

Corruption is another major ailment, depriving Iranians of economic opportunities. Regime's granting "no bid" contracts to cronies in Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corporations is only one example. The Bonyad, the massive semi-government foundation have transformed in to huge companies that dominate the trade while evading competition, taxes and regulations, if any. The epi-

demic of corruption is now seen everywhere in the country. The, Transparency International, (a global civil society organization leading the fight against corruption) ranked Iran 2.9 on a scale from 10 (highly clean) to zero (highly corrupt).

Drug addiction is also one of the most serious problems facing today's Iran. According to the United Nation's World Drug Report for 2005, Iran has the highest drug addiction rate in the world. The addiction to drug is now widespread. To some accounts, the number of drug addicts in the country is now over 4 million, which is of course directly related to Iran's high un-employment. In addition, from every four people addicted using syringes, one becomes HIV-positive. One study shows that male addicts begin taking drugs as early as fifteen, while females are introduced at a later age. The two most used narcotics are heroin & opium. The readers can watch glimpses of Iran's impoverished drug addicts, laying helplessly in the streets, through the internet.

Iranian girls at the age as low as 10, not too far back, Iran's sweat-hearts protected by civil rules, are now forced to marry elder men, sometimes 60 or 70 yrs old. The Regime, promotes and protects temporary marriage or "Sigheh" which allows a man to marry a woman for as short time as one hour. To make this shameful act legal, the couple, just have to take an oral vow before a cleric. According to Committee on the Rights of the Child, it was noted, increase in the number of forced marriages for girls from ages as low as 10. Also they found attitudes which places less value on education for a girl than a boy. According to UNICEF, the negative attitudes towards female education continue to exist, and families still view girls as better engaged in housekeeping activity. There are reports from the "U.N. Watch on Violence Against Women", where it highlights the issue of trafficking on girls & women. The women are kidnapped, bought or even forced into temporary marriages in order to be sold into sexual slavery in other countries. According to Article 1041 of the Civil Code or rather Regime's Code, marriage before puberty (nine full years for girls) is prohibited, **which is to say that the marriage at the age of 10 is legal.** Sadly enough, under the banner of Islam, this fundamentalist regime is denying the equality of men & women. Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's former president, has declared explicitly that women are inferior and must be treated differently under the law: "Justice does not mean that all laws must be the same for men and women.....The difference in the stature, vitality, voice, development, muscular quality, and physical strength of men and women shows that men are stronger and more capable in all fields.....Men's brains are larger....Men incline toward reasoning and rationalism while women basically tend to be emotional". Mohammad Yazdi, the one time Head of Regime's Judiciary, has declared **"If kneeling before God were not obligatory, wives should have knelt before their husbands.** A woman is wholly the possession of her husband, and her public life is conditional upon her husband's consent". He also declared "No matter at what stage of knowledge, virtue, perfection, and prudence a woman is, she does not have the right to rule". In general, Islamic fundamentalist have established their ideology on the difference of sexes, to them male is always superior than a woman. Some of them even believe that women are different form of humans, with different psyche.

EDUCATION

The Regime from the start, condemned higher education, perceiving universities in general as a threat to the emergent state.

They claimed from the beginning that the universities are morally corrupted and students are westernized, and the professors are at the service of the West. The clerics claimed that the students are brainwashed by westerners & claimed that all the Iran's misery & "backwardness" has been due to the absence of Islamic laws and Islamic societies. Therefore, based on this ideology, the clerics began to purify the schools and universities. A great many ranking positions were filled with unqualified or unskilled individuals, who's only qualification were to be a Regime supporter. Due to above, plus the inclusion of Islamic subject matters in the curricula, the educational quality decreased drastically. In Sept. 2006, Iran's President, Mr. Ahmadinejad promised to eradicate all universities from what he calls the "liberal & secular influence". Also, the admittance into higher education, specifically universities, was therefore primarily based on ideological beliefs, rather than value. This was implemented by a so called "Political Screening" where the administrative body rewarded those who have been supportive of the cleric's ideology and punished those who have not.

Therefore, the university entrance exam, the Konkur, have become a means to admit Regime's supporter & hold back individuals who are not aligned with the system. As a result of this policy, these rejected masses, have no choice but to choose isolation from their society or to emigrate to foreign countries. At present Iran tops the world countries in emigration known as Brain-Drain Phenomenon. The International Monetary Fund considers Iran (highest ranked) in Brain-Drain among developing countries, with an estimated 150,000 people leaving Iran yearly.

ESCALATION OF ATROCITIES

This part of my article is to show to the readers how the Regime has recently escalated its atrocities toward Iranian people and also to bring to surface its tactics, domestically to intimidate the public & internationally to deceive the public opinion outside Iran. Here is some of the activities that the Regime undertakes.

For nearly three decades Iranian people have lived under the most repressive & notorious Regimes ever existed in our history. Much have been said & written about this Regime's atrocities toward Iranian people. What I intend to cover in this part of my article is in fact to write about a new wave of torture and execution in Iran by the Islamic Republic. There are news & rumors that the mass executions of political prisoners which were carried out in the 1st years of revolution, may be repeated. There are now news coming from Iran that the religious police has been doubled in streets & parks to impose hejab. The Regime still continues to



stone Iranians to death, ie. Jafa Kiyani in Takistan & Mokrameh Ebrahimi, mother of 5 children. Zahra Beni Yaghob, was killed recently walking in the park with his fiance. Another woman named Horiyeh, was executed in public in Tabriz. The execution of young political, union, labor and student activists have also escalated. The Regime's high court has sentenced Adnan Hassanpour, a journalist of Kurdish origin to death, he was arrested in July 2007. Yasser Goli, another activist, arrested & tortured in October 2007 by the Regime's intelligence agents. Farzad Kamongar, an educator & member of the teacher's union, arrested, tortured & now in solitary confinement, exposed to noise torture.

In December 2007, when hundreds of students protested in Tehran University against the new wave of crackdown on activists, the Regime arrested most of them with false allegations. The Regime's media reported that the protesting students had carried concussion grenades & alcoholic beverages into the University, Regime's all too familiar tactic. The detainees have been incarcerated in the Regime's intelligence agency's lockup. Also in December 2007, the Regime's security police and masked intelligence arrested another 28 students during a demonstration, some now in solitary confinement in the Regime's notorious prison, Evin #209. For the names of these activists go to the "Int'l alliance in support of workers, women & students in Iran". The Regime's security is also involved in raiding the homes of the activists, hitting & kidnapping them. These brave young activist plus thousands more are suffering in the most inhumane way in Regime's prisons and detention centers. They need our support to resist to this anti-human Regime in Iran.

There are reports from former political prisoners, ie. Sudabe Ardavan, that the Evin inmates commit suicide when they can no longer bear this barbaric tortures in their cells. Hamid Reza Mohamadi, who cut his veins with spoon, is one example. Other inmates simply hang themselves using their own clothes. For reference, the readers can simply click search the internet under the Iranian political prisoners.

Kianoosh Sanjari, a young Iranian hero, has been another student activists/political prisoner. He has spent two years in Regime's prisons, ten months of which in solitary confinement. K. Sanjari is now out of Iran & is a human rights activist. In his May 31, 2007 interview with Maryam Maktoob, he explains how he was arrested, interrogated, beaten & imprisoned in a small cell 1 1/2 by 2 meters. He explains how the prison officials torture prisoners in their underground facilities. Prisoners are beaten, and subjected to loud sounds, not allowed to use restrooms. The

prisoners could rot in their prison cells & no one would know. Mr. Sanjari also explains how officials charge people for crimes that they have never committed. He says, the goal of the prison officials is to get the prisoner to falsely admit to the accusations against them by means of torture.

Nothing I can write could be more powerful than just to quote from Mr. Sanjari's own words. In response to a question, "Is anyone in Iran safe?", here is what he had to say "No one in Iran has any safety. For example, there are poor family members who have political gatherings in front of Amnesty International in Iran, and soon after they all get arrested. Even if someone is protesting a simple pay hike at their job, they will get immediately arrested. Even if a parent is with his/her kids; everyone present will be arrested. There is a man by the name of Omid Abbass-Golinejad who has two daughters and a wife. One day he and his family were standing outside of Amnesty International, at which point they were all arrested, including his three and four year old children. As this example demonstrates, no one, even if you are a young child has any safety in Iran." And when he is asked about, "How can Iranians in the West get involved in Political Activism?", here is his response, "There are not many Iranian freedom fighters outside of Iran. If an Iranian living in the West wants to help, they should go stand outside of Embassy of Iran or Amnesty International and protest. We don't see that often. If we have 100,000 Iranians get together, we could make a difference; even if it's a small difference. Everyone should know about the political prisoners and what they are going through. I hope that people who are not freedom fighters can wake up from the dream that they are in and think about their home country. Unfortunately what I see for the people living outside of Iran is that they left Iran to live under different circumstances. They forgot the poverty, the killings and the prisons. They forgot about the torture. Instead they have been taken by the beauty of the West and have forgotten where they came from. It is our duty as human rights activists to inform these people of what is going on in Iran."

Therefore to become active and to protest to the above mentioned atrocities, please join, Amnesty International, The Int'l campaign against Islamic Republic atrocities, and the Int'l Alliance in support of workers, women, & students in Iran. Steal a little time from your other chores and write to the above institutions and try to expose these unspeakable atrocities, arrests, tortures, imprisonments, and house arrests. We know that it has been the Regime's shameful tactic since its inception, to kill innocent people as a means of intimidation. Also it has been its tactic to often yield to int'l pressure temporarily, but resume its atrocities once the pressure is subsided. Therefore sustained pressure is the way to go, to ease this new wave of death sentences and torture.

Iran, once the most powerful country in the world, with its glorious history. The land of Achaemenians, 550-330 BC, with the establishment of charter of human rights never before declared in the ancient history. The land of Sassanid, 226-651 AD, constituted the last great Iranian empire before the Muslim conquest and adoption of Islam. Much of what later became known as Islamic culture, architecture, writings and skills, were taken mainly from the Sassanid Persians. In fact the highest achievements of Persian civilization were witnessed by Sassanids. This dynasty's territories encompassed all of today's Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Afghanistan, Eastern parts of Turkey, parts of India, Syria, Pakistan, and Central Asia.

to be continued



THE “WAR” OFFICIALLY designated by the U.S. government as such and inaugurated with the “decapitation” strike of March 19, 2003, was really only a change of tempo in the overall war on Iraq. It commenced with the sanctions imposed by the UN and by a separate U.S. blockade in August of 1990, stretching through the first “hot” attack of January 16, 1991, on through the next twelve years, 1990-2003; a long war, and a terrible one for the Iraqi people.

ONE

On April 3, 1991, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 687, the so-called mother of all resolutions, setting up the Sanctions Committee, dominated by the United States. It is vital to understand that the first “hot” Gulf War was waged as much against the people of Iraq as against the Republican Guard. The U.S. and its allies destroyed Iraq’s water, sewage and water-purification systems and its electrical grid. Nearly every bridge across the Tigris and Euphrates was demolished. They struck twenty-eight hospitals and destroyed thirty-eight schools. They hit all eight of Iraq’s large hydropower dams. They attacked grain storage silos and irrigation systems.

Farmlands near Basra were inundated with salt-water as a result of allied attacks. More than 95 per cent of Iraq’s poultry farms were destroyed, as were 3.3 million sheep and more than 2 million cows. The U.S. and its allies bombed textile plants, cement factories and oil refineries, pipelines and storage facilities, all of which contributed to an environmental and economic nightmare that continued nearly unabated over the twelve years.

When confronted by the press with reports of Iraqi women carting home buckets of filthy water from the Tigris river, itself contaminated with raw sewage from the bombed treatment plants, an American general shrugged his shoulders and said: “People say, ‘You didn’t recognize that the bombing was going to have an effect on water and sewage.’ Well, what were we trying to do with sanctions: help out the Iraqi people? What we were doing with the attacks on the infrastructure was to accelerate the effect of the sanctions.”

After this first “hot” war in early 1991, with Iraq’s civilian and military infrastructure in ruins, the sanctions returned, as an invisible army of what we could call “external occupation,” with a vise grip; the intent was to keep Iraq from rebuilding not only its army but the foundations of the economy and society.

Despite the efforts of outfits such as Voices in the Wilderness, embargoes don’t draw the same attention as salvos of cruise missiles or showers of cluster bombs. But they’re infinitely more deadly, and the perpetrators and executives deserve to end up on trial as war criminals as richly as any targeting officer in the Pentagon. By 1998, UN officials working in Baghdad were arguing that the root cause of child mortality and other health problems was no longer simply lack of food and medicine but lack of clean

water (freely available in all parts of Iraq prior to the Gulf War) and of electrical power, now running at only 30 per cent of the pre-bombing level, with consequences for hospitals and water pumping systems that can be all too readily imagined. Many of the contracts vetoed at the insistence of the U.S. by the Sanctions Committee were integral to the repair of water and sewage systems. By some estimates, the bombings from the Gulf War inflicted nearly \$200 billion worth of damage to the civilian infrastructure of Iraq. “Basically, anything with chemicals or even pumps is liable to get thrown out,” one UN official revealed.

The sanctions, then, served as a pretext to bring this hidden war home to the Iraqi people, to “soften them up” from the inside, as one Pentagon official put it. The same trend was apparent in the power supply sector, where around 25 per cent of the contracts were vetoed. This meant not only were homes without power, but also hospitals, schools, the infrastructure of everyday life. But even this doesn’t tell the whole story. UN officials referred to the “complementarily issue,” meaning that items approved for purchase would be useful without other items that had been vetoed. For example (as *CounterPunch* reported at the time) the Iraqi Ministry of Health ordered \$25 million worth of dentist chairs. This order was approved by the Sanctions Committee, except for the compressors, without which the chairs were useless and consequently gathered dust in a Baghdad warehouse. These vetoes served as a constant harassment, even over petty issues. In February 2000 the U.S. moved to prevent Iraq from importing 15 bulls from France. The excuse was that the animals, ordered with the blessing of the UN’s humanitarian office in Baghdad to try to restock the Iraqi beef industry, would require certain vaccines which (who knows?) might be diverted into a program to make biological weapons of mass destruction.

For sheer sadistic bloody-mindedness, however, the interdiction of the bulls pales beside an initiative of the British government, which banned the export of vaccines for tetanus, diphtheria and yellow fever on the grounds that they too might find their way into the hands of Saddam’s biological weaponeers. It had been the self-exculpatory mantra of U.S. and British officials that “food and medicine are exempt from sanctions.” As the vaccine ban shows, this, like so many other pronouncements on Iraq, turns out to be a lie. Indeed, the sanctions policy was always marked by acts of captious cruelty. Since 1991, the U.S. and Britain slapped their veto on requests by Iraq for infant food, ping-pong balls, NCR computers for children’s hospitals for blood analysis, heaters, insecticide, syringes, bicycles, nail polish and lipstick, tennis balls, children’s clothes, pencil sharpeners and school notebooks, cotton balls and swabs, hospital and ambulance radios and pagers, and shroud material.

But the prolonged onslaught on the Iraqi people by the sanc-

TWO

But the prolonged onslaught on the Iraqi people by the sanc-

THE THIRTEEN YEAR WAR

David A. Yazdan

Older men declare war. But it is the youth who fight and die. And, it is the youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow and the triumph that are the aftermath of war.

HERBERT HOOVER, address to the 23rd Republican National Convention, Chicago, Illinois, June 27, 1944. *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Twenty-third Republican National Convention*, p. 166.

tions did not mean that direct military attack stopped in March of 1991. Indeed, though it received scant attention in the press, Iraq was hit with bombs or missiles an average of every three days since the ceasefire that purportedly signaled the end of the first Gulf War. Its feeble air defense system was shattered and its radars were jammed and bombed; its air force was grounded, the runways of its airports were repeatedly cratered; its navy, primitive to begin with, was destroyed. The nation's northern and southern territories were occupied by hostile forces, armed, funded and overseen by the CIA. Every bit of new construction in the country was scrutinized for any possible military function by satellite cameras capable of zooming down to a square meter. Truck and tank convoys were zealously monitored. Trop locations were pinpointed. Bunkers were mapped, the coordinates programmed into the targeting software for bunker-busting bombs.

Iraq after the Gulf War wasn't a rogue state. It was a captive state. This daily military harassment was the normal state of play, but there were also more robust displays of power. In June of 1993, Bill Clinton okayed a cruise missile strike on Baghdad, supposedly in response to an alleged and certainly bungled bid by Iraqi agents to assassinate George Bush the first on his triumphal tour of Kuwait.

Twenty-three cruise missiles were launched at Baghdad from two ships in the Persian Gulf. With deadly imprecision, eight of the missiles hit a residential suburb of Baghdad killing dozens of civilians, including one of the Iraq's leading artists, Leila al-Attar.

Then in December of 1998 another raid on Baghdad was launched, this one timed to divert attention from the House of Representatives' vote on the question of Clinton's impeachment. This time more than 100 missiles rained down on Baghdad, Mosul, Tikrit, and Basra, killing hundreds, Clinton's chief pollster, Stan Greenberg, imparted the welcome news that the bombings had caused Clinton's poll numbers to jump by 11 points. When in doubt, bomb Iraq. The message was not lost on Bush. In late February of 2001, less than a month into office, Bush let fly with two dozen cruise missiles on Baghdad, a strike that Donald Rumsfeld described as an "act of protective retaliation." And alongside these attacks the CIA was busy sponsoring assassination bids and, with sometimes comical inefficiency, trying to mount coups against Sadaam Hussein.

After five years of sanctions Iraq was in desperate straights. The hospitals filled with dying children, while medicines necessary to save them were banned by the U.S. officials in New York supervising the operations of the Sanctions Committee. Half a million children had died in the time span. The mortality rates were soaring with terrifying speed. The infant mortality rate had gone from 47 per 1,000 in 1989 to 108 per 1,000 in 1996. For kids under five the increase in the rate was even worse, from 56 per 1,000 in 1989 to 131 per 1,000 in 1996. By 1996 the death count was running at 5,000 children a month., to which Madeleine Albright made the infamous comment, "we think the price is worth it."

THREE

One might think this carefully planned and deadly onslaught on a civilian population, year after year, surely was retribution enough for Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. But what allowed the ultra-hawks in Washington to press for another hot war on Iraq was Saddam's personal survival as Iraqi dictator. Though the aims of the war party were much broader, the brazen survival of Saddam was always the pretext.

On July 8, 1996, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and

Political Studies sent a strategy memo to Israel's new Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Grandly titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm" (the realm in this instance being Israel), the memorandum had among its sponsors several notorious Washington characters, some of them accused more than once down the years of being agents of influence for Israel, including Richard Perle and Douglas Feith.

Among the recommendations for Netanyahu were these: ... roll-back some of [Israel's] most dangerous threats. This implies a clean break from the slogan "comprehensive peace" to a traditional concept of strategy based on balance of power

Change the nature of [Israel's] relations with the Palestinians, including upholding the right of hot pursuit for self-defense into all Palestinian areas....

Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq - an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right - as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions.

Within a few short months this strategy paper for Netanyahu was being recycled through the agency of a Washington bucket shop called the Project for a New American Century, which was convened by William Kristol with infusions of cash from the right-wing Bradley Foundation. The PNAC became a roosting spot for a retinue of DC neocons, headlined by Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and Paul Wolfowitz.

On the eve of Clinton's 1998 State of the Union address, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz sent Clinton a letter on PNAC stationery urging the President to overhaul radically U.S. policy toward Iraq. Instead of the slow squeeze of sanctions, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz declared that it was time for Saddam to be forcibly evicted and Iraq reconstructed along lines favorable to U.S. and Israeli interests. The UN be damned. "We are writing you because we are convinced that current American policy toward Iraq is not succeeding and that we may soon face a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the cold war," the letter blared.

In your upcoming State of the Union Address, you have an opportunity to chart a clear and determined course for meeting this threat. We urge you to seize that opportunity, and to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim above all at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.

In all likelihood, the strategy outlined in the letter was aimed not at Clinton, the lame duck, but at Gore, who Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, et. al. believed might be more receptive to this rhetoric.

They had reason for hope. One of the PNAC's members was James Woolsey, former CIA head and long-time Gore advisor on intelligence and military matters. And it worked. As the campaign season rolled into action Gore began to distance himself from Clinton on Iraq. He embraced the corrupt Ahmad Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress, indicted the Bush family for being soft on Saddam and called for regime topple.

Had Gore been elected he likely would have stepped up the tempo of military strikes on Iraq within weeks of taking office.

FOUR

After seizing power, the Bush crowd didn't have to wait long to draw Iraqi blood. Less than a month after taking office, cruise missiles pummeled Baghdad, killing dozens of civilians.

Then came the attacks of 9/11. Just hours into that day of disaster, Rumsfeld convened a meeting in the war room. He commanded his aides to get “best info fast. Judge whether good enough to hit S.H.” - meaning Saddam Hussein - “at same time. Not only U.B.L.” -the initials used to identify Osama bin Laden. “Go massive.” Notes taken by these aides quote him as saying: “sweep it all up. Things related and not.” The notes were uncovered by David Martin of CBS News. The preparations for overthrowing Saddam began that day, under the pretense that Saddam was somehow connected to bin Laden’s Wahhabite kamikazes. Rumsfeld knew then that the connection was illusory, and, despite lots of bluster and digging, it didn’t become any more substantial over the next year and a half.

In the months that preceded the second “hot” war, started on March 19, 2003, many a theory was advanced for the prime motive of the war party. Was it the plan of the proIsrael neocon hawks? Was it all about oil and (a sub-variant) because Saddam was insisting on being paid for his oil in euros? Was it, in the wake of 9/11, a peremptory message about U.S. power (this is the current White House favorite)? Was it essentially a subject change from the domestic economic slump?

The answer is the essentially nonconspiratorial one that it was a mix, Bush’s initial policy in his first fumbling months in office was far from the chest-pounding stance of implacable American might that it became after 9/11 changed the rule book. 9/11 is what gave the neocons their chance, and allowed them to push forward and eventually trump the instincts of a hefty chunk of the political and corporate elites. For many in these elites, the survival of Saddam Hussein was a small blip on the radar screen. For a resume of what preoccupied these elites, here’s a useful account from Jeffrey Garen, who was Clinton’s first under secretary of commerce for international trade, writing in *Business Week*:

The biggest issues the administration faced were not military in nature but competition with a Japan and Europe, financial crises in Latin America and Asia, negotiations over the North American Trade Agreement, and the establishment of the World Trade Organization and China’s entrance into it. In Washington eyes, the policies of the MT, the World Bank, and the WTO were bigger issues than the future of NATO. The opening of Japan’s markets was more critical than its military posture in Asia. The rating that Standard & Poor’s gave to Indonesia was of greater significance than sending our military advisers there. We pushed deregulation and privatization. We mounted massive trade missions to help U.S. companies win big contracts in emerging markets. Strengthening economic globalization became the organizing principle for most of our foreign policy. And American corporations were de facto partners all along the way.

That’s a fair account of how the agenda looks, from the imperial battlements. Run the show as best you can, but don’t rock the boat more than you have to. Acting too blatantly as a prime world gangster, dissing the Security Council, roiling the Arab world, prompting popular upheavals in Turkey, all counted as boat-rocking on a dangerous scale. By the end of half a year’s national debate on the utility of attacking Iraq, business leaders were still chewing their fingernails and trembling at the economic numbers; the New York Times was against war and George Jr. had lost the support of his father, who issued a distinct rebuke during a question-and-answer session at Tufts in mid-spring. George Senior’s closest associate, James Baker and Brent Scowcroft, similarly expressed disagreement.

