

# Smiles That Last a Lifetime

Clear Solutions to Correct Your Unique Smile.

Restoring Stability, Strength, and Function to your Smile

لبخندی زیبا و عمری رضایت خاطر

## Glow Dental Spa

Behshad Ahkami, DDS.



The cosmetic dentistry specialists of **Glow Dental Spa** in Wayne offer a comprehensive range of treatments designed to give you a strong, well-aligned bite and a healthy, beautiful smile, including Invisalign®, porcelain veneers, teeth whitening, and smile makeovers. After evaluating your teeth and gums and discussing your needs and goals, **Dr. Behshad Ahkami** will create a treatment plan that is ideally suited to you and your unique smile.

Cosmetic  
General

Restorative  
Sedation

Have a question? Contact our office today!

برای مشاوره درباره هرگونه زیباسازی و ترمیم دندان با شماره زیر تماس بگیرید!

**TEL: 973 942 6550**

**FAX: 973 942 6553**



506 Hamburg Turnpike, Suite 101, Wayne, NJ 07470

Dr. Behshad Ahkami

# A TRUE DIAMOND SOURCE

Think you have to travel to the “Big City” to find diamond experts?  
Think you’re getting a high-level of expertise from that clerk at the Mall?

Think you have to “know someone” to get a great deal?

**Think again!**



The experts at Bentley Diamonds will show you that the expertise you can get only from people who truly love and appreciate fine diamonds is right in Wall Township.

Technology has made the knowledge of the Four Cs – Color, Clarity, Cut and Carat Weight – just the beginning of diamond evaluating.

With technology has come new coatings, irradiation, heat treatments, color enhancements and High Pressure High Temperature Treatment, to name a few. These new techniques can make a diamond look great, but may not increase its value and some of them are only temporary.

Kaz Bagheri and Dan Capuano, co-owners of Bentley Diamonds make sure you know exactly what you are buying and will take the time to educate each and every customer.

Primarily diamond merchants, Bagheri and Capuano added the jewelry store to the already thriving diamond business when they realized that some friends and customers were paying inflated prices and being given misinformation elsewhere. As diamond-dealers they saw customers being sold overpriced and under-appreciated diamonds. Now they make sure that every piece sold at Bentley Diamonds is exactly the right size, design and cost for the customer. As diamond manufacturers and importers, they can cut out the middlemen and the steps that inflate diamond prices.

With over 3,000 setting available and the experts to make any custom setting combined with their buying power to get the highest-quality stones for less, Capuano and Bagheri will make sure your purchase will fit the occasion, your personality and your budget.

**TOP:** Bentley Diamond, Wall, NJ.

**CENTER:** Interior shot of Bentley Diamond sales floor.

**RIGHT:** Bentley diamond cutter appraising his work.

**LEFT:** Your diamond purchase is quality assured from stone to setting.



***More Precious Than Our Diamonds is Our- Reputation.***

**BENTLEY DIAMOND**

1860 Highway 35, Wall, NJ

**(800) 333-DIAMONDS**

**[www.bentleydiamond.com](http://www.bentleydiamond.com)**

# Let Dr. Raiszadeh Inspire Your Group with His Natural, Affordable, Highly Effective Approach to Healing Back Pain.

Dr. Raiszadeh shares his insights with those who suffer from chronic back and neck pain, those who treat it, and those who must pay for that treatment. Consumer and healthcare industry organizations of every stripe engage him to speak to their audiences.

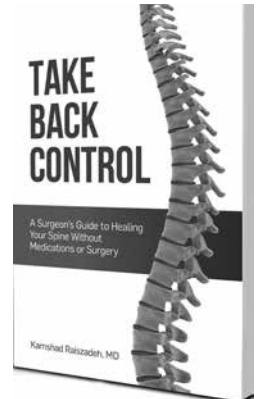
## A Few of His Most Popular Keynote Topics

Dr. Raiszadeh will gladly customize a presentation for your group. His topics include:

- To Cut or Not to Cut? Why Spine Surgery May Not Be Right for You
- Simple Tips and Tricks to Prevent and Reduce Back Pain
- Are You Ruining Your Back? 5 Common Mistakes to Stop Making Right Now
- Pain Relief the Drug-Free Way: Find Relief Without Addictive Opioids
- The Exercise Cure: How Medically Supervised Exercise Can Heal Your Back...And Change Your Life
- The Economics of Back Pain: Why America Can't Afford the Surgery and Drug Cycle
- Is a Chance to Cut *Always* a Chance to Cure? A Better, Cheaper, More Natural Alternative
- How to Talk to Patients about Drug-Free Alternatives to Their Back Pain
- Want to Minimize Worker's Comp? How Back Strengthening Exercises Can Help

## Who Needs to Hear the SpineZone Message?

- Government institutions
- Insurance companies
- Medical practice groups
- Family practice physicians
- Addiction related groups/experts
- Pain management practices
- Small and medium sized companies (especially those with high incidence of back injuries)
- Self-insured companies with a large number of at-risk employees
- Athletes of all ages
- Consumers with back problems
- Health-conscious young people seeking to prevent back pain



## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT TAKE BACK CONTROL:

*Dr. Raiszadeh exhorts the patient to take control of his health through lifestyle changes...And in regard to the healthcare system, he shows how the transition of spine care from "surgery first" to "surgery when needed" can save money for society and improve well-being for patients."*

—James Robinson, PhD, Professor of Health Economics, School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley

*"We are in the midst of a devastating opioid addiction crisis, an epidemic fueled by our collective societal delusion that our lifestyle choices don't matter, that there's a quick surgical or pharmaceutical fix for everything, and that our minds have nothing to do with our physical bodies or overall health...With a deep humility, Dr. Raiszadeh uses personal stories drawn from his career and life to show us that we can heal when we focus on the root causes of our suffering."*

—Zubin Damania, MD, Founder, Turntable Health, ZDoggMD

*"Knowing what I know now, I wish I had taken Dr. Raiszadeh's advice and exhausted all options with rehab rather than going through with back surgery. There's too much that can go wrong when you expose your spinal canal to surgery. Rehab may take time, but in the long run it's a much better choice."*

—Steve Kerr, Coach, Golden State Warriors of the National Basketball Association

**SAVE 25% OFF SPINEZONE ONLINE TO RETURN TO A PAIN-FREE LIFE.**

**We want to share our success with you, by offering our personalized, coach-led 6 weeks program at a discount.**

Get started at <https://online.spinezone.com> and use code **PersianHeritage** to save 25%

To book Dr. Raiszadeh for a speaking engagement, visit: [www.takebackcontrol.com](http://www.takebackcontrol.com),

call: **619 229 5344**

or email: [info@takebackcontrol.com](mailto:info@takebackcontrol.com)

# **AHKAMI MEDICAL GROUP**

**WITH OUR PROFESSIONAL STAFF INCLUDES:**

**Registered Nurses . Social worker . Clinical Dietician**



**VISIT BY APPOINTMENT**

**973.471.9585**

**110 Passaic Ave., Passaic, New Jersey 07055**



# Persian Heritage

www.persian-heritage.com

**Persian Heritage, Inc.**

110 Passaic Avenue  
Passaic, NJ 07055

E-mail: Mirassiran@aol.com

Telephone: (973) 471-4283

Fax: 973 471 8534

## EDITOR

**SHAHROKH AHKAMI**

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Mehdi Abusaidi, Shirin Ahkami Raiszadeh, Dr. Mahvash Alavi Naini, Mohammad Bagher Alavi, Dr. Talat Bassari, Mohammad H. Hakami, Ardehsir Lotfalian, K. B. Navi, Dr. Kamshad Raiszadeh, Farhang A. Sadeghpour, Mohammad K. Sadigh, M. A. Dowlatshahi.

## MANAGING EDITOR

HALLEH NIA

## ADVERTISING

HALLEH NIA

\* The contents of the articles and advertisements in this journal, with the exception of the editorial, are the sole works of each individual writers and contributors. This magazine does not have any confirmed knowledge as to the truth and veracity of these articles. All contributors agree to hold harmless and indemnify *Persian Heritage (Mirass-e Iran)*, Persian Heritage Inc., its editors, staff, board of directors, and all those individuals directly associated with the publishing of this magazine. The opinions expressed in these articles are the sole opinions of the writers and not the journal. No article or picture submitted will be returned to the writer or contributor. All articles submitted in English must be typed.

\* The appearance of advertising in this magazine does not constitute a guarantee or endorsement of the products by *Persian Heritage*. In addition, articles and letters published do not reflect the views of this publication.

\* Letters to the Editor should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the above addresses and numbers. The journal reserves the right to edit same for space and clarity or as deemed appropriate.

\* All requests for permissions and reprints must be made in writing to the managing editor.

## PUBLISHED BY

**PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.**

A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes

Cover Price: \$8.00

Subscriptions: \$32.00/year (domestic);  
& \$2.00/year (International)

Typesetting & Layout  
**TALIEH PUBLICATIONS**

# Persian Heritage

**Vol. 26, No. 101**

**Summer 2021**

**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK** 6

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** 8

## NEWS

Atlanta Film Festival Picks Five Films From Iran 9

Child Adoption Up 10 Percent in Iran 11

Hegmataneh Hill Closer to World Heritage Registration 12

## COMMENTARY

Legal and Tax Implication of Money Transfer from Iran 13

Faith or Religiosity Dogma vs. Human Spiritual Consciousness?

*(Pirouz Azadi)* 14

Persepolis Restorers Start Work on Seljuk-era Inscription 15

## THE ARTS & CULTURE

Reviews 16

The Shahnameh as World Literature *(Rasoul Sorkhabi)* 17

Tali Farhadian 19

Triumph of Self-Empowerment 20

Xerxes' Armed Engagements and Military Organization 22

Dedicated Iranian Teacher 25

The Narrative of a Purposeful Life for an International Artist

*(Omid Karimi)* 26

Bandar Khamir 28

Pieces of Iran *(Nawal Qcasiano)* 29

Interview with Siamak Farahbakhshian 30

*(Shahrokh Ahkami)*

## Important Notice

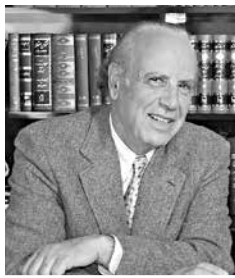
All written submissions to Persian Heritage with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. When an article is submitted we assume the author has complete ownership of the article and the right to grant permission for publication.

Persian  Heritage

**Special  
Announcement:**

**Contact our California  
based Advertising Agent  
for your ads.**

**(973) 471 4283**



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

For the past 25 years *Persian Heritage* has continuously published this magazine, because of the support and cooperation of all our dear colleagues, who love their Persian heritage and culture. On this long journey we have been successful in maintaining this rich culture in our new home countries, for our children, grandchildren, and future generations, who may not have the privilege to know about their ancestors. This twenty-five year continuous journey was interrupted last summer because of the Covid-19 virus. This virus put the country and the world at a standstill.

I remember the days of late winter 2020. Persian New Year was around corner. I was on my usual route, all excited and full of joy coming back by subway and bus from New York City to New Jersey (I usually took this route on Saturdays to visit my patients and then return by bus or train to New York for a weekend stay.) Two days later, on the following Monday, a public announcement was made that travel by subway, train and bus was no longer advised due to the rapid growth and the contagiousness of the virus. Those days were just the beginning of an experience like no other. The world was still not fully aware of the danger this virus proposed to society. People were still not fully taking refuge in their homes to avoid one who was infected. The following weekend, again on my usual route from New York to New Jersey to make hospital rounds and see patients at the office, I was informed that one of my office workers, who usually accompanied me on rounds at the office, had been diagnosed with the virus and had fallen ill. This sparked a fear in me and within that week many governors ordered major shutdowns. We like most businesses closed our medical office. Employees were urged to stay at home. (Little did we know it would last for the next fourteen months. If one recalls it was believed that the virus was to be the worst for those two weeks. We closed for one month and then our office staff committed to continue to serve our patients in need. I thank them for their dedication and professionalism. My daily visits to the hospital were reduced only to emergencies and deliveries.)

The summer issue of the magazine was in preparation, but due to financial burdens, paper supplies and other factors that accompanied Covid-19, we made the decision to halt the publication of the summer 2020 issue. This decision seemed like a failure for me and my colleagues at the magazine. It felt like our child was ill and there was nothing we could do about it. This debilitating feeling was not just among our colleagues at the magazine; it was felt by loved ones around me. Families, the elderly, and friends kept their distance to avoid getting each other sick. Keeping our distance from one another became the new norm. After a couple of months passed and the summer issue was not published, I came to my senses. I decided to overcome the fear of the unknown and take charge of my life and live my life as safely and to the fullest possible. Even though the future seemed dark and grim I knew I had to find the courage to overcome this darkness and step forward. I needed to live with hope, not fear. I believed the only way out

of all this was to move forward, keep optimism alive and support friends, family, other loved ones and even strangers in this time of need. It was this determination that gave me the courage to move forward and continue with the publication of the fall 2020 issue of *Persian Heritage*.

We are fortunate here in America. With the accessibility to the vaccine and its benefits we have been able to bring our lives back to some normalcy. We see the revival of life and hope coming back to our daily lives. Our colleagues at *Persian Heritage* have also had the privilege of being vaccinated and thus *Persian Heritage's* journey, one that started twenty-five years ago continues.

When I look back at the past fourteen months and the loss of life of loved ones in the United States, Iran and across the world, I am heartbroken. I am saddened by this loss of life. I, however, am not one to live my life in the past. I try to live in the moment in my professional and personal life. I constantly try to learn my lessons from my past mistakes. I am proud, gratified and grateful of my achievements. I try never to worry. I have never planned a detailed future for myself. I have tried to live my life day by day for as long as I remember. But I must admit that these past fourteen months, like for so many others, have been exceedingly difficult for me. I have felt a heavy burden on my shoulders. The everyday reports on the numbers of lives lost and destroyed here, in Iran and all over the world became part of my psyche.

In the country of my birth only two to three million citizens have been vaccinated, out of a population of over 80 million. THIS SADDENS ME! WHY, I ASK? Is it because of the corruption of the government that they are unable to provide for their innocent and vulnerable people? It may take up to one to two years before Iran's citizens have access to this vaccine. How could millions of vaccines be destroyed due to a lack of electricity in Iran? How can the purchase of vaccines be held back by the Ministry of Health because of "so called" lack of funds? How fair is it to only give access to those who can privately purchase the vaccine from private vendors? Over 30% of the citizens, living below the poverty line, have fallen as victims to this virus, I ask you is it fair to allow people to die because of their socio-economic status? How could the mullahs be so unethical, calling crowds of people to the mosques for prayer sessions when they knew about the dangers of exposure to this virus? The real numbers of lives lost may have been censored. For what reason? India has publically acknowledged the numbers of losses!!! These days the world focus is on the high number of people encountering the virus and dying in India. If, however, you compare the population of India (over one billion) to the population of Iran (eighty million), Iranians have a higher rate of mortality.

Last month we lost a famous Persian poet who fell ill to the virus. He walked into the hospital on his own two legs but was discharged, perhaps due to a lack of unprofessional health professionals. He later died on a street corner with a bottle of water in his hands dressed in the hospital gown from the hospital. How can



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

this be happening in Iran when the neighboring country of Turkey has already vaccinated over thirty million of its citizens?

