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From the Editor's Desk

Due to circumstances and events that occurred around the world over the last few months, choosing the subject for this editorial was a difficult decision. Something happened, however, that made me reflect back to the birth of this magazine and the reasons for its inception. Considering the headaches, expenses, doubtful financial reward and time that it would take to launch **Persian Heritage**, most of my acquaintances thought that I was possessed. I spent many sleepless nights wondering if I had the courage and the strength to take on this responsibility; a responsibility that would cause this very "opinionated" man to remain neutral in presenting our articles and interviews for print. So many exceptional Iranians have worked tirelessly in an effort to preserve the integrity of Iran and the culture of Persia. They did so without being concerned with a persons race, religion or political persuasion. Could I follow in their footsteps? For this magazine to be a success, the answer to this question had to be a definitive "YES". Anything short of YES, would result in this magazine being associated with a variety of groups or religions, making it just another political or religious forum, and not a true representation of our culture. I thank those who convinced me to go forward. I thank those who have supported our efforts. And, I thank my dear colleagues for their dedication in helping to make **Persian Heritage** a success.

And I now know the subject on which to write.

While in school, as a child, I had a classmate, who was considered to be mentally challenged. During exams we would pair up with another student to prepare for the tests. One year I was paired with this young boy. After one hour of conversation I made a revelation. This boy was not "simple" at all. He was, in fact, brilliant and ahead of the rest of his classmates on the world and life. I could not hold myself back and asked him, "You are brilliant. Why do you allow others to see differently? We need

to correct this false perception they have of you!" His answer was as surprising as my revelation of his brilliance. It was a statement that remains strong in my heart. "Shahrokh, I beg you not to tell anyone. You have been the only one, after so many years to recognize the real me. Let the others remain in their ignorance and naivete. I know who and what I am. I know my values and can easily live without false friendships." This is a statement I wish I had the courage to practice.

And so . . .

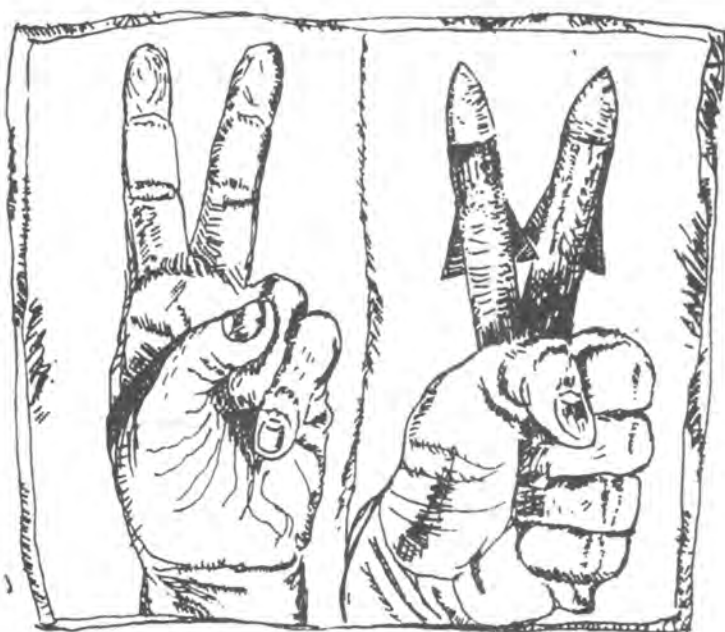
Over the last four years, we have picked our articles and interviewees on the basis of their content and contribution to society, not on their political or religious beliefs. When we interviewed physicians, it was because of their achievements and contributions to the world; a painter or poet was interviewed for their talents; directors, producers and writers for their success and their journey getting there. Their political or religious beliefs were never considered, let alone known. I have always believed these matters to be personal. There is a time and place to discuss such matters. But an individual's decision to decline to be part of such a discussion is their right and must be respected. **Persian Heritage** does not have the time or desire nor is it the proper forum.

ALAS! Regardless of how careful, benign or politically and religiously neutral we try to be, there are organizations and individuals who feel the need to associate this magazine with a religious or political cause or group. Some Hezbollah's have labeled us Bahia's some Bahia's, Hezbollah's; some Moslems associate us exclusively to the Jews and the Jews to the Moslems. We are Communists, Fascists, Socialist, Democrats, Republicans, Capitalists. It has also been said that we have a staff of 100, make millions of dollars and own our own cultural center, Mosque, Synagogue and school. I can go on for paragraphs listing all the things the

magazine and its staff have been called or associated with. As for the truth we are and represent all of them. Because together they make up this great Persian community. A community with a culture to be proud of.

Again, I believe an individual's religious and personal beliefs are just that, personal. But as the Editor of this magazine and in an effort to keep the enemy of our culture and this magazine (and others like us) at bay, I will tell you who and what I am. (Despite the fact that this would be against the statement of my learned classmate). I have no one political preference and have no political agenda. I am a Moslem. As a Moslem, I respect all others views and beliefs. I thank the readers who support us, challenge praise and debate our articles. Without you we are nothing but lifeless pages and, therefore, hope that you will continue to be part of **Persian Heritage**. For those whose actions are adverse, for those who seek to destroy us, be it out of jealousy or hatred, I ask that you reevaluate the credibility of your source. Before you voice your opinion, research your information. Make an educated conclusion rather than voice the simplified opinion of another. In the end this saves everyone from embarrassment and repercussions of being falsely accused. When a fact is inaccurately reported and repeated, it becomes a distorted fact. A distorted fact can be more destructive than the most powerful of weapons.

Shahrokh Alavi



Arab-Iranian Relations: Present and Future

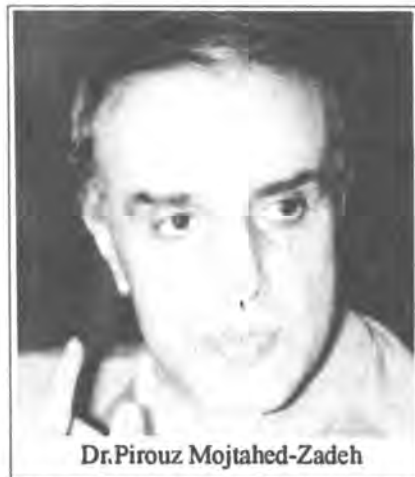
Paper presented by:

Dr. Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh

To: International Seminar on Arab/Iranian Relations

London = Wednesday 28 April 1999

Organized jointly by Arab Research Center and Society for Iranian Territorial Studies



Dr. Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh

Introduction

I must point out first that I am here to speak as an independent academic who wants to examine briefly the possibilities and difficulties helping or hindering expansion of Arab-Iranian relations. Since I came to this country to continue with my studies in early 1970s, I became familiar with the Western notion that good relations between Iranians and Arabs are doomed owing to the scale of

historical, geographical, political and some cultural differences that exist between them. I never believed this to be the reality of the situation. These differences do exist between the Iranians and the Arabs as they may exist among any other two nations or groups of nations, but propagation of the idea that Arabs and Iranians are natural enemies because of these differences can only facilitate progress of the policy of divide and rule in our region.