But against this opposition, domestic political factors proved

paramount and overwhelming. The post-9/11 climate offers the American right its greatest chance since the first days of the Reagan administration, maybe even since the early 1950s, to set in blood and stone its core agenda; untrammled exercise of power overseas, and at home roll-back of all liberal gains since the start of the New Deal. And not just that, but an opportunity too to make a lasting dent in the purchase on Jewish support and money held since Truman by the Democratic Party.

FIVE

These are the prizes, and so it was never in doubt, since the morning hours of 9/11, that the Bush regime would attack Iraq and eventually bring home the head of Saddam. But what the regime needed immediately and got, was not the head, but the image of the head, wrapped in the U.S. flag. That came with the images of Iraqis - actually a small knot of Chalabi’s supporters plus some journalists - cheering U.S. troops in the Baghdad square in front of the Palestine Hotel on April 9 as they hauled down Saddam’s statue in one small portion of that square, itself sealed off by three U.S. tanks. As for the looting, it’s entirely in character for U.S. planners to have had plans for the “attrition of Iraqi national self-esteem,” but also we wouldn’t discount local initiative, probably with inside help, in looting the archeological museum and the National Library. The non-discovery of the weapons of mass destruction was and remains a huge embarrassment for both Bush and Blair. The British *Independent* (April 20, 2003) carried the following huge front-page banner headlines: “SO WHERE ARE THEY, MR BLAIR? NOT ONE ILLEGAL WARHEAD, NOT ONE DRUM OF CHEMICALS. NOT ONE INCRIMINATING DOCUMENT. NOT ONE SHRED OF EVIDENCE THAT IRAQ HAS WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN MORE THAN A MONTH OF WAR AND OCCUPATION.”

CounterPunch tends to agree with the assessment of the Russian commentator “Venik” who remarked when the “hot war” ended that, as in the initial U.S. engagement in Afghanistan, the prime U.S. weapon of mass destruction was the dollar.

We have read many highly detailed accounts of how, in the first week of April, the impending siege of Baghdad turned into a cakewalk, and though we don’t believe most of those details, we do agree that there were some big pay-offs and U.S. guarantees of assisted flight. Indeed here at *CounterPunch* we wonder whether some of those billiondollar stashes found by U.S. troops in Baghdad were not U.S. pay-off money that speeded the departure of the Republican Guard’s commanders, duly followed by the defection of the prudent troops.

Iraq’s seventeenth years’ war is not over. That’s obvious enough, and we expect many long years of travail and struggle lie ahead for those millions of people in the cradle of civilization. We will report on them to the best of our ability. Readers (and CounterPunchers) especially) should not neglect, in pondering those thirteen years, the fact that U.S. officials spent years knowingly making decisions that spelled certain death to hundreds of thousands of poorest Iraqi civilians, the bulk of them children.

One would think that these idiots in Washington have learned the lesson; that sanction hurts only the little people, not the despots and miscreants. That is why sanction against Iran is only hurting the little people, some of them surviving by selling their kidneys. The Mullahs are getting fatter, richer and more arrogant. It is better and cheaper to remove them than hurting the innocent.

Reference: Neo Conned By Robert Fisk

BONDED AT BIRTH:

HOW A CIA COUP D'ÉTAT IN IRAN AND MY LIFE BECAME ONE

PART ONE

By Behzad Yaghmaian

I am a child of the coup d'état, born in Iran a few days after the CIA helped overthrow the popular, democratic government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953.

Not long before my birth, facing nationwide protests, the Shah of Iran was forced to abdicate his power and flee the country. My mother used to tell me how men and women celebrated in the streets, how strangers gave flowers and sweets to each other. "The Shah left," and they cried with joy. However, the celebration did not last long. In just a few more days, the political landscape changed again. Men paid by the U.S. government began to roam the streets of Tehran, armed with truncheons and chains, assaulting Mossadegh's supporters. Soon the Shah returned and Mossadegh was put under house arrest. That was when I was born.

A witch-hunt for the followers of Mossadegh, communists, anyone who opposed the Shah and the coup d'état now began. Many were jailed – and tortured. Some opposition figures went underground or left the country; the rest lived in fear of the Shah and, within a few years the SAVAK, his brutal secret police, also set up with CIA help.

Even as a child, I knew about the SAVAK. I remember adults whispering about it at family gatherings. The fear was palpable. I drew the obvious conclusion: the SAVAK was more powerful and far more horrible than Zahhak, a legendary Iranian monster with snakes growing out of his shoulders, that I feared as a child.

My family did not respect the Shah or America; they feared them. My father forbade us to mention them at family gatherings. "Politics is not any of our business," he would say. It was his mantra. He feared being spied on by the SAVAK, our neighbors, or strangers. Later, I learned how the Americans helped create the SAVAK, trained the Shah's torturers, advised the Shah, and closed their eyes to everything that happened in his political prisons. I was told how young men and women were

tortured in these jails and I came to agree with my father; politics was not any of my business.

When I was in the fifth grade, I first saw tanks, soldiers, and angry protesters – at the intersection by my home. Sticks in their hands, and throwing stones, these men broke the windows of our local phone booth and the stores around the intersection. They were shouting, "Death to the Shah," "Death to America." I heard the gunshots – many of them. Scared, yet curious, I went to the rooftop of my house to watch the chanting men. "Come downstairs," my father shouted. "This isn't any of our business."

My home was near the main army barracks in Tehran, the elementary school I attended only a short walk away from the scene of serious street riots. The school was somehow an extension of my family: my uncle was the principal, my mother and aunt teachers. I understood the seriousness of what was happening on the streets only when, in the middle of taking an arithmetic exam, I noticed the vice principal and my aunt in our classroom, whispering to my teacher and glancing at me. I was only half-done when the teacher walked over, examined my test papers, and whispered the remaining answers to me.

Joining my aunt, I raced home through the tense, half-deserted streets of my neighborhood, leaving the other students struggling with the exam. "Too dangerous to be out; everyone was worried for you," my aunt said. I did not leave home again that day or the next.

In the streets in those days – it was 1963 – people talked about a man they called Ayatollah Khomeini. Some liked him; others did not. I was too young to understand any of the adult discussions around me, but I could grasp the meaning of the tanks on our streets. Later, I learned that they were in my neighborhood to quell a rebellion by Khomeini's supporters. As a result, he was exiled to Iraq.

In high school, I would see police officers in helmets, swinging their trun-

cheons outside the campus of Tehran University; sometimes I even saw them beating protesting students. But I would walk away, staying out of trouble just as my elders had advised me.

ONTO THE STREETS

Then, one day in February 1970, I didn't walk away. At six in the morning, my mother woke me and sent me off on the chore I hated most, buying fresh bread for breakfast. In the neighborhood bakery, I was dawdling, enjoying the heat of the fire from the glowing oven and the intoxicating aroma of fresh bread, when a young man in black trousers, a suit jacket that didn't match, and a brown, hand-knitted V-neck sweater pulled over a shirt of a different color approached me. Short and unassuming, he had an instantly unforgettable face one that I remember vividly to this day.

"Sorry for intruding," he said politely, introducing himself as a student from Tehran University. I can't claim to recall the details of our conversation, only his question, the one that intrigued me, but left me uncomfortable and scared.

"Do you know about the student strike over the bus-fare hike?" he asked. I did not, I told him, but I certainly knew about the Shah's recently announced plan to increase fares by 150%, everyone did. This threatened to make my life far more difficult. I was born to a lower middle-class family and the fare hike would have meant taking the bus to school, but walking forty-five minutes to get home. Like many in my school, I was, until that moment, prepared to do exactly that. End of story.

Quietly, but passionately, the young man told me of the student decision to force the government to retract its new policy. "Will you come out and join us?" he asked, encouraging me to boycott my high-school classes that day and do just what I had always feared, protest. Although there were no other customers in the bakery, the pervasive fear of being watched by the SAVAK left me feeling uncomfortable. As soon as my bread slipped out of the oven, I paid the baker, shook the young man's hand, and rushed home – not, of course, mentioning a word about my unexpected encounter.

I took the bus to school that morning and was attending a lecture in physics, when a sudden uproar in the hallway disrupted my peace. Stamping feet, banging on doors, hundreds of students were marching through the corridors, shouting, inviting everyone to join them in the school courtyard. The

teacher, hoping to maintain order, continued his lecture, but his students simply packed up their books and stormed from the classroom. Following them without hesitation, I joined the protest. For a brief moment, my fears, it seemed, had vanished.

From that courtyard, we poured into the streets – against the Shah, against America, against everything that had once terrified me – disrupting traffic, joining others from nearby schools. Rumors circulated in the crowd. Arrests had been made at Tehran University. Students had attacked the Iran-America Society Cultural Center, breaking windows and chanting anti-American slogans. Later that day, we rode the bus home – free. The next day, the government announced a policy reversal: The bus fares would be left unchanged.

A WORLD OF SILENCES

In college in the early 1970s, some of my classmates would disappear for weeks or months at a time. No one asked why. Everyone knew they had been taken away by the SAVAK. When they returned, we still did not ask questions. This happened to a classmate I respected. Like the young university student I met at that bakery, he was provincial. Most of the other students in the school wore jeans or more stylish Western outfits; he wore trousers and suit jackets, the typical outfit of provincial folks. Different as we were, he often engaged me in conversations about life and our studies.

One day, he stopped coming to school. A week passed, then another and another; still, his seat remained empty. There were whispers about his whereabouts, but no one discussed his absence openly. Soon, other students began disappearing: a petite woman, a tall bearded fellow, and a youth from a far-away province.

Three months passed... and then, one morning, I saw him sitting alone on a bench in the main lobby of our school, thin and frail. I embraced him, said a few words, and departed. I wanted to ask questions; I did not. He wanted to tell me stories; he did not. And life went on in that silence.

“NO GAS FOR IRANIANS”

I left Iran for graduate studies in the United States in 1976. On February 9, 1979, an Islamic government replaced the Shah’s regime. I watched the mass protests and shootings in Tehran from New York on television. Once again, there were those tanks in the streets and people chanting “Death to the Shah,” “Death to America.”

Once again, they were joyously shouting “Long Live Khomeini.” The Shah fled the country. I was happy to see him go, happy Iran was free of America.

I read how students and ordinary citizens stormed the Shah’s prisons, unlocking every cell, freeing all political prisoners. Some had been in jail since the 1953 coup d’état. Those opening the prisons fancied turning them into museums, which would educate future generations in the wrongdoings of the Shah and his American supporters. No longer, they dreamed, would Iranians be tortured for opposing them.

Such hopes, unfortunately, did not last. By the time I returned to Iran in the summer of 1979, the country was already facing life under a repressive theocratic state, albeit an anti-American one. Iranians who took part in the mass movement in the streets which, miraculously, overthrew the Shah were now dealing with a government that wished to control every aspect of their lives. It promptly banned all music, foreign movies, and theater; subjected women to what it considered an Islamic hijab, forcing them to cover their hair and wear baggy robes in dark colors; it had no hesitation about shutting down newspapers and magazines that questioned its policies. Government militias and paid thugs raided the headquarters of oppositional political organizations, attacked bookstores, and burnt books.

By that fall, the Shah’s political prisons were once again being used to jail and torture Iranians. Many of the freed political prisoners had been returned to their cells. Ironically, this time around, they were charged with being friends of America, aka “the Great Satan.” Anyone who challenged the government was accused of helping the United States to undermine the Islamic Republic, the cold war with the Great Satan was now a convenient pretext for imprisoning journalists, writers, and student activists – anyone, in fact, who dared to disagree with the reigning theocrats. They were labeled “enemies of the state,” “agents of America.” It was the beginning of a new era.

And yet much remained eerily the same. With many still being jailed and tortured, this time for liking America or being considered its voice in Iran, we Iranians remained hostages to the strange, entangled, never-ending relationship between the two countries. In the U.S., Iran now underwent a similar transformation from ally to enemy after a group of student backers

of Khomeini seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, holding 50 of its residents, hostage for 444 days. I was back in the Bronx, attending Fordham University, when, during that crisis, Ronald Reagan termed Iranians “barbarians.” If I was hurt by the label, the Iranian government welcomed it as the best proof of America’s “animosity towards the Islamic Revolution.”

The hostage crisis opened a new chapter in the Iranian-American relationship, evoking anger among some of my fellow students at Fordham. A long banner, for instance, hanging from a wall of one of the dormitories read: “Save Oil, Burn Iranians.” Hoping to offer a sense of the Iranian grievances against the U.S. that lay behind these events, I agreed to be interviewed by the student paper. I explained the way the effects of the CIA’s covert action in the 1953 coup had rippled down to our moment, how Iranian democracy had been a victim of American support for the Shah.

A few days after the interview was published, in a letter to the paper’s editor, a group of students wrote, “The Iranian student must watch his back when he walks home alone late at night.” Similar threats continued, along with occasional physical harassment. Meanwhile, Iranian students in southern states were reportedly denied service at restaurants and gas stations – “No Gas for Iranians,” was a gas-station sign of the times; some were even beaten up.

The Reagan administration only increased its rhetoric against Iran in this period, matched phrase for phrase by the Iranians, as the war of words between the two countries became ever more intense. Action replaced words after Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, invaded Iran in 1980, starting an eight-year bloodletting between the two countries that would leave hundreds of thousands dead and wounded.

Hoping to weaken, or perhaps topple, the Islamic Republic, the U.S. and its regional allies – Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates – aided the Iraqi war effort, providing Saddam with large grants and credit. Later in the conflict, the Pentagon provided Iraq with invaluable operational and planning intelligence as well as satellite information about the movements of Iranian forces, even when it knew that Saddam would use nerve gas against them. Meanwhile, the besieged Iranian government continued to persecute its domestic critics, accusing them of being the agents of the “Great Satan.”

to be continued

TAMBR PERSIAN/IRANIAN STAMPS

taken from: farsinet.com

STAMPS AN INDICATION OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES IN IRAN

Iran has been known for colorful postage stamps for several decades. The post-revolutionary Islamic Republic government made a special use of the postage stamp as a medium to deliver its political, religious and social message to an internal and international audience. In a way, tracking the Islamic Republic stamps since 1979 reveals the political trend and the phases that Iran has gone through. There are still other stamps that just celebrate Iran's rich cultural and artistic heritage and the Islamic Republic has certainly not fallen short in that category of stamps.



Bam Earth Quake Memorial Stamp Set

DID YOU KNOW?

Who wouldn't love something tax free? George Herpin did. He was a French stamp fancier back in the 1860s, when stamps were a fairly new invention. Before stamps, the recipient of a letter, not the sender, had to pay the postage. Stamps forced the sender to foot the bill, and created a lot of stamp lovers among folks on the receiving end of the mail and a mania for stamp collecting. "Timbromania" from the French word "timbre" for stamp, was toyed with as a term to affix to this new hobby. But when Herpin suggested "philatilie" (anglicized to "philately"), combining the Greek root "phil-" meaning "loving," with Greek "ateleia," meaning "tax-exemption," stamp lovers everywhere took a fancy to it and the name stuck.

1. Reza Shah 2. Cyrus Cylinder 3. 1889 Ahmad Shah



Where is my home?

By: Azar Aryanpour

Tell me of my home
That rugged beloved city
With twisting alleys
Inharmonious houses
Where simple-hearted people lived
At the foot of the magisterial Alborz
Tell me of my people
Of those ragged children
Bathing their naked bodies in the sun
On the unfriendly pavements
And of the ancient street vendor
His wealth strapped to the back of a sickly mule
Bartering for a loaf of bread
Or that wandering dog
Yelping for food
Target of the passersby's boots!

Who occupies my home
My sanctuary
That white edifice enfolded in roses?
Do the noisy sparrows still nest
In the tall, proud, poplar trees?
Does the glossy black Raven
From the old fir's pinnacle
Proclaim the changing seasons?
The lofty weeping willow
Rinses her long hair in the pond?
Are the children's light footprints
Engraved on the lawn?
Their pictures on the mantle piece?
And my husband
My raining light
Without him,
Where is my home?

FROM GODS TO HEROES

by: Hooshang Payan

Regardless of the mysteries that befall the earth, Nature plays no favorites. Every part of the world is subject to the vagaries of the elements. It's the inhabitants who give each phenomenon a different importance. And since such wonders of nature are rarely understood in all its ramifications, these same inhabitants attribute supernatural powers to them, regarding them as gods.

The location may change, the culture may change, but people are people and human nature remains the same. A reading of *Avesta* (the ancient scriptures of Zoroastrianism) as well as *Rig Veda* (the basic beliefs of Hinduism) makes one aware of similarities in both the culture and the religion of Indo-Iranians c.1500 BCE, such as:

Zoroastrianism	Hinduism	function
Mithra	Mitra	sun god
Asha	Rta	sacred universal order
Haoma	Soma	sacred wine
Surayya	Surya	solar sun god ^{5,12}

In the Middle East, as early as 1700 BCE, Surya, an Indo-Iranian-Aryan sun god, is mentioned on a clay tablet in Babylonia.²

Three hundred years later in 1400 BCE Egyptians recorded the practice of local Aryan rulers in Palestine, Asia Minor, and Syria worshiping Mitra, Varuna, Indra, and Nasatya.²

In northeastern Iran, about the same time, migrating Iranians and Indians were in the process of geographical separation, which influenced changes in language, as well as religion. Zoroaster's monotheistic beliefs eliminated all gods, except Ahura Mazda. Since he objected to violence of any kind, he definitely did not approve of Indra, the warrior god.

After Zoroaster's death, references to some of the gods like Mithra and Anahita reappeared in religious references. 13, 14 Other popular mythical personalities gradually developed into kings and heroes that soon became the main characters of books – like Garshasp-Nameh and Shah-Nameh. Since most people respected, even feared, authority and power, they accepted such changes and immortalized Rostam, the mightiest of Iranian paladins.²

Similar developments also existed in other civilizations around the world. In Egypt, pharaohs were gods.⁶ Born of a goddess mother and a human father, the Babylonian king Gilgamesh was 2/3 god and 1/3 man.¹⁵ Occasionally a learned man became known as a god, like Imhotep, the god of medicine in c.2900 BCE in Egypt.¹ Most people sought the protection of their powerful gods and prayed to them. Among such gods, Thor and Indra relied on thunderbolts for weapons.^{8,11} Iranian literature, however, neglects references to such a warrior god.² Instead, the fantastic abilities and accomplishments are attributed to Rostam – hero, not a god.^{2,5}

In various Iranian myths, the god Vrthraghan, the king Threatona, and the hero Keraspa – all mentioned in *Avesta* – have been compared with Thor and Indra. While the hero Rostam is not mentioned in *Avesta*, his great grandfather Keraspa (Garshasp) is.^{4,5}

	THOR	INDRA	ROSTAM
country:	Scandinavia	India	Iran
size at birth:	Large	large	large
birth method:	Caesarean	Caesarean	Caesarean
color:	red hair	ruddy complexion	red hair
unique weapons:	hammer	lance	large hammer (gorz)
ability:	Superhuman power	superhuman power	superhuman power
commitment:	justice and order	justice and order	justice and order
dislike:	chaos	chaos	chaos
nemeses:	dragons, giants	dragons, daevas	dragons, daevas
challenger:	son	son	son

Garshasp and Sam-e-Nariman, the ancestors of Rostam, are mentioned in *Avesta*. Rostam and his father Zal appear as national heroes only in later books, not in *Avesta*.^{2,5}

As a child in Tehran in the 1930's, when there was no radio, not even electricity in our homes, I read by the light of kerosene lanterns during the long winter nights when it was too dark or too cold to play outside. I spent my leisure moments reading *Rostam-Nameh*. Vicariously, I helped Rostam slay the maddened white elephant, tame his stallion Rakhsh, slay the Lion of Neyestan, grapple with a dragon or two, foil the plot of the Witch by killing her, and struggle with daevas.

All my classmates had also done the same. The exciting adventures of Rostam thrilled adults, as well as children. In coffee houses men (mostly those with limited formal education) spent the evenings sitting around, smoking their hookahs, and listening to storytellers.^{2,10} The epics were also repeated in the so-called Power House (Zoor-Khaneh), a gymnastic center frequented by young men who would gather there to learn from the masters the intricacies of exercise, wrestling, courage, and valor (Javan-Mardy). During these gatherings their muscular bodies pulsed to the rhythm of drumbeats as they absorbed the inspirational messages of the chanting of Ferdowsi's epic poetry. By the time they left, they were all determined to be as powerful as Rostam, who was also generous, courageous, truthful, thoughtful, and helpful to the poor and the troubled.

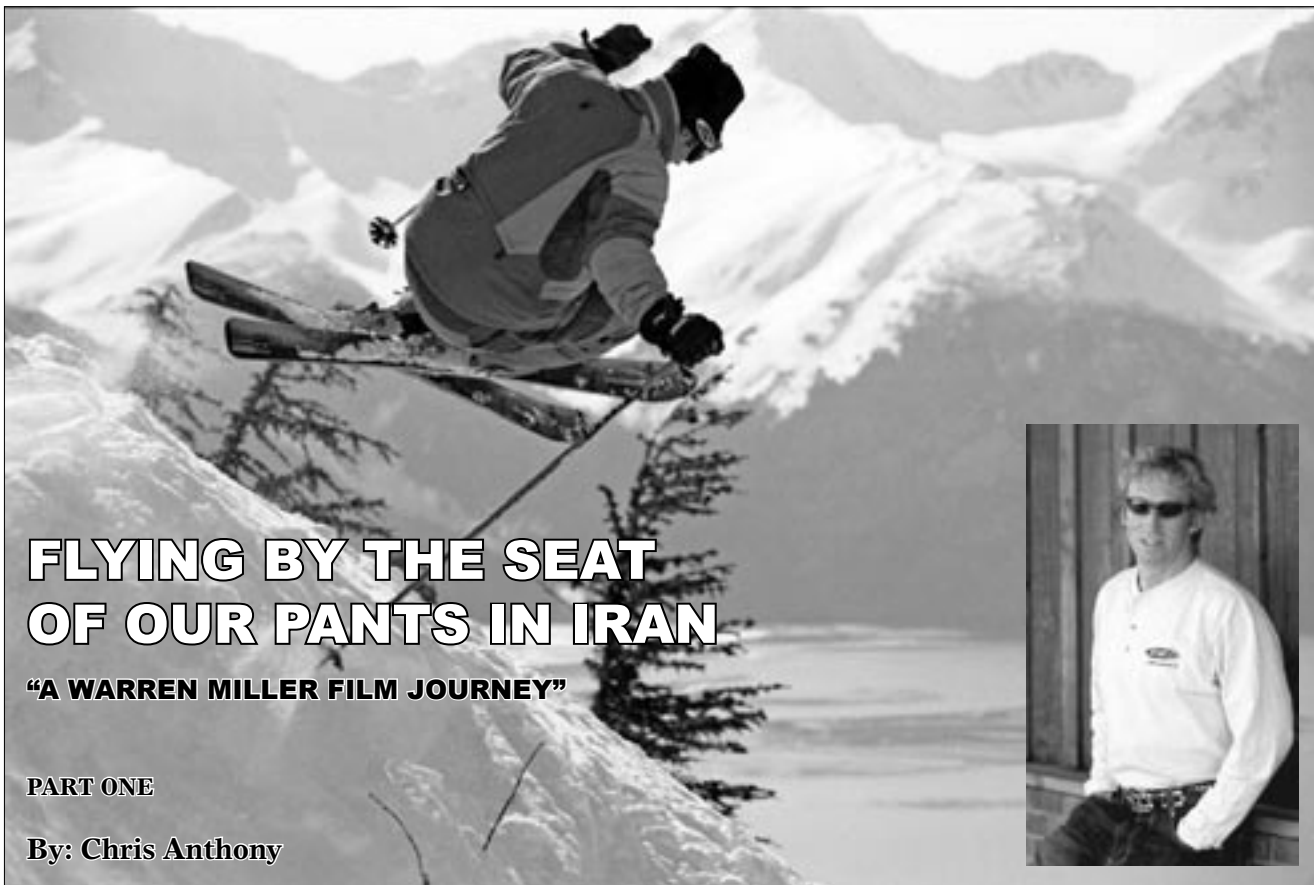
Tales of similar supermen spread beyond borders of Iran. In Ireland, Cuchulainn is held in awe for similar unbelievable acts of courage, whereas in Greece it's Hercules who performed wonders.^{3,8,11} The appreciation of such mythology about Rostam spread even as far as Arabia, but not among the religious leaders.⁹

While Mohammad was preaching in Mecca one day, he condemned Nadhr-ibn al Harith, one of his own relatives, a man who persisted in telling stories of Rostam and Isbandiyar, kings of Persia.^{7,9} Such stories supposedly drew people away from Islam. The account of this condemnation of Harith by Muhammad's God is reflected in Quran, Sura 31:6⁹

But there are among men
those who tell tales
without knowing
to mislead men
from the path of Allah
and throw ridicule
there will be
a humiliating chastisement

The popularity of the *Shah-Nameh* has been a source of irritation and animosity between entertainers and mullahs. Recently, Khomeini and his associates repeatedly condemned *Epic of Kings*. But such an attitude is very old. A thousand years ago after Ferdowsi died, mullahs forbade the burial of his corpse in the Islamic cemetery. His body had to be interred in his own garden at his estate. Mullahs referred to him as "gabr," a slur. Nevertheless, till this day, Ferdowsi's epics delight Iranians in spite of such objections. The magic of the words of Ferdowsi attracts people to the coffee houses and has them asking to have the television turned off.¹⁰ In 2004, 300 coffee houses in Tehran featured minstrels, singers and poetry readers who included the works of Ferdowsi in their repertoire. Myths, especially *Epic of Kings*, are part of old Iranian culture and preZoroastrian religion. Till this day, the magical and miraculous actions of Rostam astound readers and listeners. These tales of remarkable adventure have been translated into English, as well as many other languages including Arabic.