I read a friend's post on WhatsApp and would like to share it with you: "When I was in the United States, I went to the market to buy some watermelons. When I came to the bin of watermelons, due to old Persian habits I would pick up the watermelons and tap them to choose the best ones. An American woman came up to me and asked me why I kept tapping the melons. I responded by telling her it is because that is how we pick the best ones. She asked if I could choose one for her. Then she asked me about my ethnicity. I told her that I was born in Iran. She responded with the following comment, "Interesting, I wish that you would choose your leaders as carefully, with all this tapping, before the elections. Why don't you apply the same detailed measures you use to pick a watermelon, when you pick your leaders?"

It is true in many aspects we think we are experts and know it all. In conversations we have no respect for other opinions but our own. We cut off people when we don't like what we hear. Many of us even after forty years want to go back to life in Iran as it was. This is wishful thinking. According to my friend even with our watermelon picks we take our time and apply detailed measures to find the sweetest and the tastiest. AND if the watermelon we pick is a bad choice we do not take responsibility. We blame the market owner or accuse him of changing the watermelon we picked for another, while we were not looking. The woman who made the sarcastic comments to my friend and clearly pointed out the faulty choices we have made in choosing our leaders and social networks perhaps is correct. Perhaps we don't have the capability and/or the wisdom to make the right choices and acknowledge our faults.

This should be a lesson for all of us. We have to make choices that may not be best individually, BUT are the best choices to allow the country, its people and children to have a solid and positive future. It takes courage, knowledge and years of planning and research to create a plan for the future. We have to show the leadership that we are capable of making positive changes. Fairness and equality for all its citizens (men, woman, old, young, rich poor) must be achieved, in speech, the practicing of religion, human rights, and in voting. There must be a separation of church and state. It is time to let the mullahs know that they need to go back to their mosques and leave politics to those who are capable and wise, professionals who are deserving and ethical. This kind of leadership is what is needed to lead the country towards growth.

As stated by a world leader "Iranians are among the most intelligent, successful and deserving people in the world and yet the only place they are not allowed to use their intelligence and expertise is in their own country, Iran." The reason behind this sad fact is suppression, oppression and the destruction of the most talented and capable, among them the youth.

I continue to hope for better days ahead. I continue to wish that soon all Iranians and the people of the world (especially those from the 3rd world countries and the innocent) will have access to this vaccine. I wish this so the world can return to the living. I also wish and hope, the world we all return to is kinder, more loving and more responsible.

Shahrokh Alavi

## Don't Let Your Taxes Break You!

### نگران گزارش مالیاتی خود نباشید!

ما آماده ارائه هرگونه مشاوره و خدمات جهت برنامه ریزی مالی، تهیه گزارش های مالیاتی، و حسابداری جاری به شما هستیم

## Grippaldi & Wollruch, LLC; CPA

1035 Rt. 46 East, Suite 101, Clifton NJ

### We Offer Experienced, Professional Services

Individuals, Partnerships corporations  
Competitive Rates  
Business Consulting  
Tax Planning  
Payroll Tax Returns  
Monthly Accounting  
Audits Assistance  
Electronic Tax Filing  
Retirement Planning  
Year-round Service

(973) 546 2050

(973) 476 8700

FRANK@GWRCPA.COM

WWW.GWRCPA.COM



**SAVE**  
**\$50** ON ANY

**PERSONAL TAX RETURN**

W/COUPON

**SAVE**  
**\$75** ON ANY

**BUSINESS TAX RETURN  
OR CORPORATION & LLC**

W/COUPON

**A SPECIAL THANKS**

Dear Editor:

Thank you so much for the cultural contribution that you beautifully and respectfully presented in Persian Heritage Magazine! I have enjoyed the magazine for years. Many, many years ago you printed a note about my poetry book, Chai. I have a new book, just that may be of interest: "Esther Entering Your Destiny" that took 6 years of research in Khuzestan about the land of Susa, the respected Esther of Susa and the contribution of the Persians to world culture.

*With respect, Lailee Bakhtiar*

**ONE MORE COMMENT**

Dr Rahni's article is the best cultural, historical and jovial description of our NowRooz celebration.

We also celebrate this beautiful event by putting it in our glorious Persian Parade every year in Madison Ave. Unfortunately the Covid pandemic canceled it for two years. We are hoping to put on the display in April of 2021. God willing!

*David Yazdan*

**WE CAN STILL HAVE HOPE**

Dear Editor:

Your last editorial, was similar to other messages you send, in describing the state of affairs in Iran. This one however seemed to take a new direction and posed a different form of encouragement for the people of Iran and those Iranians who now call another country their home.

The Diaspora have in many ways been lucky. While the transition of leaving their homeland was difficult, they have

worked hard and now see the results of this with the success of their children and grandchildren.

I believe in my heart that the spirit of the true Iranian citizen can never be broken, either by its government or by the hands of outsiders. This has been shown during the course of Iran's history. And I believe it is resources such as your magazine that have helped educate non Iranians on the complexity, beauty, talent, education, kindness and resourcefulness of Iran's citizens. While the present government may be in control of the everyday life of Iran, they can never control the hearts and minds of its citizens. I pray that your wishes for Iran and the world in this new year will come to fruition. I further hope that next year's editorial will reflect that these hopes and wishes come true.

*K. S (New Jersey)*

**DISAPPOINTED**

Dear Editor:

I believe the reason an interview was omitted from this issue of *Persian Heritage*, I am hoping it was because of Covid and lack of access. Your interviews are always a highlight of the issue. It is such fun to meet Iranians who are not formal celebrities. They are always an inspiration to me and to my children. Having said that I trust that for the Fall and Winter issues the interview will return. In fact if anyone reading this would like to be interviewed I would suggest them contacting you. Keep up your good efforts in keeping our achievements and news alive.

*H. R (California)*

***In the Memory of Ali A. Nourian, M.D.***

Ali A. Nourian, M.D., 83, passed away at his Moosic home, his beloved wife of 55 years, Homa, by his side.

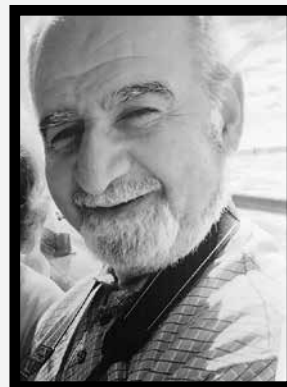
In 1937, he was born in Babol, Iran, near the Caspian Sea. He earned his medical degree from Tehran University and came to the United States with his wife in 1967 and continued his medical education and training.

Ali decided to stay in the United States and raise his family in pursuit of the American dream. He practiced psychiatry for over 50 years, most of those in his adopted Northeastern Pennsylvania home. During his working years, Ali served his community through his private practice, the Scranton Counseling Center, the Friendship House, and as head of the Psychiatry Department at Community Medical Center, Scranton.

Along the way, Ali helped thousands of children and adults struggling with mental health challenges and guided them through some of the most difficult times of their lives. For some of his patients, he was a trusted counselor and source of stability for decades. Countless patients and their families benefited from his hard work and dedication.

When not working, Ali loved spending time with his family and friends, tending to his garden, traveling the world with his camera, and memorializing his trips with breathtaking photography. He was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and a loyal and steadfast friend to many. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and community.

Ali is survived by his wife, Homa, three sons, Robert, Benjamin, and Thomas, a daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, two grandsons, Nathan and Justin, a brother, Iraj, two sisters, Mulook and Zoreh.







African Violet



Crab



The Doll



Eyes and Arms



Spotted Yellow

## ATLANTA FILM FESTIVAL PICKS FIVE FILMS FROM IRAN

Five movies from Iranian filmmakers were screened at the 45th edition of the Atlanta Film Festival, which opened in the U.S. city on April 22.

“African Violet” by Mona Zandi-Haghighi will go on screen at the main section of the festival. The film is about the middle-aged Shokuh who finds out that her elderly ex-husband Fereidun has been placed in a nursing home by their children. With second husband Reza, she decides to remove Fereidun and take care of him in their own home.

The film will be competing with 25 movies including “We’re All Going to the World’s Fair” by Jane Schoenbrun from the U.S., “Ma Belle, My Beauty” by Marion Hill from France, “Knock Knock” by Xiang Liu from China, “Akilla’s Escape” by Charles Officer from Canada and “Dream Horse” by Euros Lyn from the UK.

“Eyes and Arms” by Panahbarkhoda Rezai will be screened at the documentary section of the festival. The film is about a middle-aged couple, Maryam and Mohammad, who lives in almost total isolation in a rural area. Maryam has lost both her forearms and one foot in a train accident and Mohammad is blind. The couple literally completes each other with her acting as his eyes and him her arms.

The festival will also screen Iranian shorts “Crab” by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi, “The Doll” by Elahe Esmaeili, and “Spotted Yellow” by Baran Sarmad.

“Crab” tells the story of a shy schoolboy who is interested in performing in a play with his school’s theater troupe. But the only part offered to him is to play the role of a crab.

“The Doll” is a short documentary about a father who consents to the marriage of his 14-year-old daughter Asal.

“Spotted Yellow” is about a young girl Roya with a yellow spot on her face. When a giraffe appears in her life, everything begins to change.

*Tehran Times, 04/14/21*

## New Persian Language Division VOA Director

The Voice of America, a U.S. government-funded news organization, has promoted Leili Soltani to director of its Persian language division, one of VOA’s largest news services. An experienced multimedia journalist, Soltani has held on-air, production, and executive roles at VOA. She joined VOA in Washington, D.C. in 2003 as part of its Radio Farda broadcasts, transitioning to VOA television in 2007. Born in Tehran, Iran, Soltani will lead VOA broadcasting to Iran via the VOA365 television channel. “I am deeply honored to take on this new assignment,” said Soltani. “In keeping with the VOA Charter, we will continue to work hard to ensure balanced and unbiased coverage of news, especially during this sensitive time in Iran, with nuclear negotiations underway with the U.S. and the European Union and with Iran electing a new government in the coming weeks.”



“Leili Soltani’s deep knowledge of the audience needs, as well as of the organization she’s been serving for 14 years, makes her uniquely positioned to take the Persian division to new levels of excellence,” said Acting VOA Director, Yolanda López. Established in 1979, the VOA Persian Division’s mission is to provide objective, accurate, and timely news and information in the Farsi language and to confront disinformation and censorship efforts by the Iranian regime. Its content allows the U.S. to speak directly to the Iranian people and the global Persian diaspora.

## Historical Monuments in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Gain Former Glory



TEHRAN – A total of ten historical buildings and aging structures across the southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province have undergone some rehabilitation works, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

A budget of 13 billion rials (about \$310,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the restoration projects, ILNA quoted Rahim Dadinejad as saying on Wednesday. Choram Fort, Azizi Castle, Pataveh Bridge, and the ancient city of Belad Shapur were among the restored structures, the official added.

He also noted that In addition, the cultural heritage department of the province strives to add more valuable historical structures to the national heritage list.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is known for its nomads and nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

## Women's Share of National Budget Rises by 61%

Tehran Times, February 2, 2021, By Faranak Bakhtiari

The budget proposed for women and family affairs has increased by 61 percent in the national budget bill for the next calendar year (starting on March 20).

Women, as half of the active population in any society, make an important contribution to development and growth, and financial support is needed to increase this effectiveness. The issue has been considered in the annual national budget.

The budget, which directly covers women and family affairs, is equivalent to 37 trillion rials (nearly \$880 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials), which increased by 61 percent compared to the current year's budget.

The largest share of women's budget is earmarked to the organizations active in the field of women and the family, which accounts for about 75 percent of the total credit, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

About 30 percent of the total women budget is allocated to children, 73 percent of which will be spent on supportive activities to meet the basic biological needs of children, and only about 30 percent is allocated to education and training issues.

The largest increase in credit is related to the "Allowance for improving the nutrition of children with metabolic diseases", which has increased almost 13 times compared to this year's budget.

Supporting women heads of households in the form of insurance, services, and social support is another important issue, which accounts for 25 percent of the budget, which has grown by about 50 percent. Female-headed households' share of the national budget accounts for 23 percent of the total credits for women and the family. In Iran, there are 3 million women-headed households (WHH), out of a total of 22 million families, and most of the WHH can be found in less developed areas of the country, according to the UNDP office in Iran. Masoumeh Ebtekar, the vice president for women's and family affairs, said in October that the government has taken major steps for the advancement of women and families in Iran.

"Through an inter-sectoral process, we developed national indicators for gender equity, which laid the ground for

the first result based Plan for Women and Family Advancement in 31 provinces and we recently launched the dashboard for monitoring indicators on gender equity and family prosperity."

"Based on our review of legislation on women and family, we have proposed 10 new bills including the bill on the Protection of Women's Security Against Violence and several new laws," the vice president added. "At least 2700 women-focused NGOs are active in Iran and we have plans for the empowerment of civil society activities, we have successfully implemented schemes like enhancing social resiliency, also the economic empowerment of thousands of women heads of

the household through micro-credit Funds and Cooperatives," she added. She went on to highlight that the family is the cornerstone of human development, through the National Family Dialogue scheme. "We have taken an initiative to empower civil society in dialogue skills to enable family and social cohesiveness. The International Center for Family Dialogue has been recently launched in Tehran."

In the field of legislation, finalizing the bill to ensure the security of women against violence, which can play an important role in combating domestic violence, the implementation of the plan granting Iranian citizenship to children born to Iranian women and non-Iranian men, and the bill banning the marriage of girls under 13, has been among the government's efforts, she concluded.



### MULTIPLE GRAMMY-AWARD WINNING ARTISTS HIGHLIGHT NEW WEST SYMPHONY'S "TOUR OF IRAN" CONCERT

The Farhang Foundation was thrilled to be in partnership with the prestigious New West Symphony of Southern California for their "Tour of Iran" concert April 8-11.

Three Grammy award-winning artists shared their talents and took the stage with other internationally-renowned musicians as part of the New West Symphony's A Tour of Iran concert virtually held on April 11. The concert is part of the symphony's groundbreaking and reimagined "Global Sounds, Local Cultures" season which shines its spotlight on the vivid cultural influences that have shaped classical music and Southern California itself.

As part of the festival, three-time Grammy award-winning mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, Grammy winning instrumentalist Hamid Saeidi and NWS's Grammy-award winning artistic and music director Michael Christie will explore centuries old traditions spotlighting Iranian poetic and musical cultural influences on the western world.

They were joined by renowned Iranian instrumentalists Pejman Hadadi and Masoud Rezaei in presenting masterworks by Handel, Rameau and Gounod as well as the timeless overture to Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Iranian composers Behzad Ranjbaran, Masoud Rezaei and Golfam Khayam will also share their inspiration from Iranian sites and poetry. Choreographer Melieka Fathi and restauranter Sadaf Salout Nezhad contributed their performing and culinary masterpieces to the festival's cultural understanding.

# CHILD ADOPTION UP 10 PERCENT IN IRAN

TEHRAN TIMES, 04/13/21



Child adoption has increased in the country by 10 percent, following the actions taken to speed up the process, Habibollah Masoudi-Farid, deputy head of the Welfare Organization, has stated.

