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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Have you ever, as grandparents, stopped to compare the life you had as a child with the life of your grandchild? I am not one to compare myself with anyone or anyone with another, but in the case of my childhood in comparison to that of my grandchildren, the experience has proven to be educational. I was visiting with my west coast grandchildren this past June, as usual, and much to my delight, I got to be their chauffeur.

My first stop was tennis lessons for the four-year-old. From the moment she left her house to the end of our journey she whistled. I caught a glimpse of her face in the rear view mirror. Her smile and innocence made me reflect back to my childhood in Iran. At four years old I was taking her to a tennis lesson; her parents and most modern day parents believe that participating in sports is as important as their education. At four years old, I was playing with handmade toys and hearing from my parents that sports were for street kids and that my future was in books and homework; there was no mixing the two.

My granddaughter's afternoon was a swimming lesson. My friends had no swimming lessons or a fancy pool. They would swim in the murky waters of the local river in the summer and bribe the guard with a few cents to swim in the public baths in the winter. My granddaughter's day would continue with skating lessons on shiny booted skates, my friends would nail spikes into their shoes and proceed onto the frozen river they swam in the summer. And finally, her day would end with gym lessons on serious equipment. My friends made their own equipment. In fact one day a classmate of mine came to my house bearing a gift of barbells made of sticks with bricks hanging off the ends. I, of course, graciously accepted his offer, but never once picked them up out of fear they would fall on my feet or head and my parents would then find out that I was partaking in the forbidden activity of sports.

Anyway my learning lesson came during my granddaughter's tennis lesson. Of course when we arrived I was anxious to see her "supposed" inner talents as a tennis player. Amazingly she picked up her racquet (as if she was holding it forever), it was nearly as big as she, and caused her to stumble to her group. There were about five or six kids ranging in age from three to five. The faces of the parents as the kids were dropped off clearly reflected their individual belief that they were holding the hand of a future tennis pro, these were my exact sentiments. The instructor, a tall and physically fit young man gathered the children on the court and placed them each in a circle with balls. He then instructed them how to swing. Within seconds it was evident that the kids did not have much interest in what he was saying. They wanted to hit the ball all right but were hell bent on hitting it the way they wanted and not as instructed. Mayhem best described the scene. I was mesmerized by the patience of the instructor. After a while he came to the realization that he lost control. Calmly he led the kids off the court and offered them a refreshment. After drinking their juice, he brought them back to the court, hoping against hope that they would do better in the second session. They didn't! In a few minutes the kids were back doing things the way they wanted. One kid became so frustrated he threw his hat on the ground and walked over to his parent. After a few minutes he returned, picked up his hat and racquet and proceeded to do the same thing as before. I immediately recognized that perhaps they were not ready for the game of



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

or: (973) 574-8995

EDITOR:

SHAHROKH AHKAMI

EDITORIAL BOARD: Dr. Mehdi Abu-Saidi, Shirin Ahkami Raiszadeh, Dr. Mahvash Alavi Naini, Mohammad Bagher Alavi, Dr. Talat Bassari, Mohammad Ali Dowlatshahi, Mohammad H. Hakami, Ardeshir Lotfalian, K. B. Navl, Dr. Kamshad Raiszadeh, Farhang A. Sadeghpour, Mohammad K. Sadigh, Ghahremon Suleymonpour, Dr. David Yeagley.

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tennis but, like the other parents and grandparents sitting in the stands with me, I cheered with excitement whenever one made contact with the ball, regardless if the form was correct, regardless if the ball was hit in the net or out of bounds.

At the end of the lesson, the instructor, still unraveled by the mayhem, led the kids off the court and into a huddle. After a few seconds they let out a joyful cheer picked a favorite candy from the basket he offered and ran back to the arms of their loving parents. My granddaughter was still smiling and singing and of course chewing her bubble gum. I wondered if she felt any sense of accomplishment? On the drive to our next stop she continued to whistle, sing and chatter and I continued to reflect back to my youth.

I kept thinking about the childhood play we engaged in. Regardless of the years between her childhood and mine we all partook in these games and hopefully learned something. It would have done me good to stop the analyzation at that point, but I continued. I started seeing her lesson as something else. Her teacher became a leader in society and the kids' representatives of different social groups. I remembered how easily the kids discounted the valuable advice of their instructor and proceeded their own way. I saw how easily it was for them to take a different path and method to achieve an end and goal. I witnessed the ease in which one turns away from the knowledge of one who is honest and truthful and accepts the easier path. All too often the easier path does not formulate the skill needed to repeat the success. All too often beginners luck fades and one quickly finds that luck will not guarantee success. The consequences for those young children not looking to good leadership is not horrific, for they still have a few years to understand the benefit of honest instruction. As adults, however, the consequence of not looking to good leadership results in chaos. It dilutes our ability to achieve concrete and lasting results. As individuals, we as a group have been lucky in our personal affairs, despite the many obstacles we encountered. As a group, however, we like the children on the court like to stay in our own little circle. We swing inadvertently at a ball or goal, hoping eventually to make contact with our racquet, instead of lining up together and swinging the racquet as the knowledgeable instructor has taught us and hit a clean shot.

Yes, what I saw was childhood play. It is, however, well applied to our actions as adults. We do not have the luxury of time like the children to understand the value of and positiveness of good leadership; they are at the dawn of their dreams and goals. Many of us, however, who are the force that holds the community together, are entering the twilight of our lives with little time left to actualize our dreams. Maybe it is time for us all to finally grow up!

Shahzad Alavi

In Memory — 9/11



IF I KNEW

*If I knew it would be the last time
That I'd see you fall asleep,
I would tuck you in more tightly
and pray the Lord, your soul to keep.*

*If I knew it would be the last time
that I see you walk out the door,
I would give you a hug and kiss
and call you back for one more.*

*If I knew it would be the last time
I'd hear your voice lifted up in praise,
I would video tape each action and word,
so I could play them back day after day.*

*If I knew it would be the last time,
I could spare an extra minute
to stop and say "I love you,"
instead of assuming you would KNOW I do.*

*If I knew it would be the last time
I would be there to share your day,
Well I'm sure you'll have so many more,
so I can let just this one slip away.*

*For surely there's always tomorrow
to make up for an oversight,
and we always get a second chance
to make everything just right.*

*There will always be another day
to say "I love you,"
And certainly there's another chance
to say our "Anything I can do?"*

*But just in case I might be wrong,
and today is all I get,
I'd like to say how much I love you
and I hope we never forget.*

*Tomorrow is not promised to anyone,
young or old alike,
And today may be the last chance
you get to hold your loved one tight.*

*So if you're waiting for tomorrow,
why not do it today?
For if tomorrow never comes,
you'll surely regret the day,*

*That you didn't take that extra time
for a smile, a hug, or a kiss
and you were too busy to grant someone,
what turned out to be their one last wish.*

*So hold your loved ones close today,
and whisper in their ear,
Tell them how much you love them
and that you'll always hold them dear*

*Take time to say "I'm sorry,"
"Please forgive me," "Thank you," or "It's okay."
And if tomorrow never comes,
you'll have no regrets about today.*

(Unknown)

I'M MAD AS HELL!

Anonymous, NJ

I am writing to you as a non-Persian with a question to the Iranian population at large, but especially to the practicing Muslim Iranian population. There is so much the "non"-Persian and non-Muslim populations know about you and your religion. What we do know has been taught to us by the media that in more cases than not, has linked the religion, despite many rhetorical caveats, to terrorism. The media has linked you to women wearing chadors, chain beating men in the streets and most importantly to the hostage issue and chants of "death to America." These are images that are at best held by a minutia of worldwide Iranians. Too many of us "nons" are not educated on the freedoms you once experienced and long for again, too many of us do not know about your educational background, your history, your culture and the contributions made by you as a group. Too many of us see you as extremists who live, not in the modern cities I know, but in clay cottages, in cities where the streets are not paved and the main transportation is a donkey or beat up jalopy. Too many of us do not know that Iranians are far from the religious zealots as now labeled. Too many of us see you dressed in peasantry rather than in designer fashions. In short too many of us know only the fictional side of you, not the truth.

How can you as Iranians and as Muslim practicing Iranians not be "ANGRY AS HELL!?" When are you as a group worldwide going to get together stand up and shout, "I am mad and I am not going to take it any more?"