The bulk of Arab-Iranian differences do not exceed in volume or complexity of those that existed among the British, the French and the Germans for a long time. If these European nations have learned to give their common interests priority over their mutual differences, certainly the Arabs and the Iranians can also learn to give their common interests and common bonds priority over their mutual differences.

Past Experience and Future Prospects

The most complexed differences among the Arabs and the Iranians occur in the region of the Persian Gulf, where common historical, geographical, cultural and strategic bonds between the two outweighs any scale of differences and should override all disputes in the region. Here economic life of all states depends vitally on security of the region. These fundamental interests and strategic sensitivities common to all should work as a regional mechanism bringing regional nations together in an arrangement for cooperation based on a regional balance of power working as the natural guarantor of such an arrangement. This mechanism does not function at the present time mainly because most of the regional players put their trust exclusively on extra-regional protection as a result of what can be described as the force of habit.

Arabs and Iranians have in recent years experienced a barrage of propaganda in the Persian Gulf

accusing regional states of entertaining ill intentions against each other which can result in the only conclusion that salvation is to be sought in extra-regional domination of the affairs of the region, at the expense of sacrificing regional self-respect and self-reliance. Reflection on this situation necessitates posing the question whether extra-regional powers have done anything at all to help regional countries solve their differences and create a homogeneous regional arrangement for peace and cooperation, or have they constantly been engaged in promoting political and territorial disputes in order to create and maintain regional justification for continued military domination of the region and political interference in the affairs of the region. Such a reflection needs examining of the three periods of the recent history during which foreign powers managed affairs of the region; the littoral states managed their own affairs; and foreign powers returned to take control of the affairs of the region.

1- The Era of Pax-Britannica

During their colonial presence in the Persian Gulf, the British, approached issues of territoriality and states relationships in the region with a great deal of inconsistency. The natural outcome of such an inconsistent approach could not have been but numerous territorial and boundary disputes in the region. Disputes of this nature inherited from the colonial era are the living proof of how the British gave a territory to one state, without complete regard for potentially compelling evidence supporting claims of the other state. British researchers of modern times argue that this was because British interests would be more closely identified with those of one at the time, rather than those of the other and the vice versa. They believe that British treatment of territorial disputes in the Persian Gulf was based on the policy of leaving the matters alone as long as they caused no problem. This might have been the case, but the reality is that siding with one party at

one time and with the other at another effectively provided them with the regional justification for the continuation of colonial rule and the resultant conflicts divided regional peoples and made British rule in the region easy.

2- The Post-Colonial Era

Territorial and political differences in the Persian Gulf have for a long period of time prevented proper and lasting Arab-Iranian cooperation in the region. At the same time, in any emergency involving the overall interests of both sides, cooperation between Iran and her Arab neighbors materialized especially in an atmosphere free of extra-regional domination. The best example of this is the period between 1968 and 1978; a ten-year period of Arab-Iranian cooperation, which was prompted by a sense of emergency arising from the British government's announcement in January 1968 of its intention to withdraw its forces from east of Suez and hand the safeguarding of security in the Persian Gulf to its littoral powers, an announcement which coincided with US President Richard Nixon's declaration of the doctrine of non-interference in regional conflicts, leaving regional security around the world to friendly regional players. The urgency of regional cooperation in the Persian Gulf for maintenance of peace and security thus became an issue of paramount significance. Iran and her Arab neighbors promptly realized that promotion of cooperation needed settlement of differences which, in turn, created the necessary goodwill in the region required for the settlement of territorial differences. This goodwill was created as a result of meetings and agreements among leaders of Iran and Saudi Arabia in 1965 and 1968, when they decided on extensive cooperation among regional states and Muslim nations. It was under the influence of this state of strategic urgency on the one hand and regional goodwill on the other, that many and complex border issues were settled. Two of the most complicated border issues settled in this period were those of continental shelf

boundaries settlement of 1968 between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the 1971 understanding between Iran and Sharjah on Abu Musa Island. These were followed by a number of settlements such as; Continental Shelf Boundary Settlement of 1969 between Iran and Qatar; 1971 between Iran and Bahrain; 1975 between Iran and Oman and the river and inland boundary settlement between Iran and Iraq in that same year. Maritime boundaries were also settled between Iran and Dubai and between Qatar and Abu Dhabi in the same period.

Other manifestation of Arab-Iranian understanding and cooperation in the period 1968-1978 include Iran's internationally praised withdrawal of historical claims to Bahrain and her swift and highly effective response in 1973 to Oman's call for assistance in defusing a Marxist-separatist conspiracy against her territorial integrity. This swift and extensive military assistance eradicated the 12 year old armed struggle of communist separatists in Dhufar province of Oman in a short period of under three years. It is noteworthy that while Iran was busy defending Oman's territorial integrity, almost all Arabs attacked her on the accusation of having territorial ambitions in Oman. The flame of this fire, fanned by communist and dubious Western sources alike, remained ablaze against Iran even after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, in spite of the fact that one of the initial foreign policy undertakings of the Islamic Republic of Iran was to withdraw the remaining military units from Oman. These attacks reflected a wider scale of growing mistrusts between the Iranians and the Arabs in the region; a rekindled fire which was fueled by various sources in the West, especially after it became clear that Arab-Iranian cooperation in other areas, such as in OPEC international oil policies, effectively tipped the balance of political influence, in the international geopolitical system in favor of the regional nations, the Arabs and the Iranians.

3- The Wars and the Onset of Pax-Americans

Iraq's invasion of Iran brought US naval fleets into the region and its occupation of Kuwait provided the necessary excuses for the establishment of permanent US military presence in the Persian Gulf. This development coincided with the rapid changes taking place in the global geopolitical system, which increased the significance of Western control of the Persian Gulf in the emerging global uncertainty. This is a new status quo the continuation of which needs to feed on continued disputes among regional states.

Conclusion

It is significant to recognize the fact that Iranians and Arabs succeeded in realizing regional balance and cooperation in the 1970s mainly because both sides enjoyed, at the time, goodwill and friendship of Western powers. It is equally important to recognize the legitimate interests of the West in the continued safe flow of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf. Similarly a return to the period of understanding and cooperation within the framework of any arrangement will need the goodwill of the West by being reassured that its legitimate interests will be safeguarded. Important is also the fact that regional goodwill is the requisite condition needed for solving differences. Alternatively, promotion of disputes at the expense of destroying the scope of goodwill and cooperation in the region, the way the United Arab Emirates, for instance, is doing at present, will of course be counterproductive and can only result in the continuation of regional justification for extra-regional domination which itself is a source of insecurity. Abu Dhabi does not seem to pay enough attention to the fact of the furious way in which the UAE pursues its territorial disputes with Iran, is in practice harming all prospects of improvement in the overall Arab-Iranian relations, needed for the expansion of goodwill for the settlement of UAE's disputes with Iran and all other areas of differences between the Iranians and the Arabs.

