



Persian Heritage

www.persian-heritage.com

Persian Heritage, Inc.

110 Passaic Avenue
Passaic, NJ 07055

E-mail: Mirassiran@aol.com

Telephone: (973) 471-4283

Fax: 973 471 8534

EDITOR

SHAHROKH AHKAMI

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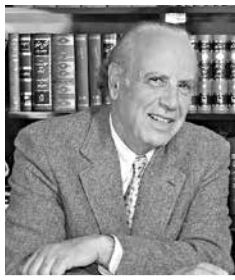
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Persian  Heritage

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

A few days ago, I wrote my editorial for this issue of *Persian Heritage*. In it I criticized some friends and enemies, within the Iranian Diaspora community, on the way they approach and deal with Iran's current regime and the atrocities this regime has committed. When I read the editorial to my colleagues at the magazine, they opposed printing it. They believed it was too personal. After a brief debate, I realized they were correct. The people in Iran are feeling so much pressure from the regime, closing the doors of hope for the youth, personal financial disasters due to the sanctions placed on Iran, the censorship of free speech, the incarceration of women for expressing their views (using the excuses such as the Hijab), unemployment and not receiving wages for their work and an increase in public demonstrations, how could I write about the approach of the Diaspora on the present regime and BE SILENT on the hardships that the people of Iran are enduring every day!!! Hence, I was forced to rewrite my editorial.

I decided again to write about the daily news that comes out of Iran and what I post on *Persian Heritage's* website, on *Instagram* and other social media sites; the news of the corruption, inter marriages within the ruling families, the rushed trial of the former mayor of Tehran, for killing his wife, which was smeared to avoid the truth from being exposed by being pardoned by the victim's brother and a woman being executed for trying to defend herself against her rapist. I reviewed these subjects in my mind and between my surgeries at the hospital, I tried to decide on what topic I would write.

During a break, I was sitting quietly. My mind was occupied with and saddened by thoughts of Iran, the place of my birth. It has been under assault for many years. My solitude was broken by a colleague and friend (a charming person, whose integrity and wisdom I admire). He began the conversation with an event he and his wife encountered while attending church services. They met an elderly woman who had just relocated to another state. She was discussing her health problems with my colleague and his wife. She was having difficulty finding a good physician to treat her ailments. Finally, she found a specialist who she believed was perfect, but there was a problem. Naturally he asked her that if she found the perfect doctor to treat her then what was her problem! In response, she stated that he is Moslem and Iranian. He looked at his wife in disbelief and surprise. In unison, they responded to the woman that it was shameful that a devout Christian like herself could make such a statement. They told her that for many years they have had the honor to have Iranian and Moslem friends in the medical field and other professions. They have always found them to be wonderful human beings in all aspects of life; their professionalism and their work ethics, their great regard for kindness, friendship and their love for family and community. They sternly informed her that in all their experiences they never saw any unethical behavior from them as friends and colleagues. They added, for educational purposes, that

she should know not all Iranians are Moslem and that if they are Moslem they are mostly of the Shiite Sect of Islam. Furthermore, they told her that they have never seen any sort of brutality and/or violence in their demeanor.

He told me that the woman, by her facial expressions, was obviously surprised by their comments, but she continued to defend her position by telling them that most terrorists in the world are Moslems and so that makes them violent and brutal. My friend again calmly responded to this educated woman (who is highly regarded in her community) with the following question; in all the terrorist attacks that we have had in the United States can you tell me how many of these terrorists were from Iran? Of course, she didn't know the answer but reinforced her point by stating that they were all Moslem! My dear friend could not stop there. He followed up with another question asking her if she knew that out of the nineteen terrorists that attacked the United States on 9/11, 15 were from Saudi Arabia and the others were from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan etc....but, due to these countries being specifically Arab and allies of the US their nationalities were never publicized and their religion was used as a scape goat.

The woman still trying to defend her position and show her "so called" knowledge on the subject, asked the couple if they disagreed that Iran was our enemy. My friend turned to the woman and asked her if she really believed a country and government, based on theocratic practices, such as Iran, is labeled by the United States and other countries as a terrorist nation, makes the people of that country our enemies?

He continued his education by telling her political differences between two governments has nothing to do with the people of those states. He questioned her on whether she had considered that this perfect doctor she found to treat her may be one of the millions of Iranians who left Iran after the revolution because they despised and feared the regime. He also asked her if she knew if he, like so many other Iranians, worked hard to continue their lives in the US and other parts of the world. He asked her if she knew how highly regarded these individuals are within their Diaspora communities. His final point was informing her all these individuals attended colleges and universities to become doctors and spent hours of post graduate education to learn how to treat her illness.

I have always been impressed with my friend's spirituality. He is dedicated to his religion and always applies the teachings of Jesus and Christianity in his life especially, to be kind to thy neighbor. He concluded his conversation with the woman by suggesting that as a highly-educated person and world traveler, she could learn everything she wanted to know about her doctor from her computer and Google. While she was doing this, he further suggested she read about Iran's history, its culture and contributions they as people (not a government) contributed to society for thousands of years. He told her to enjoy this additional education.; it will reveal that despite past and present hardships

the people of Iran are pressing on, that Iranian Diaspora in the United States have enjoyed contributing to society over the past 40 years, in medicine, the arts, business, finance ... etc. and how Iranians, who are Caucasians, are recognized as one of the most successful ethnic groups who have migrated to the United States. He directed her to research NASA where she will find that out of 25,000 employees approximately 300 are Iranian-Americans and hold high-ranking positions. Finally exhausted he suggested before she ever makes such an uneducated statement again about Moslems, Iranians or any other group of people or religion that she research the matter first. In a final question, he asked her if she knew that the first woman to receive an award, equivalent to the Noble Prize in Mathematics, was an Iranian woman, who unfortunately passed away at a very young age from cancer, sadly never to enjoy the fruits of her labor.

I looked at my friend and was moved and proud by his defense of the Iranian people. He told me that he and his wife were astonished a woman in her position and high scholastic education level could be so ignorant and so influenced by the media and government propaganda. He was disappointed that their conversation wasn't a mere difference of opinion on a subject, but rather her uneducated opinion, which was clearly a baseless bias and misperception of an entire people, in this case Iran. He thought perhaps he and his wife got through to her as she promised to do more research on her own and avoid the influence of the media on Iran, Iranians and especially her physician.

With the end of our conversation I heard them call me over the loud speaker to report to the operating room (OR) for my next case. This was perfect timing for me as I needed to be relieved from such an emotional conversation. His words to this woman

were so powerful and disturbing. While I was proud of his and his wife's response to this woman I was angered that the conversation was even possible. How could this woman truly have believed her position? I felt like I was hit on the head!

As we headed to the OR together, I wiped my forehead and took a deep breath. I looked at my friend and thought how he, in such a gentle manner, was able to correct this woman's misconception about Iranians. I don't know if I could have controlled my temper. Entering the OR, I closed the chapter on our conversation and began taking care of my patient, who was my present responsibility. I focused on her and was clearly happy she didn't (or at least I hope she didn't) question or care about my religion or origin but was simply confident in my medical expertise.

That evening, as I made my way back home, I reflected on the earlier conversation I had with my friend. I felt anxiety in my stomach thinking of how Iranians in Iran or elsewhere have been the subject of unfair treatment and labels based on slanted propaganda by the governments and media. I realized this had to be reiterated in my present editorial; there is a difference between the people who make up a country and its government. This is a critical part of education, we the people of the world, need to understand, before any other goals for peace, climate etc. can be achieved. These divisional tactics have no place in world society especially when the truth can be found at our fingertips, instead of in front of a television.

People, regardless of their birthplace, need to be treated equally, even though their achievements may be different. An example of this is the treatment of the Cuban people. Since the early 1960's the American government had its differences with the Cuban government, Fidel Castro and his allies, but the US made it a point to treat Cubans in and out of the US with dignity and respect. The Cuban people are not the enemy of America or Americans, nor are Iranians. Why then, unfortunately, are Americans directed to think differently of Iranians, to view them and the country as enemies? This is a dangerous, unfair and ignorant view that is in the minds of not all, but too many Americans regarding Iran. This is also a dangerous, unfair and ignorant view for anyone to have against any group of people or country. We need to learn to direct our animosity towards a country's government, not its people and soil.

This subject has many sub topics, that can be discussed, and I will continue to discuss it in my editorials until the day Iran and Iranians are once again respected and understood. A day when I can focus on the joy and love, friendship and peace and the absence of pain and suffering for Iranians and Iran. A day when political executions do not exist, human rights are plentiful, free speech is welcomed not feared and Iranians no longer must flee from their families and land in order to thrive and survive.

In the hopes that this day is soon a reality for the world we live in, I bid you best wishes until the next time.

In the words of Molana:

'There exists a field beyond all notions of right and wrong, I will meet you there.'

These words are also tattooed on the arm of the actor Brad Pitt

Shahrokh Alavi

About the Cover

Wonders of Iran:

BADAB SOURT

NATURAL SPRING



The Badab Sourt Natural Spring is located south of Sari, west of the village of Orost. It is made of a range of stepped travertine terrace formations, as flowing water from two hot mineral springs cooled and deposited carbonate minerals on the mountainside. This Spring is actually comprised of two separate springs with completely different colored and scented water. The first spring contains very salty water that gathers in a small natural pool. During the summers locals swim in the pool and believe its water is useful for curing back aches, rheumatism and skin diseases. The second spring has a sour taste and is predominately orange mainly due to the large iron oxide sediments at its outlet. The terraces are made of travertine, a sedimentary rock deposited by flowing water from the two distinct mineral springs; they were formed during Pleistocene and Pliocene geological periods. When the water, supersaturated with calcium carbonate and iron carbonate, reaches the surface, carbon dioxide degases from it, and mineral carbonates are deposited. The depositing continues until the carbon dioxide in the water balances the carbon dioxide in the air. Iron carbonate and calcium carbonate are deposited by the water as soft jellies, but they eventually harden into travertine. As a result, over the course of thousands of years, water from Badab Sourt springs, which flow from the mountain, have combined to create a number of orange, yellow and red colored pools shaped as a natural staircase.

THANK YOU

I looked through the last issue of *Persian Heritage* and again wanted to congratulate you for your commitment, deep love, total dedication to our heritage and for making the publication the best it could be.

I wanted to tell you this, each time I receive a new issue and have not been able to find time to say it the way I want to but I didn't want to put it off any longer, fearing that it may never happen at all!!

I know what type of effort goes in preparing a journal full of great articles and information.

I don't know how you do it day in and day out without interruption for so long and keeping it in a very high standard. It shows that you love what you do and we all are very fortunate and lucky to have you in our community.

My wife and I would like to thank you for your service to the Iranian community in these critical times.

Best personal regards,
Behrooz Akbarnia

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PUBLICATION OF PERSIAN HERITAGE

Thank you also, for the write up about Dr. Gamar Aryan, my beloved paternal cousin. Dr. Aryan and Dr. Zareenkoob were and are among our Persian treasures.

The Summers when my family spent time with Aryans exceptional family, are unforgettable. Dr. Aryan's siblings are / were also highly educated and they were all interested in different fields. There are / were physicists, doctor of medicine, professors of history and human rights etc. ... May they all rest in peace.

Thank you again.
Minou Arbab

A PRECIOUS GIFT

That is a very precious gift. Thank you very much. I always admire your passion and dedication to Persian culture.

Shervin Mortazavi

TIRELESS

Your indefatigable dedication to keep the *Persian Heritage* well and alive is really admirable.

Best, *Ardeshir Lotfalian*

ONE IN A MILLION

Dast marizad. You are one in a million. I wish you lots of energy, inspiration, good health, long and happy life.

Merci, *Goli*

ADMIRABLE PERSISTENCE

Thank you. May God give you a LONG and HEALTHY life. Your persistence is admirable.

Much respect and love,
Jahangir Jon Sedaghatfar

NEEDING AN EXTRA COPY

I am a regular subscriber to *Persian Heritage*. I would like to get an extra copy of spring 2019. I must say, I truly love *Persian Heritage* and always look forward to getting it.

Congratulations to Shahrokh Ahkami!

Best regards,
Nemat Moussavian

JUST A QUICK POINT

I just received *Mirass-e-Iran* Number 94. On the front cover page, there is a typo. Under English "Climber"'s name of Amir Shahqammadi is incorrect. It should be Shahqadami or Shahqadammi.

M. Eghtedari

YOU MISSED WHAT HAPPENED!

I enjoyed reading your editorial on your concerns about an imminent attack by the US against Iran. Your concerns are obvious and understandable. However, you and most of the media missed what was going on behind the scenes regarding the plot by the British for the survival of that regime, they helped put there in 1979.

I addressed this on my epigrams in Face Book as soon as I learned that oil and gas carriers were hit by mines, immediately attributed to the Iranian Guards who got them there. The reaction of US was immediate. They sent carriers, destroyers and drones, to the Arabian sea near the Persian Gulf. They pretended that this attack against the Iranian shore and nuclear missiles was imminent. You sir and other media outlets missed what happened next.

There was an immediate response by Khamenei stating, "we have no intention to get in a war with the US!" To support his statement, he ordered the Houthies to evacuate the coastal area near the Gulf.

Trump responded, "we have no intention to get into war with Iran unless they attack our armed forces." Hence the danger of war was temporarily passed. Then you ask the question, if Khamenei did not order that, who did and why? Ask yourself this simple question, who would benefit from that war?

If you say the US, you are wrong. The beneficiary of that war would be the Mullahs. The entire nation would go to support them even though they hate the regime. Trump would be the loser, and this would cost him reelection in 2020. Now do you see why he pulled away after he was alerted by some of his aids. He was then fooled by the downing of one of our information drones.

Again, Trump showed restraint. He said may be this act was not done by the Iranian government but by a rogue element. I ask then who was behind the baits to get Trump involved? Among the "so called" allies which country hates Trump the most? It is England.

During the primary of 2016 which country overtly slammed Trump? It was not Russia, China, North Korea, not even France and Germany, it was David Kameron the Prime Minister of England. He slammed Trump for saying he would not allow Muslims to emigrate to the US.

The sanctions are hurting the Mullahs, more than the Iranian population, who have been besieged, downtrodden and poor long before these sanctions. There were no sanctions during Obama, were the people any better?

Did you forget 2009 when the present regime killed thousands of our young people in the streets and Obama did or said nothing? In my opinion his non reaction was because he was in bed with them.

The British are angry and hate Trump because they cannot control him.

Thank you, *David Yazdan, MD.*

GREAT EDITORIAL

Your last editorial was wonderful.

Thank you very much. *Hossein Ghorashi*

Art Museum Presents the First U.S. Exhibition for Iranian Artist



The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art is presenting the first United States exhibition by Iranian artist Naeemeh Naeemaei from June 15 to Dec. 31, 2019. The exhibition features work from two series, “Dreams Before Extinction” and “Under the Earth, Over the Moon.”

“Naeemeh’s work is such a surprise,” said Jill Hartz, the museum’s executive director and the exhibition’s curator. “She is such an accomplished painter, and her themes, focusing on endangered species and Iranian village life and their stories, draw us in so completely that we find ourselves in her world.”

Naeemaei uses her real dreams and memories to evoke an emotional response from the viewers of her work. “Dreams Before Extinction” addressed the loss of wild animals in Iran and elsewhere.

Naeemaei’s work was first brought to American audiences in a bilingual book featuring the paintings, which was published by Perceval Press in 2013 and republished this year in conjunction with the exhibition.

“I use my dreams, wishes, memorabilia and legends, plus information about the species, to extend my imagination,” Naeemaei said. “In each painting, I’ve lived with the animal in my mind. It is deep connection.”

Her new series, “Under the Earth, Over the Moon,” is inspired by the story of a friendship between a young girl named Mina and a Persian leopard. Mina, who lived in a village named Kandelous more than 100 years ago, experienced a peaceful friendship with a leopard.

As the story goes, during the season of collecting firewood, her beautiful voice attracted the leopard and gradually they became friends. The story turned into a tragedy when the leopard was shot by a villager who was in love with Mina.

“A few years ago, I went to Mina’s village and in spite of some renovations, her house was still there, with its yard and tree,” Naeemaei said. “During several trips to the area, I talked to people, took pictures and developed my ideas until today, when three (including a triptych) of an anticipated 15 paintings are ready to be shown here. You may find Mina somewhere in a painting, or me in her place in another piece, or even none of us but still sense something that has remained of us, something like a deep sorrow and a deeper love.”

Born in Tehran, Iran, in 1984, Naeemeh Naeemaei received her bachelor’s degree in art in 2006 from Tehran Art University, where her major was sculpture. Her art — paintings and sculpture — has been displayed in Tehran as well as Berlin.

Prior to moving to Oregon in 2017, Naeemaei was active in Iran’s environmental movement and involved with several organizations that raise awareness about endangered species and other environmental issues.

**A Tribute to My Wife
An Exemplary Woman,
a Muslim, an Iranian,
and an Immigrant**



Today my wife, Dr. Farrokh Dehdashti, Professor of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine and Chairwoman of the Division of Nuclear Medicine at Washington University was honored as the first recipient of Dr.’s Barry & Marilyn Siegel Endowed Professorship Chair in Radiology at Washington University. I’m proud of her because while I already knew she was ahead of me in honesty, purity and humility, after her presentation today I realized that she was far ahead of me in science too. While behind every successful man there is a supporting woman, behind every successful woman there is a supporting man too. It takes a whole village to work together for one to shine. The role of our parents, our teachers, our friends, our community, and our spouses and children cannot be overemphasized.

I am proud of her since she represents an exemplary woman, a Muslim, an Iranian, and an immigrant, all features that are considered negative in this current political leadership.

Bahar Bastani MD,
Professor of Medicine - Nephrology
& Transplantation.
An Iranian, Muslim, Immigrant (legal)

Iran, Under U.S. Sanctions, a Perfect Travel Destination for Tourists

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency

There has been a rise in the arrival of foreign tourists to Iran as well as internal tourism by Iranians themselves after the unilateral US sanctions devalued the national currency rial, making a trans-Iranian journey very cost-effective and relatively cheap for world travelers. Seven million 800,000 foreigners traveled to Iran during the last Iranian year 1397 (to March 20, 2019), showing a 50% growth in comparison to a year before that, according to the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHTO).

The majority of the tourists were Turkish, registering a 74% rise compared to the year before, according to the report.

Nationals from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Iraq, and Oman were the next five top tourists that visited Iran last year. The US sanctions made rial lose much of its value, paving the way for a cheaper journey to Iran for foreigners.

Washington's punitive measures have largely kept European travelers away from Iran but also Tehran has been looking to attract now wealthy Chinese tourists to give a go to its tourism industry. Lately, Iraqis and Pakistanis visit Iran in a bid to use its high-tech medical equipment and treatment, promoting medical tourism in the country. Also, the latest World Tourism Barometer from the World Tourism Organization shows a hike of 8% in tourists that have visited the Middle East during the first quarter of 2019. "The Middle East (+8%) and Asia and the Pacific (+6%) experienced the highest increase in international arrivals. Numbers in both Europe and Africa were up by 4%, and in the Americas, growth was recorded at 3%," reads the report.

Over the last three years, there's been a surge in eco-tourism in the country that promotes visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial mass tourism.



Foreign tourists in the southern Province of Kerman
Tabas, northwestern Iran

A. The Economic cost of Corruption and Sanctions

1. The Nuclear Dispute: The Trillion-Dollar Conflict

Based on the Iranian Parliament’s social accounting matrix (SAM), economic models establish the cost of corruption scandals and sanctions to Iran’s economy during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to be in the range of 1 trillion dollars.

2. Jobs: The Billion-Dollar Equation

Corruption is a form of divestment. Job creation models for countries comparable to Iran suggest that, depending on the sector, every \$1 billion in lost oil revenues, if invested in Iran’s economy, could generate between 200,000 to 600,000 jobs.

3. Jobs: The Trillion-Dollar Equation

According to Iran’s Minister of Labor, the cost of creating one job ranges from \$6,000 to roughly \$120,000. At \$6,000, \$1 billion can create more than 160,000 jobs. At \$120,000, \$1 billion can create more than 8,000 jobs. Even at \$120,000 per job, a trillion dollars lost over the Ahmadinejad decade could have translated into more than 8 million well-paying jobs.

4. The Employment Picture

The abuse of Iran’s oil revenues has eroded Iran’s industrial base. Corruption has had a devastating impact on workers. Despite an influx of more than \$700 billion between 2006 and 2013, economists suggest the net total of job creation in Iran was zero. Despite oil prices at more than \$100 per barrel, the flood of imported goods into Iran resulted in the bankruptcy of more than 2,500 industrial firms and the reduction of the work force in the industrial sector by more than 500,000.

5. Youth Unemployment

With more than 60% of Iran’s population under 30 years old, unemployment among Iran’s youth between the ages of 15 and 29, stands at a staggering 21.8%, with the rate for women at almost 40%. As things stand, the labor market only creates 1 job for every 3 Iranian youths entering the labor market. By 2021, with a labor force of 42.5 million, 7.5 million people, or 17.6% of the population, will be unemployed.

6. Corruption, Scandals and Jobs

Under the IFC model, the \$2.7 billion

KHOSROW B. SEMNANI

Source: Where’s My Oil?



Zanjani corruption scandal, cost Iran between 270,000 to more than 1 million jobs. Using the government’s \$6,000 per-job estimate, 450,000 jobs could be created if these sums were reclaimed.

The \$24.5 billion that Naftiran Intertrade Company, the NIOC’s offshore trading arm, withdrew from Iran’s sanctions windfall, if invested in the economy, would have created more than 4 million jobs at \$6,000 per job and more than 200,000 at \$120,000 per job.

B. Oil Heists and Accounting Irregularities: Sanctions Windfall and Sovereign Wealth Fund

1. No Accounting for Iran’s Frozen Funds

The Rouhani government and Iran’s Central Bank have still to provide a complete accounting for the status of Iran’s frozen funds. There are significant

discrepancies in the accounts, with the government failing to track, reconcile or account for at least \$60 billion. According to former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, only \$3 billion in Iran’s frozen reserves have made their way back to Iran by April 2016, raising questions about the Central Bank’s claims concerning the \$27 billion-\$29 billion in released funds expected to be returned to Iran.

2. NIOC and Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO) \$24.5 Billion Audit’

The Central Bank, the NIOC and the State Audit Organization have failed to account for \$24.5 billion in oil revenues withdrawn and spent without proper authorization by Naftiran Intertrade Company, the offshore oil trading arm of the NIOC.

3. The Chinese Oil Contracts and Concessions

The status of \$22.5 billion in Iranian oil revenues held in China as guarantees for joint venture projects remains unclear. Although compared to the infamous “Treaty of Turkomenchai,” the nature and legality of these contracts and concessions remain veiled in secrecy, as does the identity of the beneficiaries. To this day, it is not clear who sets up, controls and monitors these accounts on behalf of the Iranian people, in which banks. Nor is it clear which joint-ventures were guaranteed by \$22.5 billion in Iranian oil revenues, and what goods and services, if any, were imported from China, and by which entities.

4. The Domestic Banks

The government authorized the withdrawal of the rial equivalent of \$10 billion in Iran’s frozen assets from the Central Bank, the bank admits. In 2015, the head of the Central Bank described the status of these funds, allegedly loaned to various Iranian banks, as being “in doubt.” This raises grave questions about the health of Iran’s banking sector, the extent of corruption in Iran’s financial sector, the nature and condition attached to the loans, and the status of \$10 billion in projects on the verge of bankruptcy or default. To date, the Rouhani administration has not provided a comprehensive and transparent account as to how these funds were squandered.

5. Iran’s Sovereign Wealth Fund

While much attention has focused on the pay of executives charged with managing Iran’s Sovereign Wealth Fund, the National Development Fund (former

Oil Stabilization Fund), the crisis at the fund is much deeper than the scandal over inflated salaries and perks. The laws and rules regarding the deposit and withdrawal of funds from the account appear to have been skirted to facilitate the plunder of the fund for off budget pork barrel projects. Revenue Watch estimated that between 2005 and 2011, the OSF should have received \$36 billion more than the government reported, and that between 2006 and 2011, the government withdrew more than \$150 billion from the fund without clear economic justifications. To this day, Iranians are in the dark about the operation of Iran's Sovereign Wealth Fund. The fund has scored a 1 out of 10 from the Sovereign Wealth Institute's Transparency Index. The state of the NDF- anemic by all accounts-points to extensive systemic and structural weaknesses. Such levels of corruption, neglect and mismanagement of oil revenues should be of grave concern to the government and the Iranian people given the need to protect the country against volatility in oil markets. A comprehensive review of the fund, including an audit of all deposits and withdrawals from its accounts, is a matter of national security.

C. Governance of the Oil and Gas Sector

1. The Iranian People's Blind Spot

Iran's oil and gas sector has been kept in a collective blind spot. As reflected in the Zanjani case, the flows of information and data necessary for monitoring the movement of oil and funds through the sector have broken down. Despite questions from the media, the government and others in the oil and gas sector cannot account for billions in oil revenues. Similarly, the most basic information about the ownership structure, capabilities and performance of major players in the sector, such as Khatam al-Anbia, are not available. It is not clear how decisions are made, contracts vetted, investments allocated, projects monitored and revenues measured. Major economic plans and projects have stalled for decades. For Iran's economy to recover, reclaiming and restoring the oil and gas sector must become a national priority.

2. The Unknown: The Black Market in Iranian Oil

Unknown quantities of Iranian oil are sold on the black market by oil mafia and other corrupt actors with little loyalty to the Iranian people. Entire tankers are

unaccounted for. Such oil cartels pose a threat to the economic prosperity and national security of Iran.

3. Energy Policy: Priorities and Policies

Iran's political and economic priorities must focus on long term energy policy that is rational, not ideological or political. Iran's nuclear program accounts for less than 1% of the country's total energy use, with fossil fuels accounting for more than 99%. To have subjected Iran's oil and gas sector, and the economy to massive sanctions, in the name of defending Iran's right to enrich uranium, was economic suicide.

4. Securing the Oil Supply and Revenue Chain

Iran's oil supply chain is highly vulnerable to corruption. The arteries connecting the physical flow of oil and gas out of the country to the flow of goods and revenues into the country have been slashed.

So also have the arteries governing investments in projects and plans for the development of Iran's oil and gas sector. Restoring transparency and accountability to the oil and gas sector is essential for protecting Iran's resources. Iran must sever its ties with the highly sophisticated international black market in oil, a criminal underworld that is every bit as powerful as the illicit drug and arms market. Rather than keep the sector operating under a veil of secrecy that facilitates corruption and rewards impunity, Iran's national security and economic future depends on access to information: multiple institutions checking, reporting, auditing and verifying data about prices, volumes, shipments, deliveries, payments and partners.

5. Budgets and Treasury: Oil Allocations and Economic Malignancy

A significant portion of Iran's oil revenues is not accounted for in Iran's budget. Oil is allocated to actors ranging from parastatal organizations to revolutionary guard commanders and private consortia, all of which operate outside official channels. The Iranian treasury and Parliament do not control their budget, revenues or expenditures. This breach of sovereignty has serious implications as it opens the most sensitive sectors of Iran's economy to nefarious players, oligarchs and militias. They not only abuse their political power to establish and expand monopolies that prey on Iran's resources, they have an interest in amputating the Iranian people's

sovereignty by taking over the Iranian state on behalf of foreign interests. Some are directly implicated in grave human rights violations, money laundering, financing extremism, extortion, smuggling and other criminal and terrorist activities.

6) Investments in the Oil and Gas Industry

Corruption is a major cause of the decline of Iran's oil and gas industry. To put it bluntly, the return on investments in Iran's oil and gas projects and plans have been pathetic. Projects and plans are poorly conceived, managed, structured, funded and secured.

The outcomes are disgraceful. Iran sits on the world's largest reserves of gas- the South Pars Fields- yet Iran's National Gas company is nearly bankrupt. As the Crescent Petroleum corruption case has made abundantly clear, after spending billions of dollars in Iran's oil revenues on the development of the South Pars Oil field, Iranian officials blame corruption at the NIOC for signing disastrous long-term contracts, with pegs binding Iran to sell its gas at one-fourteenth the market price.

7. Policy and Governance

As the World Bank made abundantly clear in its review of Iran's oil and gas industry, there is a lack of vision for the sector. For all practical purposes, the NIOC's historic monopoly over the sector has been compromised and its professional cadres purged.

The sector has been opened to new players: corrupt and criminal actors and interest groups ranging from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and parastatal foundations to international and domestic consortia. The result has been the fragmentation and fractionalization of Iran's oil and gas industry- a severe constraint on the productive and operational capacity of the sector, with profoundly negative consequences for the future of Iran's economy.

8. Diminishing Returns: South Pars

Despite billions in alleged investments over decades, Iran, with the world's largest gas reserves, has failed to tap into its potential as a gas superpower. Billions in oil revenues have vanished in South Pars only for the value of the entire field to be squandered through corrupt deals pricing Iranian gas at one-fourteenth its worth. Iran's plans to pump 34 billion cubic meters per annum into its oil recovery

program have been jeopardized due to shortsighted policies. As Iran's situation has grown more desperate, that of other players has grown stronger. Qatar, which shares and exploits the same gas field has become an energy superpower.

9) Diminishing Returns: Iran's Oil Fields

Protecting the productivity of Iran's oil fields is crucial to Iran's economic future. Every year, the country's oil fields lose between 8%-14% of their production level- a massive loss that can be forestalled by reinjecting 34 billion cubic meter per annum of natural gas into Iran's oil wells. Yet Iran has missed its last two National Development Plans (2005-2015) to increase its oil recovery rate by 2%.

With 9.3% of the world's total proven conventional crude oil reserves, every 1% increase in oil recovery rates translates into \$80 billion more in revenues. Instead of gaining ground, corruption in Iran's oil and gas sector is compounding losses at a staggering pace. Iranian policymakers are putting entire generations at risk by making and then failing to properly implement recovery plan after recovery plan, decade after decade.

D. Political Risks of Corruption

1. Extremism

The link between extremism and corruption is incontrovertible. While the Iranian people were subjected to the most severe economic pressures, the Rouhani administration has accused an economic militia with ties to IRGC of engaging in corruption on a scale unprecedented in Iranian history. IRGC commanders not only assumed sensitive posts in Iran's oil and gas infrastructure, they siphoned unknown sums of Iranian oil revenue into foreign accounts over which Iran has no control or jurisdiction.

Extremism, in the form of the nuclear dispute, allowed the thieves of state to subvert controls over the sale of oil in the name of bypassing sanctions. Such black-market activities threaten Iran's prosperity and security. They also give the oil mafia an interest in perpetuating extremism: promoting and provoking crises, whether under the guise of defending Iran's nuclear program or through inflaming domestic and regional conflicts.

E. From Denationalization to Reclamation

1. Transparency, Accountability and Con-

trol Virtually

All Iranians have a national obligation and an economic interest in reclaiming their oil by fighting corruption. The Islamic Republic's revolutionary ideology must not become an instrument for the denationalization of Iranian oil. Iran's oil and gas sector is a national treasure, with the Iranian people holding title to an asset that is worth trillions of dollars.

The process of reclaiming and salvaging the treasure depends on a robust anti-corruption campaign initiated at all levels of society. Iranian officials and institutions have a duty to protect Iran's oil and gas sector, reserves, resources and revenues against the thieves of state. They must not only demand transparency and accountability but also establish and enforce policies, standards and metrics for restoring confidence in the governance, productivity and future. of the oil and gas sector.

2. Audit

Addressing the open corruption cases, vast accounting discrepancies, and systemic gaps is crucial to restoring Iran's sovereignty over its resources. As with the case of Nigeria, it is essential to initiate an independent audit of Iran's oil and gas sector's books and operations- particularly for how the sector was run under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

3. Judiciary and Parliament: Prosecution of Corruption Cases

Iran's judiciary and Parliament must not cover up corruption by high officials responsible for the governance of Iran's oil and gas sector. All corruption cases in Iran should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The higher the official, the greater the breach of trust, the more grave the violation and the more important the need for complete investigation and accounting of the crimes. Yet, as charged by Ahmadinejad and others, the judiciary itself is corrupted, more often than not conducting investigations and trials with the intention of covering up rather than revealing grand corruption in the oil and gas sector.

F. Corruption by Design

1. Corruption is Not Accidental

Corruption in the Islamic Republic is not accidental. It is structural and systematic-purposefully and deliberately crafted to facilitate theft on a grand scale. While the spoils from corruption allow the Islamic

Republic to survive, effectively rewarding and unifying the thieves of state for the plunder of Iran's resources and revenues, it punishes the Iranian people by exposing their culture, health, economy and security to untold harm.

2. Corruption is about Control

Corruption is an instrument of political and economic coercion and control- a rite of passage that separates insiders from outsiders. Bribery, extortion, kickbacks and embezzlement are not viewed as a violation of law or ethics, but as a necessary and integral part of Iran's political and business culture. In such a system, without corruption, no one is secure in their property or person, and as such corruption is viewed as a necessity of life that guarantees survival, or, at the very least, prevents sabotage, extortion, confiscation and loss.

3. Corruption is Embedded in Politics and Business

Bribery, extortion, kickbacks and embezzlement have become integral and implicit parts of Iran's political and business culture. Virtually all economic transactions are subject to corruption, with regime insiders, fixers and gatekeepers collecting tolls and demanding "sweets" in exchange for issuing licenses, permits, deeds, titles and other services.

4. Corruption is Systemic

Corruption is actively promoted through governmental and administrative structures, effectively weakening the fabric of civil society by encouraging opportunism and protecting a culture of theft premised on the violation rather than the protection of individual and collective rights. It threatens the Iranian people's sense of national identity and solidarity by eroding the foundations of their character, with the quality of relationships and sense of community severely diminished.

5. Corruption Negates Traditional Values

Future generations are forced to grow up in an environment in which traditional values that serve as the legal and moral foundation for investment, growth, stability and security are negated.

Values such as trust, integrity, dignity, empathy, compassion and solidarity give way to greed, avarice, theft and fraud, with bankruptcy and dishonor as the likely outcome.

REVIEWS

A THOUSAND YEARS OF THE PERSIAN BOOK

Kaveh Farrokh

(January 19, 2019- Education, Learning, Science Technology)



Beginning in ancient times Persia has been a center of scientific achievement and was often the conduit of knowledge from China and India in the East to Greece and Rome in the West. Persian-speaking scholars have been active in furthering knowledge in fields of science and technology, such as astronomy, chemistry, anatomy, biology, botany, cosmology, mathematics, engineering, and architecture.

Ancient Sassanid Persia was home to some of the earliest universi-

ties and libraries of the ancient world. After the Islamization of Persia (651), middle Persian Pahlavi texts as well as Indian, Chinese, Greek, Aramaic, and Latin scientific texts were translated into Arabic. Although Arabic remains the primary language used for scientific writing in the Islamic world, many scholars have also produced a range of scientific manuscripts and works in the Persian language. The Mughal court in India (1526–1858) became a major center for the production of scientific works in Persian.

Marvels of Creation and Oddities of Existence

Over the centuries many scholars and scientists of Persian origin have written in Arabic, the preferred language for religious and scientific subjects. The iconic *Marvels of Creation and Oddities of Existence*, originally written in the thirteenth century, is a popular work of cosmography that has been translated into various Islamic languages. The Library holds manuscripts in the original Arabic, as well as Turkish and Persian translations. This sixteenth-century Persian text contains several unique illustrations, including these depictions of mythical creatures.

This sixteenth-century Persian text contains several unique illustrations, including a gold leaf map that clearly demonstrates how the world was viewed in the medieval Islamic period.

The Book of Indian Castes and Kinsfolk

In India from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, during the reign of the Mughal court and the subsequent British Raj period, many manuscripts were written in Persian. The manuscript on display, illustrated in vibrant colors and detailing the distinguishing characteristics and customs of India's various castes, religious communities, and the trades and technologies of each group, is by James Skinner (1778–1841). The son of a Scottish lieutenant colonel and an Indian Rajput princess, Skinner was fluent in Persian and wrote extensively in the language. His manuscript portrays professions ranging from surgery to papermaking with miniature paintings produced primarily by Mir Khalan Khan.

The Study of Medicinal Plants

The study of medicinal plants and their effects on humans has been an age-old tradition in Persian-speaking lands. This publication, written by two commanding officers in the Muham-

madzai Pashtun tribal confederacy during the Barakzai period (1826–1973), is a lithographic printing of a pharmacology. By the 1860s, lithographic book printing extended from India to the frontier territories of Afghanistan and was preferred to typographic printing because it better retained the traditional calligraphy. This book, the earliest work in the field of medicine printed in Afghanistan, contains a list of various substances, herbs, flowers, minerals, and potions used for healing purposes in traditional medicine.

Explanation of Human Anatomy

This comprehensive manual in three volumes deals with the human body, ailments, and the medicinal properties of plants. The book was the first detailed handbook of modern medicine in Iran and was probably used for teaching purposes at the Polytechnical College (Dar al-Funun) in Tehran. The first volume contains numerous detailed images illustrating human anatomy, such as this one showing the lower half of the female body. The illustrations are most likely copied from a European book.

Geographic Survey of Persian Lands

This lithographic book, of which apparently only volumes one, two, and four were published, aims at a comprehensive treatment of the geography of Iran in an alphabetical arrangement. The volume displayed here follows the model of the famous *Mu'jam al-buldān* (Dictionary of Countries) compiled by thirteenth-century Arab author Yāqūt. It includes entries from Persian letters "alif" through "te," including a lengthy entry on Tehran and its history from the early Safavid period through the 1870s. The image on display, most probably copied from a contemporary photograph, shows the *Ayyān* (or *Tāq*-i *Kasrā*) (Palace of Khusraw), which was the legendary palace for the Sassanid kings (224–651) located in the vicinity of modern Baghdad.

TITLE OF THE BOOK: PERSIAN FIRE AND STEEL: HISTORICAL FIREARMS OF IRAN

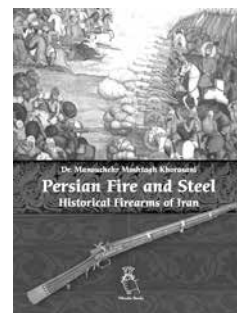
Author: Dr. Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani

Publisher: Niloufar Books, Frankfurt am Main

The book presents a thorough and detailed analysis of the introduction and development of historical firearms in Iran. The present book is a result of years of study on historical Persian manuscripts on firearms making, classification and usage and as well as an analysis of the Persian firearms kept in the Military Museum of Tehran.

These artifacts are described, analyzed and presented in the catalogue by showcasing magnificent colored pictures of 100 artifacts which belonged to the personal royal collection of Nassereddin Shah Qajar. The first chapter of the book, titled "Matchlock Muskets", deals with the history of the introduction and development of matchlock muskets in Iran. The next chapter, "Flintlock Muskets", describes the flintlock mechanism and flintlock muskets. Then the third chapter, "Percussion Cap Lock Muskets", analyzes Persian muskets equipped with the percussion cap system. The next chapter, "Pistols in Iran", analyzes Persian flintlock and percussion cap pistols.

The following chapter, "Gun and Pistol Accessories", describes the accessories to load the guns and pistols. Chapter six,



“Cannons and Rockets”, analyzes the history and development of cannons and rockets in Iran. The next chapter titled “Persian Manuscripts on Firearms” offers a complete translation, annotation and explanation of three important Persian manuscripts on firearms. The manuscripts are as follows:

a) An untitled Safavid manuscript on casting bronze cannons - This is the earliest known Persian manuscript on firearms from the Safavid period and deals with casting bronze cannons. This manuscript is kept in the Central Library of the University of Tehran with the number 2085. The end of the manuscript is signed with the inscriptions Kamtarin bande-ye dargāh Soleymān qur'ī-ye mezzrāq (the Lowest Servant of the Court, Soleymān who holds and takes care of a short spear [for the king]). Thus it can be assumed that it is written by Soleymān. The manuscript consists of 51 pages and seventeen drawings.

b) Another manuscript is titled Resālei dar Fešang [Treatise on Rockets] and is written by Mohammad Rezā Tabrizi in 1256 hijra (1840 C.E.) who was a mohandesbāši (head of engineering units). This manuscript is a combination of a translation of two different Congreve manuscripts and the writer translates some parts directly and some parts are written and added by Mohammad Rezā Tabrizi himself as he says that he was under the impression that Congreve did not explain clearly and wanted to hide important aspects. It has ten plates. Although the paintings resemble the paintings of Congreve books on rockets, all soldiers in Tabrizi's book are depicted with Qajar-period uniforms of the Persian army holding the Iranian flag of the lion and the sun. The enemy is shown holding the Ottoman flag and wearing Ottoman uniforms. The manuscript consists of 99 pages.

c) Another Persian manuscript is titled Resāle-ye Qurxāne [Treatise on Arsenal] and is written by Mohammad Bāqer Tabrizi in 1257 hijra (1841 C.E.). This manuscript is kept in the National Library of Iran with the number 1766.

The first part consists of several chapters about the gunnery tools for cannons. This part offers a detailed account about how cannons were loaded and shot. Additionally, it provides information about how gunnery tools were made and how they functioned. It also provides information on mortars and howitzers.

The second part is about the rockets and their accessories. This part offers valuable information about war rockets and how they were shot. Finally, the third part is about the fireworks that were used during celebrations. The manuscript has 258 pages. At the end of the book some other important Persian manuscripts on firearms are introduced and explained briefly.

The second part of the book has a catalogue describing and showcasing 112 examples of Persian firearms with colored pictures. These consist of matchlock muskets (26 examples starting from the ones made during the Shah Abbas period with the help of the Shirley brothers), flintlock muskets (26 examples) and percussion cap muskets (13 examples), flintlock pistols (5 examples) and percussion cap pistols (12 examples), bronze and iron cannons (11 examples), swivel guns (4 examples), mortars (2 examples), howitzers (3 examples) and gun accessories (10 examples of gunpowder and primer flasks, and gunpowder measure). The first part of the book has 220 pictures accompanying the text. The catalogue has over 400 colored pictures on 112 historical arms and armor from Iran. 100 items are from the Military Museum of Tehran (Saa'd Abad Palace Museum) and 12 items from the Military Historical Museum of Artillery in St. Petersburg (Russian Federation).

THE GARDEN OF AMAZEMENT SCATTERED GEMS AFTER SAEB

Robin Magowan

Long house

Saeb (1590-1676) was the outstanding Islamic poet of his era, celebrated for his jewel-like couplets and for a highly innovative “Indian” style that brought an enlivening sparkle to Persian poetry. But posterity has not treated well a writer whose 7,000 ghazals far outnumber those of any other Persian poet. Saeb's prolixity and the convoluted intricacies of his two-line distichs have combined to deny this poet the readership his work at its best deserves.

“It surprises me,” Saeb observes, “how scattered remarks, once placed in a book, attain coherence.” But unordered aphorisms don't automatically become memorable, let alone aesthetically satisfying. An editorial eye may not be enough to rescue Saeb from the “hundred thousand mirrors” in which he lies to this day “entombed.” But it can be of help in organizing an introductory cento of gem-like couplets.

In partnership with Reza Saberi I have devised an unusual process to introduce Saeb's poetry to Western readers. I have chosen several hundred distichs from Saberi's bilingual *Selected Verses from Saeb Tabrizi* that he culled from a two volume Iranian edition containing 3,168 ghazals. This has not been, or proven, an easy task; diction that seems clear enough to an Iranian metaphysician can require substantial decoding before its poetry comes into play. Yet the formal means required to turn aphoristic prose into verse inevitably distorts the literal towards the literary. This, then, is not so much a translation in the usual sense as an adaptation, imitation, or collage. I have adapted two-line “gems” from Saberi's text and rearranged them by subject (i.e. the Pearl, the Rose and its entourage of Dewdrops and Nightingales, Wine, Tavern, Night Owls, the Caged Court-bird, the questing Road, the apocalyptic Flood). The resulting collage conveys the contours of Saeb's poetic world: both the personae that propel it and what I intuit of a richly experienced life.

Such surgery goes against much of what we have been taught about an organicity so rigorous that the merest shift of punctuation can dismantle its intricate balance. I would agree that I may be depriving the reader of all that can accrue, couplet by couplet, in a ghazal. But such an aesthetic does not always translate well. Our poems proceed often enough by developing multi-leveled arguments, line by line. They build towards the resolution of a last line, an image or disquieting revelation that perhaps clarifies a title. Classical Persian ghazals, always untitled, feature a more meditative circling, couplet upon closed couplet (see “Poisonous Remorse,” “Self-Portrait”) with little more than a repeated monorhyme to keep the perimeter from wobbling out of control. Form is more flexible and far more repetitious than in its Western counterpart. Content may expand in a non-organic way. Ghazals were writ ten to be read aloud, if not sung, and singers still draw a syllable out to stunning length, conveying infinite yearning in a melisma of mirrors.

Instead of exploring an image, a list, a confession, or a



metaphorical sequence, Saeb proceeds by way of a couplet by couplet unburdening. The ghazals move from their charged starting point (the same word reverberates through the first two end-rhymes) towards a dismissive self-reference in the closing couplet.

Theme is to be inferred, as in a set of variations. Such indirection brings out the courtly virtues of cleverness, wit, and exuberant improvisation. Face to face with poetic mystery—the Unknown Beloved, the Almighty himself, if you like—Saeb prefers a hermetic discretion. Secrets, like women, are best kept veiled: “Beauty/strip her as we must/ stays concealed.”

Such restrictions apply equally well to the closed form of a Persian bayt or couplet. In classical poetry, the verse unit comprises two hemistichs, each called a mesra. Unlike the nominally end-stopped Western line—often enough, broken or enjambed—the bayt commands an inviolable unity:

*The couplet striking the ear
that fails to enrapture,
may be less than mature.*

Composing, couplet by couplet, Saeb sees himself as a miniaturist, a jeweler setting pearl-like tropes into the strands of a ghazal’s necklace:

*In my book no word stands unexamined.
My pearls arrive, well-pierced, from their oyster.*

A ghazal’s couplets are strung in a 4 to 20-plus strand, each presumably more amazing than the last. Yet nothing kept memorable couplets from assuming a life of their own, set in a song, or anthologized. Iranians to this day, from all walks of life, pride themselves on the number of bayts they can cite at will, from a personal treasure chest.

Saeb’s revolutionary impact stems from the highly-embellished syntax he imparts to this basic two-line unit. Often a chain will unwind from within a negative assertion:

*Silence does not veil a secret’s truth. Musk,
borne from a far room,
makes its effects felt.*

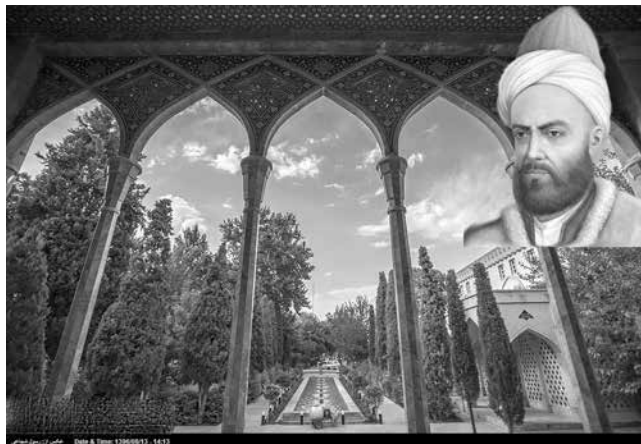
The assertion is a binary one. It begins with a pithy, “Silence does not veil a secret’s truth.” Then, seizing in the erotic, forbidden aspect of “veil,” there follows an almost Schubertian modulation, “Musk, borne from a far room, makes its effects felt.” We may not get to see Beauty herself in her out-of-bounds room, but we certainly feel her erotic impact. To capture such ricocheting intensity, I have resorted to a 3-or-4 stepped line, cadenced when possible for rhythmic effect.

Because Saeb is an intensely spatial poet, as concerned as any contemporary with issues of freedom and flight, the steps give his condensed articulations the lifting power they need.

A later couplet from the same ghazal reads:

*Were my feet less entangled
in their earthly shroud
would they find under their soles
sky’s red carpet?*

In Saeb’s metaphysical style, the hypothetical “were” and



“less” create a withheld space within which the second mesra can ascend, from terrestrial “feet” to the spiritual stratosphere invoked by “sky’s red carpet.” “Carpet,” moreover, returns the mystical insight to the very feet from whence it levitated; in a mere couplet, quite a flight!

It was not Saeb, but two poets of the previous generation, Fayzi and Urfi, who launched the “fresh” style he inherited. Their achievement, as Marshall G.S. Hodgson points out, lay in all the novel ways they maneuvered “metaphors that have become stock poetic devices ... to take advantage of the metaphors themselves.” (*The Venture of Islam*, v. III, 80). Saeb, in turn, elevated the play to where the stock metaphors become masks, personae if you want, for the poet himself: the moth forever circling its beloved candle; the entourage of dewdrops and nightingales surrounding their prince-like Rose. Where earlier poets stood unimplicated by the strings they manipulated, Saeb’s persona and the stock images intersect in a dance of exchanges between apparent equals, no setting too small: “Awareness, in a drop of water/ discerns the ocean.”

As these figures recur, in ever more astonishing settings, they take on a metaphysical complexity. I’ve cut and pasted to give them a ghazal-like stage.

And I’ve rearranged the selections to reveal the contours of a life. “Truth,” Saeb writes, “is more than an affair of words.” Its time-frame ranges from the amniotic memories of “Ocean Days” to the “celibate dungeon” of the teen-age cleric, to the “chalky-locked” elder enviously eyeing the “roaring waters” that will bring him back to his maternal ocean. These diverse identities belong to a poet rightfully proud of the selves to which, in the course of an unusually long life, he has given voice.

Mirza Mohammad Ali Saeb was born in Tabriz, the capital of Azerbaijan province in northwest Iran, the son of a local merchant. In 1603, when Saeb was thirteen, the family became one of a thousand Shah Abbas drafted to help in the building of the new Safavid capital in Isfahan.

It is not easy to interpret Saeb’s self-portraiture, but a picture emerges in “Poisonous Remorse,” of an almost obnoxiously curious child, more than a bit hyper-an-eccentric in the making. Religious schooling, the only kind available in most Persian communities, led Saeb to assume, upon graduation, the role of a cleric. He must have embarked soon thereafter for Mecca.

Disillusion, nonetheless, set in, accompanied by a life-long disgust with clerical venality and hypocrisy. Then came, if we are to believe “Ocean Days,” an awakening not unlike Rumi’s, as erotic as it was spiritual. Those “thirsty lips” liberating his “fountain” led Saeb to the mystical Sufi branch of Shiite Islam and the life of a dervish.

We spot him in Rumi’s Anatolia, in Najaf, in Baghdad, and then for a time in northwestern Iran. From the holy city of Mashad he travels, by way of Kabul, to Delhi. There follow two lengthy sojourns at the court of Shah Jahan, the patron of the Taj Mahal and a beacon for artists from across the Islamic world. The four to five years Saeb spent as a young man in India could not help but exert a liberating effect both on the poet and the ambition of his poetry. The life of a wine-bibber and man about town would not have been so available elsewhere. Nor would the paradise gardens that the Moghul emperors, taking advantage of a water-blessed climate, built as meeting places for sexual intrigue and personal display. With the gardens came new imagery-partridges, parrots, snakes. Perhaps also Indian culture encouraged a more tightly packed, not to say crammed, aesthetic. An inevitable spiritual widening led to Saeb’s embrace of Hindu karma and the whole spectrum of reincarnated existence, down to moths and ants. In a culture that admired gurus, Saeb became another revered mentor, offering advice and encouragement to those setting out on the mystical road.

Saeb doesn’t make clear what occasioned his two departures from Shah Jahan’s court. Judging from the admissions collected in “Silent Lips,” a less than politic tongue may have made departure expedient. Saeb lived, though, in a time of ever-increasing instability, both in Moghul India and Safavid Iran. Having seen the handwriting on Jahan’s wall, Saeb may have judged the time right to return to Isfahan as the second Shah Abbas’s “King of Poets.”

For all the uncertainty that surrounds Saeb’s life and work, he is not, like Hafez, a poet of teasing opacities. Instead he brings a confessional directness that feels almost Western. Identity is always something slippery for poets to project and readers to infer; hence the recourse to masks behind which verbal outrage can thrive. Saeb’s tone can seem at times overly preachy, offering advice that may grate as condescending. But poetry in his day was didactic; advice provided the currency a poet needed to survive.

In a society where speaking the truth-about virtually anything-was little short of suicidal, Saeb clearly needed the stock figures to which he gives voice with such soulful brio. Yet, side by side with the masks, lies something very personal, with all its perceived slights, comeuppances and pratfalls.

Moreover, the bar Saeb raises and insists on jumping over in a mere two lines! becomes a medium for comic exuberance, of how to be outrageous and somehow or other get away with it. On one side, we see a restive wine-swigging portly bon-vivant and ladies’ man.

On the other, a Pierrot tearfully insisting that the only life worth living is an inner one- penitent, and thus always available.

Such contrary selves may seem impossible to reconcile, but with an admirable straight face that’s what we see this virtuoso of the two-line couplet again and again bringing off. To combine in a miniature, form a subversive wit with a sensibility of truly baroque grandeur represents no mean achievement. I have collaged these scattered gems to introduce one of the world’s great comic poets to an audience I’m convinced he deserves.

What About the Sakas?

N. M. TEJARATCHI

Dear Dr. Ahkami, Editor in Chief,

Before mentioning my views about the Sakas, I would like to bring to your attention that in the Spring 2019 issue of *Persian Heritage*, I came across an article titled, “The Sakas” (pages 20-21). I looked through the paragraphs in vain to find any reference to the historical Sakas. Instead, I found a hodgepodge of subjects of various religions and sects, Sufism, “Dervishes in Spain” followed by a lot of slander and insults about Khomeini. While I am not a follower of Khomeini and do not attempt to defend him, I think every historical personality deserves fair and impartial judgement. Regarding various religions and sects, I am not a religious person, but I have never heard that the Shi-a sect is related to Sufism! Some experts believe that the Shi-a sect, the Iranian version of Islam, has been influenced by the Mazda kites - Mazdak having brought the first socialist uprising in history during the Sassanian era in Iran.

Now then, what about the Sakas? The Sakas, related to the Scythians and ancient Iranians, were nomadic people who lived in the Northern and Eastern Eurasian (Steppes) and Tarmin Basin. Scythia was a region of Central Eurasia. These people did not leave any writings. All we know about them is from Greek historians. In Iran, only the name of a South-Eastern province of Sistan has been thought to be related to the Scythians, who may have migrated to that area over three thousand years ago and given their name to that province. However, this is a strong probability. How about Sikhs in Northern India?

There is an interesting subject in Iranian traditional history about wars with people attacking from the North and North-East. In the period of the Achaemenid Empire (called Kian or Keyan), the epic-making wars have been recorded as Iran-Turan wars. For centuries after the overthrow of that empire by Alexander, and of the establishment of the Sassanian Empire in the areas North and North -East of Iran, the Indo-European people had been replaced by the Turkish people. Therefore, the historians of that period wrote about the Turanians as though they were Turkish, even though the names of their heroes (such as Afrasiab) are clearly Inda-European. Russian archeological excavations in the 20th century confirmed that these people were Inda-European and similar to the Iranians, according to what was found in some tombs, such as clothing and ornamentations. At any rate, Sufism, Dervishes, and Khomeini have no relationship to the Sakas just as you, I, and the author of that article do not.

The Sakas

Part ten

Michael McClain

Ehsan Yarshater elaborates on the above:

“A variety of fabulous creatures who are either helpful or harmful to man are known in the Iranian myths. They are also met in the Avesta, the Pahlavi books, and the folk epics of Persian literature. Important among them, and conspicuous in the Shah Namah and in Persian literature is the Saena bird, Avesta: “Saena Meregha”, Pahlavi: “Sen= murv,” Persian: “Simurgh”, mentioned in the Avesta and elaborated in the Pahlavi books. Its resting place, according to Yasht XII:17, is on the fabulous tree which is in the middle of the Vourukasha Sea and which bears the seeds of all plants and healing herbs. It is by the blessed beating of the Simurgh’s wings that the seeds of this tree are scattered, to be carried by the wind and rain over all the earth.

In the Shah Namah the Simurgh is depicted as a huge eagle with magical powers, which has its nest on top of a huge mountain. It rears Zal and helps Rustam defeat Isfandiyar. It is not certain however, whether this is the same bird as described in the Avesta. Since the legends of Zal and Rustam are probably of Saka origin, and in any event from a different region than the birthplace, it is likely either that two different miraculous birds coalesced in name or that different myths were attached to the same bird in different regions...”

It is obvious that the Avestan Saena Meregha, the Pahlavi Sen-murv, Persian Dimurgh is the prototype of the “solitary bird” of Suhrawardi and St. John of the Cross and of the “solitary falcon” of Hafiz. Hafiz’s Royal Falcon does indeed share some of the properties of the solitary bird of St. John of the Cross. The Royal Falcon of Hafiz is a high flying bixand high nesting bird that perches in the highest places. It is also a dopylary bird that usually does not tolerate the presence of those even of its own species.

Could Hafiz have been the inspiration for St. John of the Cross and his solitary bird? However, in the case of the solitary bird, St. John of the Cross is much closer to a Persian mystic who lived well before the time of Hafiz, and with whose writings Hafiz was almost certainly familiar. So, in the case of the solitary bird, it would appear that both St. John of the Cross and Hafiz were inspired by a certain Persian Sufi of whom we shall now speak.

The Simurgh also figures in two of the treatises of Suhrawardi, i.e., (Treatise of the Red Intellect and (Treatise of the Shriil Cry of the of the Simurgh. In this last treatise, Suhrawardi says of the Simurgh:

“All colors are from him, but he himself has no color”

Thus, Suhrawardi’s Simurgh possesses at least one of the properties of the solitary bird of St. John of the Cross.

Indeed, it is in the works of Suhrawardi that one finds what is by far the most exact prototype of the solitary bird of St. John of the Cross. Suhrawardi tragically died young, being born in 1153 and dying in 1191. Suhrawardi was not only a great mystic, but also a great philosopher, though not so well known as his fellow Persians Avicenna and al Ghazzali. An exposition of the philosophy of Suhrawardi would take up too much space (huge tomes have been written concerning the philosophy of Suhrawardi) and would lead us very far astray from our main topic. A most excel-

lent introduction to the philosophy of Suhrawardi may be found in Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi by Seyed Hossein Nasr; for those who read French, I recommend *En Islam Iranien: Aspects Spirituels et Philosophiques, Volume II, Suhrawardi et les Platoniciens de Perse* by Henry Corbin. In his treatise, The Language of the Ants, Suhrawardi includes a tale concerning a nightingale, another concerning a hoopoe, and one concerning a peacock. By its nature, the nightingale shares one property with the solitary bird of St. John of the Cross, i.e., it sings softly and sweetly. However, with this one exception, the bird mentioned in The Language of the Ants has none of the properties of the solitary bird of St. John of the Cross, so they need not concern us here. It is Suhrawardi’s Simurgh, which we have mentioned before, which is of course of interest, as it would appear to be the inspiration of both the Royal Falcon of Hafiz and the solitary bird of St. John of the Cross. We shall begin with what Suhrawardi says concerning the Simurgh in The Red Intellect:

“The Simurgh has its nest at the top of the Tuba tree, at dawn the Simurgh leaves its nest and spreads its wings over the earth.

I said to the old man, I have heard that Zak was raised by the Simurgh and that Rustam was able to kill Isfandiyar with the Dimmurgh’s help.

“Yes”, said the old man, “it is true.”

“How was that?”, I asked.

(Note: the following is based on incidents in the Shah Namah of Firdausi, the Persian national epic.)

“When Zal was born, his hair and face were white (he was an albino). His father Sam ordered him cast into the wilderness, and his mother, who had suffered much pain in giving birth, agreed when she saw that her son was hideous to behold. So Zal was cast into the wilderness. It was winter and cold, and no one expected him to live long, but a few days later his mother recovered from her pain and began to have compassion for her son. She said: Let me go at once to the wilderness and see how my son is.’ When she came to the wilderness she saw her son beneath the Simurgh’s wing. He saw his mother and smiled, and his mother took him up in her arms and nursed him. She was to take him home, but she said, ‘I cannot return home without learning how Zal survived these few days.’ She put him back where he had been beneath the Simurgh’s wing and hid herself nearby. When night fell and the Simurgh left the wilderness, a gazelle came to Zal and suckled him. When he had fed, the gazelle sheltered him with her own body so that no harm might come to him. His mother rose, took her son from the gazelle and carried him home.’

“What is the mystery in that?”, I asked. I asked the same thing of the Simurgh,’ said the old man. ‘It (the Simurgh) said: ‘Zal was born under the sign of the Tuba tree. We could not allow him to perish. We gave the gazelle’s foal to the hunter and placed compassion for Zal in the gazelle’s heart so that it would tend him by night, while by day I took him under my wing.’

“What about Rustam and Isfandiyar,” I asked.

“When he returned home wounded, his father Sam humbled himself before the Simurgh. Now the Simurgh has a characteristic such that if a mirror or something like that be held up to it, any eye that looks into the mirror will be dazzled. So Zal had a breastplate made with iron and polished. This he placed on Rustam and on his head a polished helmet. He also covered his horse with mirror. Then he sent Rustam into the battlefield opposite the Simurgh. Isfandiyar was forced to come face to face with Rustam, and when he drew near, the rays of the Simurgh fell on the breastplate and mirrors, the reflection from which pierced

Isfandiyar's eyes and dazzled them. He could see nothing. Since he had never experienced anything like that before, he imagined that he had been wounded in both eyes, fell from his horse and perished at the hand of Rustam. The "two feathered shaft' they talk about must be the Simurgh's two wings.'

I asked the old man if he thought there was but one Simurgh in the world. "He who knows not supposes it to be so", he said. 'Otherwise, at every instance a Simurgh must come from the Tuba tree to the earth, and the one that is on the earth, the other must simultaneously cease to exist. That is, at every minute a Simurgh comes while the one that is here disappears; just as one is coming toward the earth, the other is going from the Tuba.

The following is from Suhravardi's treatise titled: The Simurgh's Shrill Cry. " It will not be detrimental to recall, by way of an introductory preface, something of the bird 's condition and place of habitation. Those who have been illuminated have shown that every hoopoe that abandons his nest in springtime and plucks h is features with his beak and sets off for Mount Qaf who renounces the material world) will fall under the shadow of Mount Qaf within the span of a thousand years "One day with your Lord is a thousand years of those which you compute." (Qur'an XXII: 47) These thousand years, in the calendar of the people of Reality, are but one dawning ray from the Orient of the Divine Realm. During this time, the hoopoe becomes a Simurgh whose shrill cry awakens those who are asleep."

"The Simurgh's nest is on Mount Qaf. His cry reaches everyone, but he has few listeners; everyone is with him, but most are without him, you are with us, and you are not with us.

You are like the soul; hence you are not apparent

The ill who totter on the brink of dropsy and consumption are cured by his (the Simurgh's shadow, and it causes various symptoms to vanish. The Simurgh flies without moving and he soars without wings. He approaches without traversing space. All colors are from him, but he himself has no color. His nest is in the Orient, but the Occident is not void of him. All are occupied with him, but he is free of all. All are full of him, but he is empty of all. All knowledge emanates and is derived from his shrill cry, and marvelous instruments such as the organ have been made from his thrilling voice Since you have not seen Solomon, what do you know of the birds; language?

His food is fire, and whoever binds one of his feathers to his right side and passes through fire will be safe from burning. The zephyr is from his breath; hence lovers speak their hearts' secrets and innermost thoughts with him.

These words are that have been shruven here are but a puff of breath emanating from the Simurgh, an incomplete account of his proclamation."

In the works of St. John of the Cross, as in much Persian Sufi Poetry, the solitary bird represents the soul, which has achieved the heights of mystical ecstasy, as Otto Spies has noted:

"Suhravardi's Simurgh stands for the Sufi who has passed all the stages on the road and reached his goal."

So far, both Suhravardi and St. John of the Cross use the Simurgh or solitary bird (which the Simurgh is) in the same way as many Sufis and Christian mystics.

If you will recall, St. John of the Cross describes solitariness as one of the characteristics of the mystical bird. Another characteristic of the mystical bird of St. John of the Cross describes solitariness as one of the characteristics of a mystical bird.

Another characteristic of the mystical bird of St. John of the Cross is that: "Ordinarily sets itself very high, and thus the spirit

at this stage sets itself in the highest contemplation."

All the Persian Sufis - al-Bistami, Attar, al-Ghazzali, Rumi, Hafiz are at one with St. John of the Cross on this point; that their birds symbolize the soul in the highest contemplation: here all mystics agree.

The solitary bird of St. John of the Cross, like the mystical birds of the Sufis, achieves a wisdom beyond all merely human reason: "Transcending far all temporal lore" as St. John of the Cross says in *Coplas del Exstasis*.

The solitary bird of St. John of the Cross "Is unknowing of all things, for it knows God only, without knowing how."

Said Suhravardi in reference to the Simurgh "All knowledge emanates and is derived from his shrill cry."

One property which St. John of the Cross attributes his solitary bird is, at first glance, rather curious "The beak is turned always towards the place from which the wind comes: and thus, the spirit here turns the beak of the affections towards the place from which the spirit of love, which is God comes. It must put its beak into the air of the Holy Spirit, which is its (the Holy Spirit's) inspiration, so that in so doing, it may be more worthy of the Holy Spirit's company; St. John is a bit more precise than most of the Persian Sufis when he says that his solitary bird must raise its beak "Towards the place from which the breeze blows"

To the wind of the Holy Spirit.

and: To St. John of the Cross, the wind of the spirit is: obscure tidings of God" from the Holy Spirit. Henry Corbin has noted that in Islam the mystical bird is at times associated with the Holy Spirit.

Says Suhravardi in. The Simurgh's Shrill cry: "The morning zephyr is his (the Simurgh's) breath." It is obvious that the Simurgh, in Avestan "Saena Meregha" the Pahlavi "Sen-Murv" is the prototype of the "solitary bird of Suhravardi and St. John of the Cross and of the "Royal Falcon" of Hafiz.

There is much more that could be said concerning the many affinities between Suhravardi and St. John of the Cross, but we lack the space here, and the Simurgh of Suhravardi and the "solitary bird" of St. John of the Cross is perhaps the most striking example. The reader may now be asking how the influence of the Sufis and the Shi'a Imams reached St. John of the Cross. At this time there is no answer. In these pages, we have noted that the Celtic influences in the *Kievan Rus' chanson de geste* "Song of Igor's Campaign" are far too close and numerous to be "mere coincidences" yet no one knows how said influences reached Kievan Rus': for various reasons Vladimir Nabokov's theory of the "Viking bridge" is not believable nor acceptable.

By a huge margin, the Sufi and Shi'a Imam influences in the works of St. John of the Cross are far too close and numerous to be "mere coincidences": attempts to discover "intermediate works" have all failed for a simple reason; in each and every case the works of St. John of the Cross are more similar to the originals than to the "intermediates".

As a personal anecdote, when Pope St. John Paul II made his first pilgrimage to *Santiago de Compostela*, among the gifts given to him by the local archbishop was a copy of an essay of mine on St. John of the Cross and Sufism. Some months later I received a letter of thanks and congratulations for said essay from the Vatican.

Many topics have been dealt with in the present essay; of necessity, all have been dealt with very briefly. I hope that the readers will be encouraged to do further research on said topics.

to be continued

Prehistoric Iranian Toys or Votive Carts

Tavoos, December 21, 2016



These animal figurines shown in this article mounted on little carriages are part of a valuable deposit that was on display at the Louvre Museum in Paris. The relics were unearthed in Susa, southwestern Iran, in the early 20th century.

They are part of a valuable deposit unearthed by French mining engineer and archaeologist Jean-Jacques de Morgan (1857 – 1924) at Susa, southwest Iran, near the temple of Inshushinak. The collection of objects consists in a wide range of items assembled under the brilliant Shutrukid dynasty in the late second millennium BC. A number of animals on casters, tablets and wheels found in isolation indicate the widespread existence of these mobile objects, toys or votive carts, at Susa.

Morgan's aim was twofold: first, to reveal the evidences of Elamite civilization, the importance of which was indirectly known by allusions from the Assyrians who destroyed Susa in 648 B.C.E. Second, to discover the very "origins" of eastern civilization, which Morgan assumed to have stemmed from Susiana. Consequently, Darius's palace was considered as "low period" and the work was centered on the thirty-eight-meter-high Acropolis. To start with, however, there was the surprise discovery of a series of impressive examples of Babylonian civilization brought as war booty in the twelfth century B. C. by an Elamite conqueror. No immediate decision was taken about these findings but in 1900 Mozafaraldin Shah Qajar signed a special treaty was signed in 1900 by granting to France, all the antiquities found or would be discovered in Susa. In this way, Louvre was to function as the depository of a complete set of archaeological materials, which was unprecedented among archaeological expeditions. The initial shipment in 1901 was of unique importance, containing the Code of Hammurabi, the victory stele of Naram-Sin and Elamite antiquities such as a large bronze table displaying the unique skill of the Elamite metalworkers of the time.

Susa bears exceptional testimony to the Elamite, Persian and Parthian civilizations and cultural traditions. The modern Iranian town of Shush is located at the site of ancient Susa.

The function of these animals on casters remains unclear, however. Terra-cotta specimens have also been found at Susa (Louvre Museum, sb19324), raising the question as to whether they should be considered as toys or as votive carts carrying figurines. Susian children in the Middle-Elamite court may have played with them, pulling the little carts along with a piece of string. Scholars have also pointed to the religious connotation of human or animal figurines on wheels, sug-

gesting they were purely votive offerings. Of course, a toy could become an offering, dedicated to a divinity or buried alongside a deceased person.

These works are part of a group of objects known as the "temple of Inshushinak cache," found on the Susa acropolis near the temple of the god Inshushinak, whose name means "Lord of Susa." These precious objects from various periods were gathered together in a sort of hiding-place in the late second millennium BC. They included animals on casters, bronze statuettes of praying figures, circuit games (Louvre Museum, sb2911, sb2912), jewelry and gold ingots. The interpretation of this treasure-trove, like that of the neighboring "golden statuette find" (Louvre Museum, sb2758), remains unclear, but both reflect the far-reaching influence of the Shutrukid dynasty, whose sovereigns sought to pay tribute to the god Inshushinak, particularly on the Susa acropolis, the religious center of Elam.

Iran was also acting in the Western interest as a bulwark against the Soviet Union's potential threats to the security of the vital oil lanes of the Persian Gulf. The Western attitude would appear contradictory as their media would not criticize Iran's militarily powerful neighbors in the region such as Turkey or even pro-Soviet Iraq which actually had more tanks than Iran. The Baathist regime of Iraq was not only ideologically founded on Persophobia but also had irredentist pan-Arabist claims on Iranian territory (see Farrokh, *Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, 2015, pp. 915-923). This was clearly demonstrated in the aftermath of the revolution in Iran which weakened the country's military: Iraq took advantage of this by invading Iran in 1980, seeking to annex the latter's Khuzestan province. No criticism was levied in the 1970s against Saudi Arabia for example, a country which remains as one of the world's largest importers of Western military equipment. Neither was Saudi Arabia and the other oil-rich Persian Gulf Arab states criticized by Western media and politicians for their despotic governments and poor human rights records. The same Western media were quick to criticize the Pahlavi political system for the costs of the 2500-year celebration of Iranian history in 1971. The same outlets also omitted mention that the majority of those costs actually went into the building of infrastructure such as roads, communications and accommodations for Iran's hospitality industry. In sheer cost, the annual US Superbowl games are far costlier than the 1971 celebrations were in Iran. However more notable is that the same Western outlets criticizing Iran in the 1960s-1970s for corruption looked askance at the extravagance of Arabian oil-rich kingdoms such as Saudi Arabia, etc., even as millions of citizens in less affluent Arab countries suffered from abject poverty. More recent documents and publications now suggest that elements of Western governments supported leftist and Islamist political activists seeking to overthrow the Shah in the 1970s. While the reasons for this are varied and complex, it is possible that one of the ambitions of the West was the installation of a more "oil friendly" government, or as Dr. Shireen Hunter has characterized it, a "*Mossadegh Light*" system which would be more accommodating of Western petroleum interests than the Shah was by the mid-1970s. Whatever the specific causes, these few examples illustrate that Persophobia is not

Western Persephobia: A Brief Overview and Possible Reasons for its Origins

PART TWO

Kaveh Farrokh,
Sheda Vasseghi,
& Javier Sánchez-Gracia

a recent phenomenon originating in 1979, nor can it be singularly traced to antiquity.

We propose that a strong (third) factor in the origins of modern Western Persephobia may be traced to the last two centuries (from the early 1800s), a period coinciding with the British Empire. Much of what we see as modern-day Persophobia stems from this era. It is also during this time when we see the full blossoming of Europe's age of enlightenment, during which the self-identification of northwest Europeans (the French and British in particular) with ancient Greece and Rome became well-established, along with their constructed view of the "eastern other". This did not occur in isolation but very much in tandem with the rise and machinations of British and European imperial interests. From the outset of the establishment of their rule in India, the British attitude towards Iran was ambivalent at best, and unfavorable towards the Persian language in particular. The English Education Act of 1835 essentially banned the teaching of Persian in India and its official use in Indian courts. Up to this time, Indians of diverse backgrounds (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc.) were able to rely on Persian as a common Lingua Franca. Eliminating Persian was instrumental for the solidification of British rule over the Indian subcontinent. India's large and diverse population was now also cut off from a wide swathe of Persian-speakers in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iran. To further weaken the bonds between India's Hindus, Muslim, Sikhs, etc. the British East Company also supported the promotion of extremist Islamist cults seeking to eliminate Persian and Indian cultural influences.

The British policy of banning Persian as Lingua Franca in India parallel those of Imperial Russia which conquered Iranian

territories in Caucasus and forced Iran to cede these losses in the Treaty of Turkmenchai (1828). Much like their British counterparts in India, the Russians then launched a powerful campaign to eliminate the Persian language and culture in the Caucasus (and Central Asia) in the 19th and early 20th centuries – with Persophobic policies continuing under the former Soviet Union. At present the Caucasian Republic of Azerbaijan (named as such in 1918) has continued Russia's past policies of state-sponsored Persophobia. Put simply, Persian language and culture were considered as a threat to British (and Russian) imperial interests, as this could potentially serve as a (re)unifying factor against (British and Russian) domination. After a brief war, the British also forced Iran to sign away its possessions in the province of Herat and other territories in modern-day Afghanistan in the Treaty of Paris in 1857.

As per Persian itself, a gradual "academic" process, driven by English thinkers and later imitated somewhat by the Soviets, was to rename various regional variations of Persian as "*Farsi*", "*Dari*", and "*Tajiki*". Many Western media outlets and academics treat these as different languages even as all of these speakers are mutually intelligible. In contrast British and European scholars often use the term "*Arabic*" in the singular to refer speakers of this language from North Africa to Iraq. Even the Kurdish language family is considered by Western thinkers as a single language at this time, when in practice there are at least five different vernaculars, not all of which are mutually intelligible. In addition, Western outlets, especially the Media, make little or no mention of the fact that Kurdish vernaculars are West-Iranian languages akin to Persian, or that Kurds are close cultural and historical cousins of the Iranian family. Thus, even the contemporary classification of languages may be, at least in part, propelled by political considerations. Few are aware for example that the "*Map of Eastern Turkey in Asia, Syria and Western Persia (Ethnographical)*" drafted by British cartographers of the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1906, just 9 years before World War One, was an attempt at providing an academic basis for a unified Kurdistan. Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after that World War One, whole new countries were then invented by British (and to a lesser extent, the French) interests out of the carcass of the former Ottoman Empire.

Ruled by the essentially incompetent

Qajar dynasty throughout the 19th and early part of the 20th century, Iran was, from the British point of view, not as interesting as India for colonization. Iran essentially was at best a bargaining chip and/or weak buffer state against Russian incursions towards India through Central Asia and Iran itself. Yet the question of whether Iran was to remain as a unified state fluctuated in the minds of British geopolitical designers who toyed with the idea of dismembering Iran. By June 23, 1908, after having tacitly (if not openly) supported the Russian bombardment of the Iranian parliament (West Asia's first democracy), the British and Russians had in fact already agreed in 1907 to partition Iran into "Spheres of Influence" (British ascendant in the south, the Russians in the north – with a so-called "neutral zone" in between). A few years before, the British had signed agreement with Mozaffar e Din Shah on May 28, 1901 for rights to exploit the oil in Iran's Khuzestan province, appears to be correlated with (subsequently to follow) additional Persophobic policies. Given the importance of oil, especially to the Royal Navy at the time, London initially supported an autonomous movement led by their patron the Iranian-Arab Sheikh Khazal in Iran's southwest Khuzestan region. The British policy of supporting centrifugal forces in Iran soon shifted due to the threat of the Bolsheviks now ruling Russia. The British now supported Reza Shah's campaigns to restore central government rule in Iran, including Khuzestan. Then Reza Shah himself was ousted by the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941. Following the Second World War and the rise of the Cold War with the Soviet bloc, the US became the geopolitical heir of their British predecessors with respect to Iran and the "Middle East" (a non-historical term invented in the 20th century for the rationalization of Anglo-Western interests – see Farrokh & Vasseghi, *Persian Heritage*, 88, pp.12-14). Iran was again a convenient buffer against Russia, now ruled by the Communists. But like the British, the Americans had an ambivalent attitude towards Iran during this time, as noted by a number of examples cited previously.

The onset of the pan-Islamic theocracy in 1979 followed almost immediately by its anti-Western actions and propaganda may be viewed as a fourth factor in the evolution of Western Persephobia. This became especially pronounced by the leftist-led seizure of 52 American hostages in the US Embassy in Tehran. This event shocked not just the American public but, virtually

overnight, transformed the country of Iran into an international outcast. American and international news media provided virtual non-stop reports of the 444-day hostage saga which did little to buttress the image of Iran and Iranians in Western (especially American) public and political outlets. Persophobic propaganda become mainstreamed in the Western news media, political and entertainment outlets. Despite the fact that the pan-Islamic theocracy now ruling Tehran viewed (and continues to view) the culture of Iran and (especially) its pre-Islamic legacy unfavorably, Western opinion (for the main part) continues to conflate the people of Iran and the ruling establishment as if they are the same: for example, instead of saying "The Mullahs", or "Islamic regime" in reference to the ruling establishment, Western pundits' talking points will often use the terms "Iran" and "Iranians". Many of the examples of Persephobia cited earlier are typical of the post-1979 era. Persophobia was so pronounced during the Iran-Iraq war for example, that Western political and news media often downplayed (or even ignored) Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against Iranian and Kurdish civilians right up to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The impact of the hostage drama, which was still fresh in the minds of the American public, law-makers, and media, did much to support Saddam Hussein's war effort (including use of chemical weapons) against Iran in 1980-1988. It is notable that nearly forty years after its occurrence, the hostage drama continues to animate the American establishment. However, this is not the sole post-1979 factor propelling Persephobia to this date. Another notable factor is the presidential tenure of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The topic we now discuss is not the Iranian nuclear program during and after Ahmadinejad's tenure, but his distinct rhetoric questioning the Holocaust. Ahmadinejad inflamed Western opinion further against Iran by presiding over a politically charged "conference" in Tehran questioning the Holocaust on December 11-12, 2006. Ahmadinejad even hosted elements of the European and American racist and virulently anti-Semitic fringe during the controversial event. Even as the Iranian public, diaspora and select politicians inside the Tehran establishment strongly condemned Ahmadinejad's statements and "conference", the impact of Ahmadinejad's actions on the promotion of Persophobia was highly significant. The "conference" once again portrayed Iran as a dangerous and extremist country, much as the Hostage Crisis had

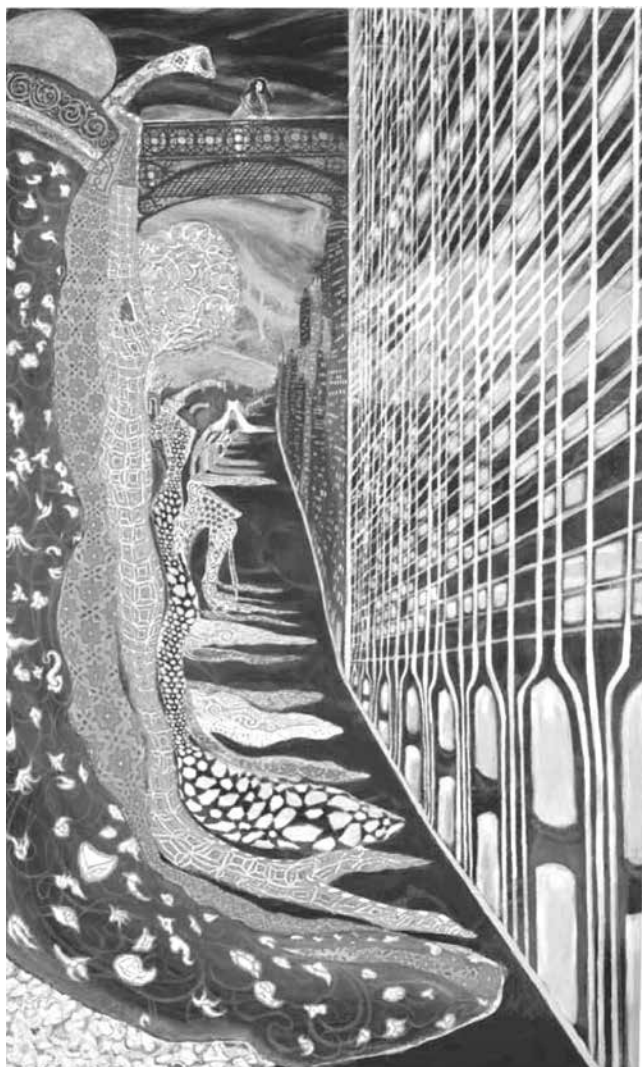
done in 1979. Just as Saddam's invasion of Iran and his use of chemical weapons was glossed over by the West in the aftermath of Hostage Crisis, so too has been Western support for Iran's extreme ethno-nationalist separatists, especially after the Holocaust-denial conference. While western support for Iran's dismemberment can be dated back to the 1930s and even much earlier, events like the 2006 (holocaust-denial) conference only serve to further promote Persophobia in Western policy-making.

Persophobia today is as much a function of the political estrangement of the post-1979 era, along with roots dating back to British (and Russian) Imperialism during the Qajar era. As noted previously, many prominent Classicists would of course trace the roots of Persophobia to ancient (pre-Islamic) times (Farrokh & Sánchez-Gracia, *Persian Heritage*, 85, pp.12-14). As duly noted by Chomsky, addressing Persephobia in the Western psyche is of course a profoundly challenging task, but there may perhaps be four initial steps towards dialogue. First, in the immediate present, it would be helpful to question the practice of portraying Iran and Iranians as propaganda targets, especially in the failure to delineate the latter from the ruling establishment. The second suggestion pertains to the first: mobilizing the media to raise awareness in the general Western public as to the notable achievements and education level of Iranians in the diaspora (especially in the US) and inside Iran.

Third, is in education where a more balanced history of Iran, notably with respect to its ties and influences on the West could be finally taught in Western curricula (see: Sheda Vasseghi (2017). *Positioning Of Iran And Iranians In Origins Of Western Civilization*. PhD Dissertation, University of New England, Academic advising Team: Marilyn Newell, Laura Bertonazzi, Kaveh Farrokh). The fourth process would be the encouragement of Hollywood to produce more historically accurate movies pertaining to ancient Iran. More importantly Hollywood has already demonstrated its power in playing a constructive role in dismantling the notion of "The Other" by breaking new ground with programs such as the "Jeffersons", "Seinfeld", and "Will & Grace". Few are aware for example that among the most successful minorities in the US in the fields of business, medicine, engineering, education, etc. and that a very high proportion of Iranians (estimated at above 50% - a high global figure) complete their higher education.

From Miniature to Skyscraper; Modern American and Iranian Painting

Pantea Bahrami
BBC-Persian, May 16, 2019



“Beyond : Georgia O’Keefe and Contemporary Art” is the name of the exhibition held at the “British Museum” in the United States from February 22 to June 2, 2019. The exhibition brings together three symbols of O’Keefe’s works, including flowers, urban landscape and desert landscape as the foundation stone of contemporary art. In addition, the exhibition is

embellished with paintings and sculptures by 20 contemporary artists inspired by Opec Heritage works.

The process of choosing these artists has been long, in 2013, two exhibition designers across the country met with 1000 artists. As a result, the foundations of the “Discovery of American Art today” were staged with 102 artists. The two designers of the exhibition, including Lauren Hines and Chad Oligud, continued their journey, and eventually ended their journey with the selection of 20 artists, reflecting both his brilliant heritage and the artistic exploration.

Lauren Hennis believes that their selection criteria are artistic, charm, intelligence and, of course, a link to O’Keefe’s themes. Although the “Beyond” exhibition is not a one-to-one response to O’Keefe’s works, the spread of discourse is one of the themes that have come about in his life and works, and in projects such as city, desert, lifestyle, concepts and complex shapes.

“We were looking for a way to look at the unspoken American stories from the perspective of artists in the past and today,” said Rad White, director of the British Museum of Modern Art. The collection of O’Keefe’s works and artists after him in a gallery allows the audience to discover the connection between O’Keefe’s works and the works of the artists who follow him, or inspired him, and engage in it. In addition, the museum is a place not only for viewing works, but also for thinking about the work.

GEORGIA BAGS AND MODERN ART

If we want to consider the extent of an artist’s presence in art history books, the number of artworks or exhibits of an artist, George Georgia (1888-1986) is notable for American art. After accepting the color and style of an abstraction, he created the most stable symbols and images of the twentieth century. But this exhibition and its designers measure the impact of an artist not only on the number of workshops but on the effects of his work on his postmodern artists. Exhibit designer Chad Eligood believes: “The exhibition goes far beyond what the questions that he posed in his painting are still speculative and are evident in the work of artists all over the country.”

FLOWERS AND OTHER SIGNS OF LIVING

Perhaps flowers make up most of Opec’s works. These works immediately take boldness through their large scale. The motive has been to emphasize the size of the large radicals in changing the perspective of New York.

“I realized that if I cut the flowers on a small scale, it would not pay attention to them when they cut them in large dimensions, such as buildings that are growing, looking at their audience, and it really did happen,” he stressed.

The historical background of these symbols dates back to the twentieth century, when modern construction was under way in the United States. Opec’s work is an answer to this kind of architecture. In addition, at the same time, he noticed the power of these works as a personal statement, a concept for the passage of artistic darkness.

Of course, flowers pass abstract concepts such as love, purity, and beauty according to its type, but O’Keefe simplifies it radically and deploys it from the background and the background, and places it in totally ambiguous terms. Considering the insight that the circle of critics and his friends in Sigmund Freud in New York patched sexual concepts and parallel struc-

tures with the female genitalia, these were rejected by O’Keefe.

IRANIAN ARTIST PRESENCE

Negar Ahkami is the only Iranian-American artist to be present at the exhibition with two works by Bridge and Source. The writer has always been associated with numerous layers and details. When you act as a viewer, you have to discover many of the phenomena that are likely to be tied up with the audience’s past and painter.

The use of the blue color in Iranian ceramics and architecture has always been evident in her works. This decoration is a way of linking Iranian art with the universal tradition.

She believes the Americans know blue and white ceramics from Chinese ceramic works. What comes from the ancient tradition of the Iranians and the Iraqis and has been forgotten. In this work, we see a painter who says: “From my studio in Manhattan, New York, this pedestrian bridge was visible and very close to the world’s towers, of course, five years after its destruction on September 11. Standing in this place an experience. It’s very emotional to me. To the left is the monumental Iranian architecture that I remember from my childhood,” and on the right-hand side of this Manhattan landscape is recognizable.

Negar has never lived in Iran. She was born in 1971 in Baltimore. But her paintings from Iran are interpreted by a cartoon commentary from Iran in Western media. Tied up. “It’s a painful experience of this misunderstanding that I have always encountered,” she adds.

She paralleled the Islamic architecture in parallel with the twin towers and Tehran’s Liberation Tower in the left-hand side. Both the Azadi Tower (Tehran’s Shahyad Square) and twin towers were born almost simultaneously after her birth: “a reminder of the period when traveling to both places was freely carried out.” The bridge represents a passion for a kind of link again; she continues.

FLAMES AND MINIATURES

Beams of flames appear on the bridge. In the Iranian miniature, these rays are a sign of martyrdom, and for immigrant Iranians, they expect to stay behind their homeland.

Negar says: “Perhaps this is an understanding of a valuable phenomenon that has been sacrificed in the homeland, I link it to some form of suffering, and a psychological symbol that has been opened up for commentary by the audience.” Although a woman standing over a bridge stands as a symbol of immigrants and refugees standing between two spaces, she does not find a safe place, especially as we are in the era where Muslims ban the Muslims.

EXHIBITION NAME

The “Beyond” name for the exhibition, inspired by the latest Oxyff oil-colored work, ended in 1972. Fuji is made up of blue, black and gray colors that are adorned with a white ribbon in the lining of the abstract horizontal layers. This painting reminds us of a far-off horizon in darkness or light.

Opeche had lost sight of her eyes three years ago, and this effect was formed only with her peripheral vision. In fact, “beyond” indicates that what happened beyond the reality of his perception. By the age of 84, he had to think about what layer he would remain on the ground after spending time. With his distinctive vision beyond time, he discovered beauty and wonder in our everyday world.

Poems by Azar Aryanpour

Remembering Roxana

1

