



# Persian Heritage

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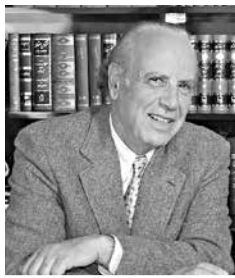
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Persian  Heritage

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Once again, I am writing this editorial under pressure; pressure of the deadline to go to print and pressure from my diligent staff. I delayed my writing for as long as possible because I was anxiously waiting for the news from Iran. Iran is, as we know, a country in turmoil and on the brink of a possible war with the superpowers of the world. We have been publishing *Persian Heritage* for twenty-four years. Most of my editorials have addressed my deepest concerns for Iran and Iranians due to the rhetoric coming from Iran's present regime. It is the same worrisome war mongering rhetoric we have heard for the past forty years, post the Iranian revolution.

I understand my comments on the editorial pages are repetitive. I also understand that to some of my dear readers, my words are boring and discouraging. But, because of the continuous disheartening events encircling Iran and its people, I am compelled to share my deepest feelings, emotions and thoughts with you, my dear readers.

In my editorials, I admit I criticize individuals, just as I am criticized in other publications and or "Letters to the Editor." This is called **Freedom of Speech**, a right and privilege we have by living in the United States. My writings are my opinions. It is unfortunate that some readers who disagree with MY OPINION AND CRITICISM, rename my words as HATE SPEECH. They have tried to make me a public enemy and have negatively labeled me. While these unjustified interpretations by some emotionally hurt me, they will not change or weaken my opinions when it comes to addressing the devastation and turmoil the people of Iran are encountering.

Having said that I do not want to lose perspective on the current important issue, which is that we are living in a very dangerous time and the possibility of war between Iran and the United States is imminent.

For many years, I have been an avid reader and continue to educate myself on the foreign policies of the world superpowers and the implementation of their policies against Iran and other countries. The current state of affair between the United States and Iran reminds me of Saddam Hussein who, because of his own ego, engaged in an eight-year war with Iran; a war that resulted in the death or severe injury of over one million Iranians, five hundred thousand Iraqis, the destruction of the province of Khouzestan, the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, the devastation of farm and industrial industries and the ruin of economic and human livelihood. But Saddam did not learn his lesson. Right after the statement of Ayatollah Khomeini agreeing to a cease fire to end the eight-year war, "Taking this decision was more deadly than taking

poison. I submitted myself to God's will and drank this poison for his satisfaction," Saddam went on another journey of war with Kuwait. He wanted to show the United States the power of his military and leadership. Using inaccurate statistics, the then United State Secretary of State Colin Powell was able to convince the United Nations that an invasion of Iraq was justified. There were many counter arguments heard from Iraq's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. The result was the invasion and the complete devastation of Iraq. The invasion was led by General Schwarzkopf of the United States, who ironically had spent his adolescents growing up in Iran. Saddam ended up in a hole, only to be found and dragged out months later. To the present day, the damage and the destruction endured by the Iraqis at the hands of the invaders remains visible. The outcome resulted in Iraq's division into three parts, under one flag!!!!??

Today the Ayatollahs in Iran are using similar rhetoric in defying the world superpowers. The problem facing these Ayatollahs is that their rhetoric is not supported by the Iranian people or the rest of the world. The hope of success for the Ayatollahs was the backing of Russia and China. However, it was not too long ago that Mr. Putin stated that he will not act like a fire department to extinguish the fire that will burn Iran down. This language was unsettling for the Iranian leaders. They finally understood that this "so called" friendship was no "friendship" at all. It was a one-sided relationship that abused Iranians by spending billions of Iranian currency on building nuclear power plants for energy, sales of the Missiles S-300 that were never delivered and the use of Iranian military bases. Finally, they realized that their "so called allies" were not and are not going to back Iran in the event of a war with the United States. Perhaps the Ayatollahs have forgotten how these same allies were a friend to the enemy of Iran, Saddam Hussein. After 40 years, these Iranian leaders continue not to understand the true meaning of leadership. They know only how to rob Iran of its valuable assets, transfer them to personal accounts to international banks outside of Iran, when these assets could be used to ease the suffering of its citizens.

In the US and other developed countries there is a drive to make something out of yourself. Becoming successful is encouraged. Many Diaspora Iranians have worked hard, sacrificed and have made names for themselves in many professions. They have earned their financial success in an honest manner not through embezzlement and stealing assets from the people of Iran. They have not profited from the sanctions placed on Iran; they have not profited the grievances endured

by the people of Iran. The sanctions placed on Iran by the United States and other countries have only helped aid the corrupt system in Iran. They have assisted the regime leaders and their children (Agha Zadeh) in buying luxury cars and buildings. They have assisted in making the poor poorer and the Iranian middle-class disappear.

How many times must it be said before we all understand the level of poverty plaguing Iran? According to the latest statistics more than 50% of the Iranian people are living below the poverty line. How does this happen to one of the richest countries of the world? How does this happen to a country once adored and respected by the world? How does this happen to a country whose history displays the most significant accomplishments in the Middle East? New statistics would with certainty show that the number of poor continues to increase. One news source stated that Iranians are more worried about inflation and poverty than war. Keeping the people under such circumstances and having them suffer in such a manner is a despicable act of this leadership.

The forty- year fight of the brave Iranian women to be allowed basic freedoms, including freedom of expression (not to be forced to cover their heads and bodies) has changed. Fighting for basic freedoms has been replaced with the fight to survive. They are fighting for the basic needs of their families. They are fighting to figure out how to afford housing and the high price of meat, potatoes, onion etc. These are the new and additional burdens on the people of Iran. Men and women, fathers and mothers are struggling to provide for their children. The factory worker has lost his job because the sanctions have forced factories to close due to a lack of imports for parts and other resources. The farmer has lost his livelihood due to the drought and the recent floods. Please tell me how these poor souls can find any strength to stand up against powers who have treated them so poorly and exploited every opportunity for growth.

Many in Iran are hoping for an uprising within the country. They are hoping for peace. They do not want a war with the United States or any other country. Just maybe this time the sitting mice will consider giving up the rule in order to avoid any conflict with the big elephant in the room, the United States. Perhaps before any mishaps occur the current Iranian regime will come to their senses and shift power back to a more deserving leadership; to a leadership that will have the ability to open doors for Iran and Iranians; to a leadership that allows them to rejoin the world; and to a leadership who will reach out a hand in peace and friendship to the global world. Iranians have always been a people with morals and values. They have unfairly and unjustifiably been labeled as terrorists, when Iranians have never been involved in a terrorist act, in any part of the world. I pray that the world understands that the actions of a government does not always reflect the desires of its citizens.

War is not the answer. Even a retired American general who spent a long time on assignment, despite his obvious pro-Arab position (referring to the Persian Gulf as the Arabian

Gulf) stated that the Hawkish members of the present United States administration are using too strong a rhetoric against the Iranian people and not directing it at the Iranian government, this is dangerous. This rhetoric is turning American opinion against the people of Iran and not at the ruling Ayatollahs.

Iranians are double victims. They have been victimized by an abusive government and victimized by a world who are not educated on Iran, Iranians and its history.

I certainly pray that the Iranian people will not have to endure another experience of war. Iranians living in Diaspora should be cautioned. While the Diaspora sit enjoying the fruits of their financial comfort, PLEASE don't encourage war. This war will be a battle that will destroy a nation and a people who have suffered so much. This war will be a battle for the destruction of the nation of Iran, it will be torn into pieces. Have a look at Yugoslavia! Every part of it has been divided into separate territories. Have a look at Syria and Libya! Better yet have a look at Iraq!

I pray that the current leaders of Iran come to their senses, have pride for their country and its rich history and find the courage to step down. I pray that they go and settle in places where they have accumulated their wealth. After forty years of hardship, I pray they will let the Iranian people have a legitimate election to decide their own new leaders.

I pray for this, I pray for this, I pray for this!

Shahrokh Aghajani

### The Passing of a Dear Friend

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Shokoufeh Mokhtari Saghafi on April 26, 2019. She was an extraordinary person, always true to herself. Until her last breath she fought, with all the strength and determination that defined her so well.



She is survived by her daughter Naz Afarine Chiffert and her son-in-law Guillaume Chiffert, grandchildren Alma, Elsa and Abel, sister Maryam Kiani and brothers Mahmad and Massoud Amirkhalili.

The staff of *Persian Heritage* and the Ahkami family extend our deepest sympathy to her family. She will be missed.

## A LETTER FROM AN AMERICAN PRISONER

To the Staff of *Persian Heritage*

Hello! I hope you are not disturbed by receiving a letter from a prison inmate, but if you read on, I think you will be interested in what I have to say. For the sake of your time, I will try to keep this very brief.

Before I was arrested, I was a very foolish young man, I developed a fascination with the people, culture, and the nation of Iran. I would watch videos on *YouTube* about it. One I remember was "Travel With Rick Steves" where he took a film crew to Iran and went to Tehran and Qom and Esfahan. I think and I remember how friendly and beautiful the people of Iran were. I decided that one day, I would travel there.

Several years have passed since then, but my interest in Iran remains, and I still desire to go some day. So, in the meantime, I have begun to learn Farsi. I really enjoy it! I have a book "Complete Persian" by Narguess Farzad that has been very helpful, as well as the combined New Persian-English and English-Persian Dictionary. These resources have been great as I begin translating articles of *Persian Heritage*. However, I am sure that my pronunciation of the words is terrible, and as I am beginning to try and write out my own thoughts in Persian, I suspect that my grammar is not very good either. And I have no way of checking.

بنابراین می‌خواهم یک کسی که بتوانم با او گفتگو دارم و از او بپرسم چه حرف‌های من درست هستند.

همچنین کنجکاووم درباره فرهنگ و مردم ایران، و خیلی می‌خواهم یک دوست ایرانی که این چیزها به من خواهد گفت.

I'm sorry if I have butchered your beautiful language in the above sentences. If it truly is terrible then you see why I need help.

My hope is that the reader of this letter will be intrigued by what I have said and perhaps connect me with someone who may be willing to help. If for whatever reason this is not possible, I understand completely. In reply (به فارسی) to let me know you

have received my letter.

متشکرم و خدا حافظ،  
سام ادکینس

\* Ps. In case my Farsi was illegible or unintelligible, I rewrote it in English on the back of this page:

"Therefore I would like to be able to talk to a Persian speaker so that I can know whether my understanding of sentences' construction is correct and also to ask about the culture and people of Iran."

\* \* \*

Dear Sam

As one, who read your letter before anybody else, I would like to congratulate your success in learning Persian on your own so well. Per your wish, I will continue my reply to your sincere words in Persian:

سلام سام

اول می‌خواهم به خاطر نتیجه تلاشی که برای یاد گرفتن زبان فارسی کردی، به تو تبریک بگویم. هرچند در حال حاضر نمی‌توانم آن کسی باشم که بتواند در این کار، به هر شکلی، به تو کمک کند. اما امیدوارم کسانی بتوانند با فرستادن یک کتاب دستور زبان فارسی، و تعدادی کتاب مصور (= با عکس) با توضیحات کوتاه درباره طبیعت و فرهنگ و بناهای تاریخی ایران و همین‌طور داستان‌های کوتاه فارسی، به عشق و علاقه‌ی تو به زبان فارسی و ایران، پاسخ شایسته بدهند. همین‌طور دلم می‌خواهد، از اینکه در محیط زندان وقت خود را با یاد گرفتن یک چیز خوب، مانند یک زبان خارجی می‌گذرانی، باز هم به تو تبریک بگویم. این بهترین و مفیدترین کاری است که یک زندانی باید برای سلامت روحی و جسمی خود انجام دهد. امیدوارم این کار تو برای زندانیان دیگر هم انگیزه‌ای برای یاد گرفتن ایجاد کند. یاد گرفتن هرچیز خوب.

راستی، نوشته فارسی تو، با داشتن چند اشتباه، باز هم، برای کسی که خودش فارسی را یاد گرفته، بسیار خوب و قابل فهم است.

برایت موفقیت‌های بیشتر آرزو می‌کنم.  
یک ایرانی خواننده نامه تو

## BEAUTIFUL IRAN



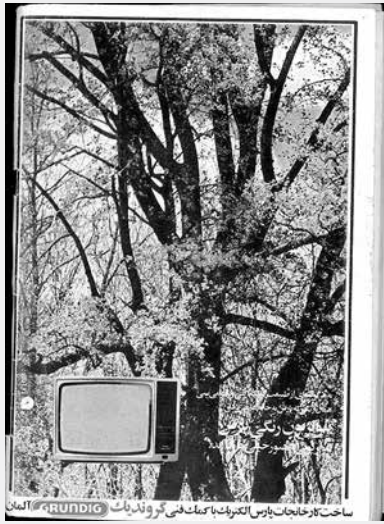
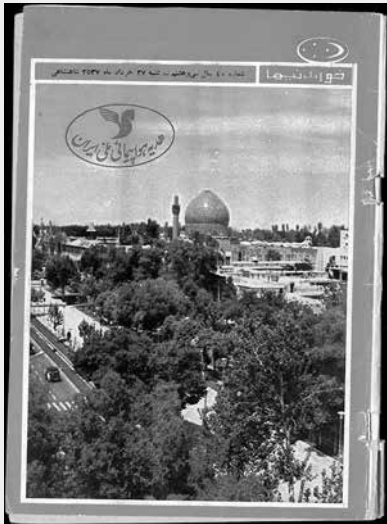
هدهد، پرنده‌ای که در ادبیات فارسی نشانه دانایی و رهبری است.  
Hoopoe, a bird which is a symbol of wisdom and conscious leadership in Persian literature



آرامگاه حافظ، شاعر مشهور ایران در شیراز، مرکز استان فارس در جنوب ایران  
Hafez tomb, Iranian worldwide fame poet in Shiraz, capital of Fars province, in the south of Iran.

## A PRECIOUS GIFT

## یک هدیه استثنایی



## Ryan Saghian



As one of today's most celebrated millennial designers, Ryan has built an extensive portfolio of work covering all aspects of design in high end residential, hospitality, and specialty commercial interiors. Recently dubbed "The go-to designer for creating homes that feel invitingly luxurious," and a "Rising Star" by Interiors California, Ryan rides the wave of designing for the top tier. As a Native Angeleno, Saghian continually incorporates elements of Hollywood opulence into his spaces, which he finds to be a defining aspect to what shapes Los Angeles design. At only 26, Ryan represents a new emersion of millennial designers, enjoying recognition for accomplishments far beyond his years. With participations in the Greystone Mansion Showcase house for California Homes Magazine, to designing a window for the Legends of La Cienega, Ryan has become a staple in the Los Angeles design community.

Born in Los Angeles, Ryan received his Bachelors of Science degree in Interior Design from the Art Institute of California's CIDA design school. From training under the industries most celebrated designers to studying design in full depth throughout college, Ryan has developed the skills many aspire to gain in the nations design capitol. In addition to creating bold and refined interiors, Ryan Saghian now manufactures a custom wallpaper collection, furniture collection, and candle line.