Following the Law on Protection of Children and Adolescents in [the Iranian calendar year] 1392 (March 2013-March 2014), adoption experienced an upward trend.

Welfare efforts to fulfill this basic slogan that children must grow in the family led welfare experts to identify children who can be fostered by the families through regular inspections, he said.

The adoption system officially started operating in May 2020, people who signed up for adoption were asked whether they are willing to adopt a disabled or older child. Families could also track their cases.

The system facilitated access, and the important point is that the adoption rate increased by 10 percent over the last year (March 2020-March 2021) compared to a year before, he highlighted.

Since [the Iranian calendar year] 1392, the number of adoption cases has increased and 2,000 children are placed for adoption annually, some of whom are placed under temporary custody because a temporary trustee is better than care centers, Masoudi-Farid said in May 2020.

For adoption, criteria like mental health, the ability to take care of a child, no addiction, no criminal record, and bad reputation, as well as proper income must be achieved. The approach is the result of studying the adoption process in 10 countries around the world, he noted.

In [the Iranian calendar year] 1398 (March 2019- March 2020), 160 children were adopted who were suffering from diseases or disabilities. Also, 130 children were given to single girls over the age of 30.

Montazer Shabar, the Welfare Organization's director for children affairs, said in July 2019 that there are 10 applicants for fostering each child in the country.

Currently, some 2,800 applicants are waiting for the adoption, most of whom are parents not having children or intending to foster a child, he added.

Ahmad Khaki, deputy head of Tehran's welfare organization for social affairs, has said that the number of children adopted in Tehran increased by 25 percent in [the Iranian calendar] year 1396 (March 2017 - March 2018) compared to the year before, as some 500 children were adopted by Tehranners in the year ended March 2019.

According to the Welfare Organization, the country's adoption and foster laws that dated back to some 44 years ago was revised and modified in 2013.

Within the new law, kids could be adopted up to the age of 16 while the former law states that kids aged 12 or less could be adopted. In addition to families with no child now families with one kid and single women are able to apply for adoption.

The law formerly authorized adoption only for orphans while the new law permit adoption for children with dysfunctional families as well in case the judge concludes that the new family is suitable for

adoption.

Previously, the adoptive families were required to sign over one-third of their property to their child-to-be but some could not afford to do so and now the judge gets to decide how a family, depending on their financial status, should be treated.

## 5,500 female-headed households supported last year

Last year, in addition to the nearly 240,000 households under the Welfare Organization's coverage, 5,500 female-headed households were also covered, Masoudi-Farid said.

"We also provided health insurance coverage for over 30,000 breadwinner women residing in nomadic or rural areas," he stated.

In Iran, there are 3 million women-headed households, out of a total of 22 million families, and most of them can be found in less developed areas of the country, according to the UNDP office in Iran.

## 4,800 multiple births covered by the Organization

Another important point is the population policies that families with multiple births, especially triplets and above, should be supported, including receiving subsidies for triplets regardless of their income. They are also supported to supply infant milk and diapers.

"A total of 4,800 multiple births are currently covered by the Organization, as last year, 800 multiple births above three were covered," he concluded.



## Hegmataneh Hill One Step Closer to World Heritage Registration

Iran is completing an all-inclusive dossier for the mysterious Hegmataneh Hill to have it registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list, deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian has announced. He made the remarks during the inauguration ceremony of seven tourism-related projects in Hamedan on Monday, which was attended by the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani via video conference. The documentation and mapping projects of the area are being finalized and the dossier is being prepared to be submitted to UNESCO. However, there are some problems and issues that the tourism ministry is doing everything possible to remove some of these obstacles, he added.

The ruined Hegmataneh (Ecbatana) which is partly beneath the modern city of Hamedan (the capital city), is widely believed to be once a mysterious capital of Medes. According to ancient Greek writers, the city was founded in about 678 BC by Deioces, who was the first king of the Medes. French Assyriologist Charles Fossey (1869 - 1946) directed the first excavation in Tepe Hegmataneh for six months in 1913. Erich Friedrich Schmidt (1897-1964), who was a German and American-naturalized archaeologist, took some aerial photos from Hamedan between 1935 and 1937.

According to the Greek historian Xenophon of Athens (c.430-c.355), Ecbatana became the summer residence of the Achaemenid kings. Their palace is described by the Greek histo-

rian Polybius of Megalopolis. He writes that the city was richer and more beautiful than all other cities in the world; although it had no wall, the palace, built on an artificial terrace, according to Livius, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

An inscription, unearthed in 2000, indicates that Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-358) built a terrace with columns in Ecbatana. Some twelve kilometers southwest of Hamedan is Gandj Nameh, where Darius I and his son Xerxes had inscriptions cut into the rock.

Polybius, a Greek historian of the Hellenistic period noted for his work The Histories, tells that the builders used cedar and cypress wood, which was covered with silver and gold. The roof tiles, columns, and ceilings were plated with silver and gold. He adds that the palace was stripped of its precious metals in the invasion of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great and that the rest was seized during the reigns of Antigonos and Seleucus. Later, Ecbatana was one of the capitals of the Seleucid and the Parthian Empires, sometimes called Epiphaneia.

Ecbatana is deemed to be remaining a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, for decades or even centuries to come as the site of the ancient city lies partly within the modern city of Hamedan, which has never been excavated before.

Tehran Times, 03/10/21

### Licensed Acupuncturist Dr. Majid Tabibzadeh

L.A.c., MSAOM

Natural Treatments for Mental and Physical disorders  
through balancing the body

**Chronic Pain, Anxiety, Depression, Insomnia, Hormonal,  
GI, Urinary, Women Health**

دکتر مجید طیبزاده

متخصص طب سوزنی

درمان مشکلات روحی و جسمی با متعادل کردن جسم و روان به روش طبیعی  
دردهای مزمن، مشکلات هورمونی، گوارشی، ادراری، اضطراب، افسردگی، بیخوابی



Offices in: Orange County & Los Angeles

TEL: 1-562-440-0558

## ART LIMO SERVICES

24 hrs, 7 days a week

SUV, STRETCH VAN



Roozbeh Keihani

201 953 6554

[artlimoservices@yahoo.com](mailto:artlimoservices@yahoo.com)

برای تهیه لیموزین

برای مراسم خود با روزبه کیهانی تماس بگیرید.

شیک، تمیز و با سرویس کامل



# U.S. Revival of Iran Nuclear Deal (BARJAM), Legal and Tax Implication of Money Transfer from Iran

ZAHER FALLAHI

The U.S. President Joe Biden is determined to restore the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or BARJAM in Farsi. There have been talks under way in Vienna, Austria, for some time how to accomplish the goal.

At the time of this writing, it is everyone's guess what the extent and scope of a new or revised JCPOA would be, as there are different parties involved in the process with varying interests. Although possible, but unrealistic to expect in the short run all sanctions will be lifted and the relations between the two countries will return to normal. It may be prudent to surmise that our Persian American clients will be dealing with the laws of sanctions similar to the current laws for the foreseeable future.

The following are the most frequently asked questions (Qs) by our clients:

## ***What types of Iranian transactions require OFAC Specific License***

Some examples of Iranian transactions that need OFAC specific license are: (1) Sale of property purchased or developed in Iran after someone become a U.S. person; (2) Sale of income producing property such as rental, commercial or a business in Iran; (3) Closing bank accounts in Iran; (4) Purchasing property in Iran; (5) Retaining legal counsels or other agents in Iran to litigate a case not covered by OFAC general license provision; (6) Self-employment or operating any businesses in Iran; and (7) Employment in Iran, exceptions; World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF). Note. Items 1-3 may require OFAC Voluntary Self-Disclosure (VSD).

## ***Do I have to pay tax on the money I received from Iran pursuant to an OFAC specific license?***

Generally, most Iranian transactions subject to OFAC specific license may be "commercial" type and subject to the U.S. tax law, and you may consult an experienced international tax attorney or Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the field.

In addition to their regular income tax implication, the above-referenced transactions may be subject to Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (FBAR), and Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) filing requirements. Before filing any delinquent FBARs, consult a tax attorney experienced in Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Practice (OVDP) cases. To protect the communication by the "Attorney-Client Privilege", have the attorney hire a different tax preparer/CPA, because the original tax preparer/CPA may have been tainted, and could be subpoenaed to testify against you as a witness if the case turns criminal.

## ***What types of Iranian transactions are covered by***

## ***OFAC General Licenses?***

Here are some examples of transactions covered by OFAC General License provision: (1) Exportation of U.S. foodstuffs, medicine, and medical devices to Iran, subject to exceptions; (2) Transferring cash gift or inheritance money from Iran to the U.S.; (3) Sale of property inherited in Iran and transfer of the net proceeds to the U.S.; and (4) Sale of property owned prior to becoming a U.S. person and transfer of the proceeds to the U.S. Note. Notwithstanding the above general license provision, consult an Iranian OFAC attorney and an international tax attorney knowledgeable on Bank Secrecy Act (BSA).

## ***Isn't it true that I do not have to pay tax on the money I receive from Iran pursuant to an OFAC general license?***

Iranian transactions subject to OFAC general licenses may be categorized based on the above-mentioned examples: (1) Exportation of U.S. foodstuffs, medicine, and medical devices to Iran, if conducted by a U.S. person these are all subject to U.S. taxation.

Additionally, the underlying general license does not allow these business owners to establish businesses within Iran; (2) Transferring cash gift or inheritance, would be tax free, but may be subject to informational tax filing requirements, if given and transferred by non-resident aliens or the decedents' estates.

If the gift or inheritance is from other U.S. persons (e.g., family members), the donors or their estates may have OFAC and tax violations, U.S. tax filing requirements and tax consequences. The recipient and the donor are advised to consult OFAC and tax attorneys before effecting the transactions; (3) Sale of property inherited in Iran, depending on the date of decedent's death, these cases may have tax filing or informational filing requirements; and (4) Sale of property owned prior to becoming a U.S. person, most likely these would have large tax liabilities.

## ***Q5. What should I do if I violated OFAC Regulations and tax laws?***

Answer: Fortunately, OFAC has an amnesty program called Voluntary Self-Disclosure (VSD) and the IRS also has an amnesty program called Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Practice (OVDP) for the violators to become compliant and may get their penalties mitigated or waived.

Because the VSD oftentimes entails violation of the U.S. International Tax Laws as well, entering the VSD should be coordinated between your OFAC Attorney and International Tax Attorney with expertise in FBAR, FATCA, and OVDP. Good luck. Zaher Fallahi, Esq., CPA.



## Faith or Religiosity Dogma vs. Human Spiritual Consciousness?

PIROUZ AZADI

*“Throughout my lifelong quest to find god, I attended sermons in Zoroastrian, Hindu and Buddha temples, Jewish synagogues, Christian churches and Muslim mosques of no avail... and then epiphany darned on me before I moved through the cosmos to find god in the “temple” closest of them all to myself: he was my conscience in my own heart....*

Epitomizing the sage old maxim in Persian, the name god literally states, “getting to know God (Khoda) is to get to know thyself (Khod) and one’s calling on earth (Be Khoda).”

Persian Poem by Rumi aka Molawi (13<sup>th</sup> century CE)

The universal human quest to search for, understand and believe in, and to worship and submit to “gods” and later a “god”, is as historic as their walking upright on the African savannahs and then beyond since five million years ago. Whilst the “objective” jury is still out as to proofs for, or against the (co-)existence of a universal god or goddess, proliferation of faiths and religions has since led to the current dozen religiosities, which persist today.

What is in retrospect most bewildering is how the number of such new religions (in the thousands) have dramatically dwindled as humans shied away from superstitions over time and after they understood mysteries of natural phenomena or even “wrath of gods” characterized as reckoning cataclysmic dictators. In fact, post Islam of 1500 years ago - currently “believed” by 2 billion - the subsequent religions that emerged such as Sikhism, Mormonism, Bahaism, Hassidism, etc. simply became a revision of one of the older “Abrahamic” tri-religions practiced by or simply born into by 4.5 billion human inhabitants today.

As to religiosity, especially the three major ones cited here, they emerged from the amalgamation of monotheistic Zoroastrianism of Persia as scripted in Avestha and Gatha but influenced in part later by Veda the Hinduism and Buddhism hymns, and inclusion of the 15 oral epic Aramaic poetries in Mesopotamia. And as if the original scriptures for each of these religions was not sufficient, the volume of piled on interpretations and justifications by each religious establishment with its

socioeconomic and political underlays far outweighed its intent and in essence contradicted and complicated its initial “puritan” message.

Against the above backdrop however, one fact is crisp loud and clear: thence, mostly concerning. Each faith when introduced in history by a messenger may have as well played a role toward improving humanity and community at the time by setting forth a set of rules obeyed by all.

Nonetheless, most (perhaps all) soon deteriorated into a dogmatic and vindictive religiosity decadence for power grab of the elite class through accumulating capitals, property and wealth by resorting to any means justified including waging holy wars and violence or slavery.

Simply because the “(mis-)” interpretations and exploitation of a religious doctrine were pretty much left to or grabbed by self-righteous and opportunist class and cults, that it not only led to trampling over its founding ideals, but that the punitive imposition of the religion itself demoralized and consequently disenfranchised the followers to walk away from it or rise against it.

In fact, one could even go farther to assert that the pragmatic adverse consequences of any religiosity through inflicting pain and misery, and inequality and injustices, have far outweighed the fast dwindling initial progressive aspects of that same religiosity.

One might rightly argue that so long as a religion practiced by a small group may serve its platonic and soothing purpose of giving refuge and solace to god-fearing and after life horrifying constituents, all seem fine. However, this is not true when the same religion goes mainstream hand in hand with the ruling or economic elite class, or even worse coalesce with or supersedes it.

One could further argue that most religions must have first begun portraying

god as an invisible, omnipotent and immortal concept. However, the self-anointed religious bosses fast portrayed such a god as a male in the physical wrathful image of a herculean man.

Even many of the two billion (20%) of the world population considered to be atheists or agnostics, are still pragmatic ecumenical and spiritual humanists who may deep down innately believe in an ultimate ultra-supreme genderless ubiquitous source of “infinite” power, energy and information. Could it be then that humans relied on their own conscience as the pragmatic drive to seek for, serve or preserve justice, i.e., one’s virtuous consciousness to differentiate good thoughts, words and deeds-from vices?

Could it be that the duality of good vs. evil-the struggle in one’s consciousness-gave rise to a conceptual god so to ensure that good always or mostly triumphs in everyday life chores, rituals, and activities?

After all, if god physically and not metaphorically existed, he or she must have been the perfect god who could have created a perfect orderly utopia universe with no chaos, no pains no miseries so its creatures live in an eternal paradise and with no day of reckoning in sight! Such god is then is excessively grand to exclusively fit into one religion! What was his/her/its ulterior motive then to wreak havoc on his creatures by creating and not eliminating Satan in a dystopia (read injustices) in the first place?

And why do some self-serving individuals or cults then ridicule when logic, rationale, facts and pragmatism, shake up their fallacies, dogmas, self-righteousness and self-anointed powerhouses, especially when the self-indulged make judgment on or crucify others while they themselves had preached that judgment is solely for god to make afterlife or on the day of reckoning?!