In America your response is of low volume. Little has been done to neutralize bad press. Discussion amongst yourselves of how wrong "we" are is of no value. You as a group of educated people and professionals are closing yourselves off from society. This my friends will only leave you weak and more vulnerable to your predators. And weak ... is exactly the opposite character of the Iranians I know and love.

Instead of dividing off into small groups it is time for you to combine your efforts and take a course of action that is guaranteed to have positive results. You need to take a course of action that will resonate across the world. While your small gatherings and parties are good for the soul, they are not

productive in changing your image. I am not saying that you should not have a parade but when you have a parade concentrate on the non-Persians lining the street not those who should come by virtue of pride. I am not saying that you should not have Persian television but those stations should be left for those who need entertainment. Your financial dollars will be much better spent on taking advertisements out in the *New York Times* and the like protesting this false image and protesting against any parallels between you, your religion and terrorism. The world and America's "nons" need to be educated and you, not politicians you support, should be the teachers. I am frustrated by your rush to support a candidate. Yes, politicians will listen because they are educated and know your great wealth, but for you to believe they have a sincere promise is ignorant, for you are still too small a voting group to make a difference politically. Your dollars therefore are not spent wisely in a political campaign. Change and education in America about Iranians will come only from a grassroots effort.

The recent bombings in London have fingers pointing directly at you. You, not Pakistan, not Saudi Arabia, are being labeled as allies of the terrorists. If you do not believe this, I direct you to read page 78 of the *Time* magazine (July 25, 2005). It holds the answer and the very reason I am writing to you. The article speaks about Islam and Islamic extremists. There is no mention of Iran. The one picture, the one image incorporated in the article is a woman in a chador reading a Koran, and described as "an Iranian woman holds a copy of the Koran at an anti-US rally." Where is the link of this picture to the article?

I as an American do not fear the masses protesting against the United States, they are practicing the very freedom we wish to give them — freedom of speech. Furthermore, their protesting in the open is not any different from our protesting against them at public rallies. I as an American, however, am afraid of those protesting in secret, I am afraid of those secretly recruiting and preying on the weak, regardless if they are rich or poor, educated or not. It is this silent force that must be reckoned with.

Unlike the article states, Iran and the

United States, Iranians and Americans are not worlds' apart in our ideology for life we are simply different in culture and perhaps religions but that is the beauty of the world and what the United States itself was founded on. Neither of us are mass murderers preying on the innocent, none of us hide behind a coat and a bomb; instead we seek peace and understanding.

America unfortunately as I stated earlier is losing its tolerance and it is because no one seems to consistently offer them any other genuine explanation. Interesting enough, the people of the world are beginning to see American democracy as we see Islam, both are beginning to smell evil in both. None are inherently evil but even God can become evil if his true image is tainted by constant lies.

Speaking out against terrorism and Islamic extremists must be a daily habit. I pray you will all pick up your pens and write to the media, I pray that I will read a full page attack on the creators of these false images in the *New York Times*, I pray that I will see you, the common Iranian, on Larry King, 60 Minutes etc. pleading your case to the American population. I know many of you are probably saying, who is this person and why should we have to answer to Americans. The answer is simply, because I care and unfortunately every group who has had the privileges to make a new home for themselves in this country and practice the freedoms enjoyed, has at one time or another had to answer to the larger group of Americans. We have all at one time or another had to plead our case and convince our neighbor that though we may be different as to music, religion, cooking we are all brothers and sisters and most importantly we are all Americans, hyphenated or not. ■

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TROPICAL SOLAR ZOROASTRIAN CALENDAR

Ali A. Jafarey

PART II: INDO-IRANIAN CALENDARS AND INTERCALATION

VEDIC CALENDAR:

It may be noted that the Indo-Aryans had also six seasons (Sanskrit *rtu*. Avestan *ratu*) evidently modified to meet the climate in the Indus Valley. They were: Vasanta (Spring), Grishma (Summer), Varsha (The Rains), Sharad (Autumn), Hemanta (Winter), and Shishira (the Cool season).

PERSIANS AND OTHER IRANIAN CALENDAR:

The Achaemenians, Sogdians, Chorasmians, and Armenians, all Zoroastrians by faith, had their own names for their months. The names of the Achaemenian months, as given in the bas-reliefs of Darius the Great are rendered to convey: (1) Irrigation-canal-cleaning month, (2) Vigorous spring, (3) Garlic-collecting month, (4) Hot-step, (7) God-veneration, (8) Wolf-birth, (9) Fire-veneration, (10) "Anāmaka — Nameless" month, and (12) Digging-up. Three names have not been given in Old Persian but we have their Elamite pronunciations and all, except two, are nonreligious terms. The Achaemenians had numbers instead of names for the days of the month. (see Old Persian, Ronald G. Kent, 2nd ed., New Haven, 1953). That confirms that the months as well as the days named after pre-Zarathushtrian deities and post-Zarathushtrian personifications of Gathic abstracts is a later addition. There are indications that it was done during the reign of Artaxerxes II (405-359 B.C.E.), and that naming the months and days in honor of deities were adopted from the Egyptians.

The names of the Gahanbars, and those of the Vedic, Achaemenian, Sogdian, Chorasmian, and Armenian months show that the names of the pre-Zarathushtrian and Gathic months must have been based on the seasons and social activities, and not on deities. These old names have, however, been so well obliterated by the authoritarian priests that we do not have any inkling of what they were.

LATER AVESTAN CALENDAR:

The names of the twelve months in modern Persian and their Avestan forms with their corresponding Zodiac names are:

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|--------|-----------|
| 1. Farvardīn | Fravashi/Fravarti | Aries | 21 March |
| 2. Ardībehesht | ASHA VAHISHTA | Taurus | 21 April |
| 3. Khordād | HAURVATĀT | Gemini | 22 May |
| 4. Tīr | Tishtrya | Cancer | 22 June |
| 5. Amordād | AMERETĀT | Leo | 23 July |
| 6. Shahrivar | KHSHATHRA VAIRYA | Virgo | 23 August |
| 7. Mehr | Mithra | Libra | 23 Sept. |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| 8. Ābān | Ap | Scorpio | 24 Oct. |
| 9. Āzar | ĀTHRA | Sagittarius | 22 Nov. |
| 10. Dey | Dathva | Capricorn | 22 Dec. |
| 11. Bahman | VOHU MANAH | Aquarius | 21 Jan. |
| 12. Esfand(ārmaz) | SPENTĀ ĀRAMAITI | Pisces | 20 Feb. |

Note: Of these only those in capital letters are the Gathic "Primal Principles of Life." Āzar/Āthra has been mentioned in the Gathas as the symbol of the Progressive Mentality (Spenta Mainyu), and "ap" (water) is also mentioned in the Gathic texts, but the rest are later Avestan names.

INTERCALATION

The Pahlavi books of Denkart and Greater Bundahishn confirm that:

1. There are two Zoroastrian calendars: (a) A tropical year calendar of 365 days 5 hours and 48 minutes that is precisely calculated to begin on vernal equinox, and (b) a layperson calendar of 365 days that is intercalated by one day every 4 years in normal times, and by 10 days after 40 years, one month after 120 years, five months after 600 years or one year after 1440 years in abnormal times. The intercalary hours must be precisely calculated to make a full day, month or year. The intercalary is necessary for (the right performance of) Nowruz, Mehregān, and other time-honored Jashans.

2. The year begins with vernal equinox (on about 21 March).

3. Spring lasts from the beginning of Aries to Gemini (on about 21 March to 21 June), summer from Cancer to Virgo (on about 22 June to 22 September), autumn from Libra to Sagittarius (on about 23 September to 21 of December), and winter from Capricorn to Pisces (23 December to 20 March). (DENKARD (Acts of Religion), Book 3, Peshotan Dastur Behramjee Sanjana, 1900, and Greater Bundahishn, Chapter 25, Behramjee Tehmuras Anklesaria,

Note by AAJ: The full texts may be read by visiting Mr. Joseph Peterson's www.avesta.org <<http://www.avesta.org>> and clicking the above references.)

THE LATE VADA DASTURJI HORMAZDYAR K. MIRZA ON INTERCALATION: SHAHENSHEHI, QADIMI, FASLI

At present there are three sects or groups among the Parsis of India

(1) Shahenshehi 'of imperial (reckoning)'. (2) Qadimi 'of ancient (reckoning)'. (3) Fasli 'of seasonal (reckoning)'.

These three groups are formed on the basis of the differences in calendar and time-reckoning, and the consequent differences in the dates of observing the new year day and other festivals.