Considering the fact that the promotion of friendship and goodwill is a requisite condition for the settlement of differences among nations, any attempt for making such a development conditional to the settlement of differences can only represent a determination to prevent regional cooperation and that can not be in the interest of the Arabs and the Iranians.

Against this particular negative instance, the overall prospect of Arab-Iranian relations is positive and a mutual understanding between the Iranians and the Arabs are on the increase on the basis of constructive grounds for peace and cooperation. Iranian presidential election of June 1997 marked a new beginning in these relations. At present, Iran's relations with Oman, Qatar, Syria and Kuwait are good and cordial. Egypt and Iran have, for some time now, been trying to revive diplomatic ties. This is one of the key elements in expanding Arab-Iranian relations. Another being Saudi-Iranian relations which are improving. The recent Saudi-Iranian cooperation in the rescuing the oil prices once again proved how effective Arab-Iranian cooperation can be for the entire region. Bahrain, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and others in the Arab World have also been working with Iran in the past two years or so for improving their relations. These developments give rise to the hope that the region is moving into an era of lasting Arab-Iranian cooperation for peace and prosperity on the basis of regional self-respect and regional self-reliance.

Some of the points raised in the seminar by Dr Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh in response to the questions put to him by the audience

First of all when there was a mention of Iran's suggestion from 1968 to 1973 that a collective arrangement with the participation of all littoral states of the Persian Gulf to the exclusion of all others for the defense of peace and security of the region which is even now the official position of Iran in this regard, Dr. Harthi of Saudi Shoura said that it was

not welcomed by the Arabs of the region, because they did not and do not trust Iran to enter into such an arrangement with her. Yet, when it is explained that this was the reason that forced Iran to act alone in maintaining peace and security in the Persian Gulf, the gentleman says that Iran did it because of hegemonial intentions. Well, I wonder what does Iran have to do to make you happy. If Iran became the bigger actor in the Persian Gulf in the 1970s, it was clearly because of non-cooperation of the regional Arabs which forced Iran to act alone and take the initiatives in her own hands. By rejecting the offer of cooperation and criticising Iran for acting alone, don't you think you seem to have difficulty in accepting Iran's geographical presence in the region and her share of interests and responsibilities?

Dr. El-Rokn said that in 1929 Iran offered to take the case of her claims to international arbitration; why does she not she do that now by taking the issue of the "three islands" to the International Court of Justice? Well, I think the answer to this is quite clear: first, it was because the British at the time refused discussing Iran's claims and rights to these islands, whereas today we are saying that we are prepared to discuss to contraversion; second, Iran was then doing everything in its power to re-establish its sovereignty rights to the three islands in question. These endeavours took 68 years from 1903 to 1971. Having achieved its goal and regained sovereignty of the Tunbs and Abu Musa Islands, what is left for Iran to do, but the same things that it did during 68 years period? What logic is there to make a nation to continue with the kind of efforts it made to regain sovereignty of its occupied territory after succeeding in defeating the occupation and regaining its rights to the territory concerned?

Dr. Mokhtar referred to the withdrawal of Iran's claims to Bahrain in 1970 as a controversial matter. I do not see any controversy in that. I wonder how pleased the Bahrainis can be to hear this from their fellow

Arabs. What had happened then was that when Tehran realized that its claims to Bahrain was increasingly becoming impractical and has tuned into an instrument in the hands of the British and ultra-nationalists of Iraq and other places to be used for evil in the region, harming every prospect of Arab-Iranian cooperation for peace and prosperity, bravely faced the fact. It took a great deal of bravery to face that fact, and I wonder there is any lesson in that for some of our Arab friends in the Persian Gulf to learn.

Reference was made on several occasions that Iran should join UAE in referring the issue of UAE claims to the three Iranian islands to international tribunal and that if such arbitration gave the islands to Iran, we (the UAE) will say good for you. Firstly, the UAE and some Arab States took the case to the UN Security Council in December of 1971 and that international tribunal decided that there was no case to argue and close the file, but the UAE did not say "good for you" to Iran and still asks Iran to go to international tribunals on the same issue once again, which cannot be a reasonable request. Secondly, going to international arbitration is normally the last resort after it has become clear that all other options have been exhausted. Direct discussion is the first option which the UAE does not seem to be able to contemplate in spite of all the fuss it makes about negotiations. I think we are mature enough to talk out our problems among ourselves by direct discussion in a proper manner not like the 1996 Doha show staged by the UAE. While the Iranian delegation

was in the negotiating room waiting for their UAE counterparts to continue with the talks, the UAE delegation was giving press conference outside the room declaring the talks having collapsed. why? Because the Iranians had a case to discuss. No! I do not mean that kind of exhibition. I mean a real and sincere talk aimed at solving the matter not for scoring points for domestic, regional or international consumption. Then there is the option of friendly third party governments' mediation which not only is not being considered by the UAE, but Abu Dhabi is doing its best to get the other states of the region - friendly to both - involved in its propaganda campaign against Iran thus trying to destroy their friendly relations with Iran.

As for other arguments, we must realize that we cannot enter the arena of academic debates by being selective in our choice and presentation of the facts. Should we decide to ignore or twist the facts of history and geography, specially motivated by ultra-nationalistic sentiments such as changing historical names of geographical places, we have only conducted our arguments on the basis of wishful thinking without any credible foundation. In this context, one must be prepared to face the facts however bitter they may turn to be. Facts of history and geography concerning the issue in question must be established impartially first and then the argument can be shaped on the basis of and in the framework of the established facts.

In their arguments the speakers from the United Arab Emirates not only do not recognize the historical

facts that Iran has been a territorial and then a nation state since 550 BC, but they do not seem to be interested to recognize Iran's geographical existence in the region; a country which has in its legal and practical possession the northern half of the Persian Gulf; that Iran was the only state or government in the eastern half of the Persian Gulf until the arrival in the region of Great Britain in the 1820s; and that the British began the process of creating the emirates from the non-territorial tribes of the region and acted as their protector and legal guardian in their foreign relations and territorial affairs; that the British decided legally the political fate and territorial shapes and border lines of the emirates and in late 1971 put them together as a federation called the United Arab Emirates before leaving the region. If these basic facts of history are not heeded by the United Arab Emirates, then the basic requirement for a common ground to set the agenda for any kind of argument does not exist.

It is in this situation that one can say that although it may be understandable that the United Arab Emirates might want to use the case of its territorial claims against Iran to create a sense of nationhood throughout its federation as territorial claims have often been used for such a purpose in the past, Abu Dhabi's endeavor to turn this issue into a cause celebre at the regional level by trying to hijack every meeting of the Arabs and the Iranians through manipulation and playing on national sentiments of others can only be interpreted as attempts based on lack of sincerity, for sabotaging the process of improvement in Arab-Iranian relations, which will only delight extra-regional forces thriving on any cause which may divide the Arabs and Iranians in the region and make foreign domination easy.