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FLYING BY THE SEAT OF OUR PANTS IN IRAN

“A WARREN MILLER FILM JOURNEY”

PART ONE

By: Chris Anthony

FLASHBACK TO FIVE YEARS AGO

I've just returned from a day of Alaskan helicopter skiing and now I'm stumbling, exhausted, trying to undress from my wet clothes through my hotel room. I hit the power button on the remote next to the bed and I have collapsed upon CNN live from Tehran.

In Alaska, sheltered from the hostility of the world, CNN is my filtered window to the worldly news. Mainly, the television is just noise in the background to break the silence of the room. Perhaps the business report will come on sometime before I head down to the jacuzzi.

CNN World News is reporting from Iran. A subject that doesn't really concern me at the time. I assume the report has nothing positive to say and will continue covering the country's fighting, terrorism, and politics.

I count my blessings to be born in the US and continue to undress from my ski clothes, while rolling around on the fresh bed. That is until I take a habitual glance at the screen before going onto something else.

Except this time, the glance turns into a stare. What I see on the television catch's my complete attention.

It is not the beautiful dark-skinned reporter, or the City of Tehran, or even the subject matter that stops me in mid-step, it is the massive snow covered mountains on the horizon. Needless to say, I'm stunned. I've always thought of Iran as a bomb-ridden desert.

I pick up the phone, call Max Bervy at Warren Miller Entertainment and ask him if he knows about the mountains in Iran. Of

course he responds, and immediately makes me aware of the fact that they have wanted to film there for years. But, considering the location and the history of the politics, it is almost impossible for Americans to go there or come out alive. I guess common sense must prevail despite the enticement of the mountains

A YEAR LATER

Back in Alaska, once again guiding for Chugach Powder Guides, I came across a very nice couple from Tahoe. When they introduced themselves as Reza and Victoria Moezi, I could not help but wonder about origin of their names. "Iranian," they respond.

Though born in Iran, they managed to immigrate to the U.S. and were now working as dentists. They still retained their passion for skiing and managed to take one heli-skiing trip a year.

Amazed, I couldn't help but research more into their backgrounds and the history of Iran. By the end of the conversation, I had learned about the Shah of Iran being an avid skier back in his day, the massive mountains just outside of Tehran, and the fact that they do have ski resorts.

TWO YEARS LATER

Reza and Victoria change their heli travel and head to Dean Cummings operation, H2O, in Valdez Alaska. Cummings, having the same desires in life as myself, can't help but research the couple's background and press the idea of one day adventuring into the forbidden mountains of Iran.

2001 - Cummings has moved forward in the proposition of

traveling into the Middle Eastern country of Iran. Propositioning a few film companies and trying together connect with Reza and Victoria. Suddenly this blurry dream started to have some clarity.

Present Day: I get a phone call. It is the call I dream about every year. The one that makes my heart jump a few beats, and means “I need to be prepared for anything,” can you have your passport in California tomorrow. We need to get this team filed for an expedition that may or may not happen”, the voice on the other end says.

Before I know it I’m scrambling to find my passport, get color copies, take head shots, copy my bio, and get it to California by 4:00 P.M. the next day or I’ll miss the window of opportunity.

I did it all in time to make FED-EX. Now relaxed, I call my favorite place of business Warren Miller Entertainment, I was asked, where we were trying to go and replied.

“IRAN”. EXCELLENT!

The next few months were chaotic. The amount of men and women it took to actually push all the paperwork through the right channels is a book in and of it’s self. A tremendous amount of credit goes to Reza and Victoria and the Ski Federation in Iran.

So on the 24th of January a group of Americans stepped onto a plane and headed East with one very simple mission on the agenda, to film skiing in the Alborz mountain range just north of the city, the team was made up of cinematographer Beat Steiner, producer John Teaford, associate producer and cinematographer Tim Willison, guides Reza Moezi and Afshin Afghantolee, 1995 World Extreme Champion Dean Cummings, 2000 World Champion, Spencer Wheatley and myself Chris Anthony.

Little did we know what lay before us. In fact, a few nights prior, I had just seen the movie “Proof of Life” in Vail, a movie about kidnap and ransom insurance, something I really didn’t know existed until the number to the insurance agency covering it appeared on my contact list.

A day and half later, at 3:00 A.M. we set down in a snow-storm in Tehran. Not only was my illusion of this place being a desert shattered, but so was my illusion of how difficult it might be for us to get through customs.

We had been rehearsed to not make sudden movements, wear dark clothes, ignore the eyes of the women beneath their chadors and definitely not to take any pictures in the airport. Basically, be as careful as possible because as Americans we are not welcome into this “hostile” place.

With a reputation so powerful, more than a few people had asked me if I had a death wish by going on this trip.

We stumbled through the muted halls of the airport into the pass port and visa check line. I immediately noticed pictures of the revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini and the current spiritual leader Ayatollah Khamenei looking down upon us. A sight that would become so familiar no matter where we were.

From that moment, I wondered how many people were watching us? Slowly we waited quietly in line while women in chadors, with only their eyes visible, went through our passports and visas without asking one question. One of the women summoned me onto the baggage claim, the area, where I’m just sure they might make our lives a living hell by drilling us with questions and going through everything we brought with us.

The process of collecting 32 large pieces of luggage, for a small group of eight Americans, is not only a hassle but will

definitely draw attention. So calmly we collected everything and continued to customs with our luggage.

Beyond the gates of customs, hundreds of men and women pushed up against the glass walls waiting for loved ones to appear from the baggage claim area. Immediately we noticed the young women with their pretty faces, dark skin, and stunning black eyes, straining to take a glance at us.

Here we are, goofy bright Americans trying not to be out of place, dragging more luggage than a small army and trying to be subtle. However, I couldn’t help but notice the stares. Then I remembered, we aren’t suppose to look at the women for extended periods of time. I turn my head downward and walked straight for the customs officer, who gives me a bag of candy and welcomes me with a handshake. I move out of customs in about 5 seconds, stunned that we made it through customs without a hitch.

Tehran was covered in snow as we drove through her city streets in the early morning hours. I was amazed. I never pictured it this way. A mix of old buildings broken up by sonic modern architecture, I was grateful that it was only 4:00 A.M. and there was no traffic. In a matter of a few hours, it would be bumper to bumper with small. They honk their horns at everything, from other cars cutting them off, to the little girls crossing the street in their black chadors. They just honk and fill the air with noise and leaded smog.

Witnessing this madness from my hotel room balcony the next day was amazing. I came to realize there is a certain order to their complete and total chaos. But, as an American, spoiled by personal space, I was having a hard time understanding the order of it. What I did understand was the snow covered mountains rising a few thousand feet to the North of tile city. They seemed so out of place sitting under the blue sky, ready to be signed by our skis.

At least this is what Spencer was ready to do. A rookie with Warren Miller Films, Spencer was running around on caffeine and ready to ski the resort just outside the city limits. I tried to calm him and explained that on a film shoot nothing, and I mean nothing happens really fast, especially in such a foreign place. This was hard for him to grasp for the next two days. Spencer kept trying to lease a helicopter and fly us from the top of the hotel, out over the thick smog into the clear skies of the mountains.

Meanwhile, Dean was trying to figure out which United flight his ski bag disappeared on during his three-day journey from Alaska. Beat, John and Tint were able to get limited filming permits so they could start documenting some of the culture around Tehran. I tagged along.

Tehran is a mix of 1970’s Denver and the Bronx, with the traffic of an eight-lane LA freeway, stuffed into three lanes running through a crowded city, without traffic signals or formal lane assignments. Needless to say the most dangerous part of our trip was either crossing a street or riding in a car and I’m not exaggerating.

People are everywhere doing something at any given moment. I sat by myself in the center of a massive roundabout one day and watched the interaction between human flesh and metal. It was an amazing sight witnessing a freshly baked stack of bread, tied to the back of the bike, negotiate its way through the carbon monoxide filled air and traffic. Meanwhile small cars stuffed with people merged in and out of non-existent lanes honking at one another. If they missed their turns they would

throw their cars into reverse, go against the traffic and catch the turn on the slide. All this, while somehow missing the lady dressed in a chador gliding from one side of the street to the other. I hung out there for hours, afraid to cross the street and get back to my hotel.

The following day, our crew headed out into the middle of Tehran. We stopped by the main market place on our way to eat. We were overwhelmed with curiosity of the locals the moment they took notice of us. They cherished the idea of Americans being in their city and smiled with curiosity as we pushed our way through the mobs of people. Small men and women carried hundreds of pounds of products on their backs while powering their way through the solid walls of people in the tight polluted corridor. Tiny vendors lined the 10 foot wide corridor where men and women rushed in and out of small boutiques at high speed. Each boutique carrying only one or two items like scissors or one size muffler or a screw.

To make one kid happy I bought a bundle of fireworks and sparkles from him for about two American dollars. The perfect item for an American to have as a guest in what is supposed to be a hostile environment. John just shook his head and crossed his fingers when he took notice of my purchase. In the end, I handed the noisemakers out along with some matches to a bunch of characters standing around a burning trash can. I watched them go nuts shooting them in the air, while we quickly exited the area.

Eventually, our permits were taken care of and Dean was able to track down his ski bag, so we loaded a bus and headed to the mountains.

The climate of northern Iran is much like Colorado, cold, dry air and mountains with similar snow pack and jagged rock. The exception is the mountains of Inmate which are much larger and with less tree covering and the valleys dry and sparsely vegetated.

We headed to the resort of Dizin, though only 75 miles away from Tehran, by the way the crow flies, by bus, the journey was 3.5 hours.

Leaving the city of Tehran, we were shadowed by massive housing projects covering the landscape to the South. Standing like square pyramids stacked there was rows for miles. These communities contained mini cities where tens of thousands of families lived.

An hour further to the West, we passed through the city of Karaj. It consisted of stone and mud houses covering the hillsides as far as the eye could see. The short dwellings blended together in harmony with the land.

As we headed North into the narrow valleys of the mountains, there wasn't any snow in sight until a break in the mountains allowed us a glance at the snow-covered peaks. The only reason these mountains had snow was due to their high elevations, the valley floor was a complete desert.

We arrived at the resort of Dizin just before the sun disappeared behind the mountains and the temperature dropped. The skeleton of what once was a world class resort appeared. A small man with his home made ski ran out to greet us. He intended to take our 32 bags up the hill. Not once did it occur to him that this was a ridiculous task- with such a small sled. Persistence paid off and a few hours later he had every bag up the hill and in one of the two cabins we rented alongside the resort.

The resort of Dizin consists of a couple of working gondolas and eleven other upward forms of transportation, chairlifts and

pomas. The base consists of a couple of hotels and a few modest cabins for the elite. The interiors of the howls are a flashback to the post revolution life of discos, music and alcohol. Since the revolution, the resort has declined behind the strict spiritual laws and only shells of what once was a resort, remain in place.

The resort, with its continental snow pack, resembles a European ski area high up on the glaciers of the French Alps. Standing above all of the 14,000-foot peaks, Mt. Damavand, the cone shape volcano, reaches 18,600 feet into the atmosphere.

That night we slept soundly in the mountain air until the septic tank decided to overflow and poison us with it's gases. Then the heater followed suit by quitting and the temperature fell well below freezing.

Despite the rough nocturnal ride, the next morning we loaded the gondola after and headed up the mountain, ready to start filming under blue skies.

Unfortunately, we soon discovered that even though the mountain appeared white, the snow in places was only a few inches deep. When we looked closer, those few inches consisted of a dry granular snow, balanced on top of a sharp rock, underneath wind and sun affected surface. Not the best conditions to show, epic skiing footage or the safest to ski, but we went for it anyway.

Dean picked out a south facing exposure, mainly because it didn't have any tracks, had the right light for the camera and we could get to it quickly. From the mountaintop, we designed a game plan. The group split up and the talent started to climb while the shooters headed in another direction to capture the best angle.

We were already -grabbing the attention of the locals, who were mesmerized by our AK Rocket Salomon skis and slick new clothes.

Once on slope and testing the snow pack, we knew this was not going to be easy. We had flown halfway around the world to film a ski movie in a couple of inches of snow, with avalanche conditions. Our goal was to make it look good for our critics back home, so they would not make fun of it, by the time the images hit the screen several months later. All I can say is thank God for phat skis.

We dealt with the issue by increasing speed, equaling our stance over out- skis and thinking tight thoughts as we skimmed across inches of snow covering jagged rocks. Every turn was a prayer as our edges clicked off the granite. This would not be a segment where we would be dropping off any cliffs for the camera. Yet, the light dry snow was still flying in the air for great visual effects. Maybe the audience will be impressed with the long run.

We continued to hike, search and drop lines off the surrounding resort. At one point, we were bordering a secure zone that made us nervous. We had read that an American snow boarder had taken on some gunfire in this area when they made this trek a year prior. But, this was the best snow we could find, so we risked it and got the shot. Nothing happened, but I did get a good view of the Shah's former estate, built for his love of skiing.

After spending a day shooting on the South facing slopes, we moved to the North for the afternoon. The trek took us to the highest point in the area. It was from there, where we stumbled on a view that blew us away.

We made a life-changing decision.

to be continued

HISTORY OF CHELO-KEBAB



Iranian chelo-kebab was prepared for the first time according to a Caucasian recipe at the time by the order of Nasser-e Din Shah Qajar (1821-1900s).

The first chelo-kebab restaurant, Nayeb, was inaugurated in Tehran in the traditional bazaar 121 years ago.

Haj Hassan Shamshiri chelo-kebab restaurant, one of the most famous, was opened at the eastern wing of Sabzeh-meydan square in downtown Tehran when Reza Shah was in power (1925-1941).

In 1352 (1973-74) a meal of chelo-kebab barg (made of mutton fillet and grilled on a skewer) served together with butter, grilled tomato, raw onion, and sumac would have cost 60 Iranian rials (IR 60) for those who were at work and could not go home for lunch. Sometimes when a number of colleagues were on leave, others had the chance to order jujeh-kebab (roast chicken), which would have cost IR 120.

TENFOLD IN THIRTY TWO YEARS

Thirty two years earlier, in 1320 (1941-42), the Iranian daily Ettela'at wrote that Tehran restaurants would charge IR 5 for a meal of chelo-kebab, including an extra large kebab barg, butter, 330 grams of rice, onion, and as much bread as demanded. At the same time a meal of chelo-kebab kubideh (made of minced meat) cost IR 4.

FIFTY YEARS EARLIER

E'temado-Saltaneh, Nasser-e Din Shah's minister of publications and head of translation office, used to order a high quality take-out chelo-kebab in Nayeb restaurant (which had just opened in the Tehran bazaar and was furnished with dining tables and chairs as in European restaurants) for IR 3 to 5. In 1295 (1916-17),

Abdullah Bahrami, the deputy general of the Tehran police, used to pay a maximum of IR four to five for each meal of chelo-kebab that he ordered for his respected and unrespected (the criminals who confessed to their crimes but promised to cooperate with the police) guests.

Twenty-five years have passed since the time when a meal of chelo-kebab cost IR 60. Now it would cost something between IR 7,000 and 40,000, while the 25-rial kebab kubideh would now cost IR 4,500 to 15,000. Considering the fact that the average income of the veterans in Iran is within a range of IR 250,000 to 600,000, and that chelo-kebab used to be a very popular and the most common national dish, now one can say that it has turned into a luxurious one.

A DISH LOVED BY ALL

During his tour of Russia, the Caucasus, and European countries, Nasser-e Din Shah enjoyed three things: the elegant clothing of the Russian Kazak, the Saint Petersburg's and Muscovite ballerinas' pants, and finally Caucasian chelo-kebab, which was different from Iranian kebab mainly prepared from chops of veal, mutton, and hunted birds and grilled on skewers. The Caucasian chelo-kebab is what is now known as kebab barg, sultani, and luleh or kubideh.

NOT BEFORE QAJAR ERA

In their writings about Iran, the European explorers who visited Iran during the Safavi era (1500-1736) mentioned a lot about different kinds of chelos (cooked and drained rice) and polos (cooked rice), stews, pickles, and jams, but wrote nothing about chelo-kebab in the sense that we talk about it today. Most probably the recipe for chelo-kebab had been given to the Iranian people either by the Caucasian people or by the Iranians visiting the Caucasus region, or, as written by Mirza Mohammad Reza Mo'tamed-ul-Ketab Shams Larijani, an author of the Qajar era, had been demanded by Nasser-e Din Shah himself from the Caucasians and soon learned by Iranians all over the country. Being an Asian dish, chelo-kebab was well received in Iran and now has turned into the most delicious Iranian dish.

FEEDING A BATTALION OR A REGIMENT

Nasser-e Din Shah had 87 wives, four in permanent and the rest in temporary marital conditions, as well as 300 slave girls. Together with the female and male servants they formed a battalion, or, better to say, a 1000-strong regiment. Writing about Nasser-e Din Shah, Doust-Ali Khan Mo'ayer-ul-Mamalek, a descendant of the Shah, narrates that on Fridays, whenever he wished to visit the holy shrine of Hazrat Abdul-Azim in Shar-e Rey, then a village in the south of Tehran, his servants used to rush to the village one day earlier and order 1,000 to 2,000 kebab kubideh. Kebab was a dish not in the court menu, but was loved by his wives. Thus, whenever they planned to go there, they did not want to lose the chance to have kebab served with basil, onion, and spring onion on copper platters.

POLITICAL CHELO-KEBAB: FIRST PUNISHMENT, THEN RECEPTION

In 1324 (1945-46), the price of imported sugar cubes from Russia went up due to the breakout of the war between that country and Japan and also the slump in imports to Iran. The tyrant governor of Tehran, Ala'e-doleh, considered the merchants and brokers such as Seyyed Hashem Qandi and Esmail Khan, who

had deals with Russia, as the ones responsible for the price hikes. Summoning them, Ala'e-doleh asked them to lower the price of sugar cubes. However, they did not accept and consequently were lashed extensively.

While they were being lashed, the son of the merchant Hashem Qandi arrived and asked the governor to lash him instead of his father. He accepted and ordered his subjects to whip the son, who received more than 500 lashes before a servant arrived and announced that chelo-kebab was ready to be served. Ala'e-doleh left the area while inviting the three punished men to join him. He said that at the time of lashing they had to receive lashes and at the time of lunch they had to have lunch. "Now the time is for chelo-kebab. Help yourselves and enjoy it."

OLDEST CHELO-KEBAB RESTAURANT IN TEHRAN

Nayeb Chelo-Kebab Restaurant was the oldest one established in the Tehran bazaar 120 years ago. From the time of its establishment till some 15 years ago when it was closed down, Nayeb waiters used to serve the extra-filled plate of pyramid-shaped hot rice crowned with the melting butter, while kebabs on skewers were served by a waiter who used to go from one table to another and provide customers with extra kebabs as soon as they ran out of them and as long as rice was still left in their plates. At first, the customers used to sit on benches; later they were served at tables. The restaurant did not mind how many kebabs a customer would eat and used to charge everybody the same price, a generous manner that was characteristic of Iranians at that time. Because of this it managed to run a brisk business.

Talking about the generosity and kindness of Mr. Nayeb, a gentleman who was the boss boy of a stingy merchant when a young boy said that he used to go to the Nayeb restaurant in the bazaar every day to buy chelo-kebab for his boss. The boss never thought that he was hungry too and that he wished to have lunch too. But Mr. Nayeb, realizing that the boy was hungry, used to treat him with bread and kebab before he prepared the chelo-kebab for the merchant, and kept mentioning to his workers that he was only a child and that the smell of kebab made his mouth water.

E'temad-ul-Saltaneh, in his notes, mentions a shop in the bazaar which, like Europeans, served food at tables in 1292 lunar Hijra (some 121 years ago), a reference most probably to the Nayeb restaurant as the first chelo-kebab restaurant in Tehran. However, chelo-kebab restaurants were most likely first established in the northwestern city of Tabriz which borders with Caucasia. Nowadays, chelo-kebab is a national Iranian food in Tehran and other cities.

The reputation of the Nayeb restaurant was passed on from one generation to another, and now there are tens of chelo-kebab restaurants in Tehran and other cities that are named after the original one. But the most famous of them in Tehran are the ones located in downtown near Shamsul-Amareh, and in Sa'adat-abad, Aban, and Vali-e-Asr streets, the owners of whom are most probably the descendants of the founder of the original one in the bazaar.

The reputation of the Nayeb chelo-kebab restaurants has crossed the borders and now tens of them have been founded in other countries. In the downtown of Los Angeles, for example, there is a Nayeb chelo-kebab restaurant, which according to an Iranian who has recently been there offers pseudo-chelo-kebab. When asked what he meant by pseudo-chelo-kebab, he said that

chelo-kebab is a dish prepared with aromatic Iranian rice and fresh mutton fillet. When prepared with beef, it would be better to name it steak and rice rather than chelo-kebab, something similar to but not real chelo-kebab.

KEBAB SHOPS

Till 1330-35 (1951-57), one kebab kubideh would have cost IR three-and-a-half in Tehran and other cities, while two of them together with bread and grilled tomato would make a full meal costing about IR eight. You could buy a lemonade or water milk for two to four rials. Thus you could have a perfect lunch for IR 10 to 12.