In the second system of time-reckoning (Sal Vihezakik), as noted above, a month was intercalated every 120 years. In ancient Iran, this intercalation was affected under royal patronage according to the guidance and advice of the council of the learned men of the realm. Al-Biruni writes (p. 54):

"The reason was this that intercalation was an affair settled under the special patronage of their kings at a meeting of mathematicians, literary celebrities, historiographers, and chroniclers, priests, and judges — on the basis of an agreement of all those regarding the correctness of the calculation, after all the persons I have mentioned had been summoned to the royal court from all parts of the empire, and after they had held councils in order to come to an agreement."

The last intercalation under Iranian sovereignty was affected in 406 A.C. during the reign of Sasanian Emperor Yazdgard I (399-420). On this occasion, two months were intercalated — one that was due and the other in anticipation of troubled time in the coming century when the next intercalation was due. In 406, therefore, the five Gatha days were transferred from after the end of Shahrevar month and were placed after the end of Avan month, where they remained for six centuries thereafter. Due to political instability and disorder in Iran, and later the Arab invasion and overthrow of the Empire, the practice of intercalation fell into disuse.

In 1006 A.C. four intercalations were due; and it appears that in that year four months were intercalated, and the Gatha days, which were after the end of the Avan month at that time, were shifted and placed after the end of the 12th month Aspandarmad. Hence the Oshmurtek year coincided with the Vihzekakik year. Since then there was no difference between the two systems, or really speaking only the Oshmurtek year remained in practice.

The difference of a month in various Zoroastrian calendars in Iran, and also between the Zoroastrian calendar of Iran and that of India had been noticed in various sources. This difference of a month between the Zoroastrian calendar of Iran and that of India was stressed and highlighted in 1721 when Jamasp Velayati, a Parsi priest of Iran, came to Surat. The matter came to a head when Jamshid, a Zoroastrian of Iran, came to Surat in 1736. He explained that the Zoroastrians of Iran were ahead of their co-religionists in India by a month in commencing their year and observing religious festivals and functions. Some Parsi families of Surat adopted the Iranian system of reckoning the year, as explained by Jamshid. In order to bring their calendar in conformity with that of Iran, a month was dropped from 1114 A. Y. (1745 A.C.), by reckoning Roz Mahraspand of Mah Avan (of Indian Parsi calendar) as Roz Mahraspand of Mah Adar. Thus they formed a separate sect or group for themselves (1745 A.C.). They were known as Qadimi 'of the ancient (reckoning)'. This is an Arabic term used in Mod. Pers. in the sense of 'ancient, former'. It was used by the Zoroastrians even before 1745. The corresponding term used in Iran is *bâstâni* 'ancient'. The Qadimis adopted also the Iranian mode of prayers, customs, and ceremonies, which differ to some extent from those of their other co-religionists in India.

The Zoroastrians of India who continued to follow their original system of reckoning the year are known as *Shâhenshâhi* 'of the Imperial (reckoning)'. Evidently this term refers to the Sasanian Emperors, particularly Yazdgard III, the last Sasanian Emperor.

The said difference of one month between the Zoroastrian calendar of India and that of Iran may be explained by the assumption that the forefathers of the Zoroastrians of India intercalated a month after the downfall of the Sasanian Empire either in Khorasan (where they lived in exile) or after their arrival in India. Evidently, this must have happened after 1006 A.C. and in India. But no record or even oral tradition has been preserved.

JASHN OF AWARDÂDSÂLGÂH

It appears that the Jashn of Awardâdsâlgâh gives a clue to the solution. This Jashn was performed **every year** on Roz Khordad Mah Aspandarmad of the Shahenshahi reckoning. It was performed **only in India**, and **only by the Shahenshahi priests**. It was not performed by the Qadimi priests, and it was

unknown in Iran. The day on which the Jashn was performed coincided with the new year day of the Iranian and Qadimi reckoning. It is reasonable to conclude, as done by M. P. Khareghat, that the Jashn was instituted when the last intercalation of a month was affected by the forefathers of the Parsis of India in remembrance of the new year day which was abandoned when the intercalatory month was added. However, Khareghat's explanation of the term is not satisfactory....

Hence it is reasonable to conclude that 'Awardâdsalgah' was originally 'Khordâdsalgah'; the day was called *sâl-gâh* 'time of (new) year' in remembrance of the new year day which was abandoned; and Roz Khordad was the day of the intercalated month on which it was so abandoned. Hence the term 'Awardâdsalgah' must be 'Khordâdsalgah', and it should mean: 'the time of the (new) year (falling on) Khordad (Roz)'; and the Jashn was instituted by the Parsis of India in remembrance of the Noroz, which they abandoned while intercalating a month in India. (Outlines of Parsi History, Hormazdyar Dastur Kayoji Mirza, Bombay, 1974, ages 442-445)

PART III: THE GATHAS, THE PRECISE CALENDAR, AND THE ZARATHUSHTRIAN RELIGIOUS ERA

This I ask You, tell me truly, Lord.
Who is the foremost creator and parent of the Universal Law?
Who made the sun and the stars in their paths?
Who makes the moon wax and wane?
I am, Wise One, eager to know all this and more.
(Gathas: Song 9.3)

Any person with a fair knowledge of astronomy will at once recognize that this stanza was composed by a person who must have been well versed in astronomy and that it speaks of a precise lunisolar year. This is clear because (1) Zarathushtra speaks of Asha, the law of precision which governs each and every movement by any body, macro or micro, in the universe; (2) he speaks of the paths of the sun and the stars, i.e., the tropical and sidereal movements; (3) lunar phases provide the lunar month in two parts of waxing and waning of moon; and (4) there is a desire to know more in this and other scientific fields. This opens the way for continuous research to understand the creation and the Creator. It means constant improvements in calendar and other necessities of life.

LUNISOLAR CALENDAR

We know from the Vedic lore that the Aryans, like many nations of their day, followed lunisolar year. The Avesta confirms this. The lunar month had two parts: the waxing period and the waning period, each of about fifteen days. That made the year fall short by five days. But the lunar month is 29.53058 days. Therefore, the difference of 23 hr 15 min 57.5 sec or approximately one day every two months plus the five days short, making a total of almost 11 days, were made good by intercalations of one month every 30 months. However, as reflected by the Vispered, the early Zoroastrians added about 11 days at the end of the year. This shows that an improvement was made, evidently by Zarathushtra himself, in the Indo-year calendar of the pre-Gathic age.¹

We do not know the names of the months of the pre-

Zarathushtrian and Gathic periods. However the names of the four seasons, the six Gahanbars, the Vedic months, and the Achaemenian months are generally based on various phases of the seasons. It is significant, however, that none of these bear the names of any Aryan deity. They only reflect the people adjusting themselves with the changing phases of the year. The Gathic months must have followed the same pattern, particularly when the Gâhânbârs, the most revered festivals, bear seasonal names. This shows a lunisolar year, with months named after seasonal changes, that was intercalated to keep it precise.²

SOLAR CALENDAR

Later Avesta shows that the calendar was turned into a full solar year with each month having 30 days. We know the names of only five months from the extant Avesta — Ardibehesht, Tir, Shahrivar, Mehr, and Dey — and these from a late composition, the Âfarînegân-e Gâhânbâr.³ The names of the thirty days are also mentioned together in only one Yasna section—Yasna 16.3-6. The two Sirozahs are but thirty quotations from the Avesta arranged in the order of the days of a month. The last five days of the year and an evident fraction kept the year in tune with the seasons.