To demonstrate its sincerity the United Arab Emirates ought to help improvement in Iran's relations with the Arabs which, in turn, will create the condition of goodwill necessary for a peaceful settlement of differences between any two states.

Commentary

Dear Editor

I am sure you are aware that last week the speaker of the house John Dennis Hastert in a ceremony hosted by large group of Arabs refereed to the Persian Gulf as Arabian Gulf. This was reported in the *Washington Times*. Please send a letter to Mr. Hastert at Capital Hill to strongly object to his wrongdoing. Mr. Hastert, in order to please his hosts who are Arabs, broke the international law. All Iranians are asked to send letters with their names, address, and occupation mentioned on the letter.

Please forward this letter to your friends.

Simin Habibian

PH

PH

Should The Persian Alphabet Change?



By: *Ardeshir Lotfalian*

A tendency has grown among a small group of Iranian intellectuals and some elements of the Iranian diaspora to replace the system of writing, in use in Iran since early Islamic times, by Latin. This tendency is based on two different arguments. There are those who believe that we should use Latin instead of Arabic characters, because that would facilitate learning the spelling of Persian words. There are many words in Persian which sound the same or are similar, but are spelled differently. This is rooted in the nature of our system of writing which in some cases uses more than one character to represent the same sound. The second group is represented by those who prefer Latin to the Arabic alphabet because they believe that such a change would promote Persian language and literature in Western societies.

Notwithstanding such a tendency, the prevailing opinion among Iranians is that changing the present writing system is a major cultural event which only can take place in response to a national demand in a most profound nature. It is true that replacing Arabic characters by Latin may facilitate some of the processes involved in mastering Persian literacy. But this could hardly be considered a criterion on the basis of which such a major change be recommended. The proponents of this opinion stress that the current system of writing in Iran has proved throughout the ages to be efficient and effective. It has allowed masters of Persian literature such as Ferdowsi, Khayam, Mowlavi, Saadi and Hafez to create a number of masterpieces which are among the finest literary products of human history. We should also remember that people find language learning easy or difficult only when they compare it with another language learning experience. In other words the issues

related to the difficulties of a language as an entity to be mastered, usually surface within the framework of a second or a foreign language learning experience. They remind us that millions of people have acquired or continue to acquire literacy in Iran without being conscious of, or complaining about problems relating to spelling. Rather such complaints have been voiced by a small group of Iranians who have learned or try to learn Persian as a second language. These are the very same people who try to promote the idea of replacing Arabic characters by Latin. But actualizing such an idea, according to its opponents, would amount to imposing a demand concerning a small minority upon a whole nation.

The argument presented by the second group is equally rejected by the opponents of latinization of the Persian alphabet. The second group believes that the present system of writing of Persian language should change in order to make the language and its glorious literature more accessible to the people of Western countries. But the counter argument is that the present alphabet like other Persian cultural properties is an inherent component of the nation's cultural identity. Events during the last decades in so-called third world countries especially those which led to the Iranian revolution of 1979, have amply demonstrated the fact that unconditional westernization of a culture may prove fatal to any agenda designed to develop and refine that culture. This is especially true when the transference of Western culture means to affect the properties of a third world culture which are related to deep rooted traditions and indirectly to religion. For example, it is reminded that the writing system presently in use by Persians grew out of Kufic script that is to say the same script which was used in early Islamic times for copies of the Koran. Thus, according to this theory, the Persian alphabet has its roots in the national identity which is least likely to undergo any drastic change.

But didn't the Iranians try to foster the growth of the Persian language in early Islamic times to replace Arabic? Yes, but according to those who believe in the safeguard of the present writing system, that move was only possible as a result of a very strong sense of nationalism, which dominated the entire population. Currently there is no such national support for the changing of the Persian alphabet to Latin at the present time.

They add that even if the demand for changing the alphabet had the support of the whole nation, such a change could be disastrous with regard to some of the Persian cultural glories, including calligraphy. According to this opinion, "Transliteration" of the Persian classic poems into Latin would be an attempt to remove them a step from their original versions. It is true that the Persian alphabet can be perfectly translated into Latin characters, making it possible for those who are not familiar with the Persian system of writing to read Persian texts with accuracy and precision. But it shouldn't be forgotten that poetry results from a very special treatment of language. That is to say poetic meanings are not only read in the semantic domain of language but also in the sound system and the shapes of the characters used in a poem. This is especially true about Persian poetry because at the time that poets like Hafez, were creating their masterpieces, the art of handwriting had been brought under a measure of discipline in Iran. Rules of calligraphy required good shaping which in turn concerned relative sizes, roundness and straightness, tallness and shortness of letters, thinness or thickness of strokes. Thus poets whose work were written by prominent calligraphers had great respect for each character, the shape of which allowed them to express those poetic meanings which could not find expression in the semantic domain or in the sound patterns employed in each work. Transliteration of Persian poems into Latin characters may very well maintain the meanings of the words and sounds. But as it is argued by opponents of change, it will fail to convey the poetic values which are expressed by the shape of characters. Thus replacing Persian characters by Latin, according to this argument, would have disastrous consequences with regard to Persian

poetry which is the most refined property of Iranian culture.

Replacing Persian characters, in the opinion of this group, would also put an end to the act of calligraphy. Works of the leading masters have paved the way for the development of distinctive styles in the art of calligraphy throughout the ages, allowing calligraphers to create some of the most beautiful pieces of good handwritings. Calligraphy especially has flourished in Iran during the last decades, when an increasing number of young artists have made innovative attempts to add new dimensions to the art of good writing. Thus, changing the present system of writing would be a double loss with regard to the art of calligraphy. Furthermore, it would make the existing works meaningless to the future generations.

Finally, the defenders of status quo believe that another area to be affected by changing the Persian alphabet would be the Iranian architecture in which calligraphic ornamentation has been an essential component as demonstrated by inscriptions placed on facades, walls and portals of mosques, shrines and important secular buildings.

* * *

In spite of these arguments and notwithstanding the stiff resistance that the defenders of Persian cultural and literary values are displaying in the face of all attempts for changing the alphabet, the partisans of the change have not disarmed. One of the last efforts in this direction is the publication of a book, entitled, "Farsi, Khayam". Anoushirvan Khosshkish, the author of the book has set a number of rules for the latinization of the Persian alphabet. The author claims that with the application of this alphabet, those who speak and understand Persian but can not read and write the Arabic characters, in matter of few hours could surmount this handicap. In guise of proof for seriousness of his claim, the author has presented the famous "Rubaiyat Khayam" in his proposed new alphabet, accompanied by English and French translations of the Rubaiyat.