A modern secular, liberal and pro-

gressive society must, thence safeguard the belief in and practices of all faiths and social norms. Such society must not however provide tax or monetary incentives or divine immunity for any of such social activities, as they must all remain open to critique before the same set of the rule of laws. Simply put, nothing is sacred, no one deemed sanctified, or a criticism misconstrued as sacrilege. Respect for humanity and life on sustainable Mother Earth is crucially pivotal to human and life survival.

The Persian Poet Sa'adi has eloquently stated the role for a human in his 13th century poem:

*All peoples, livings and the inanimate  
are members of one frame,  
Since, they all from the same source  
essence came*

*If one member is then distressed  
[by an oppressor],  
The other members should lose their  
desired rest*

*If thou shan't feel for others' misery,  
The name Human is no suited name  
for thee.*

\*\*\*

*The author Pirouz Azadi was born and raised in a family rooted in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islamic beliefs; nonetheless, he pragmatically came to recognize the communal commonality among these faiths and beyond through serving humanity and safeguarding Mother Earth. His avocation has been serving as a professor of the physical and natural sciences for nearly four decades. He equally enjoys learning and sharing aspects of history and cultures, arts and literature, current affairs and policies and as they influence humanity and life.*

## Persepolis Restorers Start Work on SELJUK-ERA INSCRIPTION

A team of cultural heritage restorers from the UNESCO-registered Persepolis has commenced work on a Seljuk-era (1037-1194) inscription, which is located in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province.

“The lack of adequate restoration and protection caused further erosion and destruction of this historical monument,” Mehr quoted Seyyed Amin Qasemi, the provincial tourism chief, as saying on Monday.

“Considering the sensitivity of the restoration of stone monuments, a specialized team of Persepolis restorers was invited to inspect the inscription and develop their proposal.”

The inscription has written on a large stone with a height of 3.5 meters in Kufic, which is a type of Arabic script.

The Seljuk engraving is the symbol of the rich culture of people in this region. The main topic of the inscription is about cutting taxes, feeding livestock on the Shapur I pastures, and forbid some unpleasant customs.

The principal purpose of carving the Seljuk inscription was the association of government with the people about informing the new rules. The place of this inscription has selected so that each caravan that was coming from the Iranian plateau could perceive the inscription.

Seljuk, also spelled, Seljuq, was a ruling military family of the Oguz (Ghuzz) Turkic tribes that invaded southwestern Asia in the 11th century and eventually founded an empire that included Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and most of Iran. Their advance marked the beginning of Turkish power in the Middle East. Soaked in history and culture, Lorestan is one of the lesser-known travel destinations in Iran, which mainly acts as a gateway to the sweltering plains below in adjoining Khuzestan province. Most travelers just pass through on their way to the UNESCO sites of Susa, Tchogha Zanbil, and Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System. Lorestan is also a region of raw beauty that an avid nature lover could spend weeks exploring.

Lorestan was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid dynasties. (Tehran Times, 05/05/21)



Seljuk Empire at its greatest extent in 1092, upon the death of Malik Shah I

Advertise  
Here:  
(973)  
471-4283

[www.persian-heritage.com](http://www.persian-heritage.com)

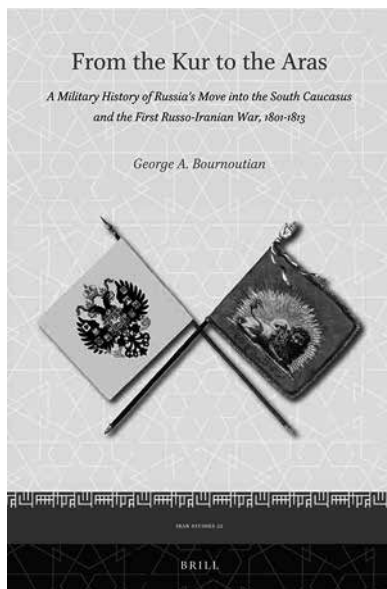
## From the Kur to the Aras

A Military History of Russia's Move into the South Caucasus and the First Russo-Iranian War, 1801-1813

**GEORGE A. BOURNOUTIAN**

(Brill)

Reviewed by: **Shahrokh Ahkami**



Few know the history between Russia and Iran. For instance, most do not know that a formal boundary between the two countries was not set until the Golestan Treaty of 1813.

As with every war there are three sides to the story, the first two come from the countries who participate (on each side) and the third from historical Monday morning quarterback historians who evaluate the circumstances. The truth of course will always remain in what the reader believes or sees as truth.

This book tries to fill in the blanks and overcome the prejudice of “the contemporary Russian and the Iranian chroniclers.” The author does this through a variety of sources including detailed maps of Napoleon’s military campaign against Russia and her allies.

To me the most enlightening aspect of the book is to learn how to prevent a further division of Iran as what happened in the formation of three Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia.

Such division in my opinion dramatically, negatively and permanently changes the lives of those living in areas that become divided.

It is a highly informative book and one worth reading.

## ESTHER ENTERING YOUR DESTINY

**LAILEE MCNAIR BAKHTIAR**

(Red Dot Publishing 2020)

Queen Esther, a much rejoiced female, during the Persian Empire, was considered mysterious with faithful obedience to a rescuing God. In this book the author includes an in-depth discussion on the importance of the geography where Esther lived, on the Silk Route between Asia and the Mediterranean Sea.

This coincided with the prophet Daniel, Nehemiah, and her cousin Mordecai for the new way God planned to lead them to Jesus. The book is a new approach to the life and accomplishments of Queen Esther and shows the purposeful decisions she made in order to complete her missions. Esther, in this book, has been perhaps, unknowingly modernized for the modern women.

This concept makes her life and trials much more readable. It was her deep love and faith in God and how she despised, dishonesty, treachery that allowed her to turn away from any fear of her own death.

If you are a follower of Queen Esther, Ms. Bakhtiar is certainly an author to follow.

## AMERICA AND IRAN

**JOHN GHAZVINIAN**

An epic history revealing how the US and Iran went from allies to adversaries over three hundred years.

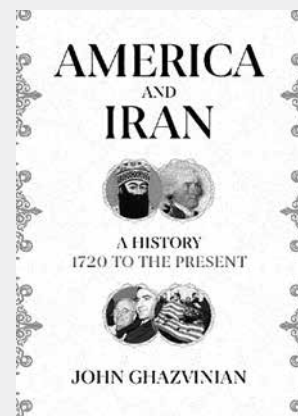
In recent times, the United States and Iran have seemed closer to war than peace, but that is not where their story began. When America was in its infancy, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams turned to the history of the Persian Empire as they looked for guidance on how to run their new country. And in the following century, Iranian newspapers heralded America as an ideal that their own government might someday emulate. How, then, did the two nations become the adversaries that they are today?

In this rich, fascinating history, John Ghazvinian traces the complex story of America and Iran over three centuries.

Drawing on years of research conducted in both countries - including access to Iranian government archives rarely available to Western scholars - he leads us through the four seasons of US-Iranian relations: from the spring of mutual fascination, where Iran, sick of duplicitous Britain and Russia interfering in its affairs, sought a relationship with the United States, to the long, dark winter of hatred that we are yet to see end.

A revealing account, America and Iran lays bare when, where and how it all went wrong - and why it didn't have to be this way.

*John Ghazvinian is a historian at the University of Pennsylvania. He was born in Iran, raised in London and Los Angeles, and has a doctorate in history from the University of Oxford. He is the author of Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil and he has written for the Sunday Times, New Statesman, Slate and The Nation.*





# The *Shahnameh* as World Literature

Rasoul Sorkhabi

The *Shahnameh* (or *Shahnama*, شاهنامه) of Ferdowsi (940-1020 AD) composed in Persian at the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century is the national epic of the Iranian and Persian-speaking peoples. This book was instrumental in reviving the pre-Islamic Persian cultural and historical heritage and elevating the Persian language and literature on par with Arabic that was intensely promoted by the Abbasid caliphate in Ferdowsi's time. Discourses on the *Shahnameh* have heavily focused on its national importance. While this dimension has its own historical significance for the Persian-speaking peoples, it has, however, masked the hidden and more fundamental and humanistic layers of the *Shahnameh* as world literature.

The term "world literature" (*weltliteratur* in German) was first coined by the German poet Goethe in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a conversation with his student Johann Peter Eckermann in 1835, Goethe remarked: "I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. ... I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (quoted from J.W. von Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann*, translated by John Oxenford, North Point Press, 1994, p. 132).

This article is a small attempt to introduce the *Shahnameh* as world literature. (For information about Ferdowsi see my article "2020: Millennium of Ferdowsi" in *Persian Heritage*, Spring 2020.)

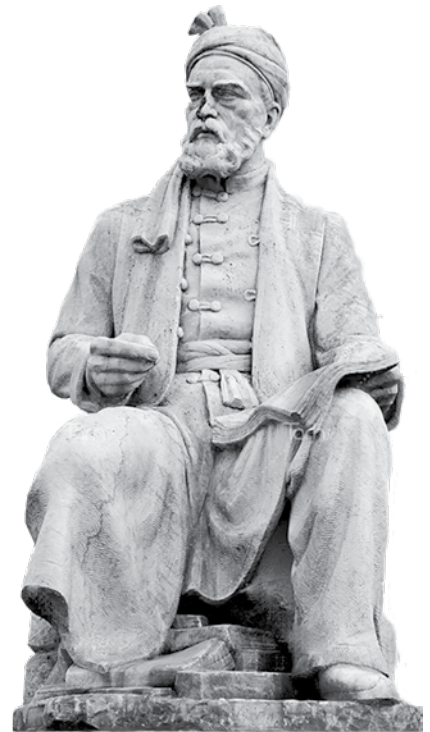
## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The word *Shahnameh* is composed of two words: "Shah" usually means "king" but also sometimes as a prefix it means "best, main or master" as in the word "shah-kar" (masterpiece). "Nameh" means "book or letter." In the modern Persian "nameh" usually means "letter" that one sends to another person, but in the classical Persian it also meant "book," such as in the titles of *Danesh Nameh* ("Book

of Knowledge" or Encyclopedia, written by Avicenna), *Siyasat Nameh* ("Book of Politics," by Nezam al-Mulk), *Qabus Nameh* ("Book of Qabus," by Keikavus) – all written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when Ferdowsi also lived. *Shahnameh* means "Book of Kings" or "Royal Book." Ferdowsi's original manuscript has not survived; therefore, we do not exactly know what title he had put on the cover page of his book. However, references made to this book by poets contemporaneous with Ferdowsi mention it as *Shahnameh*. Even its Arabic translation by Bondari in the 13<sup>th</sup> century retained the title *Al-Shahnameh*. As to the meaning of the word, Ferdowsi probably meant "The Book of Kings," rather than "Master Book," because here and there in his book, Ferdowsi refers to it as the Book of the Kings ("Nameh-ye Shahryaran," نامه شهرياران, "Nameh-ye Khosrovan," نامه خسروان) or "Book of the Noble" ("Namvar Nameh," نامور نامه). This is also consistent with the content of the book, which chronicles the stories of pre-Islamic Iranian kings, some mythical and legendary while others historical figures. *Shahnameh* is actually the name of a genre that dates back to the *Khoday Nama* (*Kahwtay Namak*, "Book of the Lords") written in Middle Persian (Pahlavi language) during the Sassanid king Khosrow I (531-579 AD), and was the source for several prose and poetry books of that genre both in Persian and Arabic in the subsequent centuries.

## AN EPIC FROM THE CLASSICAL WORLD

The word *epic* (Latin: *epicus*) comes from the ancient Greek *epos*, meaning "word, narrative, or song." Epic, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, is a type of poetry, "typically derived from ancient oral tradition, which celebrates in the form of a continuous narrative the achievements of one or more heroic characters of history or legend." The equivalent word used in Persian is *hamaseh* (or *hamasa*, حماسه), which is originally an Arabic word, meaning "fervent and fiery," but which in Persian means "courage and bravery." Interestingly, the Arabs themselves do not



say *hamaseh* for epic; the equivalent word for epic used in Arabic is *malhama* (ملحمة), meaning "bloody battle, fierce fighting or slaughter."

The *Shahnameh* is an epic work from the classical world, similar to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* of ancient Greece and the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* of ancient India. Like these epics, the *Shahnameh* is a narrative of a long war between evil and good forces in society. However, the *Shahnameh* does not revolve around a certain hero or a certain war. Its chronological and geographic coverage is remarkably vast. It begins with the creation story of the first man (and king), Kayumars ("mortal life") who lived in caves and wore leopard skin; it ends with the death of Yazgerd III, the last Sassanid king following the invasion of Iran (Persia) by the Arab Muslims in the seventh century AD.

The entire chronology amounts to 3,863 years and is divided into four dynasties as follows: The Pishdadian (پیشدادیان) "Earliest givers of law and justice," 2,441 years), Kayanian (کیانیان) "Great Kings," 721 years), Ashkanian (اشکانیان) Parthians, 200 years), and Sassanian (ساسانیان) Sassanids, 501 years). Scholars have also divided this chronology into mythical, heroic, and historical periods. The mythical period (1800 years) begins with Kayumars and ends with the killing of Za-

hhak (“Dragon”). The heroic period (1071 years) begins with the rule of Feraydun and ends with the death of Rostam, the most celebrated hero in the entire epic, and of Gosh’tasp, the Persian king who embraced the religion of Zoroaster. The Pishdadian and Kayanian kings also feature in the *Avesta*, the sacred Zoroastrian scriptures, but with some differences.

The historic period (992 years) begins with semi-true stories about the lives of kings in the later part of the Achaemenid dynasty and swiftly goes through the Parthian dynasty, but offers considerable historical details about the kings and queens of the Sassanid dynasty. The reason why the Achaemenid and Parthian kings are either absent, briefly discussed or inaccurately presented is that Ferdowsi’s main sources for the *Shahnameh* came from those compiled during the Sassanids, who made every effort to obscure the history and memory of the previous Persian dynasties rival to them.

Although the land of Iran constitutes the core of the *Shahnameh*’s stories, the events and wars portray the interactions of the Iranian kings with their neighbors – China and Turan (Central Asia) on the east, and Rum (Greco-Roman empires) and Arabia on the west. The *Shahnameh* thus covers the vast part of the known habitable world in classical times from a pre-Islamic Persian perspective.

The *Shahnameh* is the longest epic ever composed by a single poet in the same poetic style. Ferdowsi himself mentions that his book comprised 60,000 verses (*beyt* in Persian), but the manuscripts that have reached us contain about 50,000 verses, which still make the book a massive literary work. (Note that each *beyt* in Persian poetry consists of two rhyming lines.)

## PERSIAN EDITION AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

There are probably close to 1000 manuscripts of the *Shahnameh* at various libraries and museums around the world; some are complete, some partial; some are dated, some without dates. These manuscripts have survived from the pre-print era, but none dates back to Ferdowsi’s own time. The oldest manuscripts are from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first task in presenting the *Shahnameh* as world literature is to produce a critically edited Persian version of the book based on a comparison of reliable manuscripts. This task has been performed by various scholars in-



cluding Turner Macan in India and Julius von Mohl in France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by E. Bertles and his Russian colleagues during 1950-1971, and more recently by the German-based Iranian scholar Djalal Khaleqi Motlaq in the 1980s-2000s.