Dear Editor:

Dr. Ahkami I want to extend my greetings to you and thank you for the extensive and valuable contents of Persian Heritage magazine. I receive the magazine each quarter and read it with so much pleasure, thank you for this. I also commend you for your tireless efforts in keeping Persian culture, history and literature alive. Your work is admirable. May God protect you.

I have enclosed a gift for you. In 1976, I left Iran on an Iranian Airlines 747 to come to the United States. The flight was nonstop from Tehran to New York. Inside the plane there were many Iranian publications. I happened to read one called *Khandiha*, which I subscribed to. When the flight was over I kept the magazine, which is enclosed.

I have had it in my possession for 47 years and now gift it to you as I believe you would enjoy reading the contents.

It would be interesting for you to know that the owner, Editor-in-chief and publisher of this magazine, Mr. Amirani was executed during the first year of the revolution. Again, I thank you and wish you and your family health and continued success.

Sincerely,  
Azar Hojabr Bahadori

مجله را پس نفرستید!

دکتر احکامی عزیز

با سلام و ارادت. فصل نامه وزین و بسیار پر محتوا و خواندنی «میراث ایران» را همواره بعد از انتشار دریافت می‌کنم و بدین وسیله مراتب تشکر و امتنان خودم را تقدیم می‌دارم.

همچنین از زحمات ارزنده و خستگی ناپذیر شما برای زنده نگهداشتن زبان و فرهنگ فارسی و کشور عزیزمان نهایت قدردانی می‌نمایم. خداوند یار و نگهدار تان باشد.

من اولین بار که در سال ۱۹۷۶ کشور عزیزمان را به مقصد آمریکا ترک کردم، با هواپیمای جمبوجت ایران ایر مستقیم از تهران به نیویورک، داخل هواپیما مجله‌های مختلف ایران وجود داشت. من در ایران مجله «خواندنیها» را آبونه بودم و مطالعه را دوست داشتم. داخل هواپیما این مجله وجود داشت و من قسمتی از آن را خواندم و برای خواندن بقیه مطالب، آن را برداشتم و با خود بردم. اکنون که ۴۳ سال از آن تاریخ می‌گذرد، هنوز آن را حفظ کرده‌ام.

اکنون فکر کردم، شاید شما مایل به مطالعه این مجله قدیمی باشید، آن را برای شما می‌فرستم. ناگفته نماند که در سال اول دگرگونی‌های ایران، آقای امیرانی که صاحب این نشریه بودند، اعدام شدند در سن پیری. در خاتمه سلامتی و موفقیت شما و فامیل محترم را از درگاه پروردگار آرزو مندم

ارادتمند،

آذر هژبر بهادری



## SADAF KHADEM, Iranian Female Boxer Halts Return Over Arrest Fears



An Iranian who became the first woman from her country to contest an official boxing match says she has cancelled her return home from France after hearing a warrant had been issued for her arrest. Sadaf Khadem beat the French boxer Anne Chauvin in an amateur bout.

She had planned to fly to Tehran with her French-Iranian trainer. Khadem was quoted by a sports newspaper as saying she believed she was accused of violating Iran's compulsory dress code by boxing in a vest and shorts.

Iranian officials have not commented, but the head of Iran's boxing federation denied that Khadem would be arrested if she came home.

"Ms Khadem is not a member of [Iran's] organized athletes for boxing, and from the boxing federation's perspective all her activities are personal," Hossein Soori was quoted as saying by an Iranian news agency.

Khadem fought in a green vest and red shorts with a white waistband - the colours of Iran's national flag in the western French town of Royan. The 24-year-old had to fight abroad as, despite having the blessing of Iranian sporting authorities, it proved too complicated to fulfil their requirement that the bout be refereed and judged by women. Khadem had been expecting a hero's welcome when she returned to Iran. But while she travelled to Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport with her trainer Mahyar Monshipour - an Iranian-born former World Boxing Association champion who also serves as an adviser to the French sports minister - she said they were told that warrants had been issued for their arrest.

"I was fighting in a legally approved match, in France. But as I was wearing shorts and a T-shirt, which is completely normal in the eyes of the entire world, I confounded the rules of my country," she

told the L'Equipe newspaper. "I wasn't wearing a hijab, I was coached by a man - some people take a dim view of this."

A spokesman for the Iranian embassy in Paris told Reuters news agency on Wednesday that he could not comment on whether Khadem faced arrest in Iran or on her decision not to return to Iran.

Under Iranian law, women and girls as young as nine years old who are seen in public without a headscarf can be punished with a prison sentence of between 10 days and two months, or a cash fine.

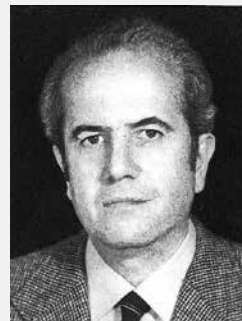
Iranian sportswomen are required to cover their hair, neck, arms and legs when competing. Until recently, Khadem would not have been permitted to take part in an official boxing match wearing a hijab or a full body form fitting uniform for religious regions. But the International Boxing Association (AIBA), amateur boxing's governing body, changed its uniform rules at the end of February.

### In a Memory of Artoosh Avanesian

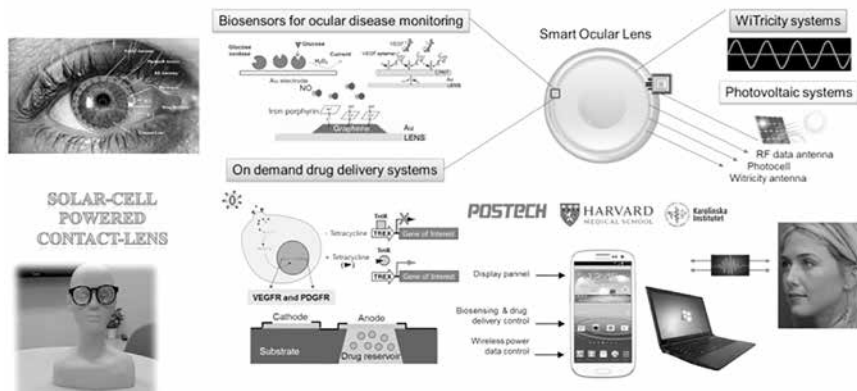
Artoosh Avanesian was born on April 21, 1927, in Tabriz, Iran. His father, Arsen Derovanessian, and mother, Hratchuhi Hacopian, had three children. Artoosh was the oldest of the three. His brother Roubik sadly passed away two months ago, and his sister Sophia passed away two years ago in Paris.

When Artoosh was 13 and attending Hayotz Dbrotz in Tabriz, his father secured a new job in Tehran and decided to relocate the family there with the promise of a better life, and better education for the children. In Tehran, Artoosh finished high school and attended the University of Tehran. He earned a degree in Chemical Engineering in 1947, a rare and difficult feat in those days. After college, Artoosh showed great interest in developing Iran's new sugar industry. He secured a position in sugar production, and his life-long career in sugar began to take shape when he moved to London and obtained a Master's degree in chemical engineering. He furthered his career in Germany in the late 1950's and was highly respected for his achievements. He continued his studies and became fluent in six languages. Artoosh returned to Tehran to continue working for a sugar-factory conglomerate operating all over Iran. In 1961, while on assignment in Urmia, he met his soulmate Lousvart Gasparian. The couple were married in Isfahan in 1965. Soon, he rose to the rank of executive in the sugar conglomerate and moved to Shiraz. In 1975, Artoosh moved his family to Tehran and became CEO of Fasa Sugar Industries. He received a medal from the Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi. In 1985, the family moved to Bloomfield, New Jersey. Artoosh continued to work in Iran until 1988, when he relocated to New Jersey to be with his family. Education and excellence at work was highly important to him and he always took pride and was a positive force for his children in that regard. He was a symbol of grace, integrity, perseverance and lived a humble life helping many friends and family in need.

Artoosh is survived by his wife Lousvart; three children, Aida, Anet and Armen all three born in Shiraz; his daughter in-law Ani; and his two grandchildren, Talia and Aleen.



**WEARABLE AND IMPLANTABLE THERANOSTICS FOR UBIQUITOUS HEALTHCARE**



Progress in advanced materials and nanotechnology paved the way for the realization of the novel miniaturized smart devices for real-time diagnostics and therapeutic applications. Technologies to constantly monitor critical biomarkers and point-of-care theranostics are still in their infancy. However, continuing advances in system-on-chip design and biocompatible system integration can help define the next generation of biomedical devices for improving healthcare and spanning the design space from transistors to the cloud. This talk addresses the main challenges towards realization of the continuous wearable and implantable systems including extreme on-chip miniaturization design, silicon – human body interfacing, RF/EM performance, safety and comfort, power scarcity and wireless power/data transfer. Flexible, wearable, biocompatible, low-power, low-noise, auto-powered and/or wirelessly powered integrated circuits, will be a few of the enabling technologies for developing these emerging systems. As exemplary embodiment of the recent progress beyond state-of-the-art cutting-edge technologies, several examples have been introduced and implemented including: a portable long-term brain imaging system, a smart theranostic contact lens and wireless electronic stents.

**BIOGRAPHY:**

Ehsan Kamrani received a BSc degree in bioelectric in 2002, and MSc degree in electrical-control engineering, in 2005 from SBMU and TMU universities of Tehran, Iran. He

obtained his PhD degree in biomedical engineering from Ecole Polytechnique Montreal, Canada, in 2014. His research focuses on realization of novel wearable/implantable biomedical devices using low-power SoC ASICs and bio-optoelectronics. He was a research assistant with the Polystim Neurotechnologies laboratory, Montreal, from 2009 to 2014, and appointed as a visiting scholar with the MIT, Cambridge, MA, USA, and a research assistant with the Harvard medical school, Boston, MA, USA, from 2012 to 2015. He was a post-doctoral research fellow and visiting scholar with the biomedical nanomaterials laboratory at POSTECH, Korea, in 2014. Since 2014, he has been with Harvard-MIT health science and technology and the Wellman center for photomedicine, Harvard medical school, Cambridge, where he is involved in an active bio-optics project for developing novel innovative technologies by integration of photonics and biological system aiming at developing a novel diagnostic optical instrument for medical applications. He is a technical committee of IEEE engineering in medicine and biology society on wearable biomedical sensors and systems and a member of IEEE solid-state circuits society, the institute of physics, the optical society of America, and the international society for optics and photonics. He was a recipient of 15 awards, including the best paper awards from CFSC'03, ACFAS'12, MIOMD'12, and the 2013 Polytechnique research & innovation.

**DARBAND, TEHRAN**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



Darband (Persian: دربند, [dærˈbænd]), formerly a village close to Tajrish, Shemiran, is a neighborhood inside Tehran's metropolitan limits. It is the beginning of a popular hiking trail into Mount Tochal, which towers over Tehran. A chairlift is also available for those not interested in hiking. The Persian term darband translates to "door of the mountain" (band, a variation of vand and fand, meaning "mountain"). The initial start of the trail at Darband is about 250 metres long and is dotted with a number of small cafes and restaurants. These are quite popular and are busy in the evenings, as locals and tourists alike visit the many hooka lounges along the trail.

The Zahir-od-dowleh cemetery, where many Iranian giants of art and culture such as Iraj Mirza, Forough Farrokhzad, Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, Abolhasan Saba, Ruhollah Khaleqi, Rahi Mo'ayyeri and Darvish Khan are buried, is also located in Darband.

At the entrance to Darband Square is a bronze statue of the Amir Shahqammadi (Shahababa). He was born in 1929 in Quchan, Iran. For years he was a climber, skydiver and skier. He arrived to this area at the age of 17. Because of his knowledge and expertise in his sports and the area he is credited with the rescue of passengers and crew of an American plane that crashed in Zardukh Peak.

**IRAN RANKS NEAR BOTTOM ON WORLD BANK'S INDEX OF WOMEN'S EQUALITY**

**Radio Farda:** Women in Iran are paid less than three-quarters of the salaries paid to their male compatriots, the World Bank said in a study published February 28. In terms of economic equality for women, Iran ranks 185 out of 187 countries included in the study, behind only Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

The study, titled "Women, Business, and the Law 2019: A Decade of Reform," examined ten years of data, exploring how the economic decisions women make are affected by the law. It examined 35 indicators of equality, covering topics ranging from property ownership and inheritance laws to job protections and pension policies, as well as rules governing marriage, movement, travel, pay, and personal safety.

In addition to being ranked against other nations, the countries included in the study were given scores on a 100-point scale. The Islamic Republic obtained only 31.25 points, while the global average score is nearly 75. Among the countries, Iran fell behind in the scoring are the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa and Uzbekistan in Central Asia, both of which scored 70 points.

"If women have equal opportunities to reach their full potential, the world would not only be fairer, it would be more prosperous as well," World Bank Interim President Kristalina Georgieva said in a statement.

The six countries that received a perfect score of 100, Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden, were found to give women and men equal legal rights in the measured areas. However, none of these economies garnered the maximum score a decade ago, indicating they have all implemented reforms in the meantime.

The report also shows progress over the past ten years overall, with the average score rising from 70 to 75. The report's authors attributed this gain to laws and regulations passed over the last decade allowing greater inclusion of women. The report cited 274 reforms in 131 countries.

The report found that 35 countries have proposed laws against sexual harassment in the workplace, granting protections to an additional two billion women, while 22 nations have abolished restrictions that kept women out of certain industrial sectors. According to the World Bank, Iran is the second largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region after Saudi Arabia, with an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016 of \$412.2 billion.



**THE EDINBURGH IRANIAN FESTIVAL**

This festival is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization. Its mission is to increase understanding of Iranian culture, history and people, hopefully correcting skewed perceptions the country's citizens presently face. Most do not know that over 5,000 Iranians make Scotland their home.

This year the festival celebrated its 10th year and did so in style. The festival offered a variety of cultural events for all tastes and age. Opening day was March 1, 2019 with music by The Persian Celtic Fusion and a musical performance from four wonderful musicians who live in Scotland. Ali Rahmani on the Tombak and Daf, Nick Jenkins on the fiddle with two singer songwriters, Farzane Zamen and Lorraine McCauley.

There was also a special day at the National Museum of Scotland that included Iranian bagpipes, an amazing film at the Film house, a Shirin & Farhad theater show; Iranian cookery class and a crafts and fashion fair at their own Bazaar located in the Nomad's Tent.



# WHO OWNS IRAN'S OIL?

## Corruption in Iran's Oil and Gas Sector

2nd & final part

President's Letter, Khosrow B. Semnani

(taken from "Where Is My Oil?")

**"Our path is not the path of oil. Oil does not matter to us. The nationalization of oil does not matter to us. It is a mistake. Our goal is Islam. Our goal is not oil. If someone nationalizes oil, but puts aside Islam, why follow him?"**

**Ruhollah Khomeini**

There is nothing random about millions of Iranians finding themselves buried under the poverty line. Bureaucratic sleaze and sloth only explain so much. What they do not explain though, is how, in a period of sanctions, when the Iranian people were subject to severe strain, the Central Bank and key ministries were facilitating the flow of millions of barrels of oil and billions of dollars in capital out of the country. There is nothing abstract about these figures.