Francis Richard, Chief Curator of Oriental Manuscripts at the French National Library, in a preface to this book has supported "the enterprise". According to Mr. Richard: "Once the rules of the game are accepted, i.e., the

simple rules of transcribing modern Persian sounds into Latin are understood the reader feels quite at ease and finds it refreshing to read a familiar language in an unexpected script." Mr. Richard's observation on this subject continues as follows: "Is the Persian culture attached to an alphabet? Not necessarily, because Persian while written in Arabic, is also written in Hebrew, Syriac and Cyrillic scripts. Would this present attempt not provide access to their own literature to thousands of young Iranians born and educated far away from their homeland, in English, French and German speaking environments? As calligraphic masterpieces attest, Arabic writing is part of the Persian civilization. But learning Arabic script is arduous and often frustrating. The difficulties of the Arabic script discourage many overseas Iranians to go on learning about their culture."

The opinion of a foreign orientalist should not of course be considered as a green light for the replacement of Persian alphabet by Latin. But in his argument there are certain points that may deserve attention.

What can be said in all fairness in guise of the conclusion is that the latinization of the Persian alphabet is an idea which seems to have little chance to be followed in Iran, the land where the Persian language is born and presently spoken by a population, where the number presently exceeds 60 million. But today, the strong presence of Iranians abroad after the 1979 revolution and the risk of alienation of a new generation of Iranian immigrants which receive their education in language other than Persian, from their cultural heritage, may justify some attention to this idea and perhaps its application in a limited scope, outside of Iran. This action should only take place with the purpose of providing a means of linkage and communication between the new generation of Iranians in foreign countries and the great culture of their parents and ancestors.

PH

Persian Heritage

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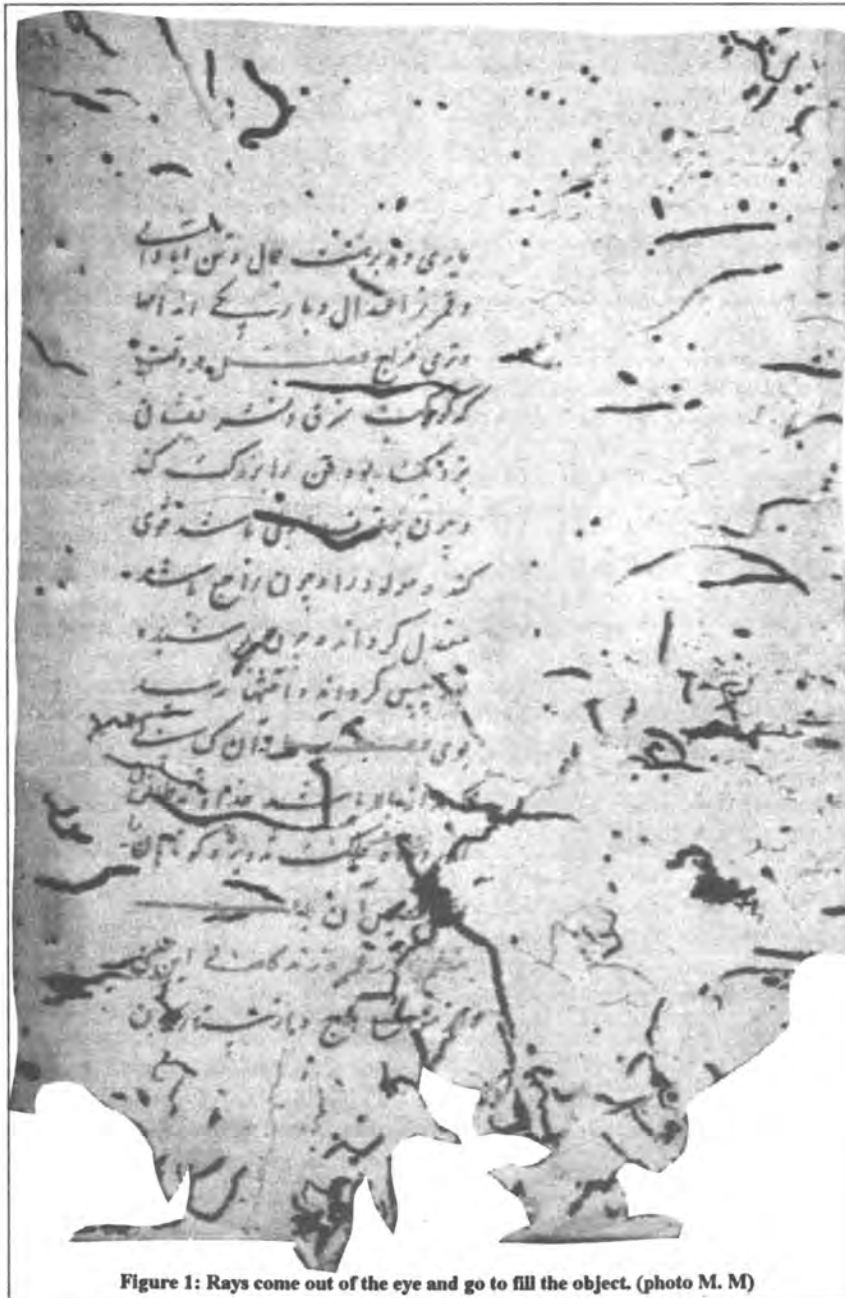


Figure 1: Rays come out of the eye and go to fill the object. (photo M. M)

Alhazen

Father of Optical Physiology

Massoud. Mirshahi, M. D., Ph. D.
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Ibn Haythan was known in the western world as Alhazen. He is said to be one of the great scientists of the Tenth Century. It is believed that he was probably born to a Persian family in 965 BC, in Basra. He then left for Cairo, where he was appointed the official physician of Ismailis Fatimid Kalifat. As an astronomer, mathematician and physician, he wrote more than sixty books on these subjects. His work on optics, however, is considered the greatest revelation in the history of science. His work encompasses all the subjects on optics, including optical physiology.

One of his studies involved reflection and refraction in realized experiments that included the use of mirrors (spherical, parabolic, cylindrical, concave and convex) and a study of the magnifying glass, research on shade, colors, rainbow and a discussion on light, which is considered the first philosophical scientific treatise on vision.

OPTICS IN THE WESTERN WORLD BEFORE ALHAZEN

The main discussion of the Fifth Century, BC was research on the eye and the seen object, where the light acted as the principal actor, because light is considered to link the object to the eye. Today, this theory is readily adopted, without a single thought of its development so many years ago. It was argued that the object became clear by the way the eye and the object communicated and/or that there was a connection coming from the eye and going to the object seen or from the object seen to the eye or a coexistence between those two things. It is said that the first theory, transmission from the eye to the object was the theory adopted by Pythagoreans.