At that time when livestock still used to feed on natural pasture, meat seemed to be more delicious and aromatic and the aroma of kebab could be smelled from a far distance and make passersby feel hungry. Kebabs used to be wrapped in different kinds of Iranian breads such as taftoon, sangak, and lavash (the dough of all of which are spread out in the shape of an almost 23-inch-diameter circle or a 12 x 30-inch rectangle) topped with basil in summer and with a big-size onion in winter.

People used to say that if a young boy under the age of puberty smells kebab, he must immediately be provided with some or otherwise he would lose his state of manhood forever.

Nowadays, after so many years that kebab shops have served people with kebabs in the traditional way, and after the opening of so many modern restaurants and deli, hamburger, pizza, and fried chicken shops, the business of the kebab shops is not brilliant. Elegant people no longer go to the shops to sit amidst the smell and smoke of kebab to have kebab.

However, the kebab shops in Hazrat-e Abdul-Azim bazaar managed to enjoy their reputation for few more decades. The kebab shops in Sarband and Darband villages of Shemiran, north of Tehran, as well as certain shops in smaller cities, such as the ones in and around the northeastern city of Mashad, and the one in Shiraz opposite the historic site of Hafezieh that serves a lot of people who consider going to the restaurant a national and traditional obligation, were also famous and could attract a lot of customers.

Most of the kebab and chelo-kebab restaurants had interesting names such as Salamat (health), Keramat (dignity), or Nezafat (cleanliness), entailed with the name of the city of Tabriz with the aim of attracting more customers.

A short period of time after the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, and after a period of bankruptcy, a number of big and modern kebab shops were opened in uptown Tehran and renewed the tradition of serving kebab and bread grilled right on the spot. These shops, which named themselves kebab-khaneh (kebab houses), were quite different from those in the old time filled with smoke and smell of kebab. Soon their business flourished so that they are now among the most crowded restaurants in the city. Many of them also have special ovens for baking Iranian bread and presenting fresh bread to their customers.

FAMOUS CHELO-KEBAB RESTAURANTS IN TEHRAN

Presently, there are hundreds of chelo-kebab restaurants in Tehran, the most famous of which are Nayeb in Sa'adat-abad district (there are several Nayeb restaurants in other parts of the city including the ones in Aban, Vali-Asr and Vozara streets), Shater-Abbas, Madayen, Alborz, Yaas (two of them belonging to the Nasser brothers), Royal Vanak, Lux-e Talaei, Apadana,

Orkideh, Javan, and Tabriz. Sahra restaurant (in Sahra Hotel on Ayatollah Taleghani Street, opposite the former American Embassy) has also the reputation for presenting delicious chelo-kebab. It is unfortunate that chelo-kebab has not been registered as an international food, although it is definitely much better and more delicious than many other dishes belonging to other nations.

ABROAD

Javad Farifteh, Ahmad Shah’s (the last king of Qajar dynasty who was deposed in 1925) special chef, immigrated to Paris some 70 years ago and established the well-known Farifteh chelo-kebab restaurant there. Also, Ahmad Khan, an Iranian resident of Germany, set up a restaurant when the Nazis were in power and once, it is said, Hitler, accompanied by his two aides, went to the restaurant and tried the Iranian chelo-kebab. In recent years, you simply find tens of chelo-kebab restaurants in every European and American city and there are so many of them here and there that it is not simply possible to give an exact statistic of them.

NAYEB RESTAURANT

Nayeb restaurant is owned and managed by Dr. Hossein Yazdan-Manesh, a Ph.D. graduate in sociology from France. He administers his restaurant in the best way possible and with excellent taste. Dr. Yazdan-Manesh believes that administering a well-known and honorable restaurant is nothing less than having the title of a doctorate in sociology and that many educated people may run such businesses successfully. Nayeb is known as one of the best restaurants in Tehran and the way its personnel treat their customers certainly pleases them. Dr. Yazdan-Manesh is surely successful in his business.

CHELO-KEBAB PAHLAVANI (EXTRA LARGE)

In recent years, preparing extra large barg and kubideh kebabs, which are sometimes three times bigger than ordinary ones, has become common, but they are usually too big to be eaten by one person. It is said that at the time of the Constitution Movement in Iran (1900s), the owner of a chelo-kebab restaurant in Tabriz, listening to a speech in favor of the movement, asked the speaker what constitutionalism meant and what would happen if Iran enjoyed a constitutional government. The speaker, who himself was not very much aware of the details, said that constitutionalism meant cheap chelo-kebab available for all. If Iran adopted constitutionalism, then you would get a kebab this large (at this moment the speaker showed the length of his fingertip to elbow) and with this diameter (then he pointed to his muscular and athletic arm). The man became very happy and said that he sincerely would accept constitutionalism and that he would tell others about it too.

HAJJ HASSAN SHAMSHIRI

The owner of the most famous Iranian chelo-kebab Restaurant was Hajj Hassan Shamschiri, whose restaurant was located in the eastern wing of Sabzeh-Meydan square in downtown Tehran at the time of Reza Shah. Later he moved to a four-story building, the first floor of which was the kitchen. The second floor was for the reception of local shopkeepers and single men while the third floor was for families and high-level customers. On each floor there were lots of full-length mirrors. Mr. Shamschiri used to supervise the third and fourth floors of the restaurant.

By 11:00 a.m. the aroma of kebab and the high-quality cooked rice with fresh butter used to fill the air in and around

the restaurant and make every passerby hesitant about not going inside. Shamschiri used to offer double-deck chelo-kebab; that is, he used to crown a pyramid-shaped pile of cooked rice with two kebabs in a plate.

Mr. Shamschiri was a staunch advocate of the oil industry nationalization movement and a sincere follower of Dr. Mossadegh (the then-prime minister who nationalized the oil industry). In the winter of 1330 (1951-52) he paid the very large sum of IR 1,000,000 to buy national bonds as an effort to support the nationalization plan. Several months after the 1953 coup against Dr. Mossadegh he was arrested on charges of struggling against the coup government of Zahedi and was exiled to Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. His co-prisoner in Kharg, the late Karim Keshavarz, wrote in his diary that Mr. Shamschiri had promised to treat his co-prisoners with high-quality Shamschiri kebab barg and kubideh, but that unfortunately no such chance became available. Shamschiri’s reputation for his chelo-kebab was such that an Iranian author wrote a novel about it, in which he described it as the most pleasant dish, adored by both Iranians and Westerners.

Even now, some chelo-kebab restaurants carry the name in an effort to convince the customers that their chelo-kebab is of high quality, while some others claim that they have hired Shamschiri’s chef. However, the fact is that he died almost 30 years ago and that his chefs are either too old to work or have passed away already. The only probability is that his chefs’ trainees may be now engaged in some of the restaurants.

taken from internet

DON'T ASK ME TO SILENCE

M. K. Sadigh

*Don't ask me to silence
The confined suppressed voices*

*Don't ask me to silence the confined suppressed voices
Sanction is the joy's preventer but not eliminator
Why the truth should be muted in the kingdom of sincerity
Where the swords abundant and vices are not concealed*

*My lips are not sealed to cry loud defending detained
New born taught me never withdraw responds
Screaming the truth which directed to maturity
Do not shut the doors to the sun only graves are somber*

*The words march through the depth of consciousness
Excavations revive the dead celebrate the truth
Skeleton of love still vibrate from forgotten kisses
Even the earth and ashes could not erase their passion*

*Do not make mockery out of decency and pride
They sang their lullaby in the solitude of innocence
I am their spirit flouting as blood through moments
Tell the pretenders that I learned crawling in the dark*

BOOK REVIEWS

TREACHEROUS ALLIANCE: THE SECRET DEALINGS OF IRAN, ISRAEL, AND THE U.S.

Trita Parsi

Source: payvand.com

With talk of the Iranian nuclear threat heating up, tension between Iran and Israel is dangerously high, and the risk of a war involving the United States looms. Efforts to defuse those tensions have failed because the real roots of the hostility between Iran and Israel have eluded Washington policymakers. Few analysts have access to detailed knowledge of both Iran and Israel, and the political sensitivity of the issue has made the relationship between the two nations difficult to study.

Trita Parsi, author of *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States*, to be published October 1, 2007, by Yale University Press, has accomplished what no other scholar or journalist has. Through face-to-face interviews with 130 decision-makers in Iran, Israel, and the United States, Parsi has come to an unmatched understanding of the triangular relationship that so profoundly affects the Middle East and the world. No other book explains with such authority and in such detail the complex historical relationship between Iran and Israel, the roots of the current rivalry, and the implications for US policy and for Middle East peace.

The conflict between Iran and Israel, Parsi argues, is generally viewed as an ideological one, and thus as unsolvable. Both Iran and Israel choose to frame their rivalry in this way, and each has its reasons for nurturing this view. But, while Iranian and Israeli leaders do indeed hold conflicting worldviews, Parsi shows us that the most important sources of tension today are strategic and geopolitical, not ideological. Drawing on his extensive and candid personal interviews with key policy players in all three countries, Parsi gets beyond the ideological smokescreen to examine the forces feeding the growing conflict between Iran and Israel. First among those forces is a battle for hegemony in a region still reeling from the end of the Cold War and the vacuum created by the 1991 defeat of Iraq in the Persian Gulf War.

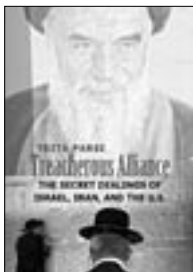
Drawing on the author's unique access to documents and participants, the book describes the behind-the-scenes relations among the US, Israel, and Iran from 1948 through 2007. Parsi examines the secret Israeli-Iranian alliance under the Shah, as well as Israel's cooperation with Iran under Khomeini in defiance of the US. He explores the role of American neo-conservatives, who got the US involved in the Iran-Contra scandal at the height of Iran's anti-Israeli fervor, and who opposed contact with Iran 15 years later in spite of Tehran's moderation. He describes the explosive Israeli-Iranian rivalry of the 1990s that poisoned American and Iranian efforts to improve their bilateral relations, and warns of a coming clash under Presidents Bush and Ahmadinejad.

QUEST FOR TRUTH ("Dar Jostejooy-e Haqiqat")

Shokoufeh Taghi, PhD

Shokoufeh Taghi, author of the novel "Quest for Truth" (*"Dar Jostejooy-e Haqiqat"*), published in 2007, is a prolific and highly respected writer, equally facile in Persian and English.

She published her first book at the age of sixteen, and,



over the course of the next few years, wrote more than twenty additional children's books, one of which, the "Most Beautiful Song," (*"Zibatarin-e Avaz"*) was named Iran's book of year in 1986. Her contributions to children's literature have received numerous national and international prizes. Not just a remarkably talented writer, Shokoufeh Taghi also illustrated four of her books for children. A book on violence against women in stories and history, *"Zan azari dar qesseha va tarikh,"* which she wrote in 2003, will be printed in December 2007 in Sweden by Baran Publishing, but, has to date, not received permission for publication in her native Iran. Her *"Masihay-e eshq"* and *"Kochehay-e bi qanoon"* were banned by the Iranian Ministry of Guidance and Islamic Culture in 1996, and remain unpublished.

Shokoufeh Taghi's contributions to academic writing have been widely recognized as well. Her PhD dissertation, the "Two Wings of Wisdom," in Orientalistic Studies was published in Sweden in 2000, and her self-translated manuscript was published in Iran in 2003 as well. A collection of 150 of her poems, *"Ayehey-e Zarnini-e Eshq"* will be available shortly through Nashr-e Thaleth. Shokoufeh Taghi is currently completing an ambitious anthropological effort. Over the course of the last 12 years, she has travelled across Iran, going from village to village, gathering a huge collection of stories, tales, lullabies, rituals and narrations, which she has recorded. The collection has been transcribed and will soon be published.

Born in Iran in 1960, Shokoufeh Taghi, while studying judicial law at Tehran University in 1978, began teaching story writing in Tehran's private schools. After the Iranian Revolution (January 1978 to December 1979, which transformed Iran from a monarchy to an Islamic republic), she taught literature at Tehran's High schools and worked as a playwright and storyteller on Tehran radio. From 1981-1983, when universities were closed, and after 1985, when she got her degree in Judicial Law, she worked for *Canoon Parvaresh Fekri Coodacan va Nojavanan* the Institution for the Intellectual Development of Children.

In 1985, Shokoufeh Taghi moved to Glasgow, Scotland, where she lived and studied Cognitive Psychology for five years and earned a PhD. In 1990, she moved to Sweden where she taught Child Psychology at the teacher's college, Pedagogen, in Gothenburg University. 1996 she moved to Uppsala where she worked at Uppsala University as a teacher and researcher.

Shokoufeh Taghi is an author and scholar who is a Cognitive Psychologist, Anthropologist and Orientalist, has completed a post-doctoral degree in religion (Yale University) and is also a recognized expert in Islamic studies with a specialty in Sufi literature. She speaks, reads and writes Persian, English, Arabic and Swedish fluently, and can read Middle, Old Persian and the Avestian languages.

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The article appeared on January 7th. It bore the title “Iran and the Red and Black Imperialism,” and contained a harsh personal attack on Ayatollah Khomeini. It started obliquely, with references to the recent days of mourning in which Ayatollah Khomeini had circulated his grievances against the Shah. It moved on to a discussion of forces designated as Red and Black Imperialism, meaning the Communists and the clergy. It said that cooperation between the two had been “rare” but that an exception was “the close, sincere, and honest cooperation of both vis-à-vis the Iranian revolution, especially the progressive land reform in Iran.” The article went on to recall the opposition to land reform back in 1963, including the “riots of June 5th and 6th,” which had precipitated the expulsion of Ayatollah Khomeini. It said that the opposition to the reform had come from the Communists grouped in the Tudeh Party and from “the landowners who had been robbing the peasants for many years.” These groups, the article continued, had turned for “succor to the clergy since the clergy enjoy great respect among Iranians.” Most of the clergy, the article said, proved “far too intelligent to act against the Shah’s-people’s revolution,” so at that point the opponents had decided to “recruit someone from the clergy who would be adventurous.” That “someone” had turned out to be Ayatollah Khomeini. According to the article, he had “an unknown past,” but apparently had lived for many years in India, where he had developed “contacts with centers of British imperialism.” The article concluded by denouncing Ayatollah Khomeini as “someone who had taken the initiative in carrying out the plans of Red and Black Imperialism... who fought land reform, the women’s vote, the nationalization of the forests... who would sincerely serve conspirators and Fifth Columnists.”

THE NEW YORKER FROM THE ARCHIVE

LETTER FROM IRAN

The Four & Last Part

BY JOSEPH KRAFT

Issue of 1978-12-18 Posted 2006-02-27

This week in the magazine, Connie Bruck writes about how, as Washington considers taking a tougher line with Iran exiles are positioning themselves as the country’s next rulers. In this article, from 1978 Joseph Kraft reports on conditions that led to the Iranian revolution of 1979.

On January 9th, two days after the article appeared, the religious students in Qum went into the streets to protest the attack on Khomeini. A clash with police ensued. Nine people were killed and many were injured. Forty days later, in Tabriz, a memorial service was held for those killed in Qum. Again, there was a clash with police. This time, thirteen people were killed. After that, trouble came in Teheran and Isfahan and Meshed, and then in Qum once more. August 5th marked Iran’s Constitution Day, and the eve of Ramadan, the Moslem month of abstention. The Shah delivered a nationwide television broadcast, pledging that he would go ahead with the liberalization program. But all through that month in city after city, there were assault on the symbols of Western modernity associated with the Shah’s rule—banks, casinos, and cinemas. The campaign reached a horrible climax in Abadan, the site of the country’s largest oil refinery. On August 20th, the Rex Cinema was destroyed by arson, and some four hundred and thirty people lost their lives in the blaze.

After that, Amouzegar had had enough. He resigned as Prime Minister and was replaced by Jaafar Sharif-Emami, a political veteran from a reli-

gious family who had worked closely with the Shah as, among other things, head of the Pahlavi Foundation a multimillion-dollar semi-family enterprise, which is the owner of most of Iran’s foreign holdings. Sharif-Emami moved swiftly and across the board to make concessions to the troublemakers. He lifted press censorship and arranged for live radio broadcasts from the previously dozing Majlis, the lower house of the parliament. With the wraps off resentment found tongue. In the parliament and in the press, there was a surge of complaints about corruption and discrimination against the middle and working classes. The new government met the strikes with generous concessions on wages and pensions. In response to charges of corruption, investigations were opened into the cases of General Nassiri (who was recalled from Pakistan) and former Mayor Nikpay. Thirty-four leading officials of Savak, including Parviz Sabeti, were dismissed in one day. At every opportunity, Sharif-Emami sought to placate the mullahs. He closed down casinos, and cinemas showing foreign films. Provincial and university officials who had taken a strong stand against religion were replaced by milder men. Most important

of all, Sharif-Emami entered into consultations with religious leaders, including Ayatollah Shariatmadari, and with the lay opposition, including Karim Sanjabi, the head of the National Front, for a broad understanding about new elections.

I went to visit Sharif-Emami in his office, just before the end of October. I found a large bluff, partly bald man in his sixties who exuded confidence. He said that there were many “dissatisfied and unhappy people in Iran who turned to the mullahs to voice their grievances.” His strategy was “to establish a good relation with the clergy.” As he saw it, the clergy was divided into two groups. “One group, which follows Ayatollah Khomeini, is radical but very small,” he said. “The other, which follows Shariatmadari, is moderate and very large. A split between them exists in every city and every village.” He was negotiating with Shariatmadari for some kind of convocation where the majority could prevail. “They must do it,” he said of his plan for forcing a decision. “Somebody must be the head of our clergy, a Pope.”

He told me he was sure that lifting the lid on censorship and on the Majlis debates was the right thing to do. “A free press is much better than pressure,” he said. The economic consequences of the strikes and the high wage settlements were, he thought, “not serious.” There would be a cost to the state in higher wages and pensions, but that could easily be made up by a cutback on expensive military projects and plans for nuclear power plants. He favored the allocation of more money to the villages, for “by increasing credits for machinery, electricity, and water, rural life can be made more attractive and agriculture more effective.” He said he hoped to “draw the men who came to town back to the villages.” He acknowledged that inflation might be a problem, but he hoped to keep it down by subsidies on basic commodi-

ties—rice, bread, sugar, tea. He did not fear a military coup. “If they come in, there will be killing and shooting,” he said. “Nobody wants that.” He did sense that a test would be coming within the next six weeks, and he hoped to put together a large political grouping that would help open the way to free elections. Among other people, he mentioned former Prime Ministers Hoveida and Ali Amini. “I’m a patient man,” he said. “I do not intend to leave this office until there is calm in Iran.”

Sharif-Emami had begun the interview by saying that that day Teheran, at least, was calm. But driving from his office back to my hotel I had to detour around the center of town. I smelled burning rubber and saw a car in flames. Later, I learned that students had come off the university campus and smashed shops and destroyed cars in what was considered the worst day of rioting that month. Convinced that Sharif-Emami could not last, I went to see the man widely tabbed as his successor Ali Amini, a renowned liberal and reformer, who had been Prime Minister at the time of the land-reform legislation of the early sixties.

Mr. Amini received me at his home, a comfortable villa in the northern section of Teheran. He had been educated in Paris, and, like most of the older generation of the Iranian elite, spoke French more easily than English. He said, “the heart of the problem is the Shah. He doesn’t like to hear the truth. He has allowed himself to be surrounded by flatterers who have isolated him. He has given over the country to a class of nouveaux riches. They show off all the time. That shocks people and turns them against the regime. The clergy has become important only because there is a lack of rapport between the Shah and the people.”

His solution was to form a government of national unity which would take over the country and open the way to new

elections. He would include representatives of the National Front. “Sanjabi isn’t much,” he said of the Front leader, “but his party has a great name. The key to such a government, however, was the Shah. “He has to learn to reign, not rule,” Amini said. “He must accept the idea of a constitutional monarchy in Iran. In fact, he must lead the way to constitutional monarchy.”

I asked Amini whether he thought the Shah was ready for such a step. He said that he had not seen the Shah in some time, and went on, “I’m prepared, but I don’t think he wants to see me. That probably means he isn’t ready to lessen his role in government. But I’m waiting.”

From the home of Mr. Amini, I went to the home of Mr. Sanjabi—an equally comfortable villa, with a swimming pool. Amini had indicated that Sanjabi was important as the leader of the National Front—the political remnant of the most serious previous challenge to the Shah. That had been made back in 1951–53 by Mohammed Mossadegh, who, as Prime Minister, confiscated the formerly British oil holdings and put together a nationalist following embracing the mullahs, the bazaaris, and, for a time, the Tudeh Party. At one point, in August, 1953, Mossadegh forced the Shah to flee the country. But a counter-coup was organized with help from the Central Intelligence Agency. Mossadegh was driven from power, and the Shah returned. Sanjabi, a lieutenant of Mossadegh’s in those days, had survived years of prison to emerge as the foremost figure in the National Front.

He spoke French to me, and was wearing yellow-gold-rimmed glasses, a gray suit of rich flannel, and Italian shoes. “There is unhappiness at every level,” he told me. “It engulfs all classes – intellectuals, students, mullahs, bazaaris, civil servants, teachers, peasants. A true agrarian reform is necessary. The relations between the landlords and the peasants are still

not just. Despite the talk of land reform, the distribution of land was not fully achieved. It was not accompanied by the passing out of the credits, fertilizers, tractors, and irrigation facilities that modern farming requires. We had a twenty-billion-dollar gift in the oil-price rise of 1973. We should have developed rural Iran first, and then industry. Instead, the Shah spent most of that gift on his family. So we had a terrible inflation, a building boom that collapsed, and acute shortages of food. Discontent became universal. Now everybody in the universities is again the regime. The young men have twentieth-century ideas, but, as in a war of any difficult period, their sentiments turn to religion. The corner mosque is the only forum for discussion. And the mullahs are not as backward as you might think. The Iranian people are capable of democracy. The West thinks we’re in the fifth century. That’s wrong. Mossadegh was a sincere democrat. We wanted democracy in this country and in this century.”

I brought Sanjabi back to the present with a series of questions. How did he see the present government? What were the chances of a military coup? What did he expect from a visit to Paris to see Ayatollah Khomeini, which he was to undertake the next day?

He said, “The government of Sharif-Emami has done some good things. But he enjoys no confidence. The public doesn’t trust him. He has to take radical decisions, but he doesn’t. He waits, and the situation gets worse and worse. Now it’s too far gone.” He acknowledged the possibility of a military coup. “But it has no chance of succeeding,” he said. “There’s no political support. The Army could stay in power only by force, as in Pakistan and South Vietnam. It couldn’t last. Thus, the great misfortune of this country is the Shah. He detains all the liberals and keeps down men of integrity. He likes thieves. He has sexual

weaknesses. He is not sincerely for liberalization. He wants to gain time, divide the religious from the lay opposition, and go back to his old system, which is essentially military rule.” Of his visit to Paris, Sanjabi said, “I am not worried about my coming encounter with Khomeini. I am an optimist. Ayatollah Khomeini doesn’t want chaos. We have to turn to Ayatollah Khomeini.”