English translations of the *Shahnameh* is another important task. James Atkinson, a British scholar in India, published an abridged translation in 1832, which has been printed numerous times. The first complete translation of the *Shahnameh* in verse was published by the brothers Arthur and Edmond Warner in London from 1905-1925 in nine volumes. The first complete prose translation was done by Bahman Sohrabji Surti, an Indian Zoroastrian scholar, from 1986-1988 in seven volumes.

None of the above works are, however, easily accessible. For those interested in reading the *Shahnameh*, four recent translations, all in prose, are suggested. *The Epic of the Kings*, translated and abridged by Reuben Levy, a former professor of Persian literature at Cambridge, was first published in 1967 and has been reprinted by Mazda Publishers in California in 1996. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of the Kings* by Dick Davis (Penguin Classics, 2006) is more detailed and also based on the more recent Persian editions of the book. *Shahnameh: The Epic of the Persian Kings*, translated and adapted by Ahmad Sadri, and with fabulous illustrations by Hamid Rahmanian (Quantuck Land Press, New York, 2013) is itself a work of art worth collecting; this translation, however, ends with the death of Rostam.

*The Persian Book of Kings* (Routledge Curzon, London, 2002) by B.W. Robinson is a summary of the *Shahnameh* based the verse work of the Warner brothers. Robinson writes: “Throughout my abridgment I have concentrated on the narrative, and have excluded lengthy speeches, letters, etc. which occupy a considerable space in the poem.” Indeed, this is a shortcoming of all these four translations. They have focused on the stories but have ignored the philosophical and moral portions of the *Shahnameh*.

## STRUCTURE AND TEACHINGS OF THE SHAHNAMEH

In his book on *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes three components that a poet or an orator should employ to demonstrate the case and appeal to the reader or the listener. These are also called Aristotle’s three modes of persuasion. First is *logos*, which is the meaningful content and reasoning (logic) of a literary work; *logos* is the reasoned speech. In the Greco-Christian mysticism, *Logos* referred to the manifestation of God; the Gospel of John begins: In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The second component is *Pathos*, or emotions and all that appeals to the audience’s sensibilities. Third is *Ethos*, or moral qualities. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle also discusses *Telos* (purpose of the story) and *Kairos* (time-place context or setting).

It is not clear if Ferdowsi had read Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, although the book had been translated from the Greek into Arabic by Is’haq ibn Hunayn and Ibrahim al-Katib, in the ninth century (a century before Ferdowsi). In any case, all components Aristotle’s Art of Rhetoric are displayed in the *Shahnameh*.

Ferdowsi begins many of his stories with *Logos* and *Theos*: Faith in One God (*khoda*) and the importance of wisdom (*kherad*) and knowledge (*danesh*). Wisdom and knowledge are essential to a happy life and successful society as they are the foundation of the created universe. Consider the very opening of the *Shahnameh*:

*In the name of God, the Lord of life-giving soul and wisdom; thought cannot conceive God more than this. God is the Lord of all names (things) and all places; God grants us our daily*



*sustenance and guides us in life. God is the Lord of the cosmos and the revolving sky; God is the Lord of the Moon, Venus and the Sun.*

Interestingly, when Ferdowsi narrates a story in which a king or a hero wants to send a written message, the letter also begins with this Logos of unfailing faith in “one wise God,” a cornerstone of not only Islamic religion but also of Zoroastrian faith in Ahura Mazda (“Lord of Wisdom”).

The Pathos forms the major part of every story in the *Shahnameh*. Here, the poet elaborates those qualities that would appeal to human heroes to strive and fight for righteousness and light, and against the forces of evil and darkness – again a direct reference to Zoroastrian faith. These qualities include justice (vs. injustice and oppression), strength and courage (vs. weakness and laziness), goodness and virtue (vs. evil and lies), liberation and freedom (vs. slavery and captivity), and patriotism. These qualities were admirable features of the chivalry class in ancient Persia, strands of which have survived in wrestling sports in today’s Iran. Ferdowsi in his epic also emphasizes that God’s grace (*farr*) upon a king manifests itself in the wisdom, justice, and righteousness of the king and his rule. At the end of the story of Zah’hak, Ferdowsi writes:

*Let us not hand over this world to the evil. Let’s all strive for what is good and right. Neither good nor evil lasts forever; it is, however, better to leave goodness as our legacy.*

Ferdowsi often ends the stories with ethical teachings that appear prominently in the *Shahnameh* and constituted Ferdowsi’s own ethos. These teachings include non-attachment (vs. greed), understanding the impermanence of life and the world, and keeping good name and honor in life. Consider these lines at the end of the story of Bizhan and Manizhen (the ‘Romeo and Juliet’ of the *Shahnameh*):

*Live in joy with your beloved now, and contemplate on how this world turns and passes: It lifts a man to the heights of pleasure, and then throws him underneath the soil.*

These sentiments are also found in the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, composed by an astronomer-poet who lived several decades after Ferdowsi.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The following are some suggestions to introduce and share the *Shahnameh* as a masterpiece of world literature.

Modern readable translations. Highly academic, dull and literal translations may be good for scholars, but not for the general public. It is important to have modern, easy-to-read translations of the *Shahnameh* into major languages of the world. Iranian cultural centers need to financially sponsor skilled translators to undertake such tasks.

Use of the *Shahnameh* in Persian teaching courses. The Persian language used in the *Shahnameh* is still alive in the modern world; moreover, it has more Persian vocabulary than words borrowed from Arabic. This makes the *Shahnameh* an excellent textbook for teaching and learning Persian.

Children and juvenile story books. *Harry Potter* books (and films) have become bestsellers and have captured the imagination of hundreds of millions of readers (and viewers) around the world mainly because of their elements of fantasy and entertainment. The *Shahnameh* is indeed full of fabulous stories which can make great literature for children and

young adults.

Documentary films. We do not have professional, informative and interesting documentary films that explore the life, work and time of the poet Ferdowsi or various historical, archeological and cultural aspects of the *Shahnameh*.

Movies and plays. Hollywood movie productions have become global because in the modern world many people prefer visual and entertaining materials.

While there are classic Hollywood movies about the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* and even about the lives of outlaws and gangsters like Al Capone and Butch Cassidy, we are yet to have professional and artistic movies based on the legends of the *Shahnameh*. In this regard, India with its massive investments on movies about the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* is far ahead.

A scholarly journal in English, published at least annually, and devoted to Ferdowsi and the *Shahnameh*, similar to academic journals dedicated to Shakespeare. Likewise, it will be helpful to organize international conferences, once every two to four years, in various cities, in order to deepen research and discourse on Ferdowsi and the *Shahnameh*.

## Tali Farhadia



Tali Farhadian, born Tali Farimah Farhadian in Iran, whose married name is Tali Farhadian Weinstein, is a former federal prosecutor, and presently a candidate in the New York City District Attorney race in 2021. Prior to launching her campaign, she was the general counsel for Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez.

Farhadian is a graduate of Yale University and Yale Law School and, as a Rhodes Scholar, earned a master’s in Oriental Studies from Oxford University, in England. At the outset of her legal career, from 2004 to 2006, she clerked for Sandra Day O’Connor and Merrick Garland. Farhadian joined the U.S. Attorney’s office in 2011 in the Eastern District of New York, following a tenure with the U.S. Department of Justice. Through June 2010, she also served as counsel to the Attorney General of the United States. A Mizrahi Jew, Farhadian immigrated to the United States with her family on Christmas Eve in 1979, fleeing the Islamic Revolution. The family became eligible for citizenship through Ronald Reagan’s 1986 amnesty policies.

*From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

## *Triumph of Self-Empowerment over Darkened Despotic Tyrann*

Davood Rahni

Legend has it that once upon a distant past juncture, ZaHawk a mythological, tyrannical, unjust, and cruel despot, ruled over Persia. Confiscating an ambivalent hiatus with his absolute power, he crowned himself on the Persian peacock throne as if he was immortal and anointed by an imaginary vengeful supreme. He reigned with iron fist, suffocating people with hegemony and heavy taxations over the vast Persian Empire to the fatal detriment of most inhabitants he mistreated as his serfs and slaves. His ever expansive territory stretched from the Indus and the Oxus Rivers of the Orient, to the Nile, Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers of the Occident. Nonetheless, ZaHawk was horrified of resenting wraths by the masses he had oppressed; consequently, he had chronic insomnia as he feared the disgruntled populace would at any moment turn up against him to effectuate his utter obliteration. In the meantime while bipolar comatose and self-sequestered, he was barely alive in a pitch black, damped and pungently musty cavern on Mt. Damavand a volcanically semi extinct roaring peak, so long as his lackeys fed the fresh flesh kill of a bright and beautiful young newly married couple each day to two the ugly serpent beasts rising out of ZaHawk's shoulders. ZaHawk knew darn well though that the two serpents could devour him in a lightning annihilation moment before a midnight if they were not in time fed with the two newly wed before one of these sunsets.

In fact, it was a whispered knowledge amongst the masses, serfs and slaves, that while they took refuge with the righteous Spenta Mainyu the good spirit Faravahar emanating from Ahura Mazda who was the Lord of light and wisdom, and his sol invictus Mithra, that ZaHawk was directed by the impure fire and filth spitting dragon Ezhdeha drawn from Angra Mainyu *aka* Ahriman, who lived deep down the volcanic shaft in earth mantle. It was Ezhdeha

that had grafted the two cannibalistic serpents into ZaHawk's calves so he could outpour misery, famine, disease, pain and suffering to people and mother earth.

As injustice is not to remain in place forever however, Kaveh the Ironsmith, gravely irate for the well-beings of his compatriots, hung his toughened leather apron the Derafsh Kaviani, over a javelin and marshalled forward the disgruntled populace after the silhouette dawn of Yalda, on the rebirth of the sun. His bravest diehards followed him shoulders to shoulders as a Si-Morgh (metaphorically speaking 30 birds forming one unified body at a time) up the treacherous Mountain. There, Kaveh beheaded the three culprits on one body in the cave with his one mighty sword strike, thus eradicating injustice and reinstated equality and happiness in Persia on mother earth. *Déjà vu all over again*, Kaveh had in reality reincarnated what his ancestors Cyrus and Mandana, Xerxes and Arianna, and Darius and Anahita of the Achaemenes, **delivered** when they had also eradicated injustice and inequality, and reinstated love, equality, inclusivity, harmony, tranquility, and peace on earth. And so, with Phoenix (Si-Morgh) once again rising out of historical ashes of oblivion, the much anticipated and ever brightened and warmer SUN re-emerged out of the dark chilling clouds and proudly shone as the most enlightened beacon of hope and happiness on the hillside of Mt. Damavand. And for the four fundamental elements of life, and as the eternal fire became strong again, along with it the soil was purified with pristine water from the glaciers poured down into the valley and the prairie, and the fresh air thinned out all around.

Ecstatically exhilarated by brief periods of joy, most had not realized that Ezhdeha, the multi-headed dragon and father of all miseries and the creator of now the obliterated ZaHawk, was still

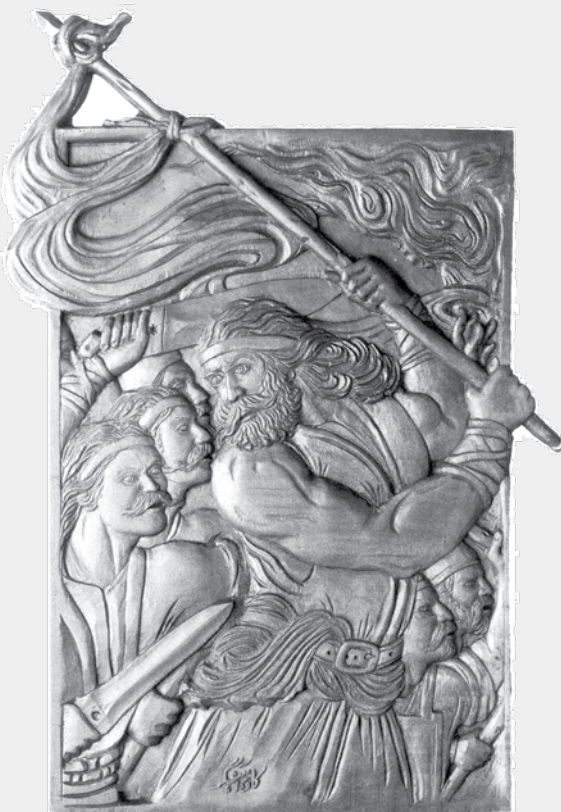
alive deep down the vertical volcanic shaft of Mt. Damavand. The nocturnal dragon would unexpectedly appear in his targeted communities to instigate catastrophe by kissing the two shoulders of a replacement for the past beast ZaHawk so two new serpents were mounted again. Houshang, to be newly crowned king of the Pishdadian dynasty had to follow the Ezhdeha back into the cave, whereby he threw the biggest Flintstone at, and killed the dragon. The Flintstone bounced from dead corpse and struck another rock. The resulting spark, which kindred spirited a sacred soothing fire seen and felt cheerfully by all down the valley, still burns eternally alive in Yazd today. Hooshang was slayed in the crossfire though, and replaced a bit later by King Jamshid Kiani and crowned at Norooz the spring vernal equinox and the birth of Zarathustra. And so, the people from all walks of life lived happily thereafter when they enjoyed as if a loving Valentine every day., However, If an when the people became complacent again to see or help their liberty denied, the Ezhdeha reincarnated with added an head, reappeared again and again in the same or other vast regions of Persia and beyond through the end of time so to bring about chaos through his ever growing strong servants: his linchpins and lackeys, charlatans and shysters, and hoodlums and hooligans.

And so, they all lived happily thereafter when they enjoyed and shared infinite love every day. In a while though, and after the people ever became complacent again to allow their liberty denied, the Ezhdeha reincarnated with added an head reappeared again and again in the same or other regions, from within or more painfully form without Persia, so to bring about chaos through his ever growing despots-to enable his charlatans and shysters, and by the evil actions of hoodlums and hooligans, linchpins and

lackeys. Norooz celebration was the most effective juncture year after year for the people to ward off all evil spirits including the ZaHawks and Ezhdehas, when communities sprinkled *esfand va kondor*, rue and frankincense over glazed holy fire yielding a strongly aromatic scent from which the beasts escaped from.

No wonder Homa Chehrazad, the just Queen of the Kiani dynasty, emulated the utopia paradise on earth for 30 tranquil years in Persia/ Iran millennia ago. And her descendent Shahdokht the daughter of Yazdgerd III of the Sassanid Dynasty and the legitmite queen to be ran away toward a curvaceous mountains in Yazd to take refuge. As she approached, the mountain opened up and then after she entered it closed. There since exists the drops of pure *tears* dripping down the deep waterwell today called Chek-Chek and revered as sacred ground by Iranians. In fact Yazdgerd was slayed and his dynasty abolished by yet a foreign Zahawk from the southwestern deserts to occupy Persia. What is excruciatingly ironic is that irrespective of perceived ideological and strategic differences among the culprits of all times and places, their thirst for absolute power and greed to plunder natural and human resources to their own ends, only continues to grow. They exploit and pillage, all the while accumulating wealth and power. Surprisingly and tragically, their tactical methodology has essentially remained the same Ezhdeha since antiquity.