The atomic scientists were favorable to this theory. Empedocle (491-430 BC) was the first one to conclude a two-way transmission. Later, however, a fourth theory developed (figure 1), with Aristotle (384-322 BC). At that same time, visual optics was dominated by the Greeks, who extended their

philosophical ideas to vision. Plato (428-348 BC) believed that the "divine fire" or luminous force leaves the eye to detect the object. When the "divine fire" leaves the eye, it encounters the light sent out by the object. It is the union of the two lights that gives the vision for color. It is the quantity of the "divine fire" which changes the color from one to another. Epicurus (341-280 BC) denied the existence of rays transmitted by the eye to the object, and Zeno (485-430 BC) believed the rays transmitted by the eye felt the object.

At the Alexandrian school with Euclid, the Third Century, BC, and Ptolemy, the Second Century, BC, the idea of rays being transmitted from the eye remained valid. Euclid said that the rays, which are transmitted, by the eye, are made of luminous superimposed corpuscles contained in the cornea. Ptolemy, however, believed that the eye sends the visual rays.

During the Third Century, BC, the mathematical basis necessary for optics was elaborated by Euclid, Archimedes and Apollonius. A conclusive tribute was brought by Galien (130-201 AC) which described the structure of the eye. He brought the eye other sensorial organs of the human being. He brings up the optical nerve, which plays the role of a cavity, through which a visual fluid flows from the brain.

The ideas of Galien and Plato's theory come together as a theory where a fluid flows from one eye to another fluid from the eye, without leaving the eye. This makes the organ sensitive and enables it to be impressed by the first fluid. The structure of the eye then starts to be involved. This, even if a false idea, agrees that crystalline plays a role.

All these ideas are going to be conclusive in the development of theories related to the vision mechanism and therefore on light. After Galien, not much progress was made. Eight Centuries later, from synthesis on geometric and physiologic studies by Alhazen, a general theory came up. What remains from the antique heritage is that the rays flow from the eye and proceed to

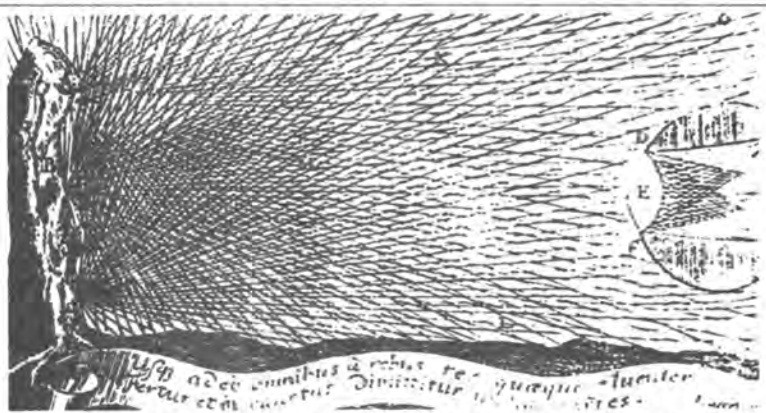


Figure 2: Light flows to the object and goes back in all directions by that way is sent to each eye that faces it. (photo M. M)

feel the object and thus the expression "to have an evil eye."

OPTICS BY ALHAZEN

Alhazen establishes optics on a fundamental basis and physiology. He undertook the first reform on optics. He extended his study by taking into consideration other phenomenon in his work "Optic Thesurus". In the first part of his work he says that direct and bright colors hurt the eye. With this idea, he stands by those who admitted the existence of a light independent from the human being. His argument is that when the eye is in contact with bright light, they hurt and in fact when one observes the sun, he cannot see it because the excessive light hurts the eye. The same thing happens when one looks at a well-polished mirror illuminated by the sun. If the eye is placed in the sunbeam reflected by the mirror, the light that comes from the mirror to the eye, the pain will be such that it will unable him to open his eye.

He then concludes that if the eye suffers from something dazzling, then we can believe that there is something flowing from the eye to the object. This is because there is no reason to suffer when the eye is in contact with the one object and not another. But it is necessary to accept that there is something that flows from the object to the eye, which has the capacity to reflect in a mirror concerning the light. He says that any illuminated body illuminated by any kind of light, flows from the light in all directions (figure 2).

Alhazen continues with the same logic and says that when the eye is

placed in front of an illuminated object, this will provide light to the external area of the eye. But it has established that the light has an impact on the eye, and it is natural for the eye to feel the light and suffer from it. The conclusion that follows is that the eye can see objects from the light that flows from it.

The second part of his work deals with experimentations related to visual sensitometry. He demonstrates how mild or excessive brightness or the interpositions of flames under certain conditions make an object invisible, or makes its particularities more or less visible under good light. The third part of his work is based on various observations. He shows that the tonality of colors varies with light. In the fourth part, he described the structure of the eye and in following chapters discussed the vision mechanism. Vision, he states, is the result of rays coming from the object and going to the eye. Here, however, is the point where he and the GrecoRoman differ. One problem remains to be solved; how does light get into the eye and give form and structure to the object?

Alhazen did come up with one idea. He brought an element of sensitivity. He said that even without any element of direction, the eye can see light and colors mixed and confused, and as organized vision. It links one point of the object to one impressed point of the eye. From the optical diagram of the eye and if you consider that the several different transparent layers are cocentric; the crystalline at the center of the eyeball

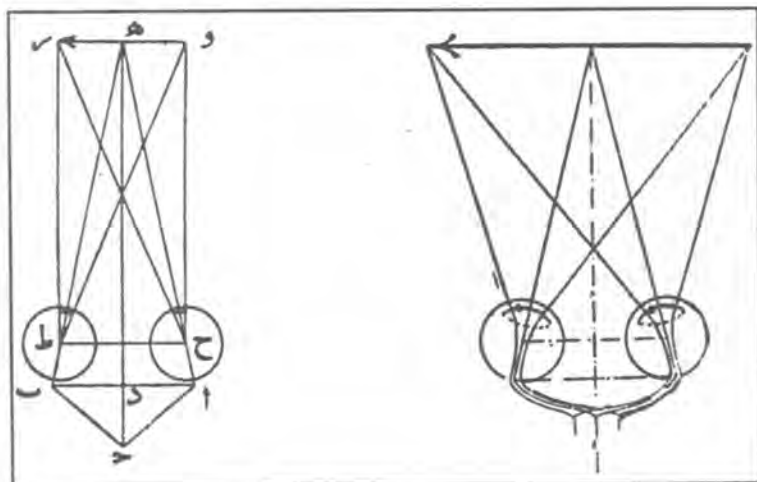


Figure 3: Physiological diplopia by Alhazen-original figure.

where the essentials of the visual faculties stand. Alhazen took into consideration Euclid's pyramidal perspective, but draws it with rays going from various parts of the object and flowing at the surface of the eye and therefore places the summit of the pyramid at the center of the eye.

Color and different points of the object are spread in a regular way along the rays to the cornea and pupil. They then get printed onto the first level of the crystalline. This picture in the same order, is similar to the object and is therefore in the eye, with all the elements to realize vision. Knowing the existence and the nerve structure, one might ask why Alhazen admitted that printing is made at the first layer of the crystalline. The answer to this question is clear. It is due to the difficulty in getting the rays through the crystalline.