As it happened, nobody’s plans—not those of the Shah or those of Prime Minister Sharif-Emami or those of former Prime Minister Ali Amini or those of opposition leader Karim Sanjabi carried the day. On Wednesday, November 1st, the Shah, apparently convinced that Sharif-Emami could not continue, received Ali Amini for the first time in years and began conversations concerning the formation of a coalition regime. According to the local press, Amini told the Shah he needed support from Sanjabi, and the Shah agreed to receive Sanjabi on his return from Paris. On November 3rd, after seeing Sanjabi, Ayatollah Khomeini said in an interview on the Paris-based Radio Luxembourg, “We have told the representatives of the opposition, such as Mi Amini and Karim Sanjabi, that if they agree to negotiate with the regime they will be banned from our movement.” Karim Sanjabi came back to Teheran and called a press conference to announce his terms for negotiating with the regime. The press conference never took place. By that time, events had pushed another set of actors, the military, to center stage. Two months before, on September 4th, there had been large demonstrations in Teheran to mark the end of Ramadan. Though the demonstrations were peaceful, thousands marched, and the military feared that matters might get out of hand. On September 6th, the government banned unauthorized gatherings, and the next day there was another large rally against the Shah in Teheran. That afternoon, the military leaders went to the Shah

and asked for a proclamation of martial law. The Shah told them to clear it with the Prime Minister and his government. The issue was argued between the soldiers and the Cabinet late into the night of September 7th. Toward midnight, the Cabinet gave its consent, and early the next morning martial law was decreed in Teheran and eleven other cities. But it was too late for a public proclamation to reach most people. Later that morning-Friday, September 8th – a large crowd gathered in Jaleh Square, a central meeting spot in downtown Teheran. After repeated orders to disperse were ignored, the security forces opened fire. More than a hundred people were killed, by the official count, and many hundreds wounded.

The shock of that massacre caused everybody to draw back. Prime Minister Sharif-Emami was able to negotiate a loose understanding whereby, martial law was not enforced to the letter. Strikes by civil servants, which had begun in September, were not broken up, though they were illegal. Nor were student demonstrations, though the martial-law proclamation forbade any gathering of more than three persons. “There was martial law without there exactly being martial law,” the Prime Minister observed to me. That fuzzy condition put an obvious strain on the military leaders. Top commanders were unsure of their responsibilities. At one point, in October, the commander of the ground forces, General Gholam Ali Oveisi, sent an officer to warn the staff of the English-language daily *Kayhan* against articles he considered inaccurate and inflammatory. The reporters thereupon threatened to go on strike, and the Prime Minister backed them up. Unit commanders never knew exactly when to intervene. At least some of the rank and file, and perhaps some of the junior officers, sided with demonstrators. On two occasions, provincial police officers were shot by enlisted men in the Army.

Moreover, the military leaders had trouble reaching a consensus on what to do. The Shah, to assure his supremacy and to guard against coups, had set up separate lines of communication with many different security organizations and their leaders. The Shah himself is Supreme Commander of the armed forces. He has a personal chief, of staff, General Gholam Reza Azhari, who oversees all the branches of the military, and meets tête-à-tête with the Shah twice a week. There are the chiefs of the three separate services – General Oveisi, commander of the ground forces, with two hundred and eighty thousand men; Admiral Kamaladdin Habibollahi, commander of the naval forces, with thirty-two thousand men; and General Amir Hussein Rabii, commander of the Air Force, with forty-eight thousand men – who also report individually to the Shah. There is the head of the rural police, or gendarmerie, which is some seventy-five thousand strong and exercises administrative control over all villages with a population of less than four thousand. General Abbas Gharabaghi, who was also Minister of the Interior in the Sharif-Emami government. There is the head of the secret police. General Nasser Moghaddam. There is, finally, the head of procurement, General Hassan Toufanian, who also serves as Vice-Minister of War to a figurehead Minister of War, General Reza Azimi.

The differences in military specialty are compounded by variations in personality and experience. The commanders of the Air Force and the Navy are relatively young men-both are forty-six – and do not carry a lot of weight in the system. Air Force General Rabii is known as atypical fly-boy, weak in political and geopolitical understanding. General Oveisi, a former classmate of the Shah at the military college is particularly close to the ruler. General Azhari, the Shah’s chief of staff, is sixty-nine and is

noted for his deliberate ways and lack of ambition. “He is underwhelming,” an American who worked with him once said. “He always gives the impression that he’d rather climb a mountain or read a book than command an army. He was exactly the right man when tensions run high.”

Toward the end of October. I went to the Army headquarters. Northeast of Teheran to visit General Oveisi. I found a solidly built, plainspoken man whose chest was covered with ribbons. He was in a distinctly unhappy mood. He did not like one bit the messy politics associated with the Shah’s liberalization campaign, which he felt played directly into the hands of the Communists. He said. “Two years ago, the Shah decided to let people be really free. Iranians who had fled the country – writers and people like that – came back here. The National Front began speaking out. The Communist Party began acting up. The religious people asserted themselves. Basically, there were two types. One group was very religious. They followed Shariatmadari, and they didn’t meddle in politics. ‘He other group specialized in politics. They were the followers of Khomeini. They started to organize people against He government and its institutions. The Communists took advantage of the situation. They made strong statements. They burned banks and schools. Some students and many instructors in high schools and colleges are Communists. The instructors persuaded all the students to go on strike, and so all classes were postponed.

“Most people in the United States and Europe are against our government. You send journalists here who see only leaders of the opposition. Then the journalists produce stories that are broadcast by the radio here and printed in the press. So the people here think they are not free.

“We have a well-disciplined and well-trained Army. The forces are ninety-nine per

cent loyal to the Shah. Maybe there’s one per cent not loyal – I don’t know. I just say that to be careful. So we are not worried. What does worry me is that there is a Communist Party growing stronger. What worries me more is that when the Communists use freedom to write or to speak to undermine the government, the government is silent. When people strike and make difficulties for others, it is not correct. It jeopardizes security.”

General Moghaddam, the head of Savak, who is a tall, pleasant-faced man with receding iron-gray hair, expressed similar ideas when I called on him in late October at his headquarters in Teheran. He said that the demonstrations were “organized one hundred per cent by the Communists, working through students and religious leaders.” He said that he himself had talked with Shariatmadari. He was convinced that Shariatmadari “supports the regime but is afraid to speak out” – afraid because the government offered no protection. It was too weak to take action even against the Communists, “Two weeks ago. We identified a writer who was very active in provoking people to demonstrate against the government,” he told me. “We asked the government’s permission to arrest him. We were told no. We did arrest several press people for instigating rebellion with false stories. We were obliged to release them all. The military and the police now have things under control. But there are dangers. It is difficult for our security forces to attack young people. If the students keep pouring into the streets, they will paralyze our security forces. If we had a powerful government that met difficulties in a powerful way, we could deal with the troubles. But we now believe the government is not strong enough. We in the security forces-in the Army, the police, and Savak – feel handcuffed.”

The security forces’ sense of being handcuffed by a weak

government inevitably intensified in late October and early November. Demonstrations grew ever larger in scope, and strikes spread, reaching the oil industry and threatening to cripple it. Negotiations for a wider coalition picked up steam. In the first week of November, the two series of events moved in counterpoint to a showdown. In Paris, on November 3rd. Ayatollah Khomeini refused to play at coalition-making and ordered his followers not to stop demonstrating until they had bred the Shah from power. In Teheran, on November 4th, the university students, rallying forth from the campus, toppled a statue of the Shah at the entrance. The troops there forced them back onto the campus. But the next day, November 5th, there was another demonstration. This time, the troops fired first into the air and then into the crowd, killing several students. The students vent on the rampage, burning banks, theatres, and the British Embassy. The day after that, Prime Minister Sharif-Emami submitted his resignation, apparently in protest against the breach of the understanding about limited use of martial law. The military, with General Oveisi in the van, seized the opportunity. They insisted that the resignation be accepted and that a military regime be appointed. The Shah consented.

On Monday, November 6th, at noon Teheran time, the Shah went on national television and radio with an extraordinary statement. He announced the appointment of a military government, but at the same time he recognized the legitimacy of the opposition, and promised to deal with grievances and to move toward free elections. He spoke with contrition, and referred to himself as the Padeshah of Iran – a term meaning simply “King,” and far less exalted than Shahanshah, or King of Kings. He said:

Dear People of Iran:

In the open political atmosphere, gradually developed

these two recent years, you. The Iranian nation, have risen against cruelty and corruption. This revolution cannot but be supported by me, the Padeshah of Iran. However, insecurity, has reached a stage where the independence of the country is at stake. Daily life is endangered and what is most critical, the lifeline of the country, the flow of oil, has been interrupted. I tried to form a coalition government, but this has not been possible. Therefore, a temporary government has been formed to restore order and pave the way for a national government to carry out free elections very soon. I am aware of the alliance that has existed between political and economic corruption. I renew my oath to be protector of the constitution and undertake that past mistakes not be repeated and [be] compensated. I hereby give assurance that government will do away with repression and corruption and that social justice will be restored, after the sacrifices you have made.... At the present juncture, the Imperial Army will fill its duties in accordance with its oaths. Calm has to be restored with your cooperation.

I invite the religious leaders to help restore calm to the only Shiite country in the world. I want political leaders to help save our Fatherland. The same goes for workers and peasants.

Let us think of Iran on the road against imperialism, cruelty, and corruption, where I shall accompany you. By validating the revolution and pledging early free elections, the Shah presumably hoped to put a straitjacket on the soldiers even as he handed over power to them. He named as Prime Minister of the new government the mildest of the military chiefs. General Azhari. But the military, once in office, acted with brisk confidence. Soldiers were moved into the refineries, and the striking workers, threatened with the loss of their jobs, gradually went back to work. Demonstrations were repressed with heavy force. Sev-

eral leading officials-including former Prime Minister Hoveida, General Nassiri, the former Savak head; and former Mayor Nikpay – were placed under arrest. When Sanjabi, the National Front leader, after his return from his meetings with Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris, tried to hold a press conference, he, too, was arrested. Investigations were opened into two highly sensitive matters – corruption in the royal family, and corruption in the Pahlavi Foundation. Either investigation could be conducted in a way that might implicate the Shah himself.

The opposition reacted very strongly. Both Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris and Ayatollah Shariatmadari in Qum denounced the military government. Khomeini exhorted Iranians to “broaden their opposition to the Shah, and force him to abdicate.” In a series of fiery statements, he called for a campaign of mounting demonstrations during Moharram – the Shiite month of mourning, which began this year on December 2nd. He singled out as a special target the holidays of Tasua and Ashura, which this year fell on December 10th and 11th, and which commemorate the deaths of Hossein, the third Imam and the grandson of Mohammed, and his followers, at the Battle of Karbala, thirteen hundred years ago. Normally on Ashura, religious Iranians dress themselves in black, gather at the principal bazaar, and march to the main mosque. As they march, some cut their heads with swords and whip their bodies with chains in an ecstasy of atonement. The processions, with blood drenching the garments of frenzied believers, are a revolutionary’s dream.

Sensing peril, the military government on November 28th banned “processions of any kind” during Moharram. Nevertheless, crowds demonstrated in Teheran during the first two days of the holy month, and there were violations of the curfew on a large scale. Oil production dropped from 5.8 million to below 2 mil-

lion barrels a day. An exodus of Americans got under way. But even as high noon approached, the major protagonists drew back. The Shah ordered that a hundred and twenty political prisoners be freed on Sunday, December 10th. On December 6th. Karim Sanjabi, the National Front leader, was released from custody. On December 8th. Ayatollah Shariatmadari, at a press conference in Qum, urged his followers to avoid violence. That same day, the military government announced it would permit the religious processions, and the next day pledged to keep troops only in the northern sections of Teheran, out of the line of march.

On Sunday and Monday, December 10th and 11th, crowds of several hundred thousand paraded through the downtown streets. They shouted Islamic religious slogans, and showed hostility toward the Shah, the military government, and the United States. But there was no serious violence, and those who tried to make trouble were constrained by more responsible elements in the procession. The troops drawn up in the northern section of town, in the vicinity of the Niavaran Palace, were not even tested.

Obviously, there had been put into effect at the last moment a typically Persian compromise. The palace and the military government – working through former Prime Minister Ali Amini – had struck a deal with Shariatmadari to avoid a violent showdown. But, though the testing time has passed, all the contending forces are still in place. The moment seems ripe for steps toward a regime that limits the role of the Shah, in keeping with the 1906 constitution. But the moment is not going to last very long. Just before the peaceful processions began, Shariatmadari indicated that he was prepared to renew pressure if concessions were not forthcoming. He was asked when the screw would be turned again. He said, “It will be soon.”

SCIENCE AND ART FOUNDATION'S WONDERFUL WORK IN BAM

BY SYMA SAYYAH, TEHRAN



The main goal of the Science and Art Foundation (SAF) is to empower Iranian youth through IT education and bring them into the realm of the 21st century. I became familiar with SAF through its founder Professor Abbas Edalat in London and my friend Mojgan and Dr. Tabesh at the SAF office in Tehran. SAF has branches in many countries and has helped to truly advance computer usage and abilities in many schools, all over Iran. SAF is supported by previous and present students and professors of Tehran's Sharif University of Technology which is one of the most prestigious universities in Iran, if not the Middle East. SAF supports programs in 33 cities all over Iran and they have 150 computer sites at schools and universities.

Recently, I had the pleasure to go to their new office near Sharif University with my husband Paul and once again I was amazed and flabbergasted by the enthusiasm and efforts that this small NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) is doing in Iran. There, I met the present Managing Director, Alireza, and his colleagues Afra and Saeed.

SAF was the main NGO after the Bam earthquake, that made a major

contribution in helping the children to overcome their trauma, by coming to the IT center it was set up in a couple of temporary buildings. I had missed visiting their field school and seeing the happy children learning, working and playing on my first trip to Bam. I did however see the photographs. I was delighted to learn that the SAF Bam ITC (Information and Communication Technology) resource center had officially opened last December and already they are making good use of it. SAF's new project in Bam is to use this ITC resource center as part of a long term vision for Education Strategy for schools in Bam, by training trainers and thus truly empowering the locals for future needs.

I would like to point out that the ITC Resource center was built with the support of Bam's Department of Education and financial contribution by CPC (Coalition of Persian Charities), Swiss Agency for Development & cooperation, other Iranian individuals and companies and SAF educational program partner UNICEF, under management of SAF.

In Bam, SAF has published a handbook for both primary and secondary schools based on **the first Persian Linux**

operating system for children, called Sharif Linux which was designed by the Farsi Web Company at Sharif University of Technology. The SAF's plan for Bam also includes establishing a central point for connecting educational institutions to the internet via wireless and eventually creating a virtual school. This all sounded wonderful and below I invite you to read the story of this little miracle by SAF, in Bam.

After the earthquake and Bam Schools reconstruction, UNICEF had donated a large number of computers to Bam which were not being properly used. For example, last year, out of 60 schools with webcams only a few were in use. SAF, because of their 3 years involvement in Bam, and 8 years experience in Iran the board decided to do something about it. They visited these schools and talked to the teachers to find out why the computers were not being used. Many complained truthfully that they did not know enough to work with them and can not afford to take any courses. SAF decided to train the trainers and create a learning pyramid. They proposed a sustainability model to UNICEF at 7 levels including Internet Infrastructure and



content development for school teachers and students for the Bam virtual school and thus training the trainers. The SAF local office, in cooperation with the local educational authorities, invited interested teachers from all Bam schools in order to train them. About 200 came and were interviewed by the training staff, 65 of the teachers were chosen to undergo the training, which was supported by UNICEF Iran office. You may be surprised to learn that out of the 65, 45 were women and 20 men.

The classes started on December 16th, 2006 and they began to learn about Sharif Linux. This is an open source operating system, which enables Persian speakers to use the net effectively, as all the menus and help are in Persian.

The course was most intense and everybody was working very hard after finishing school from 4:30 to 8:30 in the evening; even on Fridays they came to the center. In the first month all the selected teachers were taught the same syllabus. Then they had a week off. When they came back they were divided into 3 groups depending on their marks. These three divisions were specialized courses:

1. ICT Specialist group – dealing with hardware, network, web design etc.

2. IT teaching which involved being able to use software to create online courses at the virtual school <http://www.raya-bam.schoolnet.ir>

3. Two levels of training for primary and middle schools

Not more than one person from each school did the same specialist course. The specialist courses also ran for a month and by late February, after 240 hours of training per person, they finished. After Norouz the students were able to pass on what they had learned to their own students. For this purpose, SAF chose 6 schools out of the 45 there and set up a base which was directly connected to the internet, after SAF set up their wireless system. Many of the students were able to join their teachers in this learning process.

I want to congratulate SAF once again for being the pioneer in the IT field and doing a great job; close to a miracle in Bam. I am most anxious to go back and visit the ITC centre and schools to see the result of all this effort by SAF with help of UNICEF.

Payvand's Iran News, 5/19/07

DRINKING COLD WATER AFTER A MEAL

Read this! It could save your life!!

This is a very good article. Not only about the warm water after your meal, but about ladies and their heart attacks.

This makes sense. The Chinese and Japanese drink hot tea with their meals, not cold water. Maybe it is time we adopt their drinking habit while eating!!! Nothing to lose, everything to gain.

For those who like to drink cold water, this article is applicable to you. It is nice to have a cup of cold drink after a meal. However, the cold water will solidify the oily stuff that you have just consumed. It will slow down the digestion. Once this "sludge" reacts with the acid, it will break down and be absorbed by the intestine faster than the solid food. It will line the intestine. Very soon, this will turn into fats and lead to cancer. It is best to drink hot soup or warm water after a meal.

A serious note about heart attacks: Women should know that not every heart attack symptom is going to be the left arm hurting. Be aware of intense pain in the jaw line.

You may never have the first chest pain during the course of a heart attack. Nausea and intense sweating are also common symptoms.

60% of people who have a heart attack while they are asleep do not wake up. Pain in the jaw can wake you from a sound sleep. Let's be careful and be aware. The more we know, the better chance we could survive.

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.

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A HOME REMEDY: STAYING AT HOME AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO NURSING HOME CARE

There's no place like home - and that may be especially true for your aging parents as their health begins to fail.

If given a choice, few people would choose staying in a nursing home over living at home or with loved ones. And many have that choice. While failing health can make a nursing home the only option for some, many more can live comfortably at home or with their children with help from a home-health aide and regular visits from a nurse. Having a parent live with you can be stressful and demanding, but it is sometimes the best option. Your parent gets to spend time with family, your children get to spend time with a grandparent and you won't have to worry about whether your parent is getting the care she or he needs. However, caring for a parent can be difficult for children who have families of their own and demanding careers. Home healthcare assistance can make this option more affordable and less stressful for you. If your parent prefers independent living, home care assistance may make it possible to continue living at home. It's important to consider your parent's safety. Individuals with dementia and those who can no longer perform such daily tasks as cooking, dressing and cleaning may need to live with someone who can provide 24-hour supervision.

Paying For Home Care

Of course, home care can be almost as expensive as nursing home care. Having someone come into your home to care for your parent can be costly - and government programs do not cover non-medical expenses, unless your parent has virtually no assets. Typically, a home-care aide will spend eight hours a day in your home, but some home-health agencies provide aides for as little as four hours a day and some provide 24-hour care. Live-in care is one option, as room and board help pay the costs of care. One way to make home care more affordable is with a long-term care insurance policy, which typically covers the cost of nursing care and homemaker services, such as bathing, dressing and otherwise providing the personal care your parent may need. It can also fund home modifications, and training for those who are living in the home. The dilemma for many is that they may not be able to afford long-term healthcare cost, but they also may not be able to afford the insurance they need to protect themselves against those costs. There are several ways to make insurance more affordable for your parent:

Consider group coverage.

For any type of insurance, group coverage is significantly more affordable than individual insurance. That's because underwriters can better predict the insurance company's costs and can spread risk among a large number of people.

Buy it when you're young.

The younger your parent is when she or he buys long-term care insurance, the less it costs. Premiums increase as a person ages, because the odds of needing long-term care increase. To control costs, recommend that your parent purchase a policy that is renewable for life and has level-funded premiums (i.e., premiums remain at the level they are at when your parent purchases the policy).

Buy only what your parent needs.

Long-term care insurance comes with many different features. Stick to features that serve your parent's needs and don't buy what he or she doesn't need.

Long-term care rider.

Adding a long-term care rider to your life insurance policy may be an affordable alternative. Most riders pay 2 percent of the face value of the policy for up to 25 months. In addition to limiting the time period for which coverage is provided, the rider does not make adjustments for inflation. If your parent decides to use home care, whether your parent pays for it, you pay for it or insurance covers the cost, be certain to use a reputable home-healthcare agency to find a suitable aide. Under the right circumstances, home care can be a welcome alternative to nursing home care allowing your parent to live comfortably in a setting he or she enjoys. The key to home care is to plan in advance and to determine an option that is both realistic and affordable.

Insurance Considerations

If you or your parent decides that insurance is the best way to fund home care, before making a decision be certain to read the policy carefully to determine whether there are any exemptions. Purchasing the wrong policy can be as risky as having no policy at all. When considering the level of coverage needed, base your decision on the cost of long-term care in your market. The cost may vary significantly. The policy should also compensate for inflation. Unless the policy increases benefits by at least 5 percent a year, the benefit may be inadequate by the time it is needed. Also check to see what kind of long-term care services are covered by the policy. Some policies cover only nursing home care, some cover only home health care and some cover both. Ideally, the policy should cover skilled, intermediate and custodial care. Skilled and intermediate care is provided by nurses and other trained medical personnel. Custodial care assists the patient with bathing, eating, dressing and other routine tasks. One way to reduce the cost of coverage is to extend the waiting period before benefits begin. The best policies have a waiting period of 20 days. Before choosing a longer waiting period, make certain you can afford to pay for care during the waiting period.

Most insurance companies also offer a waiver of premiums beginning 60 to 90 days after the policyholder receives the first benefit payment. Some companies waive premiums immediately. Some policies limit coverage to anywhere from two to six years. With home healthcare, a person may live longer. While a policy that covers an unlimited number of days and an unlimited number of stays may be expensive, it is often worth the cost. It would defeat the purpose of insurance if coverage were to run out while your loved one still needs care. Under the right circumstances, home care can be a welcome alternative to nursing home care, allowing your parent or other loved ones to live comfortably in a setting they enjoy. The key to home care is to plan in advance and to determine an option that is both realistic and affordable.



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continuing from previous issue

Ramon Menendez Pidal has dealt with the theme of the Legend of don Roderick without entering in the polemic concerning the existence of a Mozarabic epic, and the reader may judge for himself.

Besides the facts, cited above, Menendez Pidal affirmed that the **Chronicle of Silos**, which introduced legendary and novelesque elements concerning Roderick and Witiza unknown in Castile before the 12th Century, is Mozarabic (whether partly written in al-Andalus or entirely written in Silos by Mozarabic monks is not known). In the same vein Menendez Pidal noted the close parallel between the legend of Ermanaric, (Gothic "Airmnareiks"; note Celtic element "reiks", meaning "king") a great Gothic king in what is now the Ukraine in the 4th Century AD (a Gothic epic partly preserved in a Viking saga) and the legend of don Roderick. Note that the legends of Ermanarick or Airmnareiks on the one hand and Roderick in which the sins of a king bring vengeance down on himself retribution on him and his people appear more Iranian than Germanic.

We will speak more concerning this later. The similarity to the Gothic-Viking legend appears in the version of the legend of don Roderick as told by St. Peter Pascual, son of Mozarabic parents, in his **Book Against the Sect of Mahomet**.

Menendez Pidal affirmed without mincing words that the legend of don Roderick is of Mozarabic origin, and that it is highly probable that there existed a popular narrative poetry among the Mozarabs.

In another place Menendez Pidal affirms that there existed chansons de geste on the theme of Roderick and Witiza, that said legend is proof of the survival of the Gothic chansons de geste even after the Muslim Conquest, and that the legend of don Roderick is purely Gothic.

The convergence of all these conclusions appears to me to be an affirmation of the existence of a Mozarabic epic, or at least of a popular narrative poetry among the Mozarabs.