And thence, the perpetual doctrine of “divide to conquer,” though strengthened in the more recent postcolonial era, has, nonetheless, remained forever as *Modus Operandi* of the self-righteous and megalomaniac economic powerhouses and despotic political rulers, *i.e.*, the two sides of the same coin, and ever since the first coin was invented as currency millennia ago. In so doing, and by creating a diversionary smoke screen *per se*, they inflict catastrophic devastation of biblical proportions through instigating wars and violence, usury and monetary manipulations, destructions, trans-migrations, and mass killings of the innocents, just to return later to act as the *foster mother more compassionate than the real blood mother!* Notwithstanding the excreting fact they had slayed masses in the first place, they offer reconciliations, “protections” and



“reconstructions” at costs many folds far more exorbitant than the prior vicious cycles. Through their inhumane and vicious cycle of dismal slavery and serfs, the few self-anointed despotic rulers have only undergone metamorphosis to become far more devastating than ever while inflicting more misery against the populace, governed without their meager consent.

If humans possess the capability of effectuating justice, why then resort to a fatalistic posthumous promise of a never ever seen utopia called paradise?! The only way the masses could propel forward is to sustain the glimpse of hope alive through acquiring education, knowledge, enlightenment, and self-empowerment. They must hang their aprons on their spears; unite as a Si-Morgh, thirty high flying birds as one. Only then, they could eventually beat the oppressors at the culprits’ own games, thereby leveling the playing fields toward their earned happy life and sweet freedom and true peace! This is the pinnacle of *E pluribus unum*. Eternally yearning for sustaining the universal justice anchored on love, civility, compassion and mercy, and leading to tranquility, harmony, happiness, and peace on earth, we perpetually rise as a

Si-Morgh (*aka Ghoghnoos!*)

Persia (Iran) has for millennia, and continues to undergo, turbulent periods of trials and tribulations, and afflicted by evils from both within and without. Iran has been gripping with such terms of endearments and navigating through troughs of despair and summits of elations in her very long lifespan. After the Machiavellian chivalries by the reincarnated Kavehs, each time light has eventually shone on “Persia” and triumphed over darkness, truth over fallacy, justice over cruelty, equality over cronyism, and all in all ecstatic happiness over depressing melancholy.

As narrated by Ferdowsi, the “Homer of Iran,” this tale from his *Shahnameh* wends its wisdom and relevance through tens of thousands of years of Iran’s history, bringing a hope of salvation from evils in altruistic acts of courage. *Shahnameh* the Book of Persian Kings - an epic poem composing 30,000 verses and written over the course of 30 years more than a thousand years ago, still remains alive in every Iranian’s psyche heartily. The patron King Mahmoud who had promised the poet a golden coin for each verse broke his promise. The improvised Ferdowsi, having instead resided *tranquilly* in the luscious rich paraissi style (paradise the meaning of his name) of his own imagination, never saw the coins which arrived by the repented King after had died.

Anchored on trilogy of *good thoughts, good words and good deeds*, everyone reaffirms their commitment to one or more of the following virtues, namely, volunteerism, altruism, philanthropy, benevolence and above all, to advancing dignified humanism as the pinnacles of life. The belief in the golden rule of “*treating others as you would expect to be treated*” anchored on the tripartite pedestal of *good thoughts, good words and good deeds*, conjures up in mind a poem by the acclaimed Persian 13<sup>th</sup> century Poet Sa’adi:

*All humans are members of one frame,  
Since all at first, from  
the same essence, came.  
When by hard fortune one  
limb is oppressed,  
The other members lose  
their desired rest.  
If thou feel’st not for others’ misery,  
A human is no name for thee!*



## Xerxes' Armed Engagements and Military Organization Before the 480-479 BCE Invasion of Greece

Kaveh Farrokh (Ph.D.)

Langara College

Xerxes I (r. 486- 465 BCE) became the ruler of the Achaemenid Empire following his father Darius the Great's (r. 522- 486 BCE) death in November 486 BCE. Xerxes was also the son of Atossa, the daughter of the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, Cyrus the Great. Xerxes had inherited his father's "unfinished business" of conquering the Greeks in Europe, however he first had to confront serious rebellions that had broken out against the Achaemenids in Egypt and Babylon. Egypt (whose local Achaemenid satrap Pherendates had died) had been in rebellion since 487-486 BCE, a few years after Darius I's failure against the Greeks at the Battle of Marathon (490 BCE). So serious was the Egyptian rebellion that Xerxes had been forced to arrive in person with the Achaemenid army to defeat this. In practice, not all of the Egyptians rose against the empire as numbers of these remained dedicated to the Achaemenids. The anti-Achaemenid rebellion in Egypt was soon defeated by Xerxes by 485 BCE. After this victory Xerxes appointed his brother Achaemenes as Egypt's new satrap. The Achaemenids, who were focusing on their military preparations for Xerxes' upcoming invasion of Greece, had to soon contend with yet more dangerous rebellions that had broken out by July 484 BCE in Babylon. By this time, the Babylonians had been increasingly disenchanted with Achaemenid rule. The Babylonian revolt was extensive which in addition to Babylon-city included the important cities of Sippar and Dibat. The Babylonian rebels appear to have been composed of two factions: (a) Shamash-eriba in Sippar led the northern faction and (b) Bel-shimanni, centred in Dilbat and Borsippa led the southern faction. It's not totally clear if Bel-shimanni and Shamash-eriba were coordinating their efforts against the Achaemenids while being rivals to one another. In general Bel-shimanni's uprising lasted roughly for just two weeks, leaving Shamash-eriba as the remaining leader of Babylonian dissenters. The Achaemenid army's campaign to defeat the Babylonian rebels was not

be accomplished until sometime towards the end of October 484 BCE. While Greek sources have claimed that Xerxes engaged in widespread destruction following his defeat of the Babylonian rebels, modern historians and archaeologists have questioned the reliability of these accounts. Archaeologists for example note on the lack of actual evidence of widespread destruction following Xerxes' success. As a result, modern historians now conclude that Xerxes' policies were in fact characterized by balance, competence, constancy and restraint.

While Egypt and Babylon were effectively subdued, the Greeks had already demonstrated their military capabilities at confronting the Achaemenid army at the battle of Marathon in 490 BCE. The formidable task of conquering Greece necessitated a thorough reorganization of the empire just as Xerxes' military build-up for that upcoming invasion continued to proceed. Organization was key to this process given the large landmass and the raising of armies that were widely dispersed throughout the empire. The empire was administered by dividing the territories into a system of toparchies. Each of the latter in turn supervised various numbers of satrapies within their dominion. The western region for example was the toparchy including Armenia and Anatolia with the east witnessing eastern Iranian peoples such as the Chorasmians, Soghdians and Bactrians organized into a single (administrative-military) region. The toparchies in turn needed to be efficiently connected by way of roads and communications. In this endeavor, the Achaemenids are recognized for having developed highly developed road networks which facilitated the organization of their empire. The Royal Road in particular allowed for the efficient transmission of messages and logistics between Susa in southwest Iran and Sardis in western Anatolia (a total distance of approximately 2,700 kilometers).

The primary core of the Achaemenid army that had recently suppressed the rebellions in Egypt and Babylon was composed of infantry, foot archers, and

cavalry. The infantry was composed of the elite Immortal units, regular Achaemenid troops as well as auxiliary infantry forces. Achaemenid field armies were organized along a decimal system (Herodotus, Histories, VII, 81), with the army apportioned into corps, regiments and smaller divisions. The decimal system worked from units of 10 men to then be raised to larger units of 100, 1,000 and 10,000 men respectively. While a comprehensive tabulation of the entire array of Achaemenid military units and their range of weaponry is beyond the scope of this article, an overall introduction to Xerxes' military organization leading to his invasion of Greece may be sketched here. The elite unit known as the Immortals was traced by Xenophon to Cyrus the Great (r.550-530 BCE) who allegedly first recruited 10,000 of his best troops into this corps (Cyropaedia, VII, 5, 68). The numbers of this unit were kept at 10,000 by diligently replenishing the ranks of those who had fallen in battle with new inductees (Herodotus, Histories, VII, 83). These troops were typically equipped with the Akenakes short sword, slings, shields, quivers, bows as well as spears (with officers' spears being fastened with golden butt spikes). Achaemenid infantry in general also carried the Sagaris battle axe. Another unit of note were the Sparabara (Old Persian: shield bearers) whose task was to carry large shields for the protection of the rest of their formation. Ten of these were in the front line, and behind them stood nine other rows (each of these composed of ten men) of archers who could also act as infantry, armed with short swords for close quarters combat. The Sparabara could also be armed with long spears for defense against enemy infantry nearing their formation.

A number of historians have often noted that Achaemenid infantry were unarmored, a fallacy based upon Herodotus' report of Achaemenid infantry at the Battle of Plataea (479 BCE) (Histories, IX). The notion of Achaemenid troops having been unarmored is vividly portrayed for example in the Alexander Sarcophagus (Istanbul Archaeological Museum, no.72-

74). Classical and/or contemporary artistic depictions of Achaemenid infantry frequently show these without armor as seen for example with the guards at Susa (e.g., British Museum, 132525; Louvre Museum, Sb 3320). Nevertheless, the high frequency of non-armor portrayals may be questioned with respect to historical accuracy as late Roman infantry for example have often been portrayed without armor in the Roman imperialistic arts. Having further (re)examined the Histories as well as sources such as Xenophon, current scholarship concurs that numbers of Achaemenid infantry (although not necessarily the majority per se) were equipped with defensive armor for close quarters combat. Strabo certainly makes reference to body armor (Geography, XV, 3.18-19), however it must be noted that he was writing over three centuries after the fall of the Achaemenids.

In general, armored Achaemenid troops were equipped with cuirass and notably scale armor; discoveries of scale armor (variously of iron, bronze with some gold plated) have for example, been made in the Persepolis area. In practice when engaged in close quarters combat the Greeks' armor appears to have provided more protection than those worn by their Achaemenid counterparts (Diodorus, XI, 7.3). The Achaemenid cavalry of Xerxes that were to invade Greece are believed to have had scale armor for protection, with these often worn beneath their uniform

tunics. Elite troops in particular appear to have been lavishly equipped at least as indicated by the golden scale armor of Masiustus, the commander of the Achaemenid cavalry at the upcoming Battle of Plataea (479 BCE). Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the entire Achaemenid cavalry had scale armor (and helmet) protection when they invaded Greece, given the high costs and challenges of mass-producing these over a relatively short period of time. It is also possible that numbers of Xerxes' cavalry may have worn Greek-style linen armor. Numbers of Achaemenid cavalry also appear to have used throat-guards (at least as indicated by the [now lost] Achaemenid relief from Bozkir, southern Turkey) however it is not clear if these were utilized during Xerxes' upcoming invasion of Greece. In addition to their archery equipment and spears, Achaemenid cavalry that were to soon invade Greece also deployed the Kopis sword for close quarters combat.

There were also significant elements of other (non Mede-Persian) Iranian cavalry within the Achaemenid forces. These were primarily from the northeast and Central Asian regions, notably the Saka Tigrakhauda (Scythians with pointed hats), Saka Haumavarga (Scythians bearing Hauma), Parthava (Parthians), Chorasmians, Soghdians, Bactrians and Arians. The Bactrians for example are cited by Aeschylus as having been the "flower of the Persian allies" (Persians, 732-733),

with these possibly having fielded 30,000 of their cavalry for Xerxes. The Bactrians like their other north/northeast Iranian kinsmen such as the Sakas, were especially adept in horse archery and were to fight with battle axes during Xerxes' upcoming invasion of Greece. In addition to their armor, it is possible that East Iranian cavalry (Bactrians, Saka, etc.) were also utilizing "armored trousers" as these were known by the western (or European) Scythians (Saka Paradraya) in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (or earlier), a feature to be later adopted by the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Achaemenid cavalry. The Scythians also utilized helmets and greaves of the Greek type. The esteemed status of the Sakas and Bactrians in the Achaemenid military is seen for example in Mardonius' selection of these troops to fight alongside the Medes and Persians (Herodotus, Histories, VIII, 113). The Parthava, Chorasmians and Arians were to also partake in Xerxes' invasion of Greece. Another Iranian people from the Iranian plateau who also fought on horseback were the Sagarthians who deployed wattle lassos to trap enemy cavalymen (and/or their horses). Sagarthian riding attire was identical with the northeast Iranian types as well as the Medes and Persians. For close quarters combat the Sagarthian cavalymen were armed with daggers and possibly battle axes. The Achaemenids also recruited non-Iranian cavalry, notably the Paphlagonians from Anatolia's interior (Xenophon, Anabasis, V, 6, 8).

Persian Median Elamite Parthian Arian Bactrian Sogdian Choresmian Zarangian Arachosian Sattagyddian Gandharan Hindush Saka haumavarga



Saka tigrakhauda Babylonian Assyrian Arab Egyptian Armenian Cappadocian Lydian Ionian Overseas Saka Skudrian Ionian with shield-hat Libyan Ethiopian

The soldiers of Xerxes I, of all ethnicities, on the tomb of Xerxes I, at Naqsh-e Rostam



The Achaemenid military establishment also made considerable efforts towards recruiting non-Iranian contingents from the realms under their rule. Close quarters combat infantry such as the Assyrians and Lydians were highly valued (Herodotus, Histories, VII, 61-99). The Assyrians had well trained (close quarters combat) infantry units who were separate in martial function from the (Assyrian) archers. The Achaemenid high command however appears to have blended archery into the functions of the Assyrian infantry by the time Xerxes was to launch his invasion of Greece.

The decision to dilute the Assyrian infantryman's training with archery served to reduce the effectiveness of this force in the upcoming clashes with their Greek counterparts. Another Achaemenid innovation may have been the formation of distinct units combining Assyrian infantry and spearmen with Babylonian archers. For close quarters combat protection, the Babylonian and Assyrian troops may have been outfitted with linen-based cuirasses of the Iranian type.

Lydian heavy infantry in particular were familiar with their Greek counterparts' combat methods and fought in similar fashion, especially as the Lydians were neighbours to the Hellenic realms (Polyaenus, Stratagems, VII, 8.1). Noteworthy are the Indian contingents who fought with large broadswords possibly measuring at a length of 80-100 cm with a (blade) width of 10-12 centimeters. For archery the Indian fighters deployed arrows tipped with iron.

Other effective combat contingents recruited by the Achaemenids were the Egyptians, Arabs, Ethiopians, Libyans and Carians. Egyptian troops wielded axes, swords, javelins and spears for close quarters combat along with double-curved bows for archery. For protection, Egyptian fighters wore bronze helmets and linen cuirass (of the Egyptian type) and carried large wooden shields. Arab camel-borne contingents fought mainly as archers and were also equipped with swords suspended over their backs. Ethiopian recruits fought with spears (reputedly constructed of sturdy antelope horns) and could also engage in archery. Libyan contingents fought with "*fire hardened*" javelins (Herodotus, Histories, VII, 71) and also drove chariots coupled to four horses, a feature which the Greeks were to reputedly adopt. Carian troops were mainly equipped with their Drepana sick-

le swords and continued to serve in the Achaemenid army to the last days of the empire. Also of interest are non-Iranians who may have had a more elevated or possibly "elite" status within the Achaemenid army. One of these were the Thracians of Europe, known as the Skudra among the Achaemenids.