Alhazen discovered the dark room and knew that the image of a candle is reversed. If the image has to be formed on the retina, it would necessarily be pictured inversely and therefore beyond the center of the eye. The position of the retina picture is inverse.

Alhazen has resolved a problem fifteen centuries old; to get into the pupil any reduced form of any seen object. He says that the object is formed before it gets inverted. He could get an explanation on the image being inverted that would satisfy. He gives up on the idea of the retina

being the organ of vision. He thinks that his theories are valid and when he encounters difficulty he finds a solution, temporary if not entirely satisfied.

This false problem on the interpretation of a physical inverted image being positioned rightly has been resolved by physiologists and philosophers of the nineteenth century. Alhazen continues his theory by explaining the existence of rays from the object as not sufficient. The eye has to be in the direction of the object to receive the rays. At that stage, Alhazen had to explain how two organs gave an identical vision. He discovered that by covering one eye, he provoked diplopia. His first connection was that images were formed in similar ways and that a message was transmitted by the crystalline and then to the optical nerves before getting to the chaisma. At that point a message merges, which was recently interpreted by psychological facts and reasons (figure 3)

Alhazen says that we receive two images which are double, but perceived as one single image. He shows the unification process from physiological diplopia. Out of his seven books written, one is dedicated entirely to optic illusions. He described a series of experiences on visual field and visual intensity. His theory is based on mechanism. He built a theoretic light that flows in a

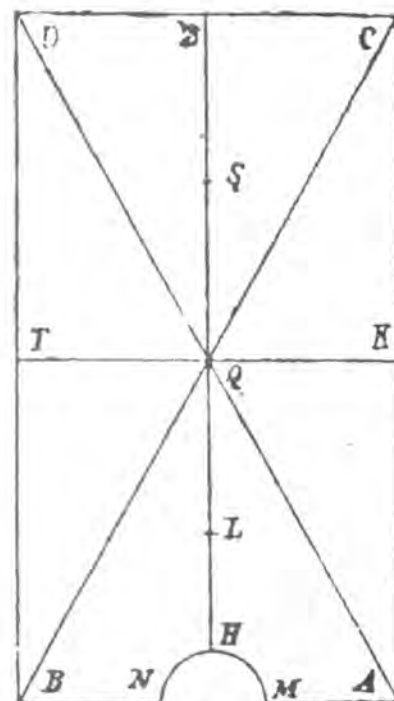


Figure 4: Alhazen imagined that the image is formed behind crystalline, on the retina. This shows the original geometric base of his hypothesis.

straight line and reflects in mirrors and refracts on transparent surfaces. It follows a rectilinear movement without any fear for intersection with other lights in a diaphanous body. The light is spread in a very fast motion. The motion, in a translucent body, is quicker than in a deep body. In fact, in any translucent body, the light that passes through, depends on the resistance of its structure.

A great ending contribution of Alhazen's work was brought by geometers, the Persian and Arab mathematician's Khawarazmy, Neirizy (Anaritus), Alkindi, Sharafdin Tusi, Ibn Sahl, Kouhie, Sagzi and all those who have worked on this matter before Alhazen. His collaborators were not known and the credit of his work was given to him.

The final outcome of Alhazen's work is more historical, he created visual optics on a solid basis with valid experimentations and conclusions. In the sixteenth century, Kepler accomplished the first reform on optics. Scientists, however, recognize Alhazen as the creator of what is today called physiological optics. PH



AN INTERVIEW WITH

MOHAMAD KHAKPOUR

By: Haleh Nia

PH: *Mr. Khakpour I would like to thank you for your time and sharing your thoughts and feelings with our readers.*

K- I thank you and I'd like to say that I am happy to be here

PH: *Tell us about yourself.*

K- I was born in 1969 in Tehran. My family was large, four sisters and a brother. Currently I live in New Jersey and have recently signed with the professional soccer team, the Metro Stars of New Jersey/New York.

PH: *You have been here a short time. What brought about your trip to the United States and why the decision to stay?*

K- My first stop in the States was California. I would like to thank all the Iranians for their help and efforts in making the U.S. my home, especially Mr. Hossein Zama and his brother. I had been invited by the coach of the Los Angeles team.

Unfortunately, he was fired before I arrived. The American League, however, were also interested in me. My team choice was the Metro stars. I eventually signed a three-year contract with them, and now reside in New Jersey.

PH: *You have traveled all across the world and made many friends in different countries, yet your choice of residence was the U.S., I understand that you are soon to be a new father, so this was a very important decision.*

K- I became immediately fascinated with this country. My plans are to reside here at least for the next few years. Whatever my future brings me, with the help of God, I will be ready for it.

PH: *Tell us about your childhood and the development of your interest in soccer?*

K- At the age of seven or eight, like all boys in Iran, I was overcome with the love of soccer. I started playing the sport on the street. Every

afternoon in Iran, on every street corner, you see boys of all ages playing and bouncing balls. That is how I started and again like most kids, I dreamed of one day playing professionally. Soccer is a very inexpensive game - by placing two rocks on each side of a road you create the goals add a small plastic ball you can begin the game. This, therefore, is a sport that every kid can have access to and it is a team sport which makes it even more wonderful. You can enjoy the game regardless of your level of skill. I never thought that I had the skill to be considered for the pros, but at the age of 13, I started playing for different clubs. By the time I was 19, I was invited by the national team to play professionally.

PH: *The sport of soccer has always been extremely popular with Iranians both inside the country and abroad. You, however, have received world wide recognition in the game and have taken your dream and this*

sport to the max. What was it or perhaps who was it that helped you become who you are today?

K- Soccer in Iran has only become professional in the last few years and has likewise only reached the professional level of competition in the last few years. Previously it was not a profession in which a player could rely on making a living. This is different today. The world has finally recognized Iran as a strong player and their team is one to depend on. Until now I believed the only person that I could count on was I, myself. Now I draw strength and idolize the people around me. The love and devotion that I receive from my fans are what keeps me going. I sincerely hope that I never disappoint them. I work hard to always play up to their expectations.

PH: We talked about your new position as a father. I am curious as to your feelings of having your child born in the States. How will this effect your life?

K- To be honest, not in my wildest dreams would I have thought that my child would be born outside of Iran let alone the United States. But the fact remains, that regardless of what soil my child is born, he will be Iranian. My wife and I have discussed this fact many times. We have always wanted to bring up our children with the customs, traditions and morals that we learned from our parents. It is also important that they know all about the aspects of their heritage as well as the language. Planting the seeds of our heritage in them at an early age, will give them a sense of belonging. But also as parents it is our duty to teach them the best of all worlds, American, Iranian or wherever.

PH: You have made the acquaintances of Iranians along the way not only in the US, but all across the world. Are there any differences?