The Avestan words *yârê* for a “year” or “year of 365 days” and *saredha* for a “year of 365 days 5 hours and fraction” show that while the common people maintained a simple way of reckoning the year, the astronomers-in-charge kept the tropical year in count and the religious festivals of Gâhânbâr in line with the seasons. These are the *ushmurtik* (365 mean solar days) and *vehizakik* (365.2422454 mean solar days) calendars of the Sassanian and post-Sassanian times. Vichitakihâ-i Zâdspram of the 9th century CE tells us to observe Zarathushtra’s death anniversary according to the vehizakik calendar.⁴

ERRING ERAS

This reckoning of the religious year was kept alive until a new custom was copied by Iranian courtiers from Babylonian and other prevailing traditions which reckoned the year from the ascension of each ruler to the throne. This was attractive and pleasing for the kings surrounded by flattering courtiers. The practice began as early as the Achaemenians and came to end when the Sassanian Empire fell before the invading Arabs some 1,400 years ago. It has distorted and disturbed chronologies to such an extent that Iranian historians have no record of the end of the Kayanian age, as to who were their successors, the entire Achaemenian line with the exception of Darius I and Darius III, the Parthians as empire builders, and the Kushans in Khorassan and India. The history as reflected in Sassanian writings and the subsequent Arabic and Persian writings by Iranians of the post-Sassanian period, including the famous Shahnameh, have many an important event missing in Iranian history. The historic events have been, no doubt, preserved but because of the lack of a chronological order and the missing eras, they are haphazardly included in the now “legendarized” Pishdadian and Kayanian periods. The practice of remembering an era by the ascension of a king continues to linger in the Yezdgerdi year observed by Parsis and some Iranian Zartoshtis. It reminds one of the ascension of an ill-fated monarch, not the dynamic message of the renovating Master, Zarathushtra. In fact, the Zoroastrians did not have a “religious” era during the entire “imperial” period, from the Achaemenians to the Sassanians. The Zarathushtrian Religious Era was completely forgotten except the early events of the Gathic

period, preserved in the Vichitakihâ-i Zâdspram.

Nevertheless the tropical year, called *saredha* in Avesta and *vehizakik* in Pahlavi continued until or even beyond 9th century CE and kept the religious festivals and their relevant agricultural and administrative activities in step with the seasons. However, it appears that during the last days of the Sassanians, the turbulent conditions made the authorities forget the four-year intercalation of the *ushmurtik* calendar and it was haphazardly done, in an on-and-off period of 120 years. It is this intercalation, and not the four-year one, which is reflected in the post-Sassanian Arabic and Persian books, and not the Avestan and Pahlavi writings, that has caused the misunderstanding that the Sassanians and earlier dynasties practiced the 120-year intercalation on regular basis.

With the disappearance of astronomer leaders, the common Zoroastrian priests and laymen relied more and more on the *ushmurtik* method and in the course of time, lost the track of *vehizakik* and intercalation. Today, the Shahenshahi and Qadimi calendars, one month apart and beginning in July and August, show that no intercalation has taken place for approximately 825 years.

NEW TROPICAL CALENDAR

After the fall of the Sassanian empire, the Arabs imposed their Hegira era with its revolving lunar months. It soon proved its impracticality. Iranian experts, both Zoroastrian and Muslims, helped the authorities but not very successfully. As a consequence farmers, most of whom were still Zartoshtis, suffered losses because of off-season taxes. Finally, Iranian astronomer-scientists, including the famous Omar Khayyam, succeeded in getting the tropical year, now called Jalâli, after Sultan Jalâl al-Din Malekshah Saljûqi (1072-92 CE), the ruler, formally declared. It is this improved and advanced tropical year which is the official calendar of Iran and Afghanistan. The formalization of the ancient Iranian calendar was a great achievement, an achievement which was kept alive not only by the rulers of the Greater Iran, from the Iraqi borders to the Chinese

ZARATHUSHTRIAN RELIGIOUS ERA

The Pahlavi “Vichitakihâ-i Zâdspram” gives the dates of certain events in the Gathic period in the “Year of Religion.” But, the question is: When did it begin?

Scholars of Zoroastrianism have been fixing the date of Zarathushtra from the 6th century to 17th century B.C.E. Some enthusiasts have even gone back as far as 8,000 or more years. Thus Zarathushtra ranges from a contemporary to the Achaemenians to a man of the Old Stone Age. All this discrepancy is due to the fact that every scholar has taken only one point, or perhaps two, to pinpoint the age. One scholar supposes that Vishtaspa, father King Darius the Great, was the same Vishtaspa, the royal companion of the Sage, and therefore makes him live around 500 BCE. The other relies solely on the tradition reported by Iranian writers, such as Abdul-Rahman Biruni, who himself is perplexed by discrepancies in Sassanian and earlier chronology. The other takes the Greek report that he lived 6000 years before the Trojan War, estimated to have been fought in 1200 BCE. Religious prejudices by aliens have brought him as close as possible to present days because of his dynamic message. How could it be so old as to outdate the relevant founders of their religion! Religious enthusiasm by Zoroastrians have pushed him as far as they could, just to show off that their “prophet” is the

foremost in conveying the divine message [to Stone Age people].

However, the combined attempts of room-scholar philologists and historians, and field-scholar archeologist and anthropologists have narrowed the age to 1000 to 1700 BCE. What- ever, the date, there are proofs that he lived in the Vedic, rather Rig Vedic age, 2000 to 1500 BCE.⁵

Meanwhile, recent astronomical researches have helped to fixed many legendary dates in a more accurate way. One such instance is Zarathushtra's date. The late Zabih Behruz, an Iranian scholar and mathematician, came, by studying various astronomical data and the disparities in the reported chronologies, to the conclusion that Zarathushtra, himself an astronomer, timed the conversion of Kavi Vishtaspa and his court to coincide with the entrance of Aries in the vernal equinox. Zabih calculated the day to have occurred on 1st of Farvardin, 21st March 1725 BCE. Since Zarathushtra declared his mission on this very day 12 years before, the Zarathushtrian Religion Era began in 1737 BCE. This gives us, at least a conventional date, within the Rig Vedic period, as a fair solution of the dates between 1000 to 1700 BCE.⁶

ZRE RESTORED

It appears that the religious era, maintained during the first 300 years of the Good Religion, fell in disuse because of disturbed days that followed the Kayanian fall. However, today we know that it began on the vernal equinox of 1737 BCE. The Zarathushtrian Religious Era is, therefore, 3743 now.

The writer used the Zarathushtrian Religious Era in his writings since 3717 = 1979. The Zarathushtrian Assembly accepted it since its establishment in 1990. Iranian Zoroastrian Publications like the Bulletin of the California Zoroastrian Center, Los Angeles and "Peik-e Mehr" of Vancouver, Canada also began publishing the era. And now, it is a great pleasure to see that the Zartosthis in Iran have also adopted it, and it is displayed in most of their publications. It is hoped that others will join the move.

It gives one the proud pleasure of constantly knowing the age of the dynamic Divine Message of Asho Zarathushtra — 3,743 years and more as the time passes. The Zarathushtrian Era, begun by Zarathushtra and followed by his companions, started as a reformed lunisolar calendar, was improved and changed into a true tropical calendar by later Avestan astronomers, was faithfully followed as the *vehizakik* by the Sassanian rulers despite the tradition of "ascension eras," was revived and further improved by Iranian scientists of the post-Sassanian period, and now stands restored and in line with Zarathushtra's wish to "know all this and more." Astronomically and practically, it is the most perfect calendar in the world. Let us promote it.

Notes

- (1) The Vispered (lit. "all-the-precise-times-of-prayers," All-the-Festivals) concerns the Gahanbars and the 11-day intercalary days of prayers at the end of the lunisolar calendar. The Vispered is not, as generally believed, secondary to the none-Gathic Yasna. It is older and in its unadulterated form, reflects the Gathic festivals only. The non-Gathic Yasna belongs to the rites and rituals of the later Avesta. See "Three Distinct Aspects of the Avesta," The Ancient Iranian Cultural Society Bulletin, Tehran, Vol. 7, No. 1, March 1969 and *Gâh-shomâri-ye Avestâyee* (The Avestan Calendar), both by Jafarey, Persian monthly Yaghmâ, Tehran, No 9, month of Âzar and No. 10, month of Âban, 1335 (November and December 1976).
- (2) (a) Seasons: Zarema/Vasanta (spring), Hama/sama (summer), zima/hima (winter), and sareda (?)/sharada (autumn). The first form is in Avesta and the second in Sanskrit.