A Skudra warrior for example is depicted at the city-palace of Persepolis in Iranian attire, acting as a throne bearer and (notably) wearing the ceremonial Akenakes short sword which is seen primarily among the Iranian (Mede, Persian, Saka) depictions. In like fashion, Cappadocian and Armenian throne bearers are depicted in Iranian dress at Persepolis. Herodotus' reports of Xerxes' assembly of five million personnel for his upcoming invasion of Greece is no longer considered reliable in mainstream scholarship given the demographic, logistical, military and geographical factors at the time. More modern estimates tend to tabulate the total forces assembled by Xerxes at 120,000 to 180,000 troops (with modern advocates of larger numbers citing figures as high as 700,000) which would greatly outnumber the Greek forces they were to confront in 480-479 BCE.

The Achaemenid navy assembled for the upcoming invasion of Greece was primarily reliant upon Phoenician seafarers for the navigation of their vessels which were also used for the transportation of troops and logistics. The Phoenicians aboard the Achaemenid ships also fought as marines and were equipped with "*...helmets in the Greek style...linen cuirasses...rimless shields and javelins*" (Herodotus, Histories, VII, 89). Each vessel reportedly had a compliment of thirty Iranian (Medes, Sakas, Persians) officers with the captain designated as the *Nav-pati* (or *Nau-pati*; Old Persian: naval commander/leader).

Nevertheless, the ranks of naval command were open to non-Iranians as well, as seen for example with Psamsineith, an Egyptian who attained the rank of *Nav-pati*. The fleet which would also include ships from Egypt, Cilicia, Ionia, Caria, Cyprus, Lycia and Phoenicia, was (by Classical accounts) composed of over 2700 war vessels but more recent scholarship suggests lower numbers (1200 to 600).

Marine archaeologists of the Aero-Marine Research Center at Malek Ashtar University in Iran, worked in 2005 to reconstruct the types of Achaemenid warships that would have been deployed

during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes. Studies conducted in Calabria in southern Italy and published in 2006 have concluded that pockets of Persian colonies were present in Calabria during the Achaemenid era, with these possibly having arrived on those vessels that had survived after the defeat of Xerxes' fleet at the naval Battle of Salamis.

Despite the vast scale of preparations undertaken for the invasion of Greece, the Achaemenid military was beset with five serious military weaknesses. The first of these were inherent to the weaponry, armor, training and tactics of the Achaemenid infantry. The Achaemenids had failed to develop the necessary doctrine and equipment suitable for close quarters combat against the Greek Hoplites. Achaemenid wicker and wood-leather shields were to also prove inadequate against Greek spears. When they became engaged at close quarters, the Achaemenid infantry's swords and spears were shorter than their Greek counterparts. In addition, the Achaemenids lacked the level of close quarters martial arts training of the Greeks.

The second weakness was the Achaemenid emphasis upon massed archery. Greek warriors, notably with their sturdy and large shields integrated into their phalanx system, proved especially capable of deflecting the deadly effects of Achaemenid archery barrages. Notably vulnerable were the Achaemenid archers who when caught at close quarters by Greek infantry, were at a serious disadvantage in close quarters combat.

The third weakness was the large and diverse nature of Xerxes' invasion force, which posed three major liabilities: (a) language of communication – while the Iranian (Mede, Saka, Persian) units could communicate intelligibly, these in turn would soon be operating with non-Iranian units whose languages were not mutually intelligible, (b) the placement of such a large number of diverse units meant that their combat tactics would also vary considerably, making battlefield coordination between these a challenging task and (c) the fielding of so many diverse nationalities meant that their weapons and overall supply requirements would vary considerably, a scenario which would seriously tax Xerxes' logistics system during the upcoming invasion. The fourth factor was the issue of loyalty and martial enthusiasm among Xerxes' non-Iranian units being assembled for the upcoming

invasion. The Ionian Greeks for example were to defect to their Hellenic kinsmen during the upcoming invasion.

Xenophon notes that numbers of non-Iranian units had to be forced by the Achaemenids to advance (Xenophon Anabasis, III, 4, 25).

The fifth factor was the role of Hellenic patriotism, which was part of the military axiom of soldiers fighting harder

in defense of their homeland against an invader. This factor in combination with the Greeks' exemplary training in close quarters combat, effective military equipment and tactics, made them especially formidable opponents.

This factor may have been appreciated by Xerxes himself who reputedly (as per Herodotus) stated the following in his speech to his assembled army right before

the commencement of his invasion:

*“Persians, I have assembled you to make this demand, that you bear yourselves bravely and never sully the great and glorious former achievements of the Persians ... I know that we march against valiant men, and if we overcome them it is certain that no other human army will ever withstand us”* (Histories, VII, 53).

## Dedicated Iranian Teacher Holds Classes on Prairies During Pandemic

PHOTOS BY RAHELE HESARI

Islamic Republic News Agency, 05/07/21



**Kolsoom Faqiri, 39, is a teacher who works in an elementary school in Chaharchenar village, suburb of Gorgan, the capital of northern Golestan province in Iran. Since the outbreak of coronavirus and despite suffering from heart disease, Faqiri has held classes on vast plains and prairies near her house on a regular basis. This dedicated teacher is standing on her feet for long hours, against the advice of physicians, since her students cannot afford buying smartphones or tablets to attend classes online.**

## THE YAKHCHAL

### Another Persian Invention You Might Not Know

This is a Persian word meaning ice (yakh) and pit meaning chal. It is thought that this was the first type of refrigeration that was mainly used in Persia 400 BC. The Yakhchal was used in the desert for capturing ice from storms. Some of those built hundreds of years ago remain today, showing the expertise of the Persian engineer. One remains in Kerman Province.

The basic composition of the yakhchal is a special mortar “sarooj” which is a mixture of sand, clay, egg whites, lime, goat hair and ash. Ice would be harvested from the mountains in the winter and set inside the dome, but underground. Inside there is a wall that runs east to west. But another way of collection was by channeling the water from the mountain into the yakhchal, the shady part of the structure caused it to freeze making more ice. Amazingly the thickness of the walls kept the water frozen throughout the summer. It was also used to make the Persian dessert known as faloodeh.





## The Narrative of a Purposeful Life for an International Artist

(Hojat Amani)

part one

Omid Karimi

### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the use of life history as a kind of qualitative research method to learn more about the concept of “purpose”. The author tries to discover more about the concept of purpose through interviewing with Hojat Amani, an Iranian artist who has endeavored to have a purposeful life and has gone beyond the self to influence his community. Combining life history interviewing with the detailed observation of the subject in a naturalistic milieu is typical of the ethnographic research. Through interviewing, it becomes clear that purpose is a multifaceted subject and despite obstacles and challenges, one can still have a purpose and be determined enough to achieve it. In addition, one learns more about the environment in which the interviewee struggles to fulfil his dream.

### INTRODUCTION

Among developmental psychologists, there is a growing interest in the concept of purpose and what it means for individuals to have purpose in life (Malin, Reilly, Quinn, and Moran, 2013). Kashdan & McKnight (2009) define purpose as a central, self-organizing life aim. Purpose is self-organizing because it provides a framework for systematic behavior patterns in everyday life. However, a recent theory considers purpose as a distinct construct. In 2003, Damon, Menon & Bronk proposed another definition for purpose which much of the emerging literature on youth purpose has focused on that (Kashdan, Machell, & Disbato, 2015): Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self. Furthermore, recent empirical research has shown that purpose is a critical factor for promoting positive development in adolescence (Bundick and Tirri, 2014). There is now a substantial body of research that demonstrates the importance of finding purpose in life. For example, after reviewing the relevant literature, Bronk, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch. (2009) concluded that purpose as a significant aspect of human flourishing, is related to greater levels of happiness and resilience, and correlates with psychological health. Research on purpose indicates that a person sense of life purpose to be closely connected to virtually all dimensions of well-being Damon (2008). Purpose has also been identified as a developmental asset (Benson, 1997, cited in Massey, Winifred, Gebhardt, Garnefski, 2008) and a goal that gives direction to life (Damon, 2008).

Most of the present research on purpose in life has focused on global self-report questionnaires. Such questionnaires ask respondents to endorse the degree to which their life has a purpose or mission (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). For sure, such researches are necessary but not sufficient. The present study focuses on the ideas of an individual who had a dream to be an artist and

that dream has come true now. The artist tries to influence his community through teaching, creating artworks and sharing his experience with others.

### METHOD

People construct their own meanings through their own experiences and qualitative research allows researchers to understand those meanings. One of the main features of qualitative research is that “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through human instrument. Therefore, the position of a researcher in relation to his or her research is critically important to understanding both research processes and findings (Marriam, cited in Enke & Huilman, 2010). Qualitative inquiry is collaborative and requires a close relationship akin to friendship. Furthermore, this kind of research involves mutual storytelling in which both practitioner and researcher feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990).

The data informing this research were collected through interviews conducted in the fall of 2017. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Hojat and the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full by the researcher. Interviews were done in Persian and then were translated into English by the author. Hojat was given the opportunity to review the transcript and translation of his interview so as to ensure his intended views.

### THE FIRST MEETING

More than ten years ago, I went to the countryside to visit my friends who were teaching there and it was there that I visited Hojat for the first time. He was serving as a secondary school teacher in a village called Maliche. I spent a night there with my friends and that night I remember Hojat was painting a portrait of an old man and together we had a whale of a time there. This





was the beginning of a good and lasting relationship. Hojat was interested in learning English language (I am an English teacher) and I was interested in learning more about the visual arts and thrust together by circumstance and serendipity, we continued our friendship over the following years. We have developed a good relationship which has lasted so far. On occasion, I would visit him to learn more about Visual Art and sometimes Hojat would drop by to talk to me and practice his English. Hojat has a candid character, and in general, he makes no bones about saying something which is necessary to be mentioned. He is brave enough to go against the flow both in his career and his personal life. He has paid the price several times for being resistant to whatever he considers misuse of power, immoral and inhuman. He has tried hard to have a purposeful life and his journey toward purpose has been continuous.

## THE PAST

Hojat has known for his painting as well as Resuscitator the old style Persian calligraphy that called Taaliq. I started writing this article when Hojat Amani had returned from his trip to Germany. He was there to display his works and to hold a workshop on Iranian calligraphy. Hojat was born in Lorestan, 1979 in small town in Lorestan province where his family have lived for years. He had the same schooling like his peers. In the past, children would go to a public school with no special education regarding the arts (the same problem exists even today) and also there were not any art schools, public library or gallery in the city. Considering family, there was no artistic background to inspire him in his career path. The only source he had was a collection of stamps which were a kind of model for him to practice drawing. The time passed and despite difficulties and obstacles, Hojat was accepted in the university as an art student and he remembers how excited he was at that time:

It was as if a thirsty person after struggling a lot reaches an oasis to quench his thirst. I had an insatiable thirst for learning. To tell the truth, I didn't like to get back home from college and I didn't like my college days to end. College days were the best period of my lifetime. I was deeply engrossed in my major.

Later, he became familiar to some great people who influenced him and he feels really indebted to them. After graduation and teaching at vocational schools for some years, Hojat passed MA exam and continued learning. The next critical stage in his journey toward success was going abroad. For the first time he visited London, the mecca of Middle Eastern visual artists, and for him it was an unforgettable experience:

It was there that I become familiar with the professional world of art business and visited extraordinary museums which are beyond description.

Hojat's most famous work, the Angels, was a significant factor which paved the way for him to hold exhibition outside Iran. He explained to me about this work with the following words:

Images of winged angels have always existed in the minds of all humans. These pictures symbolize the desire to fly and to be free from the material world. In the modern world, human beings, surrounded with machines of all sorts, are always anxious about the future. Therefore, men long for inner peace and sometimes by imagining themselves as angels, they try to find the desired tranquility.

Therefore, we have set off on a journey, carrying a drape on which two wings were painted and we photographed people as they stood in front of the drape and reacted to the wings and displayed their instinctive reaction towards being given wings.

A momentary metamorphosis into angelic beings happens for the participants. I believe all people, regardless of gender have this potentiality to become angels in character. Perhaps the modern world and technology has separated people from their essence with things like war and racism, but imagining being an angel even for an instance is pacifying.

## THE JOURNEY INWARD

It is believed that our personal purpose is inseparable from our professional purpose Gordon (2008), and making a decision regarding one's job is one of the most critical steps in the future success of an individual. Hojat decided to study visual art in a period when the arts, in Azna and other small towns and villages, were ignored and few people knew about its importance. His family did not agree with him either. Under such circumstances, Hojat decided to follow his dream and when I talked to him, he noted the importance of reflection and decision –making:

I believe that thinking and self-reflection are very important. Sometimes people, especially those who have more chances to be alone, reflect about themselves, their life and purpose and this is a very special personal time they spend by themselves. Sometimes, individuals return from this personal journey and find something precious within themselves. Usually people who are more introspective, through self-discovery find more about their true selves and this gives them more awareness which is really important for a successful life.

Since most of the great artists and galleries are in the capital, Tehran and Hojat needs to be in touch with such people and places, he has rented an apartment there. In fact, only in Tehran can you find some of the best things including universities, galleries, private art schools and so on. People in small town and villages are deprived of such facilities and they have to travel or migrate to Tehran to have access to such places. During a summer vacation, I travelled to Tehran to visit Hojat, and in a hot summer's day, when I got up from a short after-lunch sleep, I found him practicing Persian Calligraphy. When I asked him about the importance of persistence in his success, he noted that it has been very significant to him:

If you want to achieve something, you must try hard. When I look at my past, I dare say that being hardworking played a key role in my success. Therefore, we should strive and persist to fulfil our dreams. When I remember my past, I find that, despite difficulties such as lack of facilities, I never gave up and I kept on working day in day out. Burning the mid night

oil was something ordinary for me. The bottom line is that you should find a purpose and be passionate enough to achieve that.

**SELF-TRANSCENDENCE AND OPTIMISM**

Teachers have a lot of problems. In general, they are ignored and underpaid and they have a low socioeconomic status. Considering school curricula, the arts have been marginalized in secondary schools and totally ignored in high schools. Despite such conditions and the bleak future for teachers, Hojat does not want to be on the margins. He tries hard to remain optimistic and resourceful. Hope and optimism are important part of his work:

I believe that art is a miracle and by using it I want to make people feel better. Therefore, I try to communicate hope and joy to my audience. Optimism has been considered a key factor in attaining one’s goals. When we reviewed the story of Viktor Frankl together, Hojat emphasized the significant role of optimism and decision making with the following words:

Although Frankl is in prison, his mind is out of prison. He is tolerating torture, but at the same time he is imagining that he is giving a lecture to students. Decisions you make in your life are very important especially those under difficult circumstances.

For example, Frankl didn’t go to university and went to the death camps to be in the same situation with his family. Anyone who is optimistic and his mind is not confined just to the physical context, his situation will change some day.

Although grappling with personal and professional problems, one can still be helpful. A defining quality of a good purpose is self-transcendence. Hojat believes that this is a key element in the arts and he added the following comments:

I believe as human beings, if we want to have a better world, we should think about others, consider them in our decisions and plans and have an active role in the community in which we live.”