They did more than pinch Iranians in their pocketbook. At a time when foreign reserves were scarce, the Central Bank rigged the game in favor of crony capital. Luxury car importers serving the nouveau riche "aghazadeh class" were subsidized with preferential foreign exchange rates, while the Health Ministry, facing a \$2 billion budgetary shortfall, was charged higher rates than the luxury car importers essentially condemning millions of middle and

lower-class Iranians to subsidize Porsches by purchasing medicine at black market prices. While Reza Zarrab and others had unrestricted access to Iranian gas and oil accounts in Turkey, purchasing race horses, hovercrafts and yachts with \$150 million commissions, paying \$50 million bribes and distributing \$700,000 Patek Philippe luxury watches, poor Iranians were effectively locked out of receiving adequate health care. Those deaths and debts count.

Revolutionary slogans and saber-rattling-the-unrelenting calls and chants of "death to America" and "death to Israel"-have masked a much more pernicious reality: the corruption of Islam and the impending death of Iran, not as a sudden calamity but as a daily tragedy.

In an Islamic Republic where the judiciary puts such a high price on sheep that it turns the amputation of a thief's hand into a national spectacle, there is a

virtual blackout surrounding the theft of Iran's oil. Instead of honoring and serving the Iranian people by arresting the hands involved in the systematic theft of Iran's oil and gas, even tankers and rigs, the government treats the Iranian people as peasants whose only care, concern and asset is their sheep.

But this is not a time for lament. It is a time for action.

An empirical approach to corruption matters. Quantification is a basis for reclamation- systematic action rather than cheap slogans. It is not enough to condemn corruption as a scourge. Once quantified, in the form of a data-base of corruption cases, corruption can and has been traced and reversed. The World Bank Group and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have an established Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR) that allows countries like Iran to work across jurisdictions to prevent money-laundering and the theft of assets crucial

to Iran's development and prosperity. Rather than being helpless spectators subject to the plunder of their natural resources, as in the Zanjani case, making government accountable and corruption visible sets the stage for recovering tens of billions of dollars in stolen assets hidden outside Iran. Given the global nature of criminal enterprises siphoning Iran's oil under the guise of evading sanctions, international treaties, institutions and partners can help Iran's Central Bank track and recover billions hidden outside Iran.

Reversing the curse of corruption can unleash enormous blessings for the Iranian people. The linkages between Iran's oil and gas industry and the rest of Iran's economy are extensive. Based on our analysis, using the Iranian Parliament's own social accounting matrix (SAM), every dollar generated by the oil and gas sector can be leveraged into three or four dollars in the rest of Iran's economy.

By the same token, every dollar taken out of the sector is the equivalent of three to four dollars taken out of the economy.

The math behind corruption's impact is not complex. Even without an investment strategy or a multiplier effect, every billion dollars in oil revenues, if distributed as cash subsidies, is the equivalent of approximately 100,000 salaries at fair wage levels of \$900/month (\$10,800/year).

Using the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) models, the multiplier effect of \$2.7 billion could create as many as 300,000 jobs at a living wage of \$900/month.

The \$2.7 billion allegedly lost in a single corruption case, if distributed as wages, would have provided 270,000 families with \$10,000 each, the equivalent of a living wage of 3 million tomans/month (\$900) for a year.

With Iran's oil and gas reserves valued at more than \$17 trillion, reclaiming the sector and restoring the National Iranian Oil Company's prominence, productivity and performance as a "national champion" on the world stage is vital to the economic well-being of the Iranian people. As with Iran's constitutional revolution, such a reclamation, ultimately, depends on the mobilization of the Iranian people in a collective struggle against corruption. Transparency and accountability only have meaning where and when a people have a deep sense of ownership—an understanding of the value of oil not only to themselves but to their children, descendants, neighbors and nation.

Given the scale of unemployment and the spread of poverty in Iran, silence before such a humanitarian catastrophe is not an option.

The oil mafia's fingerprints are everywhere.

Under the cover of religion, corruption has taken the form of abuse of power, nepotism in appointments, bribery and kickbacks, divulging secret information, rigging bids, improper vetting of contracts, illegal allocations of oil, sale of discounted oil, foreign currency transfers, purchase of phantom rigs, illegal and unauthorized withdrawals from accounts, suppression of reports, audits and investigations, judicial whitewashing of corruption cases and the amputation of legal and religious principles for the sake of expediency. To this day, the movement of entire tankers carrying unknown volumes of oil remains shrouded in mystery.

Far too often, corruption is concealed from the public as a matter of national security. Instead of pursuing corruption cases, the individuals and institutions charged with protecting the public interest act as pirates. Stakeholders-critical institutions and individuals-participate in government to secure their stake in the plunder of the nation's wealth. Under the rubric of protecting national security, the most elementary legal, financial and reporting requirements are flouted, effectively creating an information blackout concerning governance of the oil and gas sector. Those who dare to expose and oppose corruption are attacked for violating the sanctities of Islam, for propaganda against the system, and for insulting the leadership.

The irony, of course, is that in this, the age of surveillance, information is hard to conceal. While Iran's judiciary, and other institutions, do their utmost to keep material and documents classified, at times by eliminating government officials, at others by muzzling the Parliament and the press, much of this information is known to

foreign powers, among them the United States, Russia, China, Israel and others. Official communications and bank accounts, transfers of funds, flows of oil, movement of tankers, purchases and movement of material can be tracked at a level of detail and with an ease hitherto unimaginable. Quite apart from the tracking of officials, funds, documentation, communication and oil tankers, technological innovations such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR), can detect pipelines several meters beneath the ground, let alone what transpires above the ground.

The destruction of Iran's centrifuges in a cyberattack by the **Stuxnet virus** showed the level of detail at which Iran's most closely guarded secret—the nuclear program—had been penetrated. There is no reason to believe that the operations of Iran's oil, gas, shipping and banking industry are better protected than Iran's nuclear program. Much the same holds true for official communications. Given that the NSA can tap the communications of the German Chancellery—sweeping vast amounts of data even from low priority targets—the notion that the Iranian's government can conceal communications concerning corruption in Iran's oil and gas sector is a pipedream. So is the notion that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) can conceal billions in illicit smuggling activity—activities at all of Iran's ports and docks are easily picked up by satellite. The Zarrab case should have put that conceit to rest.

The irony about concealing corruption under the veil of national security arguments is that it puts foreign powers in a position to secure concessions by bribing and blackmailing Iranian officials. The only people left in the dark are the rightful owners of Iran's

oil. And gas.

Our goal and duty is to lift this shroud to make the operation of Iran's oil and gas sector transparent and its management accountable to the Iranian people. As the owners and beneficiaries of Iran's oil and gas resources, every barrel of oil and dollar of revenue flowing through Iran's oil sector belongs to them, not the thieves of state.

It stands to reason, then, that what makes Iran's vast reservoirs of oil a blessing or a curse is neither the chemistry nor the conspiracies around oil. It is the character of the Iranian people and their leaders.

But, the fate of the sector cannot be left to experts and officials alone. All Iranians have a stake in the health, productivity and prosperity of their mother industry.

Failure to secure Iran's oil and gas supply chain will have dire, and compounding consequences for Iran's economy. In this sense, ownership must go well beyond demands for accountability and transparency at every level of Iranian state and society. It requires a plan of action. Saving Iran's oil and gas sector depends upon all Iranians claiming their right to their oil and demanding systematic and corrective action at the legal, regulatory, operational, administrative and financial domains.

In the memorable words of Afshin Molavi, author of *The Soul of Iran*, the gift is not only a geological endowment but also a spiritual inheritance, a blessing and bounty that since time immemorial has lit the heart, the homes and the temples of the Iranian people: It is this sacred light, one that burns in the hearts and homes of all Iranians, that thieves of state wish to extinguish.

Omid for Iran's sincere hope is that this paper, which draws heavily on the work of

many scholars, practitioners and journalists, will help raise awareness about the gravity of the theft threatening Iran's oil and gas industry. More importantly, we hope it will place the question of the reclamation of Iran's oil and gas sector at the forefront of debates about reviving Iran's economy.

By its own account, a theocracy that negates the sovereignty of the Iranian people in the name of religion has turned into a kleptocracy that robs Islam of sanctity to conceal the corruption of an oil mafia—the thieves of state. This theft is not an unintentional blemish on the Islamic Republic. It is masterfully organized, systematic and global. It has no place in Iran and no justification in Islam.

As in the past, the Iranian people will reclaim an inheritance for which so many have sacrificed so much. Every barrel of oil—every drop—belongs to Iran's children. It is every Iranian's duty and obligation to defend this treasure as guardians of a sacred trust. Justice demands no less.

But justice is a collective endeavor— it will not be delivered by a divine savior. It will come only when the Iranian people take charge of their destiny and insist on turning their suffering into an unyielding and total rejection of a culture of impunity and corruption. When individuals stand firm against the indignity and injustice implicit in bribery and corruption, their actions have ripple effects that extend from their family and work environment to the culture and society at large.

Though Iran's representative institutions are terribly compromised and in many cases corrupted, in recent years, a few notable members of Parliament have spoken out against the plunder of Iran's natural resources. Clearly, key parliamentary leaders and committees, regardless of faction, recognize that tackling corrup-

tion goes beyond investigating and scapegoating individuals. Restoring accountability and transparency depends on good governance: the structural and systemic reform of institutions charged with managing Iran's oil and gas sector. Every city, town and neighborhood in Iran stands to benefit if their elected representatives speak out against the theft of the people's oil and gas revenues.

For our part, we at Omid for Iran, recognize the scale of corruption that Iran's oil and gas sector represents a humanitarian catastrophe. The human cost of corruption is many times greater than the human cost of military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities, the subject of our earlier study, *The Ayatollah's Nuclear Gamble*. Then, as now, shielding the Iranian people against such threats recognizes no boundaries. It demands a national, and indeed, a global response: concerted and systemic efforts inside and outside Iran.

President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 makes the task of tackling corruption that much more urgent. As with the Ahmadinejad era, the reimposition of US sanctions affords criminal and corrupt actors the opportunity to justify corruption on a grand scale in the name of economic resistance and national security. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Given that the Iranian people will once again absorb the price of the regime's ideology, manifest as military conflict abroad, accountability and transparency become the key to securing Iran's oil and gas resources and revenues against another round of plunder and predation.

Failure to do so may benefit war profiteers and economic speculators eager to profit from crisis. But it will ruin millions of families who cannot afford and must not subsidize the impact of

sanctions: a spike in prices for everything from foodstuffs to medicine, a collapse of foreign exchange reserves, runs on the banks and other forms of instability and mayhem playing out in Venezuela and other failed states.

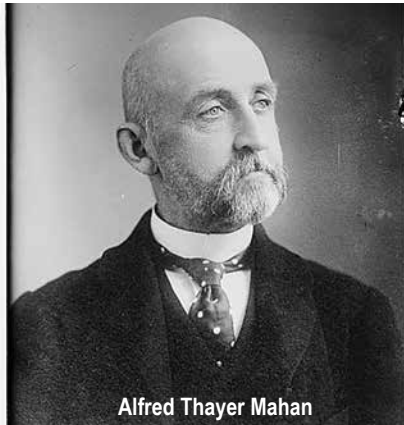
In short, a new round of international sanctions makes the war against corruption, and thus the governance of Iran's scarce resources, a matter of life and death. More, not less, urgent. Our hope is that the "Where Is My Oil?" campaign will serve as a nucleus for understanding the scale of the problem, changing the systems, and securing the benefits of Iran's oil and gas sector for the Iranian people. We are heartened by the success of anti-corruption campaigns and movements around the world, including those in Iran, and welcome all efforts by the Iranian people, media and government to reclaim and restore the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

It is our hope that the find-

ings and recommendations in this paper will serve as a basis for a much deeper collaboration for addressing and reversing the crisis of accountability, transparency, legitimacy and sovereignty in Iran. Towards this end, Omid for Iran will host a series of consultations and conferences on the governance of Iran's oil and gas industry.

Solutions are within our reach. There is no lack of education, experience or expertise in tackling corruption. And there is certainly no lack of love—we are all willing to do our part to secure a better future for Iran. Our challenge is implementation: turning love into a principle and plan of action backed by a government that is transparent and accountable to the Iranian people—not beholden to the thieves of state.

The exercise of ownership depends on a people who act, not as bystanders, indifferent about the fate of their children, but as warriors revolted by the abuse of their children's trust.



Alfred Thayer Mahan

Neologisms, according to Merriam-Webster, are new words or terms that are coined to express concepts that appear to lack a word or name. ‘Scuba’, ‘programming,’ “subprime” and even “Nazi” are all examples of neologisms that were coined to refer to new activities, jobs and concepts that arose in the last century. In contrast, malapropisms are also new coinings of words but they are misuses of terms because they are not true representation of the concepts to which they refer. They are not really innovative or even correct, although they may sound right. Trumps use of ‘unpresidented’ when he meant “unprecedented” (see Brenden Berry, 2016) is an example, as is George W. Bush’s use of “misunderestimated” when he really meant either “miserestimated” or “underestimated”.

The term “Middle East” might seem to be just another creative neologism from the last century, but in my view, it is also a malapropism. Rather than reflecting a true geographic region of the West Asia this term falsely groups countries and oversteps history, misleading people as to the true history, culture and languages of many countries with diverse population. The world does better without the use of “Middle East”, in my opinion.

In practice, the expression “Middle East” has created many misconceptions about regional people, arts, and customs that disadvantage the many different peoples living in what is not necessarily a uniform part of the world.

The history of the expression was recently documented in the *Persian Heritage Journal* (2017, pp. 12-14) by Kaveh Farrokh and Sheda Vasseghi, who cited when and by whom the term Middle East was **invented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**. They attribute its creation to Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) who invented the

## THE “MIDDLE EAST”: A 20<sup>th</sup> Century Neologism That Has Run Its Time?

Mohammad Ala, OpEd News outlet

expression in the September 1902 issue of London’s monthly *National Review*, in an article entitled “The Persian Gulf and International Relations.” In that article, Mahan wrote “the term Middle East, if I may adopt which I have not seen”. He may not have seen it in his day, but we have seen it far too often, in my opinion, and it is a disservice to continue using it.

Closer examination of this invented ‘term’ reveals that it has no linguistic, cultural, anthropological or historical substance. For example, Iran and most part of Turkey are not Arab countries but since they are included in the ‘Middle East’ they are often inferred to be “Arab”. These regions share a long heritage of Turco-Iranian or Persianate civilization. A Persian influence in the region is evident in words which many languages use and in the region. Iranians and Turks have strong connection to the Caucasus. But what connections do these countries share with other ‘Arab’ states? Not culture, art, tradition and perspective so much as a geopolitical purpose for the “West”.

The power of the invented term “Middle East” and the argument that it is a malapropism both lie in the fact that it provided a new geopolitical terminology to a rather ad hoc portion of the world, just like the governor of Massachusetts, Gerry, reconfigured the districts in Massachusetts to benefit the Democratic Party in 1812.

Governor Gerry was caught and hence the name “gerrymandering” to describe the practice intended to establish a political advantage for a particular group by manipulating boundaries. The “Middle East” is a form of gerrymandering: By calling attention to itself as an entity it dictates that there exists a defined region of the world which just happens to coincide with portions of West Asia where Western political, military, and economic interests are at stake. The term reconfigures “West Asia”, especially in the Persian Gulf region. It is gerrymandering, but like a malapropism, sounds convincing at least at first glance.

Propagation of “Middle East” was rapid in the first half of the 20th century. The term invented by Mahan was almost immediately popularized by Sir Ignatius Valentine Chirol (1852 — 1929), a journalist designed as a special correspondent from Tehran, Iran by the Times newspaper. Chirol’s article entitled, “the Middle Eastern Question,” expanded Mahan’s version of the “Middle East,” to new territories including Afghanistan and even Tibet. The situation gets funnier when the same or similar authors discuss the Islamic arts and architecture.

And of course a newly recognized region needs a new political status, thus it should come as no surprise that after WWI, Winston Churchill was chosen to be the head of a newly established “Middle East Department.”

This department redefined Mahan’s original idea of the Middle East to include even more territories: Palestine and the Suez Canal as well as the newly created states of Iraq, and Trans-Jordan. Interestingly, Tibet and Afghanistan were eliminated from London’s Middle East Department. Boundaries were re-drawn based on oil and gas interests in the Persian Gulf region. Mal-appropriation indeed, to coin!

As the 20th century concluded and the 21<sup>st</sup> century began, Western media outlets, political platforms and entertainment venues all used the “Middle East” when referring to the geopolitically useful countries in what is geographically West Asia. The invention of the new term has led many people, including scholars and the media to refer to Iran as an “Arab” people or country. Hence it is a malapropism.

Much of the confusion may be attributed to the religion of Islam. The notion that many countries are Islamic (even different denominations) may have led people to group the “Middle East” countries. Then why omit Indonesia, Pakistan or even Bosnia and Chechnia for example, from the “Middle East”? The tendency to see Islam as a single homogeneous religion and culture is also responsible

for the tendency to see all followers as Arabs and speakers of the same language, practitioners of the same culture. This misconception is wrong and misleading and does a particular disservice to Iran. The neologism “Middle East” confuses people who are not from the region and has the potential to make mockery of international norms. For example, Jack Shaheen, discovered that in the 1980s, almost 80% of North Americans believed Iranians to be Arabs or Arabic speaking people. However, the majority of Iranians speak Persian, a language in its own right and not a dialect of Arabic.

In the landmark textbook “Orientalism” (1979) by the late Edward Said (1935-2003) makes a similar point through his concept of “Orientalism.” In Said’s words:

“Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time): “the Occident.” Thus a very large mass of writers, among who are poet, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and

imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny, and so on. . . . The phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient” despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a “real” Orient. (1-3,5) “

The use of “Middle East,” I would argue, is also case of ‘Orientalism,’ and a dangerous one. As noted in the *Amazon.com* summary of the impact of Said’s book:

“This entrenched view continues to dominate western ideas and, because it does not allow West Asia to represent itself, prevents true understanding.”

To paraphrase, the “Middle East” does not allow the countries in that region to express themselves as they are. It instead projects a regional stereotype.

The main point of this article is that there is a danger in replacing historical facts and names with gerrymandered politically based terminologies. Because of Western control over media and Internet, a neologism can enter the scholarship domains. However, when it becomes a malapropism, people are misled and authors lose credibility and factual accuracy to regional stereotypes that are not based in reality.

The wrong term can inappropriately group people who have very separate views of the world and their place in it. It is my view that the historical names like “West Asia” must not change, especially terms like “Persian Gulf” which have been used for thousands of years. We should not be consumed by our quest for war and thirst for oil, like Governor Gerry was consumed by his zeal for the Democratic Party.

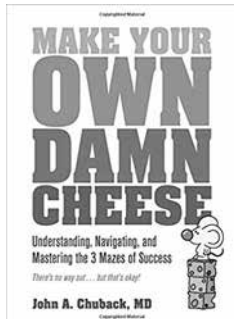
Neologisms can have their purpose, they show our creativity, our progress. But some neologisms, like “Middle East” should be discontinued.

## REVIEWS

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN DAMN CHEESE

John A. Chuback, MD

Health Communications, Inc. 2019



Incredible, best describes this book. It is short sweet and delivers an important message to the following populations: children, adults and POLITICIANS. It is my belief that if we all read this book we are less likely to align ourselves with one political party and one way of thinking. After reading this, you should be able to discard any ability to be brainwashed by anyone.

We must become independent thinkers, rather than the way our peers, political parties and social media would prefer. As the title suggests, you will learn to make your own cheese, because it is the only cheese that is real. It is a message book without psychological mumbo jumbo. This book reminded me of another life changing book, *The Richest Man in Babylon*. *How to Make Your Own Damn Cheese* circles around the life of Earl, a little mouse, who is determined to exit his maze, because he heard that life was greater on the outside. Earl, befriends another mouse (older and wiser) who also lives in the maze, his name is Napoleon. Napoleon then introduces him to four other mice who are able to get Earl to know himself, understand himself and to be the leader of his own life. He learns the guiding principles that revolutionize his life. He learns that rather than chasing cheese, TO MAKE HIS OWN DAMN CHEESE. Buy this for your friends, buy this for your children and buy this for yourself.

## BIDEL

Robin Magowan

Longhouse

In various areas of Central Asia (Persian-conversant India, Sunni Afghanistan, and the former Ottoman Turkey) Mirza 'Abd al Qader Bidel (1644-1720) has long been revered as both a great philosophic poet and the last exponent of the highly innovative Inda-Persian style. A prolific poet and polymath, his collected poems number more than 100,000 distichs, not to mention philosophical tracts, an autobiography, and a scientific treatise on atmospheric effects. Elsewhere Bidel has not fared well. As recently as 1986, the only edition available in Iran of his poetry was a mimeographed version from a four-volume Kabul edition. Nor has he fared any better in the western world. It is only in Venice, Italy, starting in the 1950s with Alessandro Bausani and continuing with Riccardo Zipoli and Gianroberto Scarcia's indispensable *Il canzonieri dell'alba*, that the beginnings of recognition have come.

There are reasons for such neglect. A Sunni poet who believes in reincarnation may be too heretical for orthodox Shiite tastes. And the sheer prolixity of Bidel's output, untitled as it is, cannot help but be daunting. Where are the luminous needles in that 100,000-verse haystack? Add the conceptual difficulty that his enigmatic poems pose, with their convoluted syntax and highly compressed imagery, and you wonder for whom Bidel thought he was writing. Unlike

many others, Bidel is not a court poet. Told that there was not a greater poet in the whole of India, Shah Aurangzeb remarked, "Let him write a eulogy in my honor."

Once I've seen how well he composes I'll raise his rank.' The order, coming from a dictator he despised, so infuriated Bidet that he gave up his officer's commission and adopted the life and penury of a wandering dervish. Bidel, also pronounced Bedil, is a pen name meaning "without a heart," i.e. broken-hearted or melancholy. His is a poetry of moral persuasion, but the persuasion comes in an idiom of complex, self-aware and unpredictable turns that we recognize as baroque. That "broken heart" of his is a mirror, an image that rings so often, in such contradictory ways, as to be synonymous with the poet himself, "Whenever you face a mirror, think Bidel." There is a doubleness in his poetry, of inside and out reflecting on each other almost simultaneously, that speaks to the mirror-like aspect of photography.

I came to this "emissary of the occult" through my friend the Persian-Arabist scholar and translator, Michael Beard. While spending a sabbatical year in Italy, Michael encountered Bidel when he read Bausani and met Zipoli and his fellow Persianists in Venice. Knowing of my interest in translation, Michael suggested collaborating on the ghazal I call "The Prisoner's Garden." Not an easy poem to decode. At one point, some Iranian ladies explicated a line to Michael by dancing out its implications. But in the process of trying to give the translation a life akin to what I imagine it carries in its own tongue, I found myself hooked.

When I asked Michael what else of Bidel I might work with, he directed me to Reza Saberi's compendium *A Thousand Years of Persian Rubaiyat*. There I found accurate translations of some 57 Bidel quatrains. A four-line epigram, often monorhymed, is easier to versify than the distiched sprawl of a ghazal. Bidel's *rubai* consist of an initial assertion, aphoristic in tone, followed by a more specific application. Rhyme, when applicable, can bind the disparate segments in a sonic pattern that feels inevitable. All the same, it took over a year before I had versions that read like poems rather than translations.

Knowing of Bob Arnold's interest in miniature forms, I sent a batch to his Longhouse Press. He, in turn, selected fifteen that he arranged in a Japanese-like accordion format. I then sent a copy to Reza Saberi, fully expecting him to be appalled by the liberties I had taken, hardly a word left intact. Instead, to my surprise, he invited me to collaborate on a large *Rose-Garden of Persian: Poetry from the 10<sup>th</sup> c. to the Present*. In the course of that work we tackled the four complete *ghazals* included in this collection.

More recently Reza issued *Hidden Treasures Selected Verses from Kalim and Bidel*. His Bidel is a sizable gathering-150 well packed pages of excerpted ghazal verses. It is from this collection that I have adapted the verse in the concluding section.

While Persian poetry abounds in poets difficult, if not impossible to translate, Bidel is notorious for the way his poems refuse to divulge their meaning. There is a well-known story about a reader who found 70 different ways to interpret a single hemistich; only to be informed by none less than the poet himself, appearing in a dream, that none of these versions was the right one. Then again, the appeal of this kind of hermetic poetry lies precisely in the way that, in resisting interpretation, it teases us to keep coming back to it, finding ever newer possibilities and hidden depths. In adapting Bidel's ghazals, I have used a three-or-four stepped line to create a space flexible enough for the imagery to come alive. I hope these lines, "scraped on the bars of cages," can help to introduce a poet of vast integrity who deserves to be far better known.

MAGOWAN



BIDEL

# A Brief List of Persian Scientists and Scholars Who Had Major Contributions to Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Era

BAHAR BASTANI

## Islamic Sciences:

Salman the Persian (Salman Farsi, 656 CE), religion commentator & companion of Prophet; Imam Abu Hanifa (699–767), Islamic scholar, founder of “Hanafi School of Fiqh”; Imam al-Bukhari (810–870) prominent Islamic scholar, compiler of “Sahih Bukhari” hadith book; Imam Muslim (818–875), Islamic scholar, compiler of “Sahih Muslim” Hadith book; Imam al-Tirmidhi (824–892), Islamic scholar, compiler of “al-Jami’ as-Sahih”(Jami’ at-Tirmidhi) Hadith book; Imam Abu Dawood (c. 817–889), Islamic scholar, compiler of the “Sunan Abu Dawood” Hadith book; Hakim Nishapuri (known as the “Imam of the Muhaddithin”: 933–1014), Islamic scholar; Mansour Hallaj (858–922), mystic, poet, a major figure in the Sufi tradition. He is most famous for his saying: “I am the Truth” (Ana’l-Haqq); Sheikh Saduq (Ali ibn Babawaih: 923–991), Theologian, prominent Shia Islamic scholar, the collector of the Hadith book “Man la Yahduruhu al-Faith” one of the 4 most authentic Shia Hadith books; Sheikh Tusi (known as “sheikh al-ta’ifah”): 996–1067).

Theologian, prominent Shia Islamic scholar, founder of Shia jurisprudence, the collector of the Hadith books “Tahdhib al-Ahkam & al-Istisbar” 2 of the 4 most authentic Shia Hadith books; Al-Ghazali (Algazel, 1058–1111), Theologian, perhaps the single most important integrator of Islamic knowledge in the first millennium of Islam, he brought Tasawwuf (Sufism) into the mainstream of Islamic sciences; Mahmud al-Zamakhshari (1075–1144), a rationalist theologian, he is best known for Al-Kashshaaf a seminal commentary on the Quran; Sheikh Abdul Qader Gilani (al-Jilani, 1077–1166) orator, ascetic, jurist, theologian, the founder of Qadiriyya spiritual order of Sufism; Bahaud Din Naqshband (1318–1389), prominent Sufi master, the founder of what became one of the largest and most influential Sufi Muslim orders, the Naqshbandi order; Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi (1207–1273), Islamic scholar, theologian, poet, Sufi mystic master, his Masnavi (Mathnawi) is considered one of the greatest poems of the Persian language; Mohsen Feyz Kashani (d 1680) Shia Theologian, mystic, philosopher, Hadith narrator.

## Medicine & Chemistry Sciences:

Jaber ibn Hayan (Geber; 721–815), a polymath who is considered the father of chemistry. He emphasized systematic experimentation, and did much to free alchemy from superstition and turned it into a science.

Zakariya Razi (Rhazes, 854–925), a polymath, physician, chemist and physicist, philosopher. He was among the first to use Humoral theory to distinguish one contagious disease from another, and wrote a pioneering book about small pox and provided clinical characterization of the diseases. He also discovered numerous compounds and chemicals including alcohol and kerosene.

Abu Mansur Muwaffaq (10th century), pharmacologist; Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037), a polymath who is regarded as one of the most significant physicians, philosophers, astronomers, thinkers and writers of the Islamic Golden Age. He has been described as the father of early modern medicine; Borzouyeh-i Tabib, physician of Academy of Gundishapur; Ibn Abi Sadiq (11th century), “The Second Hippocrates”, an Avicenna’s disciple; Esfarayeni (13th century), physician; Zakariya Qazwini (1203–1283), physician.

## Mathematics, Physics, and Astronomy:

Naubakht (9th century), designer of the city of Baghdad; Nayrizi (865–922), mathematician & astronomer; Abu Raynham Al-Biruni (973–1048) is regarded as one of the greatest scholars of the medieval Islamic era in physics, mathematics, astronomy, natural sciences, also distinguished himself as a historian, chronologist, and linguist; Juwayni (1028–1085), philosopher; Khaj e Nasireddin Tusi (1201–1274), mathematician, philosopher; Sharafeddin Tusi (d 1213/4), mathematician; Juvayni (1226–1283), historian; Qutbeddin Shirazi (1236–1311), astronomer; Sheikh Bahai (1547–1621) mathematician, architect, engineer, designer, astronomer, Islamic scholar, poet; Muhammad Baqir Yazdi (17th century), he gave the pair of amicable numbers 9,363,584 and 9,437,056.

## Humanities, Philosophy, History, Poetry:

Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (Persian name = Rozbih pur-i Dadoe; d 756), Persian translator, a pioneer in the introduction of literary prose narrative to Arabic literature; Sibawayh (760–796) authored the first book (Al-Kitab) on theories of Arabic grammar. He has been referred to as the greatest of all Arabic linguists; Al-Farabi (Pharabius, 872–950), philosopher, recognized as “the Second Master Teacher” after Aristotle; Tabari Amoli (839–923), a prominent historian; Bayhaqi (994–1066), historian; Istakhri (d 957), geographer, gave the earliest known account of windmills.

Hakim Ferdowsi (934–1027) the famous poet, compose the famous Persian “Shah Nameh”, a classic poem book that extols the achievements of pre-Islamic heroes of Persia.

Abd al-Karim ibn Hawazin al-Qushayri (986–1074), philosopher; Nasir Khusraw (1004–1088), Ismaili scholar, mathematician, philosopher, traveler and poet; Khaj e Nizam ol-Molk Tusi (1018–1092), the great vizier; Shahrestani (1086–1153) historian of religions; Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209), a romantic poet; Hakim Mulla Sadra (Sadr-ol-Mote’allehin; 1572–1640), philosopher, theologian, the single most important and influential philosopher in the Muslim world in the last four hundred years, founder of Transcendent Theosophy (al-Hikmah al-Muta’liyah); Mulla Hadi Sabzevari (1797–1873), poet and philosopher.

# The Sakas

Part nine

Michael McClain

The question of Shi'ism in Muslim Spain is too complex to treat here, but note that Shi'a influence is evident in various aspects of Spanish Catholicism, particularly in the celebrations of Holy Week. St. John of the Cross was also influenced by various Hispano-Muslim Sufis, notably Ibn Arabi of Murcia, Ibn Masarra of Almeria, Ibn Abbad of Ronda and Shakir ibn Muslim of Orihuela (near Alicante). Here we also note that the influence of Ibn Arabi of Murcia is evident in the works of Dante Alighieri, particularly the *Divina Commedia*. Now we shall note some of the typical Sufi elements which appear in the works of St. John of the Cross:

1. The wine of mystical intoxication, so dear to the Persian Sufi poets, the Spanish mystic even using the wine or juice of the pomegranate (a glance at an Iranian cookbook will demonstrate how much pomegranate juice is used in Iranian cuisine) as symbolizing the unity which is the basis of the multiplicity of the grains of the pomegranate. This last is most appropriate as we shall see; the Spanish word for "pomegranate" is "granada", so the pomegranate is the symbol of Granada, where St. John of the Cross lived for six years, and where he no doubt learned most of his Sufi lore from Moriscos.
2. Then there is the interior fountain where the eyes of the Beloved ("The Beloved is, by itself, a Persian Sufi symbol) appear immediately before the mystical union. In Arabic, "ayn" may mean "eye spring" (of water), or, less commonly, "identity", and the great Spanish mystic seems to have been aware of this.
3. There is also the lock of hair that serves as a hook to entrap the Beloved, something so typical of Persian Sufi poetry.
4. The foxes and cattle which appear in the poetry of St. John of the Cross symbolize sensuality or animal lusts, another typically Sufi symbol.
5. In the works of the great Spanish mystic we also find the caterpillar which by metamorphosis becomes a splendid butterfly, thus symbolizing the soul's development. The Sufis knew this symbol well.
6. Nor must we forget the orchard or garden which must be watered or irrigated by spiritual waters. How very Persian!
7. Then we have the solitary bird symbolizing the soul in mystical flight, which includes all colors, but is itself colorless, because it is free of attachment to any created thing. How Sufi, how reminiscent of the Persian Simorgh! We shall have much more to say of this solitary bird.

By far the work of St. John of the Cross is in prose. However, the poetic works of St. John of the Cross are of such high quality that many consider him to be the finest lyric poet of the Spanish language. While many Sufis were great poets, this talent is quite rare among Christian mystics.

Annemarie Schimmel says that St. John of the Cross never appeared to her to be a strange poet, because she read him as though he were a Sufi. I also never found St. John of the Cross to be a strange poet, no doubt for the same reason.

Perhaps surprisingly, it was the Persian Sufis rather than the

Hispano-Muslim Sufis who most strongly influenced St. John of the Cross; we can only mention a few; Rumi, Hafiz, Avicenna, Attar, al-Ghazzali, as well as a host of others obviously, there is no space here to deal with this vast topic.

However, as Luce Lopez Baralt has noted, it is Suhrawardi who is the Sufi - indeed the person - who most influenced the works of St. John of the Cross. Now, Suhrawardi was not only a Persian who wrote in Persian, he was, if one may use the expression, a most patriotic

Persian. In great part his philosophy was, according to his own words, derived from the wise men of Zoroastrian Persia, and the very concept of "Illuminism" (Ishraqi) by which his philosophy is often known, is of Zoroastrian precedence.

There obviously is no space here to detail the influences of the Persian Sufis in the works of St. John of the Cross. However, since it was Suhrawardi who most influenced St. John of the Cross, we will deal with one aspect of said influence; the solitary bird, but first an introduction by Hafiz: in my own literal translation: *O Royal Falcon of lofty gaze, perched on the Sidra (lotus) tree, Not your nest is this corner of woe*

*From the battlements of the Throne of God they are whistling for you*  
*In this place of worldly snares, vanities and deceptions*  
*I do not know what has happened to you.*

*Below is the translation of H. Wilberforce Clarke:*  
*O Falcon of lofty gaze sitting on the Sidra tree (of lofty degree)*  
*Not thy nest is this corner (of this world of)*  
*From the highest heaven's pinnacle, they utter a cry for thee*  
*In this snare-place of the world, I know not what (fortune)*  
*Has befallen thee (that thou art fascinated with it).*

Here is my own poetic translation:  
*O high nesting Royal Falcon of lofty and lordly gaze*  
*And high degree perched on the Sidra, noblest of trees*  
*Not your nest is this miserable corner of the world of woe*  
*From the battlements of the Throne of God*  
*They're whistling for you to come home*  
*In this place of worldly snares, deceptions and vanities*  
*I do not know what dire fate has befallen you*

It has been noted by Luce Lopez Baralt, St. John of the Cross was author of a treatise titled *The Properties of the Solitary Bird*. Said treatise has been lost, though one may hope that a copy may yet be discovered. Fortunately, St. John of the Cross made some rather scanty references to the solitary bird in the *Sayings of Light and Love* and in the prose commentaries of *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Spiritual Canticle*. Luce Lopez Baralt has written a monograph on the mentions of the solitary bird in the extant works of St. John of the Cross, and it is the work of Luce Lopez Baralt which has inspired me to delve into the question of the solitary bird.

Says St. John of the Cross in the prose commentary to *Ascent of Mount Carmel*:

"Says Psalm CI:8: I was awake and found myself as a solitary bird on the roof". "Solitary" means that all things are abstractions and "on the roof: means that the mind is lifted to the Most High. And so, the soul remains ignorant of all things, because it knows only God without knowing why. The bride declares in the *Song of Songs* (VI: II) that among the effects of her sleeping and forgetting was this unknowing, when she came



down to the garden saying “Nescivi”, That is to say, I did not know. Though the soul in this state of knowing appears to be doing nothing and to be doing because it does not work with the senses nor the faculties, it should be aware that it is not wasting time, because, although the soul and its faculties it should be aware that it is not wasting time, because, although the soul and the faculties are no longer in harmony, the intelligence of the soul is as we have said. Thus, the bride, who was wise, in the Song of Songs answers this doubt herself, saying: “I am asleep in, but my heart is awake” Song of Songs, (V:2), as if she had said: “Although I sleep according to my human nature, naturally ceasing to work, yet my heart was awake, supernaturally raised in supernatural wisdom.”

In the prose commentary to the Spiritual Cantical, St. John of the Cross says:

“In this spiritual state, one sees the natural understanding elevates in a strange new way above all natural understanding to the Divine Light, as after a long sleep, one opens the eyes to an unexpected light. This wisdom tends to lead to understanding the psalmist when he said: I opened my eyes of my understanding and found myself above all natural intelligence, alone without them on the rooftop which is above all things here below. And the psalmist says here that he was made to be like a solitary bird, because while the soul is in this type of contemplation, it was the properties of the solitary bird, which are five:

1. The first, because the solitary bird generally sits upon the highest places; thus, the soul in this state is immersed on the highest contemplation.
2. The second, that the solitary bird always keeps his beak in the windward direction, the direction from which the wind blows, even as the soul turns the beak of its attention and affection towards the direction from which comes the spirit of God, which is God.
3. The third is that generally the solitary bird is alone, and will tolerate no other bird near him or he will fly away from his perch. Thus, the spirit in this state of contemplation is removed from all things, separated from all of them, nor does it tolerate anything save being alone with God.
4. The fourth property is that the solitary bird sings softly and sweetly. The soul does the same in this state of contemplation, for the praises which it offers to God are of the gentlest and sweetest love, the most exquisite for the soul and the most gracious to God.
5. The fifth property is that the solitary bird has that it is not of any defined color. Thus, the perfect soul, which in this excess or superabundance has no color of sensual affection and self-love, nor even of superior or inferior, nor can it speak of this in any mode nor manner, because it is immersed in the fathomless wisdom of God, as we have said.

In sayings of Light and Love, No. 120, St. John of the

Cross says:

“Properties of the solitary bird are five:

1. The first, that he flared to the highest place.
2. The second, that he tolerates knop company, not even those of his own species;
3. The third, that he points his beak to windward, in the direction

- from which the wind blows;
4. The fourth, that he is of no specific color;
5. That he sings softly and sweetly.

The same properties must possess the contemplative soul; that that it must fly above all temporal and transitory things, ignoring them as though they did not exist, and must be so enamored of solitude and silence that it does not tolerate the company of any other creature; if must point its beak to the breath of the Holy Spirit corresponding to its inspirations so that the soul makes itself more worthy of the company of the Holy Spirit: must not be of any particular color not being arched to nor determined by an y thing that is not the will of God: must sing sweetly and softly in the contemplation and love of the Beloved.”

As Henry Corbin says:

“The “Simurgh”, for example from which all souls emanate and whose Arabic equivalent is the bird “Anqa”) is also a figure of Gabriel the Archangel Active Intelligence And it is the same attributes as Christianity confers on the white dove as symbol of the Holy Spirit.” “Anqa is feminine in Arabuc, as “Saena Meregha” is feminine in Avestan; we have therefore kept this gender in translating the name given in the Persian form “Dimurgh” (we mention above the connections between the symbol of the “Simurgh” and the Holy Spirit, which is feminine in Aramaic [and Syriac] e.g., the expression of Jesus in the (Apochripal) Gospel According to the Hebrews: “M Mother is the Holy Spirit.”

Henry Corbin continues:

“The Simurgh is a mythical bird whose name already appears in the Avesta in the form “Saena Meregha”. In Persian literature it appears in a twofold tradition, that of the heroic epic and that of mystical poetry and prose.”

Says c.s. Nott of the Simurgh:

Saena Meregha the great bird. In the Mahabharata, “Garuda” There are two Simurghs. One lives on Mt. Elburz in the Caucasus, far from man. Its nest is of pillars of ebony, sandal and aloe wood. It has the gift of speech and its features possess magical properties It is a guardian of heroes, a symbol of God. The only other (Simurgh” is a horrible monster which also olives on a mountain, but it resembles a black cloud”

Says M. Schwartz:

“Hukairya”, the one place retaining its primeval perfection, connecting the upper and lower regions, and being a cosmic center from which come light and liquid, may be seen as the Iranian form of the “Axis Mundi” found in many archaic cultures. Related to this idea of a central axis or pole is the World Tree (Tree of Life, etc. ...) In Iran, this was located in the center of the Vourukasha (Sea). It is the “well-watered tree on which grow the seeds of plants of all kinds by the hundreds, thousands, myriads (Vdevdad V-15).

This tree, which contained all manner of medicaments, was also known as the tree of healing. In it rested the giant Saena bird, whose wing beats scatter the seeds of the tree. This bird is the original form of the Simurgh of Classical Persian literature.”

*to be continued*

## *Pink Martini and Persian Music*

...No not the drink, but the name of a musical group, formed in 1994 out in Portland, Oregon. The members of the group refer to themselves as a little orchestra that crosses the genres of classical, classic pop, Latin music and jazz ... AND PERSIAN! The co-lead vocalists are China Forbes and Storm Large. Both women are extraordinary, but it was Storm Large's rendition of "Omide Zendegami" that steals your heart. While I could not find any Persian connection with the group, her voice completely grasps the elegance and emotion of the song and her body movement shows the grace of Persian dance. One may remember her from the CBS Supernova (2006) where she was a finalist. The song "Omide Zendegami" was written by Rohani Moayed Anoshirvan, who was born on July 24, 1939.

He was born in Rasht, in the Gilan Province. Mr. Anoshirvan was also a featured story of Persian heritage magazine. Many wonderful singers have performed this song, including America's favorite Dinah Shore. Below are the lyrics and English translation.

### **Life's Hope**

*\*You left me                      You left my city and homeland  
Oh you the hope of life  
From your absence, my peace and composure are gone  
Just like the days of youth*

*\*Unaware of my feelings in the passion of drunkenness  
You left, you broke my sad heart  
You bound the wings of my bird of hope  
Until you detached our bond of affection*

*My house was bright because of your face  
All night  
You were my only mate, you were my companion  
All night*

*My morning has become night  
My day like your hair (i.e. black)  
In the trap has stuck  
A prey in your way*

ای امید زندگانی	از شهر و دیارم	امید زندگانی
	همچو ایام جوانی	* رفتی از کنارم
رفتگی دلم از غم شکستی	تا رشته‌ی الفت گسستی	رفت از دوری تو آرام و قرارم
همه‌ی شب	همه‌ی شب	* غافل ز احوال من در شور مستی
روزم چو موی تو	صیدی به کویت	بال و پر مرغ امیدم را بستی
		روشن ز رخ تو آشیانم بودی
		تو مونس جان، تو هم‌زبانم بودی
		صبحم شده شام
		افتاده به دام



TEHRAN – Persian literature aficionados and literati from across Iran came together at the mausoleum of Persian poet Sadi in Shiraz to celebrate Sadi National Day. Speaking at the ceremony, Iranian philosopher Gholamhossein Ebrahimi-Dinani called Sadi a poet unique in the power of imagination and wisdom.

The director of the Center for the Study of Sadi, Kurosh Kamali Sarvestani regarded Sadi as the king of words and said, "If Sadi were never born, the nature of our life would absolutely be different from what it is. Sadi is a celebrated poet whose words equal our aims and goals in modern life."

He said that Sadi believes if mankind is seeking salvation in life, he must discover the truth of the time.

Fars Governor General Esmail Tabadar, called Sadi the symbol of Iranian wisdom.

The celebration came to end with a concert by Salar Aqili who performed a repertoire of Sadi's songs.

One of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sheikh Muslih od-Din Sadi Shirazi (C. 1213-1291) is famous worldwide for his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden).

Professor Avram Noam Chomsky (political scientist, linguist, social critic and philosopher) noted in an interview on August 25, 2018 that the American "... *hatred of Iran is such a deep-seated part of modern American culture. To eradicate it is going to be very hard.*" This antipathy is defined as Persophobia (or anti-Iranism) which is prejudice, hostility, and animosity against (1) Iranians (2) the Persian language and wider Iranian culture and (3) the Persian (and wider Iranian) historical and cultural legacy in Islamic, Turkish, Arabian, European, Indian and Asian civilizations. There are plenty of examples of Persophobia or anti-Iranism in Western media outlets. These include Ann Coulter's reference to Iranians as "*ragheads*" (CNS News, Feb. 13, 2006), with a cartoon by the Columbus Dispatch Newspaper (Sept. 4, 2007) portraying the country of Iran as a sewer out of which emanate cockroaches (presumably Iranian people). This is surprisingly parallel to the Persophobic propaganda of the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein which referred to Iranians and Jews as being equivalent to flies. Several Western government officials have continually expressed profound Persophobic sentiments. What is of significance here is that this discourse makes no distinction between the people of Iran versus the pan-Islamist regime currently ensconced in Tehran. However, it would be mistaken to state that these types of statements solely emanate from the republican wing. It is notable that despite their sharp political differences on a variety of political, cultural and economic issues, Democrats and Republicans stand strongly in parallel with respect to Persophobia. For example, instead of specifically identifying the "*Mullah regime*" or "*the Islamist regime*", politicians of both parties routinely direct their statements towards the country and people of Iran as a whole. One example is Debra Cagan (advisor to US President George Bush) who directly declared to British MPs that she "*hates all Iranians*" (Daily Mail, March 6, 2008). South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsey Graham stated on May 24, 2015 that "*I met a lot of liars, and I know Iranians are liars...*" and equated the Iranians with Nazis. More recently, Senator Graham expressed on Fox News TV that it would be "*terrible*" if a DNA test revealed him to have Iranian heritage. While the Senator's office attempted to downplay the remarks, Western policy makers routinely pathologize Iranians at the DNA level. Reuel Marc Gerecht of the American Enterprise Institute for example

## Western Persophobia: A Brief Overview and Possible Reasons for its Origins

PART ONE

Kaveh Farrokh,  
Sheda Vasseghi,  
& Javier Sánchez-Gracia

has stated: "*The Iranians... have terrorism in their DNA*". James Stavritis, a retired four-star U.S. Navy admiral and NATO supreme allied commander wrote in the Foreign Policy news outlet in 2015 that Iranians are all endowed with imperialistic malfeasance which is "... *woven into their national DNA and cultural outlook*". One can only imagine the political and human rights outcry, if "genetics" were being used as talking points by the same policymakers, politicians and military leaders in reference to any other ethnic group. Almost certainly (and rightly) they would be censored by the mainstream media and then meted out the according punishment by the political and legal establishments. However, when it comes to Iranians, these same rules apparently do not apply at this time. During the 2015 US presidential debates Hillary Clinton (Democrat) made very clear to her diverse (and Democratic) audience that "*the Iranians*" were her "*enemies*". Again, Clinton made no distinction between the pan-Islamist government versus 80 million Iranian citizens as well as millions of these in the diaspora, including Iranian Americans. While several more examples of Persophobia by Western political outlets can be provided, it is remarkable that some Western policy makers have also advocated for the use of starvation and violence against ordinary Iranian citizenry, despite their lack of control over Tehran's ruling theocratic establishment. Republican Illinois Senator Mark Kirk (in office 2010-2017) has stated for example that "*It's ok to take food out of the mouths of innocent Iranians*" who have no ties with the Tehran regime, and has also advocated for the "*ruin*" and "*pain*" of the Iranian population.

Interestingly, Persophobia has also permeated into print literature, media and

entertainment venues. While a virtual cornucopia of examples can be provided, note Jeffrey Ludwig's essay in the *American Thinker* (November 10, 2014): "*There is no ... tradition of rationality in Iran. They are a deeply disorganized, primitive people ... crude ... devoid of ... grace, love, faith, or hope. ... Deception, glib talking, and sycophantic posturing ... hatefulness, rage, and utterly evil intentions ... is the Iranian norm.*" Excepting extreme right-wing and white supremacist outlets, would such literature have been printed if this had been directed towards any other (non-Iranian) ethnic and religious groups? It would appear that when it comes to one singular group (Iranians), the machinations of human rights and political correctness in Western print outlets stand in abeyance. Even the historical legacy of ancient Persia or Iran are not beyond the reach of Persophobia. It was in June 2008 when major Western media outlets such as Germany's *Der Spiegel* Magazine and Britain's *Daily Telegraph* (citing several prominent Western Iranian Studies academics), wrote very strong diatribes against Cyrus the Great (r. 559-530 BCE) and even criticized the entire Iranian populace for their appreciation of the ancient king's legacy. Western entertainment outlets, especially the Hollywood movie industry, also regularly produce movies promoting Persophobia. While a full tabulation of these are beyond the scope of this paper, a notable example is the movie *Not Without my Daughter* (1991) (presented as a "true story") which questions the very civility of Iranians. Not to be outdone, the 300 fantasy movies (2007 and 2014) go as far as to portray Iranians as non-human – literally as mindless automaton-demonic beasts at the command of the whip. While its movie writers and producers will undoubtedly disagree, the 300 movies have been highly celebrated by extreme white supremacist and Eurocentric groups. One example is Italy's apparently neo-fascist and ultra right-wing party, the *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance). The *Alleanza Nazionale* has used imagery from the 300 movies for its official poster declaring: *Difendi i Tuoi Valori la Tua Civiltà 'il Tuo Quartiere* [Defend your valour, your civilization and your quarter]. This example is no exception as neo-Nazi groups often use 300-movie imagery and scenery to produce internet YouTube videos promoting racialism and hate. Warnings of these dangerous activities have been raised by Germany's *Netz Gegen Nazis* (Network against Nazis) news outlet which states the

following: “Nazis interpret the film [the 300 movies] as a struggle of good, honorable and powerful Greeks against the wild Persian hordes. This is ... reminiscent of ... the struggle of “Aryans” against the “subhumans”.” It is thus also ironic that the name Iran literally translates as “land/domain of the Aryans”. What it is clear is that the 300 movies have been highly successful in the portrayal of Iranians as “subhumans” and of course: the “Other”.

Even fantasy/sci-fi movies and video games have embraced Persophobia. In the introductory scene of the 2014 remake of *Robocop*, US military robots are seen enforcing the military occupation of Tehran. There is also the video game “*Battlefield 3*” in which US forces inside Tehran are killing Iranians who are labelled as “*Terrorists*”. Another video game propelled by Persophobia is “*Assassin’s Creed: Odyssey*” which targets ancient Iran (in the same manner as “300”) and portrays Iranians as eternal enemies of the West. As noted already, would movies such as “*Not Without my Daughter*” or video games such as “*Battlefield 3*” have ever passed Western human rights and political correctness codes had these focused on any other (non-Iranian) ethnic group? In fact as reported by the *National Interest* journal (December 30, 2018) the Apple company removed a video game app portraying the Afghan Taliban as the enemy of the Americans due to concerns that this “... targets people from a specific government or other real entity as the enemies in the context of the game”. Netflix also obliged, according to a report by *The New York Post* (January 1, 2019) by removing a TV program that was critical of Saudi Arabia. In contrast, no (Western) objections have been raised with respect to “targeting people” against either *Battlefield 3*, *Assassin’s Creed: Odyssey*, Netflix, nor any of the movies, etc. cited earlier. Why then is this Western double standard so strongly (and specifically) rooted against Iranians per se? Chomsky argues that this is based solely on the 1979 revolution. While Chomsky is partly correct, we argue that the reasons behind Persophobia are much more deep-rooted and complex, reaching much further back in time.

### WESTERN PERSOPHOBIA: WHEN AND WHY DID THIS BEGIN?

What are the origins of Persophobia? Three general explanations have been proposed. The first traces Western Persophobia to the long-standing wars between Greco-

Roman civilization and pre-Islamic Iran (Achaemenids, Parthians and Sassanians). This has been co-opted into the so-called “War of Civilizations” narrative that has allegedly existed between the “East” and “West” for thousands of years (see Farrokh & Sánchez-Gracia, *Persian Heritage*, 85, pp.12-14). This thesis argues that Iran has always been an implacable foe of the West since ancient times. This can be critically challenged on a number of levels, especially the fallacy that relations between the Iranian realm and the Greco-Roman world were solely characterized by war. Far less emphasized is the fact that the two realms were often also involved in several exchanges in the arts, architecture, philosophy, culinary arts, sciences and learning, etc. (Farrokh, *Rivista Internazionale di Studi Culturali, Linguistici e Letterari*, No.7, pp.64-124). The terms “West” and “East” are in themselves simplistic. If we are talking of the “West” in ancient times, Greco-Roman civilization was actually distinct from the “Barbarian” Celtic, Germanic and Dacian realms residing in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. While many contemporary European scholars, political and cultural figures may disagree, there have been significant cultural, linguistic and mythological links between Celts, Germanics, Dacians and pre-Islamic Iran/Persia (Farrokh, *Shadows in the Desert*, 2007, pages 170-175; Farrokh, 2018, *Persian Heritage*, 90, pp.28-30). Less known for example, is the fact that Ostrogothic king Witiges who felt threatened by the Romano-Byzantine Empire in actually sent embassies to Sassanian king Khosrow I in 538 or 539 CE. The myth of “Iran as eternal enemy of the West” becomes even weaker when one arrives into the Safavid Era (1501-1722/1736) of Iran. Few Westerners are aware that Europe and Iran were practically allies from the early 1500s to early 1700s against the threat of Islamic expansion into Europe by the Ottoman Empire, which was the seat of the Caliphate up to its dissolution in 1924. Examples documenting the Europe-Iran alliance are Shah Ismail’s letter (in Latin) to King Charles V (r. 1519 –1556) in 1523, a painting by Gabriele Caliari at the Museum of Palazzo Ducale, Venice illustrating the 89<sup>th</sup> Duke of Venice hosting ambassadors from Iran and the Cabinet des Estampes depiction of Iranian ambassador Reza Beg entering Paris alongside his cavalry escort carrying the traditional Lion-Sun flag motif to a warm welcome by the local French populace in 1715. Apart from select scholars, knowledge of this type of

history remains virtually absent in Western historiography, movie entertainment and political outlets.

The second explanation (recall Chomsky) for the origins of Western Persophobia is traced to the political fallout resulting from the overthrow of the Pahlavi establishment by pan-Islamists in 1979. This thesis is based on the fallacy that Western relations with Pahlavi Iran were cordial and constructive up to the establishment of the Mullah system in 1979. There is however, plenty of evidence demonstrating that Western relations with Iran had been problematic with both Reza Shah and his son and successor Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Much like Ludwig discussed earlier, there are plenty of documented cases of Persophobia among high-ranking Western statesmen during the Pahlavi era (1925-1979). One example is seen in the posthumously published memoirs of British ambassador to Iran in 1939-1946, Sir Reader Bullard (1885-1976): “...*Persians have so little moral courage... hopeless search for signs of nobility of character in the Persians... The Persians have most of the wickedness of the Germans, without their courage, ability and energy*”.

The differences between the Persophobia of Bullard and Ludwig are virtually negligible. Despite the late Shah’s status as a friend of the West, and a military ally of the West and the United States against Soviet Russia the mainstream media at the time, was less than favorable of not just the Shah, but even against Iran as a whole. News reports often criticized Iran’s efforts to strengthen its military capabilities against the former Soviet Union, whose imperial Czarist predecessor had already swallowed up Iranian territory in the Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*to be continued*

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# Triumph of Self-Empowerment over Darkened Despotic Tyranny

Davood N. Rahni

Legend has it that once upon a distant past juncture, ZaHawk a mythological, tyrannical, unjust, and cruel despot, ruled over Persia. Confiscating an ambivalent hiatus with his absolute power, he crowned himself on the Persian peacock throne as if he was immortal and anointed by an imaginary vengeful supreme. He reigned with iron fist, suffocating people with hegemony and heavy taxations over the vast Persian Empire to the fatal detriment of most inhabitants he mistreated as his serfs and slaves. His ever-expansive territory stretched from the Indus and the Oxus Rivers of the Orient, to the Nile, Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers of the Occident.

Nonetheless, ZaHawk was horrified of resenting wraths by the masses he had oppressed; consequently, he had chronic insomnia as he feared the disgruntled populace would at any moment turn up against him to effectuate his utter obliteration. In the meantime, while bipolar comatose and self-sequestered, he was barely alive in a pitch black, damped and pungently musty cavern on mountain Damavand a volcanically semi extinct roaring peak, so long as his lackeys fed the fresh flesh kill of a bright and beautiful young newly married couple each day to two the ugly serpent beasts rising out of ZaHawk's shoulders.

ZaHawk knew darn well though that the two serpents could devour him in a lightning annihilation moment before a midnight if they were not in time fed with the two newly wed before one of these sunsets.

In fact, it was a whispered knowledge amongst the masses, serfs and slaves, that while they took refuge with the righteous Spenta Mainyu the good spirit Faravahar emanating from Ahura Mazda who was the Lord of light and wisdom, and his sol invictus Mithra, that ZaHawk was directed by the impure fire and filth spitting dragon Ezhdeha drawn from Angra Mainyu aka Ahriman, who lived deep down the volcanic shaft in earth mantle. It was Ezhdeha that had grafted the two cannibalistic serpents into ZaHawk's calves so he could outpour misery, famine, disease, pain and suffering to people and mother earth.

As injustice is not to remain in place



forever however, Kaveh the Ironsmith, gravely irate for the well-beings of his compatriots, hung his toughened leather apron the Derafsh Kaviani, over a javelin and marshalled forward the disgruntled populace after the silhouette dawn of Yalda, on the rebirth of the sun. His bravest diehards followed him shoulders to shoulders as a Si-Morgh (metaphorically speaking 30 birds forming one unified body at a time) up the treacherous Mountain.

There, Kaveh beheaded the three culprits on one body in the cave with his one mighty sword strike, thus eradicating injustice and reinstated equality and happiness in Persia on mother earth. *Déjà vu all over again*, Kaveh had in reality reincarnated what his ancestors Cyrus and Mandana, Xerxes and Arianna, and Darius and Anahita of the Achaemenes, **delivered** when they had also eradicated injustice and inequality, and reinstated love, equality, inclusivity, harmony, tranquility, and peace on earth.

And so, with Phoenix (Si-Morgh) once again rising out of historical ashes of oblivion, the much anticipated and ever brightened and warmer SUN reemerged out of the dark chilling clouds and proudly shone as the most enlightened beacon of hope and happiness on the hillside of Mt. Damavand. And for the four fundamental elements of life, and as the eternal fire became strong again, along with it the

soil was purified with pristine water from the glaciers poured down into the valley and the prairie, and the fresh air thinned out all around.

Ecstatically exhilarated by brief periods of joy, most had not realized that Ezhdeha, the multi-headed dragon and father of all miseries and the creator of now the obliterated ZaHawk, was still alive deep down the vertical volcanic shaft of Mt. Damavand.

The nocturnal dragon would unexpectedly appear in his targeted communities to instigate catastrophe by kissing the two shoulders of a replacement for the past beast ZaHawk so two new serpents were mounted again. Houshang, to be newly crowned king of the Pishdadian dynasty had to follow the Ezhdeha back into the cave, whereby he threw the biggest Flintstone at, and killed the dragon. The Flintstone bounced from dead corpse and struck another rock. The resulting spark, which kindred spirited a sacred soothing fire seen and felt cheerfully by all down the valley, still burns eternally alive in Yazd today.

Hooshang was slayed in the crossfire though, and replaced a bit later by King Jamshid Kiani and crowned at Norooz the spring vernal equinox and the birth of Zarathustra. And so, the people from all walks of live lived happily thereafter when they enjoyed as if a loving Valentine every day.

However, If an when the people became complacent again to see or help their liberty denied, the Ezhdeha reincarnated with added an head, reappeared again and again in the same or other vast regions of Persia and beyond through the end of time so to bring about chaos through his ever growing strong servants: his lincpins and lackeys, charlatans and shysters, and hoodlums and hooligans.

And so, they all lived happily thereafter when they enjoyed and shared infinite love every day. In a while though, and after the people ever became complacent again to allow their liberty denied, the Ezhdeha reincarnated with added a head reappeared again and again in the same or other regions, from within or more painfully form without Persia, so to bring

about chaos through his ever-growing despot-to enable his charlatans and shysters, and by the evil actions of hoodlums and hooligans, linchpins and lackeys. Norooz celebration was the most effective juncture year after year for the people to ward off all evil spirits including the ZaHawks and Ezhdehas, when communities sprinkled *esfand va kondor*, rue and frankincense over glazed holy fire yielding a strongly aromatic scent from which the beasts escaped from.

No wonder Homa Chehrazad, the just Queen of the Kiani dynasty, emulated the utopia paradise on earth for 30 tranquil years in Persia/Iran millennia ago.

And her descendent Shahdokht the daughter of Yazdgerd III of the Sassanid Dynasty and the legitmate queen to be ran away toward a curvaceous mountain in Yazd to take refuge. As she approached, the mountain opened up and then after she entered it closed. There since exists the drops of pure *tears* dripping down the deep water-well today called Chek-Chek and revered as sacred ground by Iranians. In fact, Yazdgerd was slayed and his dynasty abolished by yet a foreign Zahawk from the southwestern deserts to occupy Persia.

What is excruciatingly ironic is that irrespective of perceived ideological and strategic differences among the culprits of all times and places, their thirst for absolute power and greed to plunder natural and human resources to their own ends, only continues to grow.

They exploit and pillage, all the while accumulating wealth and power. Surprisingly and tragically, their tactical methodology has essentially remained the same Ezhdeha since antiquity.

And thence, the perpetual doctrine of “divide to conquer,” though strengthened in the more recent postcolonial era, has, nonetheless, remained forever as *Modus Operandi* of the self-righteous and megalomaniac economic powerhouses and despotic political rulers, *i.e.*, the two sides of the same coin, and ever since the first coin was invented as currency millennia ago.

In so doing, and by creating a diversionary smoke screen *per se*, they inflict catastrophic devastation of biblical proportions through instigating wars and violence, usury and monetary manipulations, destructions, trans-migrations, and mass killings of the innocents, just to return later to act as the *foster mother more compassionate than the real blood mother!* Notwithstanding the excreting fact they had slayed masses in the first place, they offer reconciliations, “protections” and “reconstructions” at costs many folds far more exorbitant than the prior vicious cycles.

Through their inhumane and vicious cycle of dismal slavery and serfs, the few self-anointed despotic rulers have only undergone metamorphosis to become far more devastating than ever while inflicting more misery against the populace, governed without their meager consent.

If humans possess the capability of effectuating justice, why then resort to a fatalistic posthumous promise of a never ever seen utopia called paradise?! The only way the masses could propel forward is to sustain the glimpse of hope alive through acquiring education, knowledge, enlightenment, and self-empowerment.

They must hang their aprons on their spears; unite as a Si-Morgh, thirty high flying birds as one. Only then, they could eventually beat the oppressors at the culprits’ own games, thereby leveling the playing fields toward their earned happy life and sweet freedom and true peace!

This is the pinnacle of *E pluribus unum*. Eternally yearning for sustaining the universal justice anchored on love, civility, compassion and mercy, and leading to tranquility, harmony, happiness, and peace on earth, we perpetually rise as a Si-Morgh (*aka* Ghoghnoos)!

Persia (Iran) has for millennia, and continues to undergo, turbulent periods of trials and tribulations, and afflicted by evils from both within and without. Iran has been gripping with such terms of endearments and navigating through troughs

of despair and summits of elations in her very long lifespan.

After the Machiavellian chivalries by the reincarnated Kavehs, each time light has eventually shone on “Persia” and triumphed over darkness, truth over fallacy, justice over cruelty, equality over cronyism, and all in all ecstatic happiness over depressing melancholy.

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

Anchored on trilogy of *good thoughts, good words and good deeds*, everyone reaffirms their commitment to one or more of the following virtues, namely, volunteerism, altruism, philanthropy, benevolence and above all, to advancing dignified humanism as the pinnacles of life.

The belief in the golden rule of “*treating others as you would expect to be treated*” anchored on the tripartite pedestal of *good thoughts, good words and good deeds*, conjures up in mind a poem by the acclaimed Persian 13<sup>th</sup> century Poet Sa’adi:

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

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the [sweat, tears, and blood] of patriots but especially the blood of tyrants.”

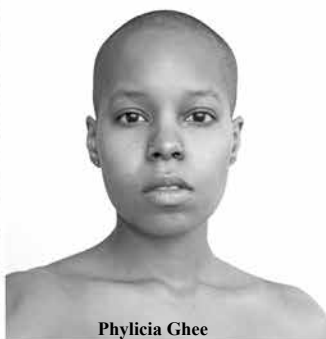
- Thomas Jefferson,  
*The Cofounder of the ever greatest Nation on earth the US of America*

## CORRECTION

Please note the following correction to the Summer 2019 edition. On page 25, the last paragraph of the first question that refers to Anthony Bourdain, was actually a comment by the interviewer and not the words of Mr. Jahangir. The pictures, on page 26, are of Jahanghir Golestan Parast and Rich Bender, Director of USA Wrestling and US Olympic Wrestling Board member. The single photo is Mr. Jahangir. The Zurkhaneh picture, on page 27, belonged to Jahangir’s late father in Esfahan.



Negar Ahkami



Phylicia Ghee

## 2019 Sondheim Finalists



Cheeny Celebrado-Royer



Jackie Milad



Akea Brionne Brown



Schroeder Cherry



Stephanie J. Williams

The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA) released the names of seven 2019 Sondheim Finalists. Compared to previous years where certain names have been repeat picks from past competitions, this year's group is 100% new and fresh, with none ever having been a finalist before. This is great because it gives audiences a chance to appreciate a new range of regional contemporary artists on top of their game and it also presents a different slice of the region's contemporary art scene, one less institutional and monumental, more personal and expressive.

Perhaps this is because this year's jurors include two contemporary artists who make drawings, Laylah Ali and William Powhida, as well as NY-based curator Regine Basha. Regardless, this year's list offers a range of artists' styles and media, from drawing and painting to video, performance, and puppetry, and skews toward the personal and the narrative, rather than conceptual and minimal. As a group, the 2019 Sondheim finalists appear to value process over product, as well as big and messy questions over neat and tidy answers.

We are excited for this group of artists to bring something vital and exciting to this year's exhibition and competition and so far, all seem evenly matched with

no standouts, in terms of experience or aesthetics. This year's prize is anyone's game and it's up to each finalist to use their \$2500 stipend (the M&T Bank Finalist Award) to create the best possible exhibition, which will then be judged in person the day of the awards ceremony.

The finalists for the 14th annual Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize are: Negar Ahkami, Akea Brionne Brown, Cheeny Celebrado-Royer, Schroeder Cherry, Phylicia Ghee, Jackie Milad and Stephanie J. Williams.

All of this year's finalists will participate in an exhibition at The Walters Art Museum and the winner receives a \$25,000 fellowship "to assist in furthering the career of a visual artist or visual artist collaborators living and working in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area." The winner will be announced live and on stage at an award ceremony and reception on Saturday, July 13, 2019 at 7 pm at the Walters. The event is free and open to the public and is the high point of Artscape for many of us.

### More on the 2019 Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize Finalists:

**Negar Ahkami** (Arlington, VA)

She is a painter whose work pas-

sionately engages the rich visual legacy of Iran, and its intersections with global art and culture. Through a wide symbolic vocabulary, tactile surfaces and an expressive use of pattern, Ahkami examines fraught and inspiring links between the U.S. and Iran, and more broadly, between the West and Middle East.

Her work has explored U.S.-Iranian geopolitics, Islamophobia, Orientalism in art and popular culture, and cultural appropriation in art history. Ahkami's work has been shown nationally and internationally in group exhibitions in museums and galleries including Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville AR; North Carolina Museum of Art; The William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs, CT; The Bronx Museum of the Arts; Stux Gallery, New York; Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York; Marvelli Gallery, New York; among others.

She has held solo exhibitions at New York's Leila Heller Gallery and LMAK Projects (Williamsburg) and Virginia's Cody Gallery at Marymount University and Arlington Arts Center, where she is a long-term artist-in-residence. Ahkami's work is included in private and public art collections and has been featured in numerous publications.

**Akea Brionne Brown** (Baltimore, MD)

She is an emerging photographer that

investigates the implications of historical racial and social structures in relation to the development of contemporary black life and identity within America. With a particular focus on the ways in which history influences the contemporary cultural milieu of the American black middle class, Brown explores today's African-American community as it relates to historical forms of oppression, discrimination and segregation in American history.

She received a Visual Task Force scholarship from the National Association of Black Journalists. Her work is featured in the Smithsonian's Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, and was recently acquired by Los Angeles Center for Digital Art. She was the 2018 winner of Duke University's Archive of Documentary Arts Collection's Documentarian of Color award. Her series, *Black Picket Fences*, was acquired for their permanent collection at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

She was also chosen to attend the 7th annual New York Portfolio Review in 2018.

#### **Cheeny Celebrado-Royer** (Havre de Grace, MD)

She is a multidisciplinary artist who uses detritus from art packaging materials, recycled and found objects, as well as studio trash to create intricate wall installations, sculptures, paintings and drawings.

The Philippine-born artist has a bachelor of arts in studio art from McDaniel College, Westminster, MD, and a master of fine arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Celebrado-Royer was a Community Art Collaborative member artist from 2016–17 with the AmeriCorps Program at MICA, where she served at the Refugee Youth Project, and was an AICAD Fellow for 2017/18 Post-Graduate Teaching Fellowship at Pratt Institute, New York.

Celebrado-Royer is currently the artist-in-residence for the post-baccalaureate program at MICA.

#### **Schroeder Cherry** (Baltimore, MD)

He is an artist and museum educator, originally from Washington, D.C. Cherry earned a bachelor of fine arts in painting and puppetry from the University of Michigan, a master's degree in museum education from The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and a doctorate in museum education from Columbia University, New York.

His works are informed by a broad sweep of narratives, literature, mythology, music, current events and history. His preferred medium is acrylic with found objects on wood. Keys, cowrie shells, glass and metal often appear in his works, as well. Although the works tend to have a storyline, Schroeder appreciates hearing viewers' responses to the pieces.

Schroeder's exhibitions in the Maryland/Washington, D.C. metropolitan area include MAXgallery; Hamilton Arts Collective; Fleckenstein Gallery; Maryland Art Place; RESORT; The Peale Center for Baltimore History and Architecture; Artists and Makers Studios; Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum; and Watergate Gallery. Additionally, Cherry is working on a series on barbershops.

#### **Phylicia Ghee** (Randallstown, MD)

She is an interdisciplinary visual artist, photographer and curator. Her artwork documents transition, explores healing, ritual, ceremony and personal rites of passage. Taught by her grandfather at a very early age, Ghee works in photography, performance, video, fiber, mixed media, installation and painting. She earned a bachelor of fine arts in photography with a concentration in curatorial studies from Maryland Institute College of Art.

Ghee has exhibited nationally and internationally, including The Baltimore Museum of Art, Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore; Egyptian Embassy, Washington, D.C.; The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse, Miami; Studio Arts College International Florence; Art on the Vine, Martha's Vineyard; and Young Collectors Contemporary, Memphis. In 2008, the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture commissioned Ghee to create a mixed media quilt for the museum's private collection. In 2015, she served as resident healing artist for a citywide campaign called the "New Day Campaign."

Additionally, in 2017, Ghee was recognized by Maryland's First Lady Yumi Hogan and the Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration for her art and activism in raising awareness on issues surrounding mental illness and substance use.

#### **Jackie Milad** (Baltimore, MD)

She creates textured works on paper and canvas. Her artwork has been featured in group and solo exhibitions nationally and internationally. Select exhibitions

include: Grizzly Grizzly, Philadelphia; School 33 Art Center, Baltimore; Phoebe, Baltimore; Lycoming College, Williamsport, PA; Gettysburg College; Flashpoint Gallery, Washington D.C.; Museo de Arte de Mazatlán, Mazatlan, Mexico); DiFOCUR de Sinaloa Galleria (Culiacán, Mexico), Transmitter, Brooklyn; Arlington Arts Center; and Goucher College's Silber Art Gallery, Baltimore.

In 2010 and 2016, Milad was awarded an individual artist grant from Maryland State Arts Council, and in 2018 and 2019, she was a semifinalist for the Janet & Walter Sondheim Artscape Prize. Milad was an inaugural resident of the Creative Alliance at the Patterson, located in Baltimore, and also held a residency at Vermont Studio Center.

Milad received her bachelor of fine arts from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, and her master of fine arts from Towson University. Besides her active studio practice, Milad also has an extensive career as a curator and educator, where she has committed many years to the education and support of emerging artists.

#### **Stephanie J. Williams** (Washington, D.C.)

She is a tinkerer and doodler whose work navigates hierarchies of taste. She received her master of fine arts in sculpture from Rhode Island School of Design, a Sheridan Teaching Certificate from Brown University, Providence, RI, and a bachelor for fine arts from James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

In 2017, she was in *Fictions*, part of the Studio Museum of Harlem's F-show exhibitions. Additional exhibition venues include |'sindikit|, Baltimore; Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, D.C.; The Delaware Contemporary; Grizzly Grizzly, Philadelphia; the Everhart Museum, Scranton, PA; and Lawrence University, Appleton, WI. In addition to reviews in prominent publications, Williams was a recipient of a DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities Fellowship in 2019; a resident fellow at the Corporation of Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY, in 2018; Virginia Center for the Creative Arts in 2016; ACRE Projects, Chicago, in 2015; Wassaic Project in 2014; Elsewhere, Greensboro, North Carolina, in 2014; and the Vermont Studio Center in 2006.

She currently teaches stop motion for the Animation Department at the Maryland Institute College of Art.



## Iranian Artist Monir Farmanfarmaian Passed Away



Born in Iran in the northern province of Qazvin in 1924, Monir wanted to study art in Paris but this was not possible because of World War II. Monir was able to get to the United States and study at Cornell University and at the prominent Parsons School for Design where she received a certificate in fashion illustration. After 12 years in New York she returned to Iran where she actively participated in the local art scene.

A versatile artist Monir participated in the Iran Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1958, 1964, and 1966. She also had solo exhibitions in New York and Paris during her distinguished career.

Monir was known for her micro-mosaic and glass sculptures, but she also worked alongside with Andy Warhol as an illustrator at the Bonwit Teller luxury department store in the 1950s. During Warhol's visit to Tehran in 1976 Monir presented him with her Mirror Ballworks.

She did not return to Iran after the 1979 revolution, as many of her works and her home were confiscated including an extensive collection of folk art that she acquired during her vast travels around Iran.

She returned to Iran in 2004 and

in 2017 The Monir Museum opened in Tehran which features over fifty pieces of her work. This was the first museum in Iran that was dedicated to the work of a female artist.

Her social circle included such artists as Joan Mitchell, Alexander Calder, Andy Warhol, and Frank Stella. In 1957 she returned to Iran to marry Abolbashur Farmanfarmaian, an international lawyer whom she had met in New York.

Farmanfarmaian began to explore her own country's heritage, assembling an extensive collection that included textiles, Turkoman jewelry, and *qahveh khaneh* ("coffeehouse") paintings featuring traditional storytelling motifs. Her floral monotypes earned a gold medal at the 29<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (1958), and in 1963 she had her first solo exhibition, in Tehran. Her own experiments with mirror mosaics began in the late 1960s after she saw compelling examples of the technique at various sites on her travels. Farmanfarmaian was inspired by *ayeneh-kari*, a traditional decorative technique of embedding fragments of mirrored glass in plaster. In her work Farmanfarmaian often fused enduring Islamic pattern making and a Modernist exploration of abstract geometric forms.

The Iranian Revolution of 1978–79 abruptly suspended Farmanfarmaian's rising career in Iran. When she and her husband went into a self-imposed exile in New York. For the following 26 years, she worked diligently, making mirror mosaics and reverse glass paintings for her friends and for her own pleasure. In 2004 she was able to return to Tehran and open a studio. Public commissions followed, including a mirror mosaic for the opening of the Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (2006), and a permanent six-panel installation for the sixth Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at the Queensland Art Museum in Brisbane (2009). In 2014 Iranian director Bahman Ghobadi premiered his documentary *Monir*.

Meanwhile, Farmanfarmaian continued to work, exploring the inherent geometric order of pattern, colour, and reflection. In 2015 she had the first comprehensive retrospective of her work in the United States. The exhibition "Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: Infinite Possibility: Mirror Works and Drawings 1974–2014" was held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

## CHARTING THE RISE OF MODERN IRAN with Yale Historian Abbas Amanat

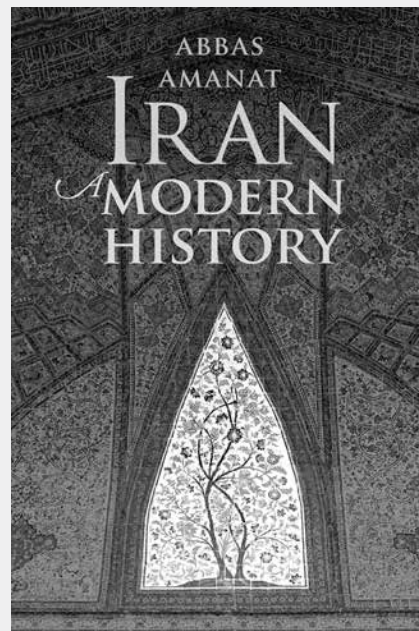
By Mike Cummings

October 30, 2018 Abbas Amanat, the William Graham Sumner Professor of History at Yale, poured decades of research into "Iran: A Modern History," his new book charting five centuries of Iranian history and its encounters with the neighboring lands and the Western world.

Amanat guides readers through multiple dynasties, revolutions, civil wars, and foreign interventions, culminating in the rise of the Islamic Republic. He provides a detailed examination of Iranian politics, society, and culture that seeks to understand how the religious establishment seized control of the Iranian state and has maintained power for nearly 40 years.

The book, published by Yale University Press, has drawn positive reviews in the Economist, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Review of Books, and The Times and Sunday Times of London.

Amanat, director of the Yale Program in Iranian Studies at the Yale MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, spoke to Yale News about his book. An edited and condensed transcript of the conversation follows.



Iran developed a strong poetry tradition very early. It was enriched over the course of time by mythology, such as "The Book of Kings" by Ferdowsi in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and various other examples that Iranians still revere. In the past, long passages of verse were memorized and popularized by storytellers in the coffee-houses. It wasn't just in the royal court, it was popular among the general public.

Sufism — a mystical interpretation of Islam — enriched Persian poetry. Refined Sufi themes were expressed in Persian verse narrative and lyrical odes. A great example of the former is the poet Rumi in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and of the latter is the poet Hafez in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

As I have tried to show, in modern times in addition to the above themes, poetry became an important vehicle for expressing sociopolitical messages and especially voicing political protest. One can see it in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 to 1911 and thereafter. There are numerous examples in my book of how poetry becomes part of the political discourse up to the present and despite the rise of today's mass media. It was a major factor in preserving a sense of collective awareness among the Iranian intelligentsia.

### *And music?*

Iran preserved its own musical tradition, which is based on a modal system, but yet it is diverse and adaptive. Over

### *Why choose the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a starting point for an exploration of the history of modern Iran?*

The 1979 Iranian Revolution represented the first time in the modern history of the Muslim world that a movement dominated by the clergy took control of a state. Historically, this is a very unusual event, not just in the Islamic world, but anywhere.

I wanted to see whether there are certain characteristics within Shi'i Islam that facilitated this rise of the clerical class and brought it into a position to control the state. Shi'ism was declared as the state religion of Iran at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was extensively, if not fully, enforced upon the Iranian peoples over the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is not a singular phenomenon. There are similar examples elsewhere, such as the establishment of the Church of England under Henry VIII.

Shi'ism has played a crucial role in shaping Iran and developing its cohesion as a country. For a long period — virtually five centuries — the religious establishment was in coexistence with the state. It was patronized by the state, protected by it, and materially rewarded by it. Religion and state were seen as two pillars of stability in Iranian society. That's why it is important to go back to the origins of this historical project and examine what happened since then.

### *How has Iran's culture helped the country maintain its national identity through centuries of revolution and political upheaval?*

I argue that Shi'ism as a belief system, supported and reinforced by the region's geopolitical complexity, preserved Iran's socio-cultural identity. Yet Iran's historical experience also contributed to its sense of national cohesion.

When the Arab armies of Islam invaded the Sasanian Empire of Iran in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Iran ceased to exist as a political entity, but it maintained the Persian language. It adopted elements from Arabic and changed its script — more or less like the way Latin influenced the Anglo-Saxon language in the development of English. Through the preservation of the language, Iran managed to preserve a collective memory of its past, which is also rather unusual. For instance, Muslim armies conquered Syria and Egypt at the same time, but both adopted Arabic.

Basically, the memory of Islamic conquest became the foundation myth for the sense of Islamic identity that emerged in Egypt, Syria and eventually Iraq. Iran was different. It preserved its memories of pre-Islamic times and grew quite proud of them.

### *What was poetry's role in preserving this collective memory?*

centuries it attracted numerous melodies and tunes of the pastoral countryside as well as the nocturnal music of the taverns, royal court and recitations in the mournful Shi'i ceremonies. Although Islamic law bans music, and there was some degree of opposition by the jurists, musical interest remained strong in Iran. Likewise, it is important to note, that Iran preserved its own painting tradition, contrary to the strict interpretation of Islamic law, which prohibits production of images. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier, one can see Persian miniature book illustrations. There are magnificent examples of it in museums around the world and at the Beinecke Library.

Finally, Iran — along with the rest of the Muslim world, but perhaps a bit more — preserved a culture of leisure. Wine drinking, for example, remained in practice. Much of Iran's lyrical poetry is about imbibing wine and the ambiance of the tavern where there was music and dancing. These, too, ran against strict Islamic practices with a puritan undertone.

***How did the relationship between the religious establishment and the state become adversarial?***

As Iran adopted selective modernizing measures in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the society gradually changed. But it was from the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, under the Pahlavi rule (1921-1979), that many institutions previously under the control of the clerical establishment, such education and the courts of law, were secularized. For instance, in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Qajar dynasty tried to enforce a European or Ottoman model to create a more state-based judicial system but the religious establishment resisted. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the state became more centralized and more secularized, it seized control of many of the functions, privileges, and institutions that were the domain of the clerical establishment.

The state created a new ministry of justice and its own secular public education that successfully competed with the religious education of the old colleges, known as madrasas.

In the West many religious seminaries managed to secularize — Yale is a very good example, but colleges in the Shi'i world, including Iran, resisted modernization. The curriculum and pedagogy didn't change. Therefore, it was easier for the

state to overshadow them by instituting secular public education.

***What role did oil play in the isolation of Iran's religious establishment?***

It was an important factor. Iran's oil industry was basically a colonial industry created and developed by the British. A massive amount of the revenue went to the British government while a much smaller percentage went to the Iranian government. But even that share of the revenue was crucial for a nearly bankrupt Iranian state in the post-WWI era. It provided the necessary funds for greater centralization; for enforcing modern reforms; for strengthening the armed forces; and for the creation of an autocratic regime under the Pahlavis that no longer sought the traditional support of the religious establishment.

The religious establishment no longer had the privileges it had enjoyed in the past. Some of its endowments were taken away. It was impoverished and the younger generation of clerical elite was lured to become part of the state bureaucracy. The nature and structure of the clerical community thus changed, and as a result it became more prone to radicalization in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was left out of the state-modern sphere and even though it preserved ties to the traditional bazaar business sector, it was by and large isolated.

***How did the religious establishment come to adopt its radical political agenda?***

There is a paradox here. On the one hand as a result of isolation the clerical community became more conservative and failed to modernize the Shi'i Islamic law. It clung to the same arcane curriculum and teaching methods. It remained a medieval system and that — in a curious fashion — contributed to its radicalization. You would have expected that a conservative establishment — the Catholic Church or Ultra-Orthodox Judaism for instance — would not embrace a hardcore political agenda. It could have remained outside the realm of politics altogether, as in other instances in the Islamic world or in the Christian world.

Yet for Iran's religious establishment, a radical political agenda became an alternative to engaging in modernization of

Islamic law. By doing so it proved to be successful in attracting certain sectors of the society that were not the beneficiaries of the Pahlavi state's secularization project. As a result, you see the emergence of a radical religious establishment led by Khomeini and his cohorts as a means of empowerment. At the same time, the Iranian state under the shah became more repressive in the 1960s and 1970s hence closing off avenues to political participation, such as a free press, the development of political parties, free critique of government policies, and absence of free and fair elections.

***How did the state's repression feed the religious establishment's support?***

In such circumstances, forces of popular dissent had few other options except resorting to the relatively untouched environment of the mosques and annual Shi'i mourning ceremonies. Despite its powerful security apparatus, the government did not succeed in closing down these venues where the clergy could express its veiled, but effective, criticism of the Pahlavi state and could blame the shah for its presumed subservience to the West, and especially the United States.

As I have shown in my book, as early as in the late 1960s the clerical community, and especially Ayatollah Khomeini and his students and cohorts, had managed to adopt and make their own much of the nativist anti-Westernism of the intellectual left, such as Jalal al-Ahmad; the remnants of liberal nationalism of the Mosaddeq era; the romantic revolutionary rhetoric of the lay Islamists, such as Ali Shari'ati; and the ideology of the Marxist-Islamist urban guerilla organizations.

***How has the religious establishment and the Islamic Republic leveraged anti-Western sentiment to its advantage?***

The radicalized clerical community even prior to the rise of the Islamic Republic had adopted a xenophobic perspective almost to the level of an ideology. This was partly justified because of Iran's bitter experiences of twice being occupied in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Western powers — during WWI and WWII. Moreover, twice in recent memory European and the U.S. interventions un-

dermined Iran's democratic institutions during the Constitutional Revolution and again in 1953.

The Islamic Republic exploited, and is still exploiting, to its own advantage these sentiments that Iranians justifiably harbored because of their troubled history of encounters with the 19<sup>th</sup> century imperial powers and the 20<sup>th</sup> century superpowers. If anything, the religious establishment is against liberal nationalism, but it saw a political advantage to be had by condemning the West and accusing it of destroying Iran's democracy. We should remember that such condemnation, a lip service, comes from a regime that is opposed to any of the political freedoms associated with democratic ideals and institutions.

***How has the Islamic Republic managed to endure for nearly 40 years?***

From a historian's perspective, one thing is apparent: The Islamic Republic has been in a state of influx almost from its start. It has managed to survive in this state of perpetual crisis — and sometimes even benefited from it — be-

cause confrontation, or anticipation of confrontation with a nemesis, that is with the United States, played into its hand. It gives the regime the pretention of legitimacy as the core to national resistance against Western hegemony and regime change. The sense of emergency hence contributed to its survival.

From a historian's perspective, one thing is apparent: The Islamic Republic has been in a state of influx almost from its start.

Moreover, the ruling clergy and its associated groups, such as the Revolutionary Guards, although a small minority devoid of the true support of a majority of Iranians, survived in power probably because of a strong sense of group solidarity. Despite their dismal record in improving the economy and developing the industrial base, and most recently dealing with Iran's mounting environmental problems, the regime has been successful in eliminating any organized source of opposition inside Iran (and outside). It was also successful in making Iran a regional power, a trend rooted in the Pahlavi era, and in engaging Iran in potentially dangerous enterprises in Syria and Lebanon.

***Will the regime survive another 40 years?***

How will the regime evolve? It remains to be seen whether it continues to be in a state of flux or, alternatively, it manages to reform itself through a gradual process.

One thing is clear: If the current regime caves under another popular upheaval, the outcome may not be promising at all. The recent Middle East popular movements of political reform, such as the Arab Spring, have by and large failed. Likewise, any attempt toward a regime change through military option or covert operation almost definitely helps strengthen the regime's popular base. On the other hand, if it is left to its own devices, will Iran become another China? Whether it moves away from a hostile ideological position to a more pragmatic regime with capitalist economy and friendlier posture toward the outside world is a matter of speculation. The recent U.S. departure from the Five Plus One nuclear deal with Iran, and the impending re-imposition of sanctions, does not offer a bright prelude for success of the latter option.