- (b) Gâhânbar (seasonal festivals): (1) Hamaspathmaidhaya (vernal equinox), (2) Maidhyoi-zarema (mid-spring), (3) Maidhyoi-shema (mid-summer), (4) Paitish-hahya (harvest), (5) Ayâthrema (no-travel [season]), and (6) Maidhyârya (mid-year).
- (c) Vedic months: (1) Madhu (pleasant, spring), (2) Mâdhav (pleasantly, vernal), (3) Shukra (bright), (4) Suchi (glowing), (5) Nabhas (cloud), (6) Nabhasya (cloudy), (7) Isha (sappy), (8) Ūrja (sap), (9) Sahas (powerful), (10) Sahasya (powerfully), (11) Tapas (warm), (12) Tapasya (warming). The names show that the calendar was reformed to conform with the weather in India.
- (d) Achaemenian months: (1) Adukanaisha (canal-cleaning?), (2) Thûravâhara (full-spring), (3) Thâigarchish (garlic-collecting ?), (4) Garmapada (hot-step), (5) Thurnabshish (fully-humid), (6) [Karbashiash?], (7) Bâgayâdish (god-veneration), (8) Varkazana (wolf pack. Perhaps an allusion to appearance of wolves in autumn), (9) Âshiyâdiya (fire-veneration). Note its relation with the month of Âzar, month of Fire), (10) Anâmaka (nameless), (11) [Samiamash?], (12) Viyaxna (ploughing).
- (3) Âfarin-e Gâhânbar 7-12.
- (4) Zarathushtra passes away in the 47th year of Religion at the age of 77 years and 40 days in the month of Ardibehesht on the day of Khûr of the vehizakik (calendar) and it has been taken to the month of Dey, day of Khûr. But the prayer rite is only in the month of Ardibehesht. (Vichitakhâ-i Zâdsparam, Section 25, B.T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1964)
- (5) Prof. Shahpur Shahbazi, The Traditional Date of Zoroaster, BSOAS, XL, Part I, 1977 p. 25-35
- (6) Zabih Behruz, Taghvâm va Târikh dar Iran, Tehran 1952. Dr Ali Hassuri, The Date of Zoroaster, in The Avesta and Modern Art, Tehran, 1978.

TO THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE ...

This Says It All....

Time passes.
Life happens.
Distance separates.
Children grow up.
Love waxes and wanes.
Hearts break.
Careers end.
Jobs come and go.
Parents die.
Colleagues forget favors.
Men don't call when they say they will.

BUT ...

Women friends are there, no matter how much time and how many miles are between you. A girlfriend is never farther away than needing her can reach.

When you have to walk that lonesome valley and you have to walk it for yourself, your girlfriends will be on the valley's rim, cheering you on, praying for you, pulling for you, intervening on your behalf, and waiting with open arms at the valley's end. Sometimes, they will even break the rules and walk beside you. Or come in and carry you out.

Daughters, daughters-in-law, sisters, sisters-in-law, mother, mothers-in-law, aunts, nieces, cousins, extended family, and women friends bless your life!

The world wouldn't be the same without you, and neither would I.

When we began this adventure called womanhood, we had no idea of the incredible joys or sorrows that lay ahead. Nor did we know how much we would need each other. Every day, we need each other still.

(Taken from the internet)

Music and Refugee Lives: AFGHANS IN EASTERN IRAN AND CALIFORNIA

John Baily

Forced Migration Review, Issue 6, December 1999

Refugee communities are often deprived of their customary means of musical expression, either because they have become separated from their musicians or from their traditional musical instruments, or due to a lack of opportunity in the host country.

This matters because of the crucial role that music-making plays in human life, such as the way it brings people together in special relationships, its capacity for emotional expression, its importance in enculturation and its role in the articulation of identity. More broadly, music not only reflects wider social and cultural processes but can also provide a means for creating, interacting with and controlling them. Music is worth investigating for its beneficial potential in dealing with life as a refugee.¹

Music-making in the Afghan transnational community illustrates the principle very well. This article compares two refugee communities: in Mashad (east-

ern Iran) and Fremont (California). The comparison allows one to include a number of variables such as: geographical distance between countries of origin and refuge; language, religion and other kinds of cultural similarity; and prospects for the future in terms of security, employment and eventual integration. These factors are likely to have relevance for many refugee communities. In the case of Afghanistan there is an additional consideration — the banning of music by the Taliban.² This gives musical activity in the Afghan diaspora added importance, for there are no accessible archives, entertainment industry or body of expert knowledge (as used to exist at Radio Afghanistan). Afghanistan's considerable musical heritage is now in the hands of expatriate Afghans.³

MASHAD

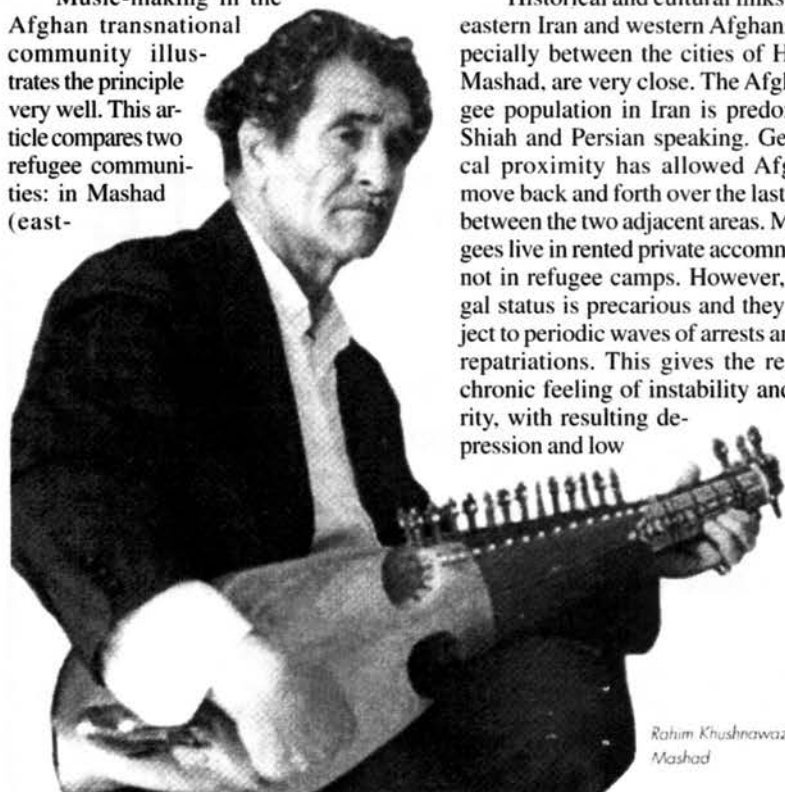
Historical and cultural links between eastern Iran and western Afghanistan, especially between the cities of Herat and Mashad, are very close. The Afghan refugee population in Iran is predominantly Shiah and Persian speaking. Geographical proximity has allowed Afghans to move back and forth over the last 20 years between the two adjacent areas. Most refugees live in rented private accommodation, not in refugee camps. However, their legal status is precarious and they are subject to periodic waves of arrests and forced repatriations. This gives the refugees a chronic feeling of instability and insecurity, with resulting depression and low

morale.

Afghan professional musicians have certain advantages over many other refugees in that they have a skill to offer. In Pakistan in the 1980s, for example, when music was banned in the refugee camps run by mullahs, Afghan musicians operated from the musicians quarter of Peshawar and made a reasonable living playing for Pakistani patrons.⁴ Afghan urban music is closely related stylistically to the Pashtun music of NWFP (North-West Frontier Province) and most of the musicians from Afghanistan were Pashtun speakers from the south-east of the country, especially Jalalabad. They brought to NWFP a rather 'sophisticated' version of Pashtun music, influenced by classically trained musicians in Kabul, itself an outpost of North Indian classical music. Between 1979 and 1986 music was more or less banned in Iran but things had changed by the late 1990s. In 1998 many of the professional musicians who had lived in Herat in the 1970s were located in Mashad. A few had been there for 20 years; others had recently arrived to evade the Taliban and to be able to continue to make a living from music.

The Afghan musicians in Mashad were busy in their community. As working musicians they played mainly for Afghan weddings, live music for the men's gathering being an essential ingredient for a 'proper' wedding. Not only does good music confer prestige: a long concert of music is important for structuring the wedding party as an event, and certain ritual songs should also be performed. Thus music is an important part of that most normative of human activities: getting married according to custom.

In 1998 the Afghan musicians and actors in Mashad were well organized. With the help of Nasruddin Saljuqi and other educated Afghans, they had formed an association called Afghan Refugee Artists in Iran — Mashad. Most of these musicians were members of three family bands, and the association also included a number of actors and playwrights formerly connected with the Herat Theatre. The musicians and actors were at the heart of Herati intellectual and artistic life in Mashad. The association had organized a number of public concerts that attracted an Iranian as well as an Afghan audience, and in December 1998 they put on a big comedy show in a cinema in Mashad that ran for eight nights. The song texts being in Dan rather than Pashto made them readily accessible to Persian speakers in Iran.