K- Before I make any comments I must say that I believe an Iranian living any where in the world remains an Iranian, just as an American living any where else in the world. Throughout my travels, I have come upon nothing but love and devotion from people. Every Iranian makes

soccer a part of their blood and their life. It is this bond that brings Iranians from every belief or background together for the purposes of unity, celebration, pride and love. For me Iranians all over the world hold a special place in my heart. I am proud of all of them. We know that Europe and the US are two very different continents with regard to values and behavioral attitudes. But when it comes to soccer fans their love and devotion are consistent.

PH: Because of your love for Iran, do you ever see yourself playing on the Iranian National team ever and will you be able to represent your country again?

K- Of course. Before my trip to the US, and the signing of my contract I made sure that if ever the National Team invited me to play with them that I would be able to at any time. This is an important aspect of my contract. As a matter of fact our first game will be held this October, and I plan to attend.

PH: Do you keep in touch with the National Team's players?

K- Of course, as much as possible.

PH: In the past few years your life and your picture have been displayed all over the world, in magazines, newspapers, television, the internet etc. has this fame changed you or your outlook on life?

K- It was the people that gave me the fame. I guess they believe I have earned it. In my life I have always tried to reach a level of satisfaction where I can keep the level of expectations of the people around me to their satisfaction and I hope that I can continue doing so. As for fame and keeping the expected image the fact is that as the first Iranian player to sign with the American Soccer League, I have certain duties and expectations that I must meet. By that I mean that in a way I am a representative of my country Iran and its people. My performance both on the field and off the field is of utmost importance and will be closely scrutinized. I therefore feel that it is my duty to show the American people and the world what my heritage, my language and my culture are all about.

I only hope that I can do this. I don't want to disappoint anyone.

PH: Where do you think your future will take you and what are your plans?

K- At the moment I have no future plans. I will probably reside here for a few years and from there, wherever God's will takes me.

PH: Will you ever return to Iran and reside there?

K- At this point I say yes, It's my home. But none of us can predict the future and whatever it brings I will follow.

PH: Right now you play for an American team and represent them. How do you feel about that and do you wish to be as popular amongst the American fans as you are with the Iranian fans?

K- I am grateful to all my fans both, Iranian and American. Let's not forget one important fact. Soccer in the United States is viewed differently than in Iran or other European and South American countries. It is basically a new sport for America. As I said before in Iran soccer is a part of life and playing the sport is in our blood. This fact will definitely affect the fans and the popularity of its players. Another, and probably more important is that in the United States money and capitalism is part of the sport. Soccer is a sport that is played in two 45 minute quarters. The commercialism of the sport is not near the level of American football, baseball or basketball. Advertisers will not have the same opportunity to promote their product during soccer games in comparison to the other professional and college level sports. In the U.S. Leagues and/or teams survival depends on corporate sponsorships and they are hard to come by. Perhaps things will eventually change and the sport will become so popular that these factors will be second-rate, but today things are as they are and as a soccer player it comes with the territory. I have a lot of respect for the American people and I see that they have the same for me.

PH: I guess it is time to disclose your playing position.

K- Center full back.

PH: *What is your opinion about the Metro Stars? And what is their future as a professional soccer team?*

K- The league players and the people involved are great. Unfortunately this season has not been the greatest, but you never lose hope.

PH: *Which teams lead the league this season?*

K- So far this year DC and Chicago.

PH: *What is the future of soccer in the States?*

K- Great. I have noticed that the stadiums are filled with young fans. They are the future of this sport. As I had mentioned before soccer is an inexpensive sport to play. Also, the great opportunities for the young sports person, such as the training camps and the school teams, will effect the success of soccer in the States.

PH: *What has been the greatest attraction for you toward the Americans and America?*

K- I have traveled to a lot of places and people all over have always welcomed me. The main factor that captured my attention was the fact that in this country you blend in. You are not considered an outsider unless you want to be. You don't have that privilege in Europe or other places in the world. When I entered this league I was overcome by the welcome I received by the other players. They made me feel at home.

PH: *What message do you have for the young soccer players of this country who hope to be like you one day?*

K- One lesson to be learned is that whatever your goal is in life, it is only up to you and only you to achieve it. Depend on yourself and reach out to the world. Work hard and never feel tired. If you want it bad enough you will get it. Stay in touch with the game and play for as many clubs possible.

PH: *During the World Cup the media had created a political frenzy out of the match between the U.S. and Iran. What were the real feelings between the players?*

K- The way the media handled it



was ridiculous. We survived it and it really did make them look bad in the end. At no time did the Iranian team or the American team ever insult, or even suggest to insult one another. As a matter of fact both teams tried to be extra courteous and nice to each other. We played a friendly game and came out as good team players.

PH: *Did you notice a difference in the treatment of the media or even the people after the games?*

K- A great difference. For whatever reason, everyone expected the Iranian team to handle themselves less than courteously. We displayed impeccable manners that have been part of our lives since birth. For years Iran had been portrayed as an out cast where animosities and hatred towards America and the rest of the world was practiced and accepted. Yet, what the world saw was completely different. They saw improved relationships. The Iranian team made an extra effort to show the world of Iranian culture and heritage and who and what we stand for. The team felt that they were representatives of their country. When we arrived in France the world view was very different from what it was when we left. It was amazing, it was as if the world had all of a sudden changed under our feet. Amazingly enough soccer had brought back the Iranian identity to the Iranians as well. The fan mail poured in from Iranians all over the world. They thanked the team for bringing us close again. Their lost emotions and feelings from years of distance and not

touching base with their homelands had placed them in a state of dissolution. That was now all gone. People now announced their identity without shame or fear. They had an identity and were proud of their heritage. The pleasure of their experience was so warmly addressed in their letters.

PH: *Our readers are young Iranian Americans who can barely speak the language and don't know how to read or write Farsi, yet they are on a constant journey of finding more about their heritage and finding a sense of belonging. What message do you have for these young people who hold you as an idol?*

K- Learning the language of your father and mother is of great importance, although difficult. Knowing the language can bring you a step closer to learning the culture and the heritage. Iran has a 2500 years-old history. It is therefore important that these young people have access to this. They need to learn and defend their heritage against hatred. It is only through seeking knowledge and learning that all evil and hatred can be abolished.

PH: *What message do you have for our readers?*

K- I have been only recently introduced to your magazine. From what I see it plays a tremendous part in introducing Iran and the Iranian culture and heritage not only to the young Iranian but also to Americans. This magazine plays the role of a round table that brings Iranians from all across the world together into one magazine. This round table is full of ideas, knowledge and a discipline that is taught which all your readers should take complete advantage of. You're a crossroad between the two cultures and it is important for both Iranians and Americans to be aware of this fact. Through your magazine, identities that have been lost for years can be found. **Persian Heritage** magazine is playing the same role that Iranian soccer played in bringing all Iranians and their children closer together; a difficult road that can only be crossed with knowledge. **PH**