If there existed, as appears to be the case, a Mozarabic epic, the probability that it had some influence on the formation of the Castilian epic at some stage of its development at least, is very great. In the time of El Cid and in the time in which the **Cantar** was written, around 1140, the Mozarabic influence in Castile, Leon and Aragon was very strong because the Almoravid invasion had caused a great migration of Mozarabs and Jews (and even some Muslims) toward the North and because the advance of the Christian Reconquest had incorporated territories with a large Mozarabic population, especially Toledo (1086) (where even today there is a large Mozarabic community which practices the old Mozarabic or Visigothic Rite) and Sarragossa (1118). Also, the principle author of the **Cantar de Mio Cid** seems to have been from Medinaceli, a frontier district not definitively

reconquered until 1120. Therefore, said author may well have been a Mozarab born under Muslim rule.

Nevertheless, some questions remain. Did there exist a real epic tradition among the Mozarabs or merely a sort of popular narrative poetry? How strong was the Mozarabic influence in the area Burgos-Lara de los Infantes in the 10th-11th centuries, the place and time where, it would appear, the Castilian epic was born? Here it is well to remember that said area is at once very Celtic and very Gothic, where, as we have seen, the Romanization was tardy and superficial and the Arabic cultural influence very weak. Here the very climate and landscape have a somber, epic quality, very different from the lush, green Santander, Asturias and Galicia or the gentle climates of Andalusia and the Mediterranean Coast. It is "a hard land that produces hard men". This area was also for nearly two centuries a frontier area, a land of constant warfare. There were periods in which the wars with the Muslims were so constant that the knights slept in the corrals with their horses so as to be able to be mounted and prepared to

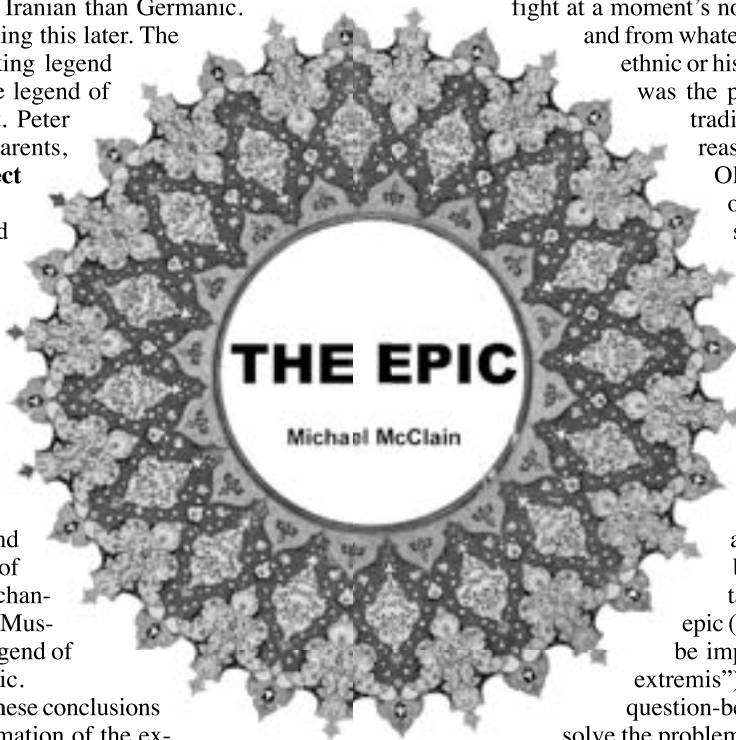
fight at a moment's notice. Old Castile by all logic and from whatever viewpoint - geographical, ethnic or historical - would have been and was the part of Spain where the epic tradition was strongest. I see no reason whatever to look outside

Old Castile for the immediate origins of the Castilian epic. In such circumstances it is very difficult to believe that the hypothetical Mozarabic epic had any strong or profound influence on the formation of the Castilian epic. More probable is that, like the French and Breton influences, the Mozarabic influence was in details, not in fundamentals. If anyone affirms the Mozarabic epic to be the source and fundamental inspiration of the Castilian epic (something which I consider to be implausible and improbable "in extremis") this would really be a sort of question-begging, because it would not

solve the problem of the origin of the Hispanic epic, since the Castilian and the hypothetical Mozarabic epics are regional branches of the Hispanic epic, as the **Ulster Cycle** and the **Leinster Cycle** are regional branches of the Irish epic. To say, for example, that the **Ulster Cycle**, which appears to be the older of the two, is the source and inspiration of the **Leinster Cycle** would not solve the problem of the origin of the Irish epic.

In other words even (in spite of all the evidence to the contrary) admitting that the Mozarabic epic is the source of the Castilian epic, it would still be necessary to seek the source from which both proceed. For this reason, the Mozarabic theory as to the origin of the Castilian epic is perfectly compatible with the Celtic, Gothic and Arabic theories. The Mozarabic theory is neither complete nor adequate in itself. Even as a theory it cannot stand alone.

Some, especially in the 19th Century, sought the origins of



the Castilian epic in Arabic literature, but the great Arabist Dozy refuted this theory with very weighty arguments. Recently, however, said theory has been revived by Francisco Marcos Marin.

Basically, Marcos Marin says that the Arabs have an epic tradition which was known in al-Andalus, and that this tradition plus the *archuzas* (Spanish transliteration of *arjuza*) produced an epic in Andalusian Vulgar Arabic, which in turn had a great influence on the formation of the Castilian epic. Sr. Marcos Marin attempts to prove this theory by way of many supposed Arabic characteristics in said epic. I find the book of Marcos Marin to be the fruit of ample research, lucidly written and demonstrating great culture and erudition. Nevertheless I do not find it wholly convincing.

The epic is characteristic of the Indo-European peoples, and the Romans (we know nothing of the other Italic peoples in this respect), lacking an epic tradition, are virtually the only important exception securely known. The epic is **not** characteristic of the Semitic peoples. The epic of Gilgamesh, written in Accadian (a Semitic tongue) is only a recapitulation of various works in Sumerian, a non-Semitic tongue. Perhaps the books of the Old Testament **Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and 1st & 2nd Kings** form the work nearest to an epic which exists in a Semitic language. The reason for this fact is not known.

Sr. Marcos Marin believes that the pre-Islamic Arab legends constitute an epic and explains the fact that said legends do not conform to the normal or Indo-European concept of the epic (which he calls "The Occidental Concept", as though the Iranian and Indo-Aryan epics were "Occidental") by the fact that the pre-Islamic Arab world was magical in place of religious in the strict sense and says that said Arab epic disappeared in Islamic times because of contacts with more advanced civilizations, i.e., the Syro-Byzantine and the Persian.

I know the legends of Antara, and to me they appear to be not an epic but a collection of romances or ballads of historical-legendary theme. The great orientalist Reynold A. Nicholson concurs with my opinion. The Persian nationalists, knowing how proud the Arabs are of their poetry, have severely criticized the poverty of narrative verse in Arabic literature and its total lack of an epic. The great Hungarian Islamist Ignaz Goldziher said that the Arabs have no epic tradition. Goldziher cited the Arab historian ibn al-Athir (died 1234), highly esteemed by Goldziher as a literary critic, in support of this idea.

Obviously, the opinion of ibn al-Athir in this field must carry more weight than that of a Persian who does not like Arabs. Ibn al-Athir, as a good Arab, praises the Arabic language and literature. Nevertheless, he admits that Arabic literature has no epic tradition, and confesses that in this respect Persian literature is superior, since the Persians have a very great epic tradition. He speaks with admiration of the great work of the Persian epic poet Firdausi (60,000 lines of 16 syllables each) and laments that the Arabic language and literature have nothing comparable. Not that ibn al-Athir was an Iranophile. In one place he says that even though the Arabic language and literature have no epic tradition, the value of the Persian language and literature compared with that of the Arabic language and literature is less than a drop of water compared with the sea, not exactly the opinion of a friend and admirer of the Persians. For this very reason his opinion in reference to the fact that the Arabic language and literature have no epic tradition must carry a great deal of weight. If the Arabs once had an epic tradition, as Marcos Marin says, why was it not developed and cultivated in Islamic times? The

great and nearly miraculous Arab conquests of the 7th and early 8th centuries which were a jihad or sort of holy war, must necessarily have provided first-rate raw material for an epic cycle, and no one can say the Arab-Islamic society was "magical" in place of religious. The idea that close contacts with the Persians and Byzantines destroyed the Arab epic tradition is inadmissible; rather, if there had existed any epic tradition among the Arabs said contacts would have represented a great spur and stimulus for its development and cultivation. The Persians have one of the most (perhaps **the** most) extensive and varied epic traditions known. The Byzantines knew well the works of Homer and developed their own epic cycles, which reached full development in the 11th Century with the epic of Diogenes Akritas. Charles Diehl affirms that:

"...(this epic poetry) was inspired by the greatness of the Christian faith, its triumphs and sufferings, and by the sentiments and passions of the people. This poetry, whose form and language were new, was firmly rooted in the Byzantine soul, it was, in truth, as has been said, the blood and spirit of Christian Byzantium."

In summary, the conditions of the Arab-Islamic world after the time of the great Arab conquests were optimum for the development of epic verse, but said development did not occur, which is conclusive proof of the absence of an epic tradition and the non-existence of the slightest tendency toward this sort of literature among the Arabs. For an example of what I am saying, note that the Byzantine epic was born and cultivated on the frontier between the Empire and the Caliphate, but only on the Byzantine side; the Arabs on the other side of the frontier produced nothing comparable.

The above shows that the epic is not natural to the Semitic peoples, including the Arabs. Ergo, the Arabs brought no epic tradition with them to Spain. If there existed epic poetry in Muslim Spain, it must have proceeded from non-Arabic sources, conceivable Byzantine or Persian, more likely Hispanic.

The word *archuza* or *arjuza* is derived from *rajaz*, an Arabic metre. *Rajaz* is a Classic Arabic metre, and is therefore quantitative. It is short, having only 2 or 3 feet per hemstich, 4 or 6 feet per line. In contrast to the other Classic Arabic metres, in which only the first line of the poem has an internal rhyme, in the *rajaz* metre every hemstich is rhymed, or, in other words, each line has an internal rhyme. In consequence, in Classic Arabic verse the *rajaz* is used mainly in short works, since it is far from easy to write a long monorhymed poem with short lines in which each line has an internal rhyme.

The Hispano-Arabic *arjuza*, though *rajaz* in reference to the number of feet per hemstich and line, is not the same as the classical *rajaz*. The *arjuza* is a sort of narrative verse in which each line has an internal rhyme, but the rhyme of each line is independent, in other words the rhyme scheme is *aa'bb'cc*, *ad infinitum*. Therefore, in spite of its metre, the *arjuza* is fundamentally that which is called in Persian *mathnawi* (pronounced "masnawi"). *Mathnawi* means narrative verse in which there are no internal rhymes, but in which the rhyme changes every two lines, once again the rhyme scheme *aa'bb'cc*, *ad infinitum*. Said literary form is indigenous to Persia, and may be pre-Islamic. In conclusion, the *arjuza* is a *mathnawi* of historical theme written in Arabic using the *rajaz* metre. It is interesting to note that the *mathnawi* form has had an enormous diffusion in the West, and has been used by the Archpriest of Hita and Chaucer among others. To what extent all this proceeds from Celtic, Persian or

SOCIAL SECURITY: TAKE THE CHECK NOW OR LATER?

رضا ملاباشی مشاور شما برای سرمایه‌گذاری موفقیت آمیز

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When you become eligible for early Social Security benefits at age 62 you must decide among taking a monthly Social Security benefit check of, for example, \$1,450 at age 62, \$1,913 at age 65 and 4 months, or \$2,538 at age 70. Let's look at the factors involved in this decision.

First, consider these Social Security retirement benefit basics. Qualifying individuals become eligible for early reduced benefits at age 62. The age to collect full retirement benefits is currently 65 and 8 months (Full Retirement Age or "FRA") and it is on a schedule to increase to age 67 for those born after 1960. If you wait to begin your monthly checks until age 70, you may derive the maximum benefit.

Also, if you have reached your FRA you may have unlimited earned income without triggering a reduction in Social Security benefits. If you will be under your FRA throughout 2007, your benefit will be reduced by \$1 for every \$2 of earned income over \$12,960. If you will attain your FRA in 2007, your benefit will be reduced by \$1 for every \$3 of earned income over \$34,440 earned before the first day of the month in which you attain your FRA.

Those eligible for Social Security retirement benefits may want to strongly consider taking the money now, rather than waiting. Although some people in the highest income-tax bracket or with a family history of longevity may find reasons to wait for the larger payment, for most retirees the decision is a simple question of mortality statistics. On average, Americans live into their early or mid-80s. Calculations show that a 65-year-old who waits five years to begin taking maximum Social Security payments won't recoup the forgone money until he or she approaches age 85.

Here's how the math works. Assume you attain age 65 in 2007 and that you are eligible for the maximum monthly Social Security check. You are now eligible to receive monthly payments of \$2,116, or \$25,392 per year. If you defer taking payments until you attain age 70, you would earn a retirement benefit credit that amounts to an increase of 7% a year. So by deferring payment, your monthly income jumps to about \$2,967, or slightly more than \$35,604 a year.

But deferring payments means you would forgo \$126,960 you would have received before age 70, during the wait. And while monthly income does increase by \$851 at age 70, it would take you nearly 12 years to collect the delayed money. But, around age 82 and four months, you come out ahead in total benefits received.

The calculations get a bit more complicated when you elect to take reduced benefits at age 62, especially if you are still working; because, Social Security will reduce your benefit if your earned income exceeds \$12,960 (for 2007).

For example, if you are a 62-year-old top earner retiring this year, you will receive monthly income of approximately \$1,587, which is 75% of what you would get by waiting until your FRA to begin taking payments. Assume your benefits are due to begin in January and you continue to work part-time and earn \$30,000 throughout the year. Your annual benefit will be reduced by \$8,520 ($\$30,000 - \$12,960 \div 2$). So, your monthly benefit will be suspended from January through May ($\$1,587 * 5 \text{ months} = \$7,935$) and your June monthly benefit will be reduced by \$585 ($\$8,520 - \$7,935$) to approximately \$1002.

Still, if you wait until your FRA to begin taking benefits, you sacrifice \$63,480 over the three year and four month wait, and it will take until your late 70s before you reach the breakeven point.

Additionally, if you intend to keep working and want to take reduced benefits at age 62, you must consider how your benefits will be taxed. It is possible that as much as 85% of your Social Security benefit payments could be taxed. Thus, if you are ready to begin taking benefits now, at age 62, and you are still working, you will have to deal with (1) a reduced benefit for taking Social Security prior to reaching your FRA of 65 and 4 months, (2) a reduction of benefits for earned income over \$12,960 and (3) a potential taxation of benefits received. The suitable decision may be to delay Social Security until your full retirement age or until actually and completely retired. And as mentioned before, it may make sense for those with family histories of longevity to delay benefits and receive a larger check in the future.

While your situation needs to be looked at individually, in some cases it may be best to take the money now and enjoy it while your health is hopefully still good and the money can still be enjoyed.

This is especially true if you have attained your full retirement age as you may enjoy unlimited earned income without triggering a reduction of your Social Security benefit. And, if you just don't need the income, you may want to take your benefit payments and invest them instead of letting the government hold it. Your investment returns may stretch your breakeven point to an even later station in life.

Should you have any questions about any of these issues, or assistance in deciding when to begin taking your Social Security benefits, please contact me at reza.mollabashy@raymondjames.com or your local Social Security Administration office.

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RAYMOND JAMES	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%
MORGAN STANLEY ²	0.25%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%
SMITH BARNEY ³	0.65%	0.65%	0.65%	0.65%	2.25%	2.25%	2.60%	2.60%
UBS ⁴	0.50%	0.65%	0.65%	0.65%	1.77%	1.77%	1.87%	1.87%
AMERIPRISE ⁵	1.75%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%
WACHOVIA BANK ⁶	1.19%	1.95%	1.95%	1.95%	2.39%	2.39%	2.40%	2.40%

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*Clients in the Client Interest Program with cash balances below \$2,500 receive a lower rate of interest.

1. Rates valid February 4, 2008, and are based on the Raymond James Bank Deposit Program.
2. Rates valid February 4, 2008, and are based on Morgan Stanley's Bank Deposit Program.
3. Rates valid February 4, 2008, and are based on Smith Barney's Financial Management Account.
4. Rates valid February 4, 2008, and are based on UBS's Bank USA Deposit Program.
5. Rates valid February 4, 2008, and are based on Ameriprise's Insured Money Market Account. Lower rates are offered on balances below \$50,000.
6. Rates valid February 4, 2008, Lower rates are offered on balances below \$50,000. Rates shown are for Wachovia Bank's customers and may not necessarily be the same for its brokerage customers. Rates may vary according to ZIP code.

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Hispano-Arabic sources is a question which does not concern us at the moment.

In Muslim Spain the arjuza was used as a sort of rhymed chronicle. Various fragments have survived. That which Marcos Marin is mainly concerned with is a considerable piece of 445 lines written by ibn ar-Rabbihi and which, dealing mainly with the campaigns of Abd ar-Rahman II against Omar ibn Hafsun, is sufficient to cause us to lament that which has been lost.

Admitting that the arjuza does not in itself constitute an epic, Marcos Marin notes elements which are not those of a mere rhymed chronicle, and which might inspire the creation of a real epic. The reader may read the arjuzas in the book of Marcos Marin and judge for himself. It should be noted that unrhymed Arabic chronicles contain many novelesque and sensational elements, "strong" adjectives and panegyrics of important people, since in contrast to the majority of Medieval Christian chronicles, they were not written by monks. It should also be noted that the arjuzas are written in Classic Arabic. The great majority of the population of Muslim Spain, Mozarabs, Muslims and Jews, either continued to speak the Romance language spoken in that area before the Muslim conquest, called by the Arabs *Lisan al-Ajjam*, i.e., "the non-Arabic language", or spoke a colloquial Arabic full of Romance words, more different from Classical Arabic than Italian is from Latin. The fact of being written in a language incomprehensible to the majority of the population of Muslim Spain must have been a barrier to the popular diffusion of the arjuza, as well as the limited circulation of books caused by the absence of the printing press. The rajaz metre is classic, and therefore could have passed neither to Romance nor to Andalusian Vulgar Arabic. The Classic Arabic metres are quantitative, while the metres of Romance and Andalusian Vulgar Arabic are, like the Celtic metres, syllabic-accentual. The contrast between the Classic Arabic metres and the metres of Romance and Andalusian Vulgar Arabic has been well explained by the great Spanish Arabist Emilio Garcia Gomez.

The arjuza or mathnawi rhyme scheme is very well adapted to narrative verse, of which fact there exists an abundance of proofs in many languages, and may have passed to a sort of popular narrative poetry - it exists in this form in the U.S. - in Romance or Andalusian Vulgar Arabic and from there to the Archpriest of Hita and Chaucer, but it did **not** pass to the Castilian epic.

It must also be noted that the Arabs in the East even with stimuli far more powerful than the Andalusian arjuza, developed no epic tradition. If there existed an epic tradition in Muslim Spain, and I do **not** deny said possibility, the arjuza is not, in my opinion, sufficient to explain it.

I have noted before the strong possibility that there existed a Mozarabic epic, or at least a sort of popular narrative verse among the Mozarabs. I am therefore disposed to believe that it is possible that there existed a Muslim epic in al-Andalus in Romance or in Andalusian Vulgar Arabic mixed with Romance words, successor to the Mozarabic epic recited and/or written in a syllabic-accentual metre very different from the Classical Arabic metres, analogous to the poetry of the Cordoban poet ibn Quzman. Said hypothetical epic may have taken the rhyme and, perhaps, some of its content from the arjuza, or it may have done no such thing.

Its fundamental origin would be Hispanic, not Arabic, for reasons given above. Being a product of Muslims, though they be *Mawalid* or *Muladis*, i.e., Spaniards converted to Islam, it no

doubt contained certain Arab-Islamic elements. Not one sample of this hypothetical epic has survived so far as I am aware, but in the circumstances this cannot be taken as proof that it never existed.

On page 207 of his book cited above, Marcos Marin gives a list of supposed Arab characteristics present in the Castilian epic. In said list I have encountered only one characteristic which could be qualified as neither Celtic nor Germanic nor Iranian: the "I" or frequent use of the first person singular by the hero, something which I am certain one does not find in any Indo-European epic save the Castilian. Giving a name and almost a personality to the sword and horse of the hero may appear to be something strange and exotic, but in the first instance it is sufficient to remember the sword **Durendal** of Roland and the sword **Excalibur** of King Arthur. In the Persian epic **Shah Namah** written by Firdausi, Rustam, the principal protagonist, has a horse named Rakush, which means "brilliant" in Persian), who is almost a personality in his own right. In the 8th Century the stable of Rakush in Seistan was still shown to visitors. The fact that the owner of Rakush is Rustam is important, because it indicates that this is something which may have passed to the Castilian epic by way of the Alans and the Goths. This will be fully discussed below. Urismag, a hero of the **Nart Cycle**, has a horse named **Durdura**. The **Nart Cycle** is the epic of the Ossetians, an Iranian people of the North Caucasus who appear to be descendants of the Sakas, possibly of the Alans in particular.

to be continued

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From an Iranian Childhood of More Work than Play, a Tycoon Rises

Iranian American wins Entrepreneur of the Year Award

By Elizabeth Kelleher, USINFO Staff Writer

21 NOVEMBER 2007

Were you to talk to Isaac Larian about his childhood in Iran, he would not wax nostalgic over childhood games or playthings. In fact, he would tell you that when his friends and cousins played or went on vacation, he did “constant, hard work” helping his father run a retail textile business.

Today, Larian is president and chief executive of the largest privately held toy company in the world, MGA Entertainment, based in Van Nuys, California. On November 17, Larian was named national Entrepreneur of the Year at a ceremony in Palm Springs, California, for his “innovation, financial success and personal commitment” in building a world-class business, according to Ernst & Young, the accounting firm that sponsors the annual award. Larian is the 21st winner and will represent the United States at the World Entrepreneur of the Year awards in Monte Carlo, Monaco, in 2008. Only one American has won the world award.

Born in Kashan, Iran, in 1954, Larian came to the United States when he was 17. He said that when he came he had two priorities: “to survive and to get an education.” He graduated from California State University, Los Angeles, with an engineering degree in 1978. But he did not stick to the sciences. “It was no twist of fate” that led him to the toy business, he said. “I have always been interested in the exhilarating nature of selling a product.”

He began importing textiles and brassware through



his own mail-order company, ABC International Traders Inc., shortly after graduating.

In 1979, he founded a company called Surprise Gift Wagon, through which he imported and distributed brand-name consumer electronic products. By the late 1980s, he had become the first official distributor of Nintendo handheld games in the United States and had begun calling his company Micro Games of America. It acted as a licensee of other companies’ products – including Power Rangers and Hello Kitty. But as Larian manufactured or distributed toy brands owned by others, he realized that his business would grow faster if he developed his own brands.

In the 1990s, Larian changed the company name to MGA Entertainment and transformed it to develop its own licenses. Today, it makes more than 20 product lines of toys, games, dolls, consumer electronics, home décor, sta-

tionery and sporting goods. Among MGA Entertainment’s hits are such household names in the toy business as Bratz, Yummi-Land, Storytime Collection, Rescue Pets, Miuchiz, West Coast Choppers, Market Racers and Marvel toys. “I have always had a penchant for creativity,” he said. “I find myself constantly seeking out new ideas and concepts that I can transform into products that make a difference in the lives of children.”