Rahim Khushnawaz.
Mashad

Stylistically, the music was virtually identical to how it had been in Herat. This is the Afghan urban style, which originated in Kabul and reached other cities largely by radio broadcasts. The typical group consisted of a singer with a small Indian hand-pumped harmonium, tabla drums, and rubab and dutar lutes. Although the style was unchanged, there was some change of repertoire, with fewer of the light romantic popular songs of past and more emphasis on serious Persian *ghazals*, especially those on religious themes, and a new interest in *qawwali*, the Sufi music from India and Pakistan. And there were new songs about Afghanistan that articulated the Afghan refugees' own aspirations.

Talking with people from UNHCR and ICR! in Tehran, it was apparent that this musical activity could be utilized in several ways. There were possibilities for community work in areas with many refugees, including camps near the border. An attempt was made to establish a music school. And it was also realized this was a way of addressing Iranians, presenting a more positive image of the Afghan refugee as someone with something to offer in the way of artistic activity.

The presence of musicians active in the refugee community means that for Afghans there is a life of music' which can be readily understood in terms of the following:

... the primary effect of music is to give the listener a feeling of security, for it symbolizes the place where he was born, his earliest childhood satisfactions, his religious experience, his pleasure in community doings, his courtship and his work — any or all of these personality-shaping experiences.⁵

Music here can be seen as having a generalized therapeutic role, helping to maintain a sense of normality and stability. Outside support organizations like UNHCR need to recognize the important role musicians play in normalization and should provide support for their activities. In addition, given the special circumstances within Afghanistan, such agencies need to see musicians as custodians of an important cultural heritage, and as people needing special protection from forced repatriation and retribution by the Taleban.

FREMONT

Unlike Mashad which is very close to Afghanistan, Fremont is home to one of the most distant Afghan refugee com-

munities. In the San Francisco Bay area there are an estimated 60,000 Afghans, with about 15,000 in Fremont. They are predominantly educated people from the cities of Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad, and many of those who came as refugees had formerly worked for Western diplomatic, educational, cultural or aid agencies before the Communist coup of 1978.

Fremont stands in contrast to Mashad on all the points listed above: it is geographically distant, with a different language, religion, culture, customs and laws. The community does not live in fear of forcible repatriation; to the authorities the Afghans are perhaps just another group of immigrants to be eventually integrated into mainstream American society. They appear to be relatively successful economically; there are many Afghan-owned businesses, and the community recently built itself a large mosque.

However, Afghans have found it hard to adapt to life in the USA. There is a good deal of cultural misunderstanding, and Afghans find themselves dealing with officious social service agencies which promote a fear of transgressing unheard-of US laws, especially those regarding the welfare of children. There are inter-generational differences, with young Afghans becoming very Americanized, and problems with lack of respect for the older generation. There is an obsession with what is going on in Afghanistan and with trying to understand what went wrong when the Mujahideen coalition failed to secure peace after the fall of the Communists. The local Afghan radio station, Voice of Afghanistan Radio 24 Hours, has constant phone-ins from listeners who debate the latest news. International Immigrant Services in Fremont plays an important role in monitoring the

state of the community and helping individuals. A medical survey revealed a community with a lot of stress, mental problems, depression and a high death rate.

Among the refugees who went to the USA were a number of musicians, mostly singers, some of whom had been big stars in Afghanistan, such as Khyal, Zaland, Ferida Mahwash, Shah Wali Wali, Haidar Salim and his sister Salina. Typically, such singers were from an educated middle or even upper class urban background (in contrast to the musicians in Mashad, who were mainly from poorly educated hereditary musician families), and usually had had a strong link with Radio Afghanistan. In addition, in the USA there is a younger generation of musicians of amateur background, usually brought up in America and much influenced by American culture.

As in Mashad, the main venue for music-making is the wedding, a modernized version, like the weddings in Kabul pre-1978, with women and men mixed together, and everyone wearing Western dress. There are also concerts in expensive function rooms like those of the Radisson Hotel in Fremont. Afghan bands in Fremont show a considerable degree of acculturation. Traditional Afghan instruments like rubab, dutar and tanbur are hard to find in the USA. The central performer remains the (solo) singer but now instruments like keyboards with their built-in drum machines, and electric pianos, are used. These can be regarded as modernized extensions of the Indian harmonium. Such bands continue to use tabla drums. The musical style has also undergone some degree of westernization, with the introduction of simple harmonic principles borrowed from Western music.

In recent years there has also developed the practice of bringing celebrated

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refugee musicians over from Pakistan to make protracted concert tours in the US. These tend to be master musicians from the old musicians quarter in Kabul, such as Amir Mohammad, Rahim Bakhsh and Haji Hamahang. Promoting concerts like this was an Afghan business activity in the 1970s, especially in the month of Ramadan, with concerts every night in hotels, cafes and teahouses in cities like Herat.

The positive benefits of such concerts for the local community of Fremont are recognized by Afghan community leaders, such as Sher Alunad, Director of International Immigrant Services. He works not only with Afghans but with many different nationalities, and so has an interesting transcultural perspective. He sees music as an integrating force, bringing members of the community together and serving to maintain Afghan culture and identity. As he told me:

"Music brings unity to the people, old and young together, and helps us not to lose our identity. We Afghans have some differences but the concerts are the only times when we forget about everything. All people from different parts, different sects, we come and buy our tickets and go to the concerts."

In his view, some immigrant communities that have invested in maintaining their cultures have benefited greatly; the Afghans have not managed to do this very well, to which he attributes some of their health problems. He believes that music could provide a therapeutic role for individuals and tells the following anecdote to make the point. Two years earlier the singers Nagma and Mangal were over from Pakistan. One night they were invited to Sher Ahmad's home. Among the guests was the distinguished elderly Afghan historian and journalist Gol Ahmad Karzai, a great music lover. After dinner the musicians asked to play for him, and they performed till two in the morning. Karzai was so weak when he arrived that he had to be supported by two people; when he left he was walking on his own feet. Anyone familiar with the use of music therapy in palliative care in the West will find this a familiar example of the restorative power of music.

In recognition of the important role of music, International Immigrant Services has done what it can to establish a traditional Afghan music course to teach tabla and harmonium. They have secured the services of Ustad Asif Mahmood, a master musician from Kabul, normally resident in London. He stays in Fremont for extended periods to run Afghan music classes. Sher Ahmad's view is that great musicians are dying every day and if new ones are not

trained, Afghan music will disappear.

If only a few learn how to do it now, they can pass it on to others.

There may well be an element of wishful thinking here. Communities like Fremont which are far from Afghanistan need an expert assessment of their musical needs and how these are best served. The attempted preservation of 'traditional music' is unlikely to be effective in the long run. Musicians in Fremont need support and recognition for establishing a music that is both modernized and westernized, yet which remains distinctly Afghan. This should help them in forging a new Afghan-American identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Afghan music in Mashad and Fremont shows two rather different roles for music in refugee life. Spatially and culturally proximate, Iran provides a temporary safe haven for a refugee population that will in all likelihood return to Afghanistan, if albeit on a new basis of periodic sojourning to maximize benefits. Music here seems to be all about normalization, reassurance, ticking over, keeping things going through difficult times for a brighter future at home. In the USA, Afghan refugees have perhaps woken up to the probability that they are not going home and that they have got to make the most of what they have in America. Music provides one means through which to create a new identity as permanent citizens, as well as providing therapeutic experiences at individual and community levels.

NOTES

1. Reyes Adelaida *Songs of the Caged and Songs of the Free*. 1999. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
2. By music the Taleban mean the sounds of musical instruments, either alone or accompanying the human voice. Unaccompanied song is not classified as 'music'. The Taleban condone and broadcast on Radio Shariat (formerly Radio Afghanistan) recitation of the Holy Koran and various kinds of religious singing, including songs in Pashtu with religious texts and what can be identified as folksong-like melodies.
3. This musical heritage is a complex matter, bringing together elements of musical practice from several regional ethnic groups, with a strong input of North Indian classical music and music theory.
4. As shown in the film *Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan* (Rally J. 1985. London: Royal Anthropological Institute).
5. Lomax A 'Folk song style', *American Anthropologist*, 1959, 61 (6):927-954.
6. Lipson, J.G and Omidian P.A *Afghan Community Health Assessment San Francisco Bay Area*, 1993. California: Dept of Health Services.

* John Baily is Reader in Ethnomusicology, Goldsmiths College, University of London. He carried out ethnomusicological fieldwork in the cities of Herat and Kabul for two years in the 1970s, with further research on Afghan music in Pakistan, Iran, UK and USA. This is a preliminary report from the on-going project 'Music, identity and therapy in the Afghan transnational community.'