Going beyond the self can be done through different ways. For instance, when I was teaching in Ashoor Abad (a village near Azna), students did not have access to basic materials, I would buy some tools for them to practice calligraphy and painting. I did my best to encourage them and make them interested in visual arts. I would give them the best paper and asked them to bring me their worst works. As a result, they were not afraid of making mistakes and they enjoyed taking part in my class. The result of this was a mutual joy. *- to be continued*

## BANDAR KHAMIR on Its Way to Become a Sustainable Travel Destination

Tehran Times, 02/12/21

The southern Iranian port city of Bandar Khamir, which has recently joined the UNESCO Network of Learning Cities, seeks to be a sustainable travel destination.

A sustainable tourism approach, instead of being at risk of over tourism, is top on agenda to be materialized in Bandar Khamir as the latter would eventually cause cultural shocks for the locals and harm the city itself and its the pristine environment, Mehr quoted city’s mayor as saying on Sunday.

In September 2020, the city joined the UNESCO Network of Learning Cities and received a certificate of membership in the network; and people who felt frustrated and isolated before, became proud of their city’s tourism capacities, Javad Mahmudi added. Situated in Hormozgan province and bounded by the Persian Gulf, Bandar Khamir is the only city located on the coasts of the Khorkhoran Wetland, one of the largest and most important marine environments in Iran.

Traveling to the Persian Gulf region would be an experience that you probably haven’t even considered. While you’ve been planning your Iranian sojourn around the jewels of the country’s rich history (Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd), to the southeast the Persian Gulf is equally deserving.

Explore the magnetic islands of Kish, Qeshm, and Hormuz, which are absurdly easy to combine and are altogether different. While Kish is unashamedly glam and glitzy, Qeshm and Hormoz are refreshingly void of large-scale development and offer a chance to glimpse a more traditional way of life



– not to mention an array of geological wonders. Along the coast, soak up the vibes of lively Bandar Abbas and make a beeline for the delightful town of Kong, whose historical center is peppered with charming old houses and monuments.

# Pieces of Iran

Nawal Qcasiano

**My heart became whole in Iran.**

When I was 11, my mother sewed cash into the pocket of my pants and steeled herself against tears as she and my father prepared me to fly alone across the world for the summer. They didn't have the money or the time off work, but they wanted me to know myself. So with two suitcases full of soqaty for relatives I hadn't seen since I was two, I boarded the plane, remembering to be brave.

I don't recall being nervous on the flights, though I was alone from Pittsburgh all the way to Shiraz. I know we stopped in Europe and Tehran, maybe switched planes, and I had one of those badges around my neck denoting unaccompanied minor. Those parts are blurry.

But here's the scene that's crystal clear.

The plane landed on the tarmac amid the dusty Zagros Mountains. I laid a thin white scarf over my head and hair and tied it under my chin. I moved with the group of travelers towards the doors of the airport and suddenly, I am squeezed.

Suffocated among relatives pushing and shouting and crying, screaming Nawal, Nawal, Nawal. I recognize my grandparents. My big red glasses are knocked off my face in the bustle of chet-

oris and khoobis and vaaay cheqad bozorg shodis. There are so many bouquets of flowers, and cousins my age, and cousins younger than me, and my great-aunts in chadors and honestly? I had never felt so adored. Click, click, click—who even took those photos?

Grateful to whoever did. All that for me? My Maman Ezzy just cried and cried.

My heart became whole in Iran.

That summer in July I turned 12, and my cousins bought me a very cool doll birthday cake. That summer I learned to dance to Andy and Kouros with my cousins. I learned my grandmother made the best albaloo polo. And I learned the courtyard behind the house where my mother grew up was the perfect place to watch my grandfather climb a small ladder to trim the fruit trees.

I visited Persepolis and the tomb of the poet Hafez and fell even more deeply in love with the poetic sounds of Farsi. I wondered on repeat why my parents left this beautiful place anyway.

In my 20s, when I reported a series on everyday life in Iran for the Star-Ledger newspaper, I saw the country through an American lens. Through the lenses that needed to be sliced in various

directions for Americans to understand why women had to cover their hair, what the culture of beauty was like, why intergenerational living spaces were crafted purposefully that way. I interviewed then-President Ahmadinejad (twice) and I remember my paternal grandfather wanting to frame that photo of me, flanked by the Iranian President. None of those memories really stick.

I woke up this morning with Iran on my mind. That happens sometimes and I wonder if my relatives came to me in my dreams. I could hear my grandfather's voice over a static-y phone line telling me he's proud of the scholarship I won. Then I start noticing.

There are pieces of Iran scattered across our Chicago home. On my bedside table, there's a black and white image of my grandmother with my mother as a toddler, in the same courtyard where I read the Babysitter's Club books. I walk across my grandparents' rug, lugged across the world by multiple relatives.

As I descend the stairs, I step over a doll with traditional Persian village attire that our girls love, given to us as a gift by my Khaleh Zahra. In the living room, I set my coffee mug on a handmade Persian tile that my cousin Neda scoured for at Bazar Vakil, that she passed

off along with 11 other beauties like it, to my cousin Sina, who carried them to my father when he visited, who carried them onto multiple planes to eventually, get them into my hands.

I move to the kitchen to pour another cup of coffee, and I see the framed vintage postcards of Shirazi art, touting new exhibits in the 60s, that my uncle Hossain collected when he was a teenager.

The artifacts we keep tell a story.

My heart became whole in Iran.

*Nawal Qarooni Casiano is an award-winning journalist and educator with experience in New York City and Chicago schools. Forever passionate about growing readers, writers and thinkers, Nawal was a classroom teacher, curriculum developer and literacy coach before launching NQC Literacy in 2014.*

*She and her team design professional learning experiences in dozens of schools and education spaces, and mothering her four young multilingual, multiethnic kids very much shapes the way she views education.*

*You can find her at the park in Chicago's Logan Square, at NQCLiteracy.com or on Twitter @NQCLiteracy*





*Interview with*

**Siamak FarahBakhshian**

**Founder and CEO of InfoStreet, Inc.**

**Shahrokh Ahkami**

**Siamak FarahBakhshian passed away in 2021, we honor him by sharing an interview Persian heritage did with him in its Fall issue of 2012.**

*Tell us about your childhood, moving to America and your education.*

I was born in Tehran on a snowy day in January. At the time, my father was simultaneously working full-time and obtaining his Master's degree. As with everything in his life, he excelled so well in his studies that he was sent to the States for a second Master's degree. During this time, he obtained his second Master's and a PH.D. As a result, I actually lived in America from the age of 3 to 6.

Our family moved back to Iran just in time for me to attend first grade. Repatriation was never a question in our family. We had moved to America to complete a process and we were to go back to repay the country that afforded us that great education to begin with.

I attended the avant-garde Roya elementary school headed by the great late Dr. Parirokh Behnam whose philosophy in child education was focused on treating every child as unique and exceptional, not as entities going through the assembly line. Her approach fostered independent thinking; something that not only worked very well with my personality, but also was absolutely necessary for me. I am forever thankful to her for what she has done for me, for my schoolmates, and for the children of Iran.

After Roya, I attended Alborz high school headed by the outstanding Dr. Mohammad Ali Mojtahedi. Dr. Mojtahedi needs no introduction to any Iranian or to many scholars around the world. He singlehandedly created an unparalleled institution of excellence. What Alborz accomplished was to instill confidence, competitiveness, camaraderie, leadership, pursuit of exceptionalism, and the yearning to change the

world in every one of its students. Some of these traits are orthogonal to one another; yet, Dr. Mojtahedi and the team of caring educators at Alborz managed to take students from all walks of life and produce graduates that would personify all these characteristics at the same time.

Alborz was so exceptional that foreign student advisors from many U.S. universities would visit it. One such advisor was Mr. Art Tichenor, the International Student Office director for Purdue University. He had seen the advanced education level at Alborz first-hand, and since Purdue is an engineering school he would admit Alborz students even prior to graduating from high school.

As such, I left Iran in the middle of my Junior year (sevvom nazary) and headed for West Lafayette, IN. Since Iran required everyone to have a high school degree or would consider their college degree void, I attended Purdue and West Lafayette high school simultaneously and graduated from high school at the end of my freshman year in college. I graduated from Purdue with a degree in Industrial Engineering. I could not be more honored to have attended all these first-class institutions.

*Where did you start your professional career?*

Graduating as an engineer in the early 80s had many challenges. There were definitely fewer jobs for engineers than there were number of engineers around. Thanks to a dare from one of my dearest friends while we were in college, I was fortunate enough to have minored in Computer Science.

As a result, I was able to land a job in the software field, which was growing in leaps and bounds. To this day, I have

yet to make a dime from my engineering degree, although I would not trade the Purdue experience for the world.

I started at a company called Vertigo. Our company built computer animation software, which was at its very infancy. It was at this time that I made a decision that I would like to run a software company. I systematically chose jobs that would give me the training for my future goal, and at the same time gave my employers an employee that was eager and passionate to give it all. A true win-win situation.

At Vertigo, I had an opportunity to work as a Unix administrator, software developer, team leader, and head of customer support. When a much larger company was buying Vertigo, I moved to Microstat, a company that offered stock quotations via a modem dial up (boy, am I dating myself or what). The Web did not exist then and what we developed at Microstat was considered quite advanced.

At Microstat, I started as a release coordinator and quickly rose to COO of this public company and sat on its board of directors. By this time, I pretty much knew how to run most of the facets of a software development firm – except for sales and marketing. I was fortunate enough to join NeXT (a company started by Steve Jobs after he left Apple) in a technical sales position; from technical sales I moved to developer partnerships, on to the dealer channel, and finally to full software sales.

In 1994, having been in the industry for 10+ years and with my goal of being familiar with the requirements of a software company realized, I started InfoStreet. I have been here ever since and could not be happier.

***Tell us about your relationship with Steve Jobs.***

For starters, I am forever indebted to him. He was an amazing person. In addition to the experience of working for Steve, NeXT had an exponential factor for all employees. Steve being who he was attracted the top talent of the Industry. As a result, we not only learned from him, but also from all the exceptional people that worked at NeXT.

Today, most of my colleagues are either running companies or are clearly in the upper echelons of the industry. NeXT was like a club for future hardware, software, and Internet leaders, and it's all thanks to Steve.

I admired his desire to produce perfection and loved the fact that although many criticized him for it, he would still have a hand in actual product development. It truly reinforced the lesson I had learned from my amazing mom and dad that if something has your name on it, it better be exceptional.

Contrary to public belief, Steve truly enjoyed those who spoke their mind and did not like “yes men”. As a result, on the personal level we got along great, as I don't know any other way.

I am proud to call him a friend and not just a boss. His passing was very hard for me. I did not expect my own reaction since I was well aware of the severity of his illness, yet I was in no way prepared for it. To this day, I don't like seeing his pictures from the time of his illness, since I would like to



remember that keen eye for perfection, that smile that only conquerors can boast, and his zest for winning. Steve was a vegan and would not eat any product that came from animals.

To me, Persian food is synonymous with meat. Yet, my wonderful wife and I had the honor of having Steve and Laurene (then Steve's finance) at our house for dinner. Our Persian food which consisted of *Addass Polo* with dates and raisins, *Aash Reshteh* (without *Kashk*), and my mom's famous recipe of *khoreh artichoke nanaa jafari* was so enjoyed that they took some home with them.

***Tell us about InfoStreet.***

InfoStreet is a Cloud App Provider. We have a number of patent-pending products that bring all the benefits of the Cloud to small businesses. The Cloud is the great democratizer. It provides everyone with solutions that at one time were only available to large businesses.

In the old days it may have taken two million dollars to build, let's say, a Sales Force Automation system and was therefore out of reach of most. Yet, today many small businesses can use such software for as little as \$5/month. This is truly a paradigm shift in the use of software and has already changed the way business is done in all industries – and will continue to do so.

InfoStreet delivers a Cloud-based Desktop that is similar to the desktop or laptop you use on a daily basis, yet it lives in the Cloud. Anywhere in the world you have access to the Internet, you can access your apps, your files and your entire environment. InfoStreet also offers an app market, where you can purchase Cloud apps that suit you best. This market includes apps from InfoStreet as well as other Cloud companies, giving our clients a wide breadth of choice.

***How do you find the success of Iranian Americans in Silicon Valley?***

Simply amazing. I could not be more proud. During the hostage crisis many Iranians had a great shame factor and would not readily identify themselves as Iranian. That shame factor has now been replaced with a great sense of pride that

almost every company in Silicon Valley or Telecom has a CxO (CEO, COO, CTO, CIO, CMO, CSO) that is of Persian origin. The innovations are numerous and Iranians as a group have been quite sought after in our Industry.

***How do you feel about your Persian Heritage?***

Even though I have only lived in Iran for less than one-third of my life, most of those years were formative years. I believe I am who I am, for good or for bad, based on the investment that both Iran and the US have put in me.

While I am very happy that I do my small bit in creating jobs and advancing technology in the United States, I have a great guilt that I have not been able to ever work in Iran and help further its people.

My goal is that if I can ever retire, I go to Iran and teach a course on entrepreneurship.

I have a love for Iran that is inexplicable to many of my friends. I look at Iran as my birth mother and the U.S. as my adoptive mother. While I love my adoptive mom, I always long for my birth mom as well. My awesome wife and I have done everything in our power to ensure our children know our culture. Thinking about it, in many ways, this is both for their benefit and for ours.

As a parent, if you find something great, you want to share it with your children. We find the Persian culture amazing. This is why my wife and I try to speak Persian with our sons and make sure we celebrate Persian events.

Even though born in America, our kids know their heritage and are proud to call themselves Persian. In addition, we already have a generation gap with our children. The last thing we need is to have a cultural gap with them as well. So, teaching children our culture will ensure that we can all relate to one another.

***What message do you have for the other generations, those before and after you?***

When it comes to the older generation, many have not been back to Iran since the revolution, and justifiably so almost all of them are saddened by that.

I would like to reach out to them and assure them that “They can take the person out of Iran, but can’t take Iran out of the person.” Be an Iranian wherever you are.

Spread the culture! Help the next generation and non-Iranians who aren’t familiar with Iran to get to know this great country. To the younger generation, I would like to let them know that when people go to college, they join fraternities. When they work, they join professional societies.

All of this is to help them further their life. You have a pre-made society with thousands of years of history. Learn it and take advantage of it. There isn’t a day of my life that I don’t use a Persian proverb to help me solve business problems, and this may just be why so many Persians excel in business.

It’s there for your taking, you benefit from it, and it could be quite fun, so don’t let this opportunity pass you by.



**OCIACC  
LAIACC**

Iranian American Chamber of Commerce

**LA & OC Iranian American Chamber of Commerce  
A Professional Networking Organization**

**OUR MISSION IS:**

- \* to advance business education
- \* promote economic growth
- \* elevate community outreach
- \* inspire and connect the best of cultures towards a better community for all.



**our first gathering 5/26/21 since Covid**

<https://ociacc.com>

<https://laiacc.com>

**949.370.0102**

<https://www.instagram.com>

[ociacchttps://business.facebook.com](https://business.facebook.com/ociacc)

[OCIACChttps://twitter.com](https://twitter.com/OCIACC)

[OCIACC1https://www.linkedin.com/company/ociacc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ociacc)