TAKING ON BARBIE AND WINNING

Mattel Inc.’s Barbie reigned as the best-selling doll for more than 40 years, until Larian’s company unseated her with its Bratz dolls. These fashion-conscious dolls won Family Fun magazine’s Toy of the Year Award four years in a row and spawned a feature film, fashion magazines, apparel collections, a Web site, online promotions and a host of related products. Today, MGA has more than 400

licensees worldwide creating Bratz-themed products.

According to Amy Opheim of Funosophy Inc., which surveys parents and children to track the popularity of toys in the United States, two Bratz dolls – the BeBratz.com line and the Bratz Fashion Stylistz – are among the top 100 toys for the 2007 holiday season. The brand itself is ranked third in popularity among girls ages 6-11, according to Funosophy’s survey. Judges for the Entrepreneur of the Year award cite Larian’s open-door policy, whereby he welcomes ideas from all of his 500 employees, as one reason for his success. In 2002, an intern suggested an idea for an accessory, and it became the first Bratz playset and won a Toy Industry Association award.

Larian has three children, and while they have not had to help their father struggle to make ends meet in the same way Larian helped his father, they share an interest in business. Their interest comes “more from the observation and curiosity than from genes,” Larian said. He named two of the Bratz dolls, Yasmin and Cameron, after his younger children.

As Larian thinks about how far he has come since moving to the United States with a goal of survival, he offers advice to other immigrants. “Don’t forget your roots, always be humble and open to taking a risk,” he said. “Don’t be afraid to fail, and when you do, learn from it, get up and try again.”

Check Out

Being Iranian

COMPILED BY: PROFESSOR M.S. TAJAR
University of the Philippines

43. Historical cities whose names are Persian: 1) Bukhara, 2) Samarkand 3) Khawrazm (Khiveh) in Central Asia, 4) Al-lahabad, 5) Ahmed Abad, 6) Heydar Abad, 7) Faiz Abad, 8) Jamshid Pour, 9) Mahmood Abad, 10) Shah Abad etc. (India) 11) Faisal Abad , 12) Heydar Abad, 13) Ghazi Abad, 14) Khorram, 15) Chaman, 16) Islamabad, etc. (Pakistan) 17) Rajshahi 18) Cox Bazaar, (Bangladesh) 19) Mozaffar Abad (Pakistani Kashmir) 20) Kufah or Kuppah (Hillside) Iraq 21) Salman Pak (Pure) Iraq, 22) Ctesiphon (Iraq), 23) Halabcha (Iraq) 24) Khorsabad (Iraq) 25) Nippur (Iraq) 26) Khanaqin (Iraq) 27) Khan Azad (Iraq) 28) Diwaniyyah, (Iraq) 29) Bandar Sri Begawan (Brunei) (Note: Bandar in Persian means port city like Bandar Abbas) 30) Banda Aceh (Indonesia) 31) Shirwan (Caucasia) 32) Nakhjavan (Armenia) 33) Mozdok (Mazdak, Caucasia) 34) Astartkhan (Russia) etc.
44. Famous Persian Queens/Princesses in History: 1) Queen Vashti of King Xerxes (see the Bible) 2) Queen Esther, a

Jewish girl, born in Persia, who became the Queen of Persian King Xerxes (see Old Testament, Book of Esther Note: Esther's tomb is in Hamadan Iran today) 3) Queen Cleopatra of Egypt (Part Greek, Part Persian) 4) Queen Mumtaz Mahal (of Taj Mahal) the Queen of the Mogul Emperor of India, 5) Princess Shahr Banu of the Sasan Dynasty, the daughter-in-law of Prophet Mohammad (wife of Imam Hosain) 6) Madam Maragel, one of the wives of Emperor Harun Rashid, the Abbasid Khalif (she was the mother of Mamoon, the most intellectual Khalifah in the history of Islamic civilization, who translated and transferred all Greek philosophy and science books into Arabic language), 7) Pura-Dokht, the First Lady of Khaliffah Ma'moon, 8) Princesses in several Arab states of the Persian Gulf, including the mother of Shaikh Makhtum of the United Arab Emirates, 9) Nusrat Bhutto, the First Lady of Pakistan (1971-1978) wife of Pakistani Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. 10) Jihan Sadat, the First Lady of Egypt (1970-1982), wife of President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, etc.

45. In the Field of Fashion: Almost all the clothing and dresses of the Mogul Darbar in the Indian subcontinent (Including Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc) are Persian in origin; that includes the world famous Nehru Tunic or Shirwani, the Jinah Cap (made of lamb skin), the Shalvar Qamis, the Indian Turban, the Parsi Gara (Persian Style Embroidery in India), and a variety of shoes and other accessories, including the well known Sukarno cap in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Philippines, etc.



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AHMAD KASRAVI:

THE GUARDIAN OF OUR PAST AND THE GUIDE TO OUR FUTURE

Written By: Fred Rezazadeh, Ph.D.
Professor, Rockford College, Illinois



Ahmad Kasravi was born to a religiously conservative family on Mehr 8, 1269 (September 20, 1890) in Hokm Abâd, a suburb of Tabriz. On his father's side there was a long line of Shi'a Moslem clergy (Mollahs) and his father, Haji Mir Ghâsem, was educated and trained to become a clergy but for unknown reasons had given up the profession and established a small rug factory in Tabriz. His grandfather, Mir Ahmad, was a well known Mollah in Tabriz with many followers preaching at the Mir Ahmad Mosque which he had built.

Although Kasravi's father had chosen business as his career, he had hoped his son will become a clergy and follow the long family tradition. For this reason, Kasravi was put in a Maktab (traditional school) at the age of six and continued his education until his father's death in 1901 when Kasravi was 11 years old.

At the Maktab, Kasravi was taught the Ghorân and basic literacy by a Mollah named Bakhshali, but he also supplemented his education at home. However, due to financial troubles after the death of his father, he began working at the rug factory when he was 13 and supervised the completion of unwoven rugs before folding and liquidating the business. He was then hired as the supervisor of a rug factory owned by the family friend and guardian, Hâji Mir Mohsen, and worked at this position for near three years. In accordance with his late father's wishes and at the insistence of Hâji Mir Mohsen, Kasravi resumed his education to become

a clergy and attended the Mollah Has-san and Sâdeghieh Maktabs as a Talabeh (seminary student). After the completion of his studies he became a practicing Mollah for a year and half, and with increasing reluctance preached at a Masjid and other religious ceremonies. It was particularly during this period that Kasravi doubted his profession, turning to deeper study of Ghorân and discovering the fundamental and profound contradictions between the teachings of the Ghorân and the Shi'a Islam in practice. As he remarked later, this experience and realization was his first major intellectual awakening in life.

The early years of Kasravi's life and experience must also had an uprooting effect on his ideas and reluctance to continue the clerical tradition of his family and the life of a Mollah. In one of several of his auto-biographies, *Zendeghi Man* (My Life), he recounts many incidents which helped to shape his thoughts and to rebel against the conservative and traditional life of clerical ignorance and fanatical Shi'a orthodoxy. Important among these was the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 toward which he felt great sympathy and the fanatical opposition to this movement by a large number of the clergy, particularly his ultra-conservative family and kin who expected him to oppose the movement with the same vigor and fanaticism as they did. Kasravi's sympathy for democratic ideas and ideals of the Constitutional Movement and the clergy's opposition to it, particularly their arguments for denouncing it as an anti-Islamic Bâbi (alluding to the

Bahâi religion, an outgrowth of the mid 19th century Bâbi movement with revised religious and ethical teachings) or a British conspiracy, created serious conflicts between his conscience and his profession which he increasingly considered as a profession of self-serving ignorant and illiterate men. Later as a practicing Mollah, he was constantly chastised for being a Constitutionalist (*Mashroteh Talab*) and the follower of western ideas. But there were many other incidents that Kasravi cites which may have played an important role in his deliberations and re-evaluations. Among these are: the annual fanatical Shi'a ceremonies against the Sunni Moslems; observing the behavior of Lanat-chiyân (religious cursers), a practice whereby a Mollah cursed other believers such as the Sunnis in public for pay; the savagery of Shaykh Abidallah in late 19th century who out of the same Shi'a fanaticism cut off the breasts of many women as punishment; the sectarian and senseless feuds and physical clashes between different groups or schools of Talabeh (Seminarians) fomented by their clerical leaders; the frivolous criticism of him by other clergy about how he wore his Amâneh (turban) and "Western" practice of wearing spectacles; the criticism and doubts about his piety because of sending his smaller brothers to a regular school rather than a Maktab; the lies and deceptions of the Mollahs and their utter lack of concern for the poverty and sufferings of the people which he personally witnessed during the great 1917 famine and typhus epidemic in Tabriz; and his greater ap-

preciation for Iranian history and culture which he found in contradiction with the Arabic nature and character of Islam as practiced in Iran.

Although he did not shed his clerical garb for another decade, these and the financial burden of supporting his family drove Kasravi to abandon and denounce his profession and seek other means of employment. Meanwhile, Kasravi continued reading on his own, made contacts with the Constitutionals, and in 1914 procured a job teaching Arabic at the American Memorial School in Tabriz. During this period he also made a trip to the Caucasus, Turkmenistan and Khurāsān. In 1917 (1296) Kasravi also joined the Democrat Party (Hezb-e Demokrat), created and led by a major Constitutionalist leader, Khiyâbâni. He was in Tabriz when the Ottomans occupied the city in 1918 (1297) and began their Pan-Turkic propaganda while another convoy was dispatched to Urumiyâ and Salmâs to level the Assyrian villages and massacre the Christian peasants. The Ottomans arrested and exiled the leading Democrats - Khiâbâni, Nobari, and Bâdâmchi - and established a Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turkic Party with its newspaper, Azâdegân. But when the Axis was defeated in WWI, the Ottomans abruptly left Azarbaijan. Meanwhile, the remaining Azari Democrats resisted the Pan-Turkic propaganda and attempted to counter it by insisting that Azarbaijan was part of Iran and deliberately decided to speak Persian at their meetings. Kasravi, Jalil Ardabili, and several other Democrats also attempted to fight against those who had collaborated with the Ottomans. Prominent among these was Sayd Taghikhan, also a Democrat and an associate of Khiâbâni, who had served as the secretary of Yossef Ziâ, the Ottoman political officer in Tabriz, as well as working for the Azâdegân newspaper.

According to Kasravi, despite his insistence, Khiâbâni did not pursue the issue of collaborators after his release and return to Tabriz and allowed some of the same people to remain as the members of the party. This created a rift between Kasravi and Khiâbâni and he left Tabriz for Tehran while still being sympathetic to the cause and in Tehran attempted to gather support for them along with other members, Bahrâmi and Nobari, and warned them of the eminent plans to dispatch a militia to Azarbaijan. But shortly thereafter, the movement was defeated and Khiâbâni himself killed in the upris-

ing. The issue of the rift between Kasravi and Khiâbâni is too complex to dissect and analyze in detail in this brief biography, but suffice it to say that Kasravi was more of a scholar with an intellectually independent mind, not prone to submit to party discipline nor inclined or apt as an organizer of inter-party politics.

Perhaps motivated by the events in Azarbaijan, Kasravi wrote his book, *Azari, Zabân-e Bâstan-e Azarbaijan* (Azari, Ancient language of Azarbaijan) which was well received in the intellectual circles. It was praised by the Soviet Orientalist, Chaykin, who was in Tehran at the time and 10 copies of it were ordered for the libraries in the Soviet Union. The book was also immediately translated into English which brought Kasravi international recognition and led to his honorary membership in various academic societies in Europe and USA, including the Royal Asiatic Society and Asian Geographic Society. Many of Kasravi's later articles were also published in Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

As indicated above, after slightly less than two years of teaching in Tabriz and his disagreements with Khiâbâni, Kasravi moved to Tehran. Here he was employed by the Ministry of Education (*Vezârat-e Moâref*) as an Arabic instructor in a secondary school named Servat. But not long after, he was employed by the Ministry of Justice and served as a judge in various parts of Iran during the 1921-1933 period. As a judge, Kasravi continually faced the corruption of the religious, political and military elite which ruled their local fiefdoms and Iran collectively. In his writings, Kasravi provides many lucid examples of this corruption and injustices he observed and experienced as a judge working for the Ministry of Justice and while serving in Zanjân, Khurāsān, and Tehran districts. In Zanjân he had to face fanatical Moslem clerics who considered civil law and courts as a rival to their practice of Shari'a (Islamic Law) and in conjunction with the feudal lords tried to undermine his authority and his legal civil and criminal court rulings. The Mollahs in competition with him or bought off by the rich defendants rendered judgments according to the Islamic jurisprudence and called his decisions void and null. In most major cases he found it extremely difficult to defend the lawful rights of the plaintiffs which largely consisted of the peasantry and the poor, the primary subjects of the exploitation and injustices of the powerful

feudal and clerical elite.

In Shushtar and Khuzestân, he encountered the famed regional warlord Sahykh Khazal and his accomplices, Saghat al-Soltan and Rezagholi Khan, and witnessed utter absence of law and order because of the corruption of government officials and military personal who were in his pay. Harassed and often fearing for his life, Kasravi was finally relieved when Shaykh Khazal was ousted by the central government militia sent by Reza Khan (later Reza Shah), but now he had to witness the military's cruelty and injustices against the local population.

In Tehran, Kasravi rose to the rank of chief judge in the Courts of First Instance and his rulings in civil and criminal cases soon put him in conflict with the Minister of Justice, Dâvar, and the Minister of the Royal Court, Taymourfâsh. Kasravi's views, his steadfast stand in delivering justice, his unbending principle of never accepting a bribe, and his firm practice of never succumbing to pressures of the feudal lords, corrupt clergy and political elite, could not be tolerated by these forces. In fact, from Kasravi's perspective, the whole Ministry of Justice was an inept and corrupt institution of injustice with appointed judges which he called the servants of gold and power (*zor o zar*). When successive attempts to buy him off or pressure him into submission failed, frivolous charges and accusations began to mount against him to force his departure. A major case that sealed Kasravi's fate was his ruling on lands in Evin, at that time a village in the suburbs of Tehran. The whole village of Evin at one time had been a religious endowment (*waghf*) of the Mash'had Mosque, but during the turbulent years of the Ghâjâr rule for some unknown reasons the *waghf* statutes of the village had been forgotten and not attended to while over the course of the subsequent eighty years the village had grown substantially with many homes, farms and orchards built and developed by the original peasantry that worked the fields. With the establishment of the Pahlavi Dynasty and the famous land grabs of Reza Shah, an arrangement between the Mollahs and the aristocracy led to a plan to evict all the peasantry and confiscate the land. Despite message from Taymourfâsh and the Court, Kasravi, citing the law, ruled in favor of the peasantry and that they should be compensated for their land developments, orchards and general land improvements.



This infuriated Reza Shah who had Kasravi summoned by the Minister of the Royal Court and reminded of his obligations to the Shah. The unbending Kasravi instead, politely and skillfully, lectured the Minister that as a judge he must rule independently according to the law and not the wishes of the King and since the Shah has indicated he is in favor of law and order, he cannot fault him for upholding the law. Furthermore, Kasravi pointed out, by allowing the case to go before the court, the Shah had recognized its legitimacy and his willingness to abide by its rulings, and if his interests are represented by incompetent men who cannot even cite the law, he cannot fault the judge for their failures. Luckily, the courageous Kasravi only lost his job and not his head as it later turned out to be the fate of the Court Minister Taymourtâsh. This is partly due to the fact that Kasravi usually did not criticize the Shah directly or personally, but always via the criticism of the incompetent and corrupt Court and bureaucracy, and the cruelties of government officials and military.

After losing his job and his license to practice law revoked by Dâvar, Kasravi began teaching history and languages in the Tehran University and occupied himself with research and scholarly endeavors which he had never given up throughout his career. When the Majlis (Parliament) passed a Bill to reorganize the University, he was offered professorship on the condition that he would recant his views, particularly those articulated in an article “Sh’er o

Shâeri (Poets and Poetry)” published in his monthly journal, Paymân. But true to his character, Kasravi refused the offer and gave up his seat.

Kasravi’s writings and socio-political criticism also infuriated the clergy which increasingly targeted him. By late 1930s Kasravi had attracted a significant number of followers among the progressive intellectuals, government officials, students and urban middle class. An intellectual and fraternal society (Bâhomad Azâdeghân) was founded with branches in several cities and clubs and libraries for gatherings and meetings. Also the daily newspaper, Parcham (Standard), was founded which expressed the group’s views. Typical charges levied by the Mollahs against their opponents and proponents of progress were now launched against Kasravi. He was accused of adultery, Bâbism, burning the Ghorân, and apostasy. With the advent of WWII and the abdication of the Shah, the reactionary clergy found greater freedom to eliminate their critics and the attacks on Kasravi intensified. The offices of his paper and the society’s libraries were looted and burned and his associates harassed and mutilated in the streets by gangs of zealot thugs. Kasravi wrote a book, Dâdgâh (Court of Justice) exposing these plots and appealing to government officials to uphold the law rather than appeasing the fascist Mollahs and relenting before mob violence.

Finally, on April 1945 (1324), a group of assassins led by Navab Safavi attempted to murder him while he was going to his office with a few colleagues in a crowded Tehran street, Lâleh Zâr. Kasravi nearly died of the sever wounds inflicted upon him but eventually survived the ordeal after surgery. Meanwhile, Safavi protected by the Mollahs was not even charged with the assassination attempt. Instead, the government created an investigative committee to look into the charges including the charge of burning the Ghorân. Kasravi’s books were examined to determine whether he is anti-Islam and in no time the process of Grand Inquisition attempted to turn him into a villain rather than the victim. But as the case proceeded, it became apparent that the frivolous charges against Kasravi will fail miserably. Hence, on 20 Espand, 1324 (March 1945), while defending himself in court and in front of the public, Kasravi was assassinated by the order of the Mollahs and died as a result of 29 gunshot and dagger wounds. The assassins were

the Imâmi brothers and members of the Fadâ’iyân Islam, an underground terrorist organization organized by the Mollahs to eliminate their opponents. At that time the Fadâ’iyân Islam was closely associated with Ayatallah Kashani and though it went through several changes it continued to serve the same function for the reactionary Mollahs in Iran.

Fearing violence, the burial services for Kasravi could not be held in Tehran. His body along with that of another victim, his long time friend and secretary, Mohammad Taghi Hadâdpour, were buried at the foot of the Alborz Mountain in Abak, Shimrân with services attended by a few hundred who had the courage to attend. He was not the first nor the last victim of the illicit Mollahs’ Jihads and brutal violence against their critics. The Imâmi brothers protected by Ayatallah Kashani and the reactionary Mollahs were acquitted, and one of the brothers several years later assassinated the Interior Minister, Hazhir, while another Fedâ’i, assassinated the prime minister Razmâra. Ironically, these were among the same government authorities and elite who collaborated with the Mollahs by turning a blind eye on their reign of violence and terror and refusing to seriously pursue and prosecute the murderers of Kasravi. Ayatallah Kashani rising with the force of terror and mob violence, as has been the case with many Ayatollahs in the Iranian history, later became a major opponent of Dr. Mossadegh and an accomplice in the 1953 CIA engineered coup which toppled his democratic government and restored Pahlavi fascism in Iran. He was also the mentor of many soon to be Ayatollahs who established their reign of terror and tyranny after the 1979 Iranian Revolution whereby many potential Kasravis were assassinated and executed en masse.

Though Kasravi died at the age of 57, he left behind over seventy books and essays which were the product of his research and scholarship. Some of these were translated and published in Europe or printed in the Arabic journals outside of Iran while many of his essays were reorganized, compiled and published as books when he was still alive. As an historian, scholar and social critic, Kasravi was among a select group of intellectuals which introduced scientific and objective research and documentation into the early 20th century Iranian literary and scholarly circles. Several of his historical works are monumental and pioneering achievements

and still serve as the primary sources on the subjects. His socio-political criticism demonstrate deep understanding of the Iranian history and contemporary society, reflecting his sharp analytical skills, outstanding insights, and accurate predictive qualities. Many of Kasravi's criticisms about the Iranian feudal culture; the religious fanaticism and superstition; violence and intolerance; the corruption and nabobism; monopoly power and control; the manipulation of people by appealing to their prejudices and ignorance; and the aristocratic attitude toward, and neglect of, the ordinary people and their welfare are still applicable in Iran. Although written many decades ago, the readers would be astounded by his writings and criticism and their relevancy to the problems and issues faced by the Iranian society today.

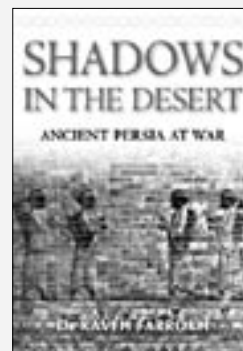
Fortunately, Kasravi was not a politician, a political activist or a revolutionary, but first and foremost, a scholar and a clever critic, for given the Iranian political environment we would have been robbed of the fruit of his genius and erudition long before the assassins robbed his life. He was among that select class of noble Iranians whose legacy is forever etched on the memory of the freedom loving Iranians and shall always be remembered as the guardian of their past and the guide to their future.

NEW DISCOVERIES ON ANCIENT PERSIA

A BOOK REVIEW OF 'SHADOWS IN THE DESERT: ANCIENT PERSIA AT WAR'

By Maziyar Talaforush

When in 546 BC Cyrus the Great defeated an unholy alliance of Babylon, Egypt, and Sparta summoned by the legendary king of Lydia Croesus (Harun, or Ghaaron), it shook the ancient world at its core. No power dared to stand-up to these armies whose cruelties at times, to this day, rattles the pages of history. Sparta had demolished and terrorized Asia Minor; Egypt was well known for its inhumane treatment of its slaves, and the Babylonian army was well-known for "up-rooting" their conquered subjects and separating them from their homelands, selling hundreds of thousands into slavery, while the unfortunate ones stayed in Mesopotamia itself, laboring for emperor Nabonidus under the scorching Babylonian sun. Not only was their defeat shocking, but with it now came a revolution in human thought: The young Cyrus had achieved the impossible, and the result of his daring attacks were that for the first time in the history of mankind, the idea of Human Rights and equality for all mankind were implemented by a 'world power', but above all, they were promptly carried-out, accordingly. Slavery was abolished, the Jews were freed from captivity in Babylon, the Persian forces escorted the new freed Judeo tribes back to Israel, rebuilding, and in effect securing the future of what would become the State of Israel.



These events and much more are highlighted in detail by Dr. Kaveh Farrokh in his new book, *Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War*. For the first time in the field of Iranian studies, a complete narration of events covering the entire span of Persia's existence from the Achaemenids to the Sassanians, right before ancient Iran fell to invading armies, starting with the Arabs and ending with Russia, has been compiled and presented in one book.

There are comprehensive analysis not found within most books relating to the empires of Persia, and the reader will be introduced to many facets of ancient Persian customs, tactical warfare as well as ancient Iranian ideologies. Packed with sumptuous details, many readers for the first will learn how Darius (the Great to be), part of 'the three horsemen', met at dawn to choose Persia's future king, in what the author describes as a "ceremonial" gesture.

In an honest narration, Dr. Farrokh (born in Athens, Greece) gives it to both sides equally; he mentions the cruel treatment of captured Arab War Lords by some of the Sassanian kings, while praising Greece for her magnificent accomplishments. And amid countless books giving us the same-old-same-old narrations on Greece and Rome, and warped conceptions of ancient Persia seen recently in fantasy motion pictures such as "300", this book is a refreshing change that aims to balance things a bit. But above all, there are new discoveries unraveled by Farrokh himself, such as new aspects of the impact that Persian architecture had on Gothic Europe, as well much more.

From the bases for Christianity ala Zoroastrianism, the Iranian knighthood rituals and the Sassanian influence on Medieval knights, to the foundation of Human Rights, the thrilling achievements of Persia is right up there with the aesthetically pleasing art and the well-known cultures of Greece and Rome, and this book points them out. Unlike the "triumphant" Greeks however, the saga of the Persians seem to be that of a tragedy. Perhaps, Dr. David Khupenia of the University of the Republic of Georgia was right, "Persia has given so much to the world and is appreciated so little."

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Persian History Inspires French Comic Book Masters

REPORT FROM PARIS BY DARIUS KADIVAR

taken from *payvand.com*, February 15, 2007

Comic Books, very much like Movies until quite recently, have often been set aside as a minor popular art forms never quite achieving the respectability of other more noble art-forms like painting, poetry, music or sculpting to name a few. It was probably thanks to Pop Art and its spearhead artists like Andy Warhol or Roy Lichtenstein and even to some degree former Iranian diplomat, Fereydoone Hoveyda, that academic interest for such masters of the genre like Hergé, author of Tintin Adventures, and his colleagues who invented what became known as the French and Belgian Ligne Claire School Style, truly started.

Other styles have since appeared and showcased at various festivals like the prestigious Festival d'Angoulême, and obviously the American Comic genre has distinguished itself while having its share of influence with Disney heroes or super heroes like Superman and Batman. Interestingly in recent years, particularly the past two and a half decades, French comic books have also tried to shed light on middle eastern civilizations, particularly Persia. This has been maybe due to the past colonial history of France or Belgium that were also penetrated by Oriental imagery and mythology due to contacts with the Muslim world and their own rivalries with other colonial powers like Great Britain or Germany.

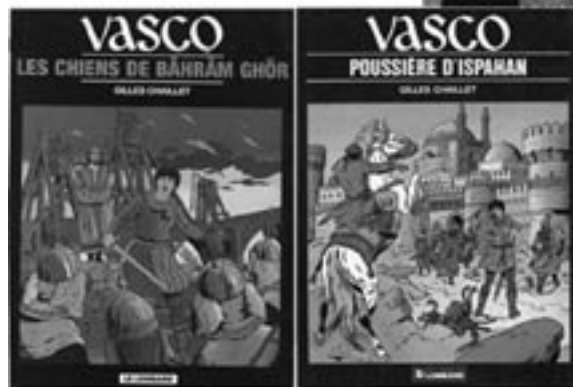
French kings, president, diplomats, writers and voyagers were to travel to Persia and vice versa. Napoleon and De Gaulle were widely admired in their time for their spirit of independence by Iranians/Persians and continued to be referred to as great leaders who respected Persian culture. General De Gaulle was particularly impressed by a State visit he made to Iran in the 1960's during which he was to inaugurate the building of a modern extension to the old Razi school. (See Author's notes).

Maybe some of this cultural and historical interaction including even the Islamic revolution, that took root in France's Neuphle Chateau, could explain some of this mutual fascination or curiosity which has had its effect in the graphic art-form of French and Belgian comic books.

Interestingly in recent years Marjane Satrapi has turned into a French cultural icon. Since the publication of her comic book series Persepolis, that explores not only the life of a school girl caught in Pre and Post Revolution Iran, but also confronts a culture clash with Western values and culture in an interesting and intellectually challenging way, while remaining true to a very personal and simple style was very much influenced by the French Belgian Ligne Claire.

In addition, prior to Satrapi several French pioneers of the French and Belgian comic book arena, they have tried to explore Persian Culture and History through recurrent adventures. This has been the case of two major icons of the French Belgian school of Artists like Jacques Martin, who collaborated with the Great

GILLES CHAILLET



Hergé author of the cult Tintin Adventures and Gilles Chaillet, who in turn worked with Martin on his Alix hero.

Below are some of their recent works that have focused on two different era's in Persian History, that of Alix in Ancient Persia and that of Vasco a Medieval knight whose adventures lead him to Medieval Persia. Each in their way has been based on meticulous historical and social research that makes the adventures if not factual at least authentic for any reader interested in Persian Pre-Islamic and Post Islamic History.

LES VOYAGES D'ALIX: PERSEPOLIS

Plot: Persepolis in all its splendor: The Apadana, the Hall of a Hundred Columns, Naghsheh Rostam and Pasargardae are only some of the splendid locations that are recreated by Jacques Martin. We are invited to discover what it felt like to live at the time of King Darius and Xerxes not only amongst the nobility but amongst the inhabitants of the great city. The splendid drawings are supported by historical information and documents that are accessible for all readers young or old.

LES VOYAGES D'ALIX: ALEXANDRE LE GRAND, AKA ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Plot: Upcoming Alix Album in the Series Les Voyages D'Alix: Alexandre le Grand. Alix and faithful buddy Enak explore the conquests of Alexander the Great. Contrary to the Alix Adventures, which respect historical chronology, The Voyages of Alix a sort of Time Machine Exploration with no particular plot but are purpose but to present Ancient Civilizations and historical Characters regardless of chronological Time and Space.

POUSSIÈRE D'ISPAHAN, AKA SANDS OF ISFAHAN

Plot: 14th Century Europe and Persia: Uncle Tolemei, banker is terribly angry! To think that they dared to disturb his nephew who was about to participate at the Palio Race! These Byzantines have no manners! As far as Vasco is concerned he only thinks of winning the race.

But Destiny will decide otherwise!

Far Away in the land of Persia, in Isfahan, a ruthless Vizir rules through Terror and tyranny. He has also taken hostage a very important personality. Nothing seems to link these two events and yet...

Who is this mysterious hostage who will drive Vasco and Van Loo to undertake a dangerous trip to the Hostile land where Christians are less than welcome? What are the true motivations of this cruel Vizir?

All these intrigues and much more will await you in this album. Vasco will undertake a perilous journey marked by battles, fears and alliances that will challenge the heroes from Sienna to Persia and Jerusalem. Once Again Gilles Chaillet offers us magnificent and precise reconstructions of the splendid medieval towns of Shiraz and Isfahan. The life and customs, religious and political intrigues and mindset of that distant era come to life. Sienna of the 14th century A.D. in all its opulence of architecture and costumes contrast with the arid climate and landscape of Palestine leading us to the court of Persia and its treasures. The drawings prove once again of the author's desire to combine an in depth historical research with a good story supported by the splendid coloring work of Assistant Chantal Defachelle.

LES CHIENS DE BAHRAM GHUR, AKA THE DOGS OF BAHRAM GHUR

Plot: Second part of Vasco's adventures in Persia, the Dogs of Bahram Gur. Days pass by as the enemy approaches the city of Isfahan ... Vasco knows that every second counts in order for him to find Sophie. Bahram Gur (who strangely looks like Leonard Nimoy) the cruel Vizir confirms that the Byzantine Princess has left the town before its fall. Vasco however is convinced that it is Bahram himself who is holding her hostage somewhere in this



mysterious town that is under siege and scrutiny by the personal militia of Bahram Gur who are known as the Dogs of Bahram Gur by the inhabitants of Isfahan. Will Vasco be able to save his beloved? And if so in what circumstances? ...

PERSEPOLIS BY MARJANE SATRAPY

First printed by a little known French edition l'Association, Marjane Satrapi's French Comic book Persepolis has achieved cult status ever since its publication. Widely translated in several languages it remains censored in Persian because of its subversive and outspoken plot. The Album series have been followed by other adventures of Satrapi and Family with such stories as Embroideries and Poulets aux Prunes, exploring issues as taboo in Iran as female sexual pleasures and Freudian obsessions of the author. Most recently Satrapi has published Sagesses et malices de la Perse and Adjar.

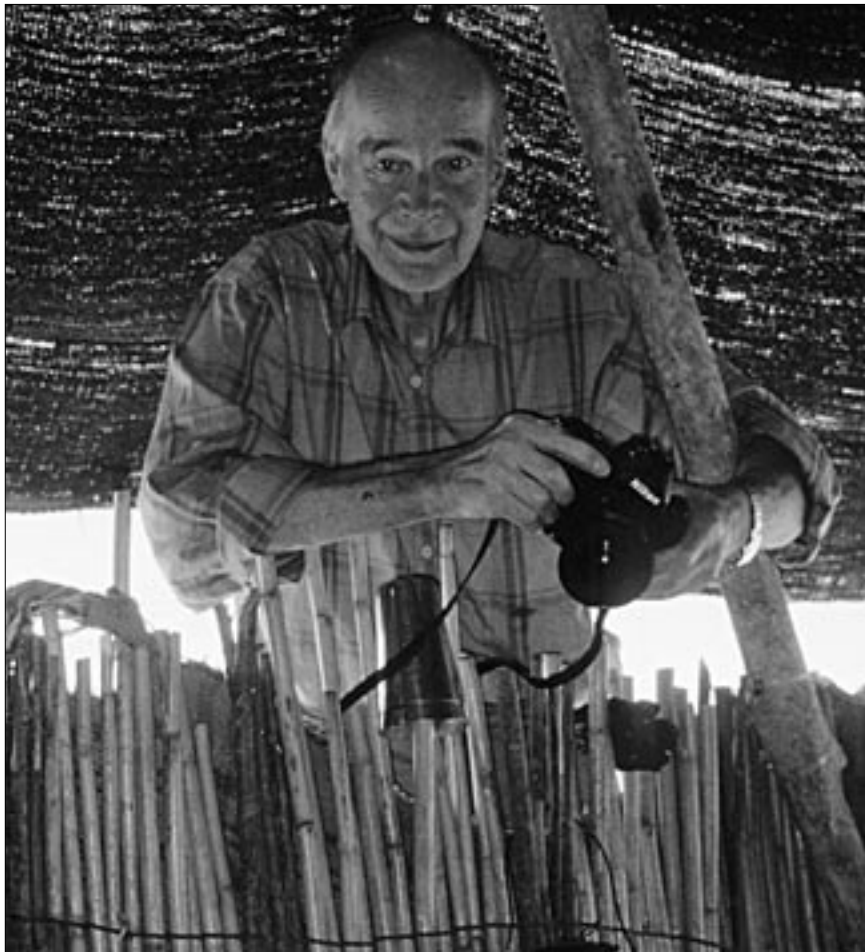
Persepolis will also be a much expected animated movie in 2007 starring Catherine Deneuve, and daughter Chiara Mastroianni in the respective title roles of Mother and Daughter Satrapi.

If unlike Greek, Roman or Egyptian civilizations, Persia remained to some degree mysterious or unreachable for the Western Mindset, these recent examples prove the ability that a so-called minor art-form like comic books has to visually educate us on other cultures and ours in particular.

It is not surprising that cinema in turn has been exploiting this art-form thanks to Storyboards that have been widely used by the Spielberg and Luc Besson (both great admirers of Hergé) generation of filmmakers.

It should be noted that unfortunately none of the Works of Jacques Martin, Gilles Chaillet or Marjane Satrapi have been translated into Persian. Maybe it is high time to consider this possibility be it by Persian language publishers outside Iran in a near future until the same can one day be done back home in our country Iran.





ANTHROPOLOGISTS RECORD THE CULTURE OF BOIR AHMAD IN SOUTHWEST IRAN

INTERVIEW WITH ERIKA FRIEDL & REINHOLD LOEFFLER

Dr. Friedl and Dr. Loeffler have been visiting the remote Zagros Mountains for over 40 years. Both are natives of Austria and retired professors of Anthropology at Western Michigan University. Their interest in the peoples and the culture of Boir Ahmad continues to take them to Iran and to publish the results of their earlier research. The interview was conducted with the help of Shohreh Majin.

Picture: Dr. Reinhold Loeffler is visiting a camp of the *Oulad Mirza Ali*, standing in a tent made of black goat hair, April 2006.

When did you start your ethnographic work in Iran, and what took you to Iran and Kohgiluyeh/Boir Ahmad? In the past, this region was considered a dangerous place for outsiders, but you went there anyway.

Already when we were students in Austria Iran fascinated us as the center of Persianate culture and as the home of many tribal peoples. We traveled to Kohgiluyeh/Boir Ahmad the first time in 1965. At that time outsiders indeed feared the various local Lur-tribal groups because of their raids and their fierce fighting. Some tribal leaders forcefully had resisted governmental control of the area until the last paramount khan had been killed in 1963. The memory of these rough times was still alive when we arrived.

We knew about this, but we thought that robbery and warfare couldn't be the only characteristics of the people of Boir Ahmad. Their nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle interested us, and so we boldly decided to go there to study their culture. Although the imperial government had just started to allow foreign anthropologists into the country, it was difficult to get permission to go to Boir Ahmad, because tribal areas were considered to be politically volatile. But we managed to get permits and found the people in the Zagros mountains extremely hospitable, kind, and understanding toward us.

What, do you think, made them so open and friendly, when otherwise they were known to be fierce and rather hostile to outsiders?

One reason was that we obviously were apolitical, and that we didn't want to take advantage of them. This put them at ease. One could also say that they realized that we were young, naive, respectful, and neither rich nor powerful, and so it was easy for them to treat us as guests. A further reason was that we went there as a family with two daughters. Even the most suspicious tribal leaders took us simply as a small family rather than as people they had to be wary of. Yet another reason for their friendliness toward us was that although at that time most people were illiterate, they understood why we were there, and that assisting us would make it possible for them to tell their stories



Dr. Erika Friedl is talking to women neighbors in Deh Koh, Boir Ahmad in 1994.

news but also for national distribution. Everybody we talk to seems to appreciate our efforts and especially the fact that we have given a voice to a people and a way of life that otherwise would have been forgotten. Nevertheless, at times the authorities make life difficult for us.

Wasn't life difficult for you when you stayed deep in the countryside with small children?

and to make their culture better known. This sophisticated insight came as a real surprise to us. Of course, there were – and still are – some people who think we can build them roads or we can put in a word for them with the authorities in case of difficulties, but by far most either take us as visitors from far away who can entertain them, or else as anthropologists who are interested to learn about their way of life. They are a very open-minded people.

Did you learn the local language? And is your work appreciated in Iran?

Yes, to both questions. Anthropologists usually learn the language of the people they study. Our children picked up Luri much faster than we did, though. Luri is an unwritten language. We learned it directly from the people, and we also learned the simple, vernacular Farsi spoken there, but reading and writing is a bit difficult for us! As an aid to learning the local language we taped folktales people told on long winter evenings. Later, Erika transcribed the tapes with the help of a local schoolteacher, who herself was very interested in folklore, and translated and annotated them. This collection was published recently in English, including the Luri transcriptions (*Folktales from a Persian Tribe*, Verlag fuer Orientkunde, 2007.) Some of our articles were translated into Farsi and published in Iran, but as the Islamic Republic does not honor copyright laws, we don't know how many of our writings are out there. However, so many educated people in Iran know English now that at least for reading books and articles, language no longer is a serious barrier.

Whenever we come to Iran, journalists from newspapers and from television stations come to interview us, both for local

In 1965 we stayed for over a year. In 1969 we returned for two more years, and from then on we visited about every other year for between two and eight months each time. This means that we experienced the tribal area, and especially the village of "Deh Koh," where we stay most of the time, throughout the development from an isolated area to one that is well integrated into the state and modern life. Until the early 1970s the road to Deh Koh was only a narrow dirt road interrupted by many water channels. The village had no piped water, no electricity. People had fields and animals and were growing most of their food, but nearly everybody was poor by any standard. Life was hard. Yet we adapted to this life quickly – after all, it had been our own wish to go there. For light in our two little rooms we had kerosene lamps; for heat we had a petroleum-stove and a metal stove burning wood. Especially during the harsh winter months there was little food. And we got sick often, together with everybody else: the hygienic conditions were poor, and diseases spread quickly in the crowded village. But the people were friendly, and our daughters got along well with the local children. We remember those times very fondly. Our daughter Agnes even returned to Iran as a medical anthropologist in 1999. Since that time, especially since about 1995, conditions of life have changed dramatically in every respect, from economy to health care, from standard of living to the way children are cared for.

You went to Boir Ahmad many times.

What did you do there?

Altogether we spent over seven years in Iran, mostly in Boir Ahmad, between 1965 and 2006. Every time we went there, we had a different theme for our inquiries. (Lately, because of restrictions on social scientific fieldwork in Iran, we can stay there only as visitors, without pursuing scholarly topics.) Dr. Loeffler concentrated more on history, religion and philosophy, while Dr. Friedl worked with women, children, and folklore. One of our first publications was on the material culture of the people, that is, on the things they used for living and working. Although the two booklets are mostly descriptive, the many illustrations make them extremely popular with the people today. As the local culture modernized, traditional tools disappeared. The monographs are the only record people have of their traditional way of life, and at every visit we bring dozens of them with us to give away. The same is true for photographs. Our images document the life in the traditional village and the growth of the village. They are repositories of people's memories.

Some of our other publications have similar value as historical documents. Others are of more academic interest, but Erika's book on women's traditional ways of life (*Women of Deh Koh*, Penguin 1991) reached a wide general readership in the U.S. as well as in Iran. (It was a "notable book" of the New York Times.) Her book on children (*Children of Deh Koh*, Syracuse University Press 1997) reportedly is used for policy-discussions on children in Tehran. Dr. Loeffler's *Islam in Practice* (SUNY 1988) is unique in that it shows how different Muslims in Iran actually think about their religion in various ways.



Traditionally (here in 1989) cooking was done over open fires in Boir Ahmad. Now most houses in Deh Koh have natural gas, but village women still prefer to cook rice in big pots for feasts in fireplaces, especially in the summer.

And Dr. Agnes Loeffler, a medical doctor as well as an anthropologist, just published her thesis-research on the reception of western medicine in Iran, in *Allopathy goes Native* (I.B.Tauris 2007.) Thus, our work is widely accessible and so far has been of value in Iran, not only in “the West.”

You were in Iran before and after the Revolution. Can you compare these two eras in Boir Ahmad?

Although the difference between “then” and “now” is great in regard to economy and lifestyle, it is not solely connected to the two different political systems. Already under the Shah, various development programs (such as *sepahe behdasht* and *sepahe danesh*, which sent young doctors and educated young people to rural areas to practice medicine and teach) started to transform villages in Iran. Deh Koh got schools, a road, electricity, and piped water. People built better houses. The food situation improved, as did health, especially the health and the survival rates of children. The last few years before the Revolution, the high birth rate began to fall. The first local women became teachers and midwives in the Tribal Education program, and returned to their home villages to work there in the early 1970s. The first young men left for university studies. Many men worked at least seasonally outside the tribal area, bringing back money and goods that made life easier at home. The former peasants claimed tribal land and became independent farmers. Agricultural enterprises changed from herding to planting orchards, for example, or even faded out as new, better-paying jobs

became available. Families abandoned their herding outposts in the high pastures and lived in the village the year around. Today, few people in the village live solely on agriculture.

Then, for a decade, the revolution and the war halted these developments, and the pro-child stance of the government set the stage for many economic problems Iran is facing now. But after the war, the economic and social developments that had begun under the Shah continued rapidly. The oil-wealth of Iran is trickling down into rural communities through loans and development projects. Even in rural areas people now envision a life that is modeled after the urban middle class. This means that today cars clog the narrow village lanes, whole village quarters are razed to give way to modern buildings and wider streets, and people build new, spacious houses with indoor plumbing and modern kitchens. This does not mean that everybody is living an easy life now – not at all. There still is great poverty in Iran, which is the more visible and hard to take in the face of increased economic inequality in the country. The high unemployment in rural areas is worrying everybody. But the aspirations of people are high, especially for their children, and education is a national hobby, as a young woman said in the village.

Other than economic changes, what did modernization bring to this rather remote area?

Most striking is the physical growth of Deh Koh and other villages. In 1965 it had some 500 inhabitants. By 2006 it had merged with four small surrounding hamlets and was a town with nearly 6000 inhabitants. The improved contact and communication with urban centers accelerated the flow of goods and ideas. Deh Koh clearly profited from the people’s early interest in education. By 2006, we counted over 60 young professionals in the health-profession alone that are natives of this village. For example,



one of the best-known Iranian ophthalmologists, Dr. Amin Nikeqbal, originally is from this village. People from small hamlets in the tribal area are sending their children to high school and to a vocational training school to Deh Koh. Slowly, the natural beauty of the Zagros mountains is attracting tourists, and the provincial government actively promotes and develops tourism. The government established a women’s co-op, whose members produce various goods such as dried herbs and needlework for sale. An English teacher opened a private language school. Television produces movies on the cultural heritage of the area. People are aware of their heritage and of the inevitable loss of traditions. The government’s ban on music and dancing at weddings accelerated this loss, but there are signs that these traditions are being revived again. A group of nature-lovers in the area is discussing the problems brought on by development, and are teaching awareness of environmental problems and stewardship to the public. Like Iran generally, Deh Koh is a very dynamic place.

How do you explain the high academic achievements of the young generation in this village?

Already seventy years ago this village requested a teacher from the government. Since then, literacy increased year by year, and many local families sent their sons to high school outside the tribal area, at great costs. Now there even is a high school for girls in the village, and women students outperform the boys academically. People realized that only education would open the path to a more comfortable life for their sons and their daughters. The quota-system for admission to university studies that the Islamic



Prohibited by the government as “un-islamic” “for two decades, the traditional wedding music and women’s round dance - here in 1966 - recently are tolerated again as long as they remain private inside a courtyard or house.

Republican government set up for women and for underprivileged rural areas benefited young people from Deh Koh greatly. Today the village has private physicians and a government clinic, mostly staffed by male and female health care professionals from the tribal area. Nation-wide as well as in the village, there are more women university students than men.

To what extent is this village representative of the country as a whole?

The model for life in Iran now nearly everywhere is a pan-Iranian modern lifestyle. Since the last years of the Pahlavi era, Deh Koh has participated in the wider Iranian developments on all levels, through government programs such as education, through television, which is nearly universally available, and through work, travel, and economic and political engagements. In this regard it is much like many, if not most, other small towns in Iran. Deh Koh probably is a bit more “progressive” than other places because of the unusually high level of education and aspirations.

However, travelling extensively in Iran we came to the conclusion that this small town is a mirror of life elsewhere and can safely be taken as a good example of life in many rural areas in Iran.

It seems that you participated in the development of this area so intensely that you could write its history of the past 50 years.

Yes, indeed. We are at the end of our academic careers but are still working on our data from years ago. Our various publications amount to a documentation of the social and cultural history of a tribal village as it unfolded over the last half century. It is unusual for anthropologists to return to one place for so long and to have an unbroken record of its development. We did not plan it this way, but after establishing such a good rapport with the local people and seeing how dynamic Iran is, we never thought about going elsewhere. Now we have seen five generations of people in Deh Koh, and with a little bit of luck we hope to be able greet the sixth

one too. The only problem we face almost every time is to get visitors’ visa from the Islamic Republic.

What do your friends and colleagues in the United States and at your university think of your frequent trips to Iran?

Our University and our professional colleagues appreciated our work and supported it from the beginning. Dr. Friedl even was honored as a “Distinguished Faculty Scholar” for her scholarly work. In public, there is some interest in our work too, and we are always happy to give talks about Iran, especially so as we know of the bad press Iran has in this country. Invariably, people are surprised when they hear us describe Iranians as extremely nice and considerate people who, by and large, are much more open, curious, and less judgmental about Americans than Americans are of Iran. In all our efforts we try to dispel negative stereotypes and to show the “other” side of Iran, the dynamic development and the generous and interesting people we always meet there.