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Interview with ROXANNA ZARNEGAR

**Former Logistics Director of the
Olympic Games**

Shahrokh Ahkami



Roxanna Zarnegar discovered her first passion in life at a young age and nurtured it into a successful career as the Logistic Director of the Olympic Games.

Roxanna, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak with an extraordinary and successful young woman. Let's begin this interview with the usual questions, who is Roxanna and where did she come from?

I thank you for that compliment; my full name is Roxanna Zarnegar, born Tehran in 1971. I moved to the United States in 1978 with my mother and father and received my undergraduate degrees from C.W. Post University, NY in the United States. I completed my graduate education in Switzerland. It was there that I began to follow my dreams and passions. You see I was always interested in sports

as a child. In college and high school I played tennis, soccer, volleyball ... anything that was competitive and fun. When I left college I stopped playing but became interested in the process of how the sports industry worked in general. I wanted to know how world-sporting events were put together. I was fortunate to get connected with and began to work with a German company that managed the logistics for sporting events and exhibitions around the world. Since then I have worked very hard and put all my efforts in learning to understand how they set up and break down major sporting events of the world.

So logistics, I presume, is essential to the organization of the event?

Absolutely! Logistics controls just about everything, the movement of all cargo in and out of the city or country. When a new stadium is built for the games the materials needed are not always available in that venue, or for that matter in the country. So, the movement of materials such as metal and concrete, flowers and glass, uniforms, food, beverages, lighting, generators, and food products for the athletes into the Olympic Village are crucial. It was my position to manage this process.

And at the end of the games?

I get to manage the breakdown and return any of the items leased or not to be used in the future of the city.

This is very interesting because as spectators we take so much for granted. We turn on our television sets and everything is just there. What about politics does it play a big part in the Olympics?

Most definitely! You have to understand that when a city gets the bid for the Olympics for that period the city's infrastructure will change. For that reason, politicians get involved with the Organizational Committees. The presidents and COO's of the Olympic Committee often, if not involved in politics before, will end up in politics after serving on the committee. It seems to be a political stepping-stone. Getting back to the infrastructure, the laws of the city are more often than not modified for the duration of the games.

Explain to our readers the importance for a country to hold the games.

Well besides the financial aspects it is all about recognition. Let me explain this, years ago a study was done to determine the most recognized symbols in the world. The most recognized was the OK sign you make with your hands and the second, the five Olympic rings. So if your country, your business, your name could be associated with these symbols you were virtually guaranteed world wide recognition. The company I worked for wanted this global recognition and therefore paid for a sponsorship for the Olympics. This made us the official provider of all shipping and custom services of the Olympic games.

While we are on the subject of the rings what is it that they stand for?

The rings represent the five continents that compete in the Olympic games and the colors represent the color of the flags of the participating countries.

As spectators we take certain things for granted, I would venture to say that most do not know the history of the games can you explain this?

Of course. More than 100 years ago in Athens they revived the Olympics from games held more than two thousand years ago in ancient Olympia, located in southern Greece. After the war with the Romans the ancient games died out. In 1896 a French gentleman Mr. Pierre de Coubertain decided that there was a great felling of passion and camaraderie that can be generated from an Olympic Games. Accordingly he created a committee, the Organization Committee for the Olympic Games. Until today some of the operational processes used in the 1896 games

are still used today. This all led to the first Olympic Games of the new movement, 109 years ago. Since then, only one substitutional game has been held in Greece. The 2004 games were the first to come home to Greece since 100 years!

You were very young to be given such a tremendous task of Chief of Olympic Operations; you must have worked very hard to be selected for this difficult and prestigious position of Chief Operations for the Greek games.

One thing you can almost always count on is reward from hard work. In my case you are correct I worked diligently with my company. While employed with them in 1999, a position for project manager for the 2000 Olympic games became available. This position entailed the majority of logistics planning for the USA Sponsors, Suppliers and Athletes. Each country has a project manager and I was appointed project manager for the United States. The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games was my first taste of how the Olympics worked.

As project manager exactly what did you do?

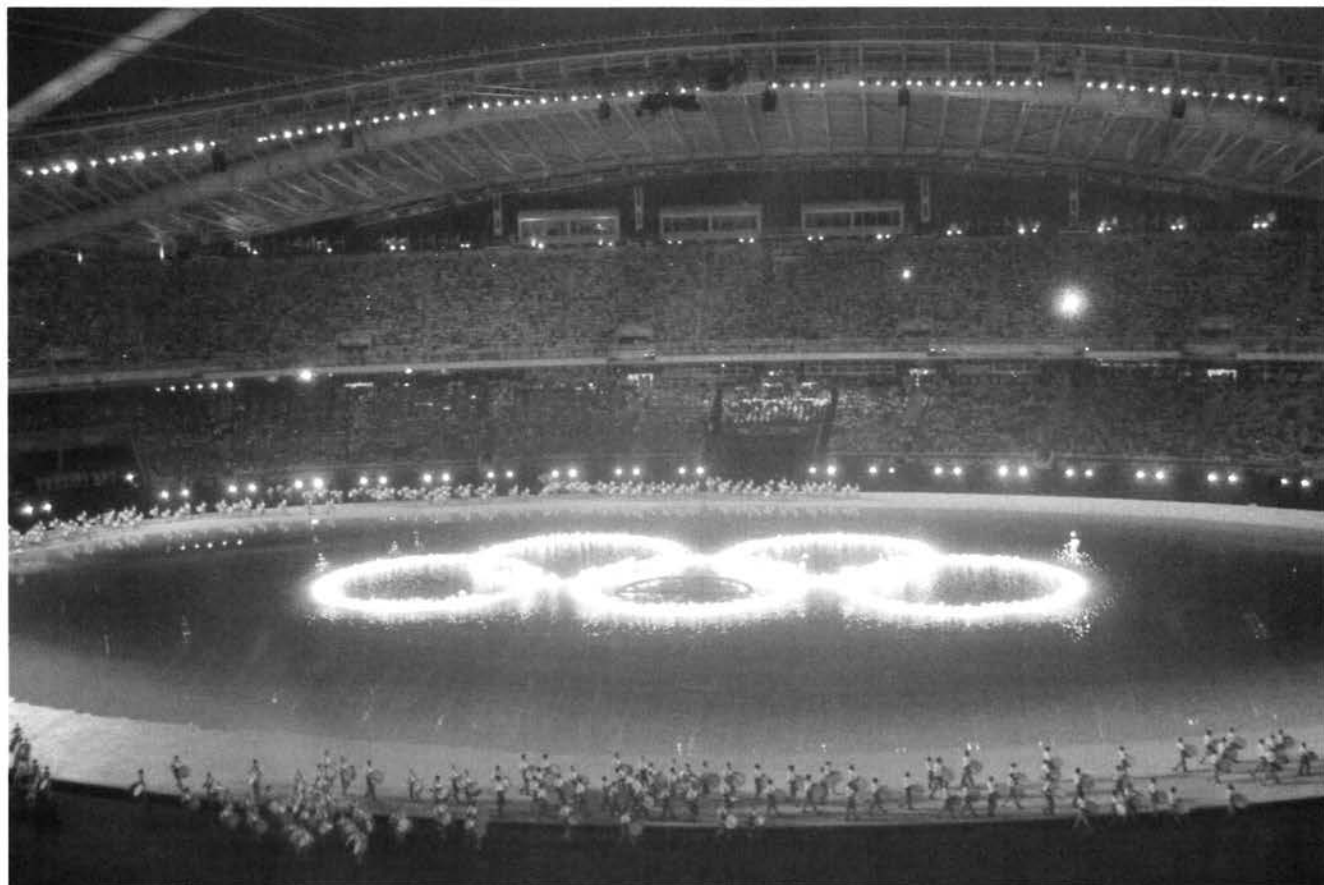
You plan and organize the movement of the raw materials, food products, supplies, and uniforms needed for the games. This usually occurs two and a half years before the actual games begin.

Moving to discuss specific games, as I am sure you remember the Atlanta games fell subject to a horrible scare with the bomb that went off killing a spectator. What was the mood of the organization committee in the planning of the next games?

The mood for Australia was ten times more energetic. This might have been because of Australia's culture and the fact that it is far removed from other super powers. It has a very relaxed atmosphere and as a result the Olympics were successful.

Was security any different?

Security is always an issue but the



games in Australia were pre 9/11 and security though a priority was not the number one concern. For Salt Lake City everything changed. Security was the major and number one issue. So important has the issue become that other security bodies such as the CIA, European Union and Scotland Yard, to name a few are brought in to determine security sensitive issues. Assessing the security issues of the city is of primary importance.

Do you have any involvement with the actual Olympic Villages?

Yes, part of my job includes building up the villages. There are approximately twenty-eight venues in a game. We are in charge of the logistical design of the venue for easy movement of trucks and material in and out of the village from raw supplies to the handing out of the sneakers supplied through China for Michael Jordan and the "Dream team."

Do you have any complaints in what you do?

Not really, just one small one. The traveling and living in many different parts of the world became tiresome. Still, the stress was nothing to compare to the feeling of joy in fulfilling a passion. I always believed that if you do what you love, the rest would come.

What changes did you notice with the Salt Lake City games besides the security?

As every organizing committee closes its term. A part of their responsibilities is "to pass the torch" so to speak to the next city. With every city comes mistakes; with every Olympic Games comes the transfer of knowledge in how to do it even better next time.

How do you decide what is needed and what is not?

Well you first look around and ascertain what you need and how much of it is locally available and what will have to be imported. For instance even though Salt Lake is noted for the high amount of snow it receives there is always a possibility that there won't be enough. We therefore had to bring in special snow making machines from Canada. Salt Lake city had one of

the best snow in years and ironically, the snow making machines were not needed. When the games were over they were shipped back.

Are you saying that the items you bring in for the games are returned at the end?

For the most part yes! Most of the items used for the games are leased right down to the stadium chairs and if the venue does not anticipate further use they go back to the sponsor or supplier.

Let's move onto the games in Greece. How did they differ from the others?

Well, I do not think I have to tell you that the culture in Greece is very different from the other countries. Time is not of great importance, a trait that is typical in a Mediterranean country. They are more laid backed and relaxed. When a city is awarded the Olympics, they are given about seven years to prepare. Preparation includes building a stadium, transportation, security, and villages. In Greece they did not use every moment of those seven years to plan and build. Instead, things didn't get moving until about two or three years out from the start date. We were nervous but the Greeks' work better under pressure. It got completed and it was beautiful. On top of everything the Greeks turned around and told the world "you see, you worried about nothing." I love them for that!

Can you tell us about your favorite memory of the Olympics you worked on?

That would be hard because each offered a unique experience. But, I must say Greece was special because my parents and my brother came. We attended the opening ceremonies together and it was the first time they got to really see where the passion comes from. I will never forget the look on my mother's face. It was very special for me to sit next to her and enjoy this unique moment in time. You should have seen my family cheer for the athletes, for a brief moment I think they felt like kids again!

Can you explain the significance of the torch and the relay regarding the torch?

Well the torch was did not exist in the ancient games. It was not introduced until 1936 at the Berlin games. At these games a prominent German athlete was given a torch like apparatus and asked to go to Olympia, the site of the original games. At Olympia there were several maidens who commenced a ceremony where they called out to Prometheus, the god of fire, to begin the games. There is a huge silver caldron made of aluminum that sits in the sun at the ancient stadium. After the maidens complete their monologue they bring the torch apparatus to the caldron and place it inside. The reflection from the sun plus gas causes the torch to ignite and marks the beginning of the Olympic games. The first runner then takes the torch and starts its journey to the destination city. Before leaving the ancient grounds of Olympia the first runner stops at the grave of Pierre de Coubertain in respect for his passion. Mr. Coubertain had requested that upon his death his heart be carried to the ancient grounds of Olympia and buried. There is small monument where his heart is buried.

The course usually takes the torch through the cities that have hosted the games. Those who are selected to carry the torch are chosen from special achievements either in sport or in culture or humanity.

The torch relay for the Greek games was exceptional because it was the first time that the relay covered the five continents. When the torch had to fly to another country it was placed in a specially designed fire resistant container, one to protect the flame from ever going out. It is a great superstition that the flame, once lit, MUST remain lit until the close of the games.

The torch is specially designed in for each games. The Athens torch was a design that was meant to resemble the famous Olive Branch of Greece. They are always limited in edition and the edition made reflects the number of runners who will run with it.

Did you run?

No, unfortunately I did not have that honor.

We got sidetracked with special moments and I would like to return to that subject for a moment. Are there any other significant moments you

would like to share with our readers?

That would be every moment. That is the beauty of the games. The games travel, because of this, each country brings its own memory and experience. Each country's culture is unique therefore making each Olympic Games unique.

What would you say was the greatest obstacle for you in working with the Olympics?

TIME, you feel like you are always running out of time and there is a definite deadline, called the opening ceremonies!

You have had an exciting professional life thus far and I am sure that this will continue but now I would if you are in agreement ask you to tell us about the private side, the softer side of Roxanna.

Certainly. It is interesting that you refer to my soft side. The Olympic experience actually enhanced my soft side bringing out my passion. The private softer side of me likes to take life slow. I do not like to plan my day but rather see where the day takes me. My soft side has little negotiation or pre-planning. I love to enjoy the day, see the sights, enjoy great company with family and friends. Actually my personal life is very different from my professional side.

Do you still work with the Olympics?

No I feel I have satisfied that dream and have taken a job with Christie's, the auction house. This should allow me more balance in my life.

I wanted to tell you earlier that you have a beautiful name, Roxanna and it is both popular in the Persian and American culture.

Thank you! It is also popular in the Greek culture. I found that out when I began to study the ancient history of Greece and Persian ancient culture, which is my new hobby. I am passionate for knowledge about these countries and wonder if it came from my experience with the games plus the history shared by Persian and ancient Greece.

Do you have other hobbies?

I have given up my competitive sport edge and replaced it with less strenuous activities and hobbies such as studying art, reading and music. I love all kinds of music and what I listen to usually reflects my mind set for the day.

You spoke of your job with Christies that means you will be working with another Iranian developed company E-bay.

You are right but fortunately for me the division I work for is very different from the E-bay the public knows. I, unlike the bidders and shippers for E-bay online get the wonderful experience of seeing and touching the master art works and antiquities of the world. It is truly unbelievable to see these pieces outside of a museum! And, the amount of money in the bidding far surpasses anything I have seen on E-bay. There is no comparison. One piece I saw recently was valued at six million with an end bid of twenty-seven million.

I can only imagine! What does the future hold for Roxanna?

I hope to continue to find a joy for life every day. I want to enjoy every moment I have. I want to share my time with my family and also hope to find that special one to love.

Earlier you stated that you left Iran at the age of six can you remember anything of your childhood in Iran?

I remember certain things like where we would shop for food and toys and also our apartment and my grandmother's house, she had an amazing house, as she is still an amazing woman. I can learn a great deal about life from her. Other than that I really don't remember much. I am however, planning a trip there next year.

As an Iranian American you have been very successful, how do you see the future for Iranians living abroad in other countries?

I believe that our future is already underway. Persians outside of Iran have established themselves in so many profes-

sions and have gained a good reputation because of their intelligence, patriotism and work ethics. Persians regardless of where they live have a zest for life unlike other people I have seen in other countries I have traveled. I believe they are the best and it is not because I am one of them!

Do you have any words you would like to say to our young readers?

I am still too young for words of wisdom! But, there is one thing I always remind myself of: In all you do, whatever you do, DO NOT focus only on the end result. If you do this you are apt to miss so much of your life and it is the journey of life more than the end that is the best part of the experience. It is not in the victory or the defeat in which passion grows, it is in the journey. Enjoy your life everyday.

I am looking at the walls of your apartment and see a picture of Jessie Owens the great athlete. Are you a fan of his?

He was an exceptional man and had a significant impact on the Olympics not only because of his athletic achievements but also because of what he contributed to the games as a person. You see the Olympics; despite the competitive nature is a movement of friendship. This picture contains one of the memorable quotes by an Olympic athlete; Jessie says, "I can win a thousand more medals that will never replace the friendships I have made in these Olympic games." In this quote he was referring to one German athlete he was competing against in the long jump in 1936. The German was winning and Jessie was fighting hard to hold onto second place let alone win. Before Jessie's last jump the German took him to the side and told him that he may jump better if he used another technique, the German showed him a better technique. Jessie took this information and applied it to his last jump; the result was that he won the gold, beating the German who helped him. Since that day they became best friends.

So they are both real Heroes!

We are all Heroes in one way or another; it all depends on how we embrace each situation. We all have a Jesse Owens moment in our lives don't you think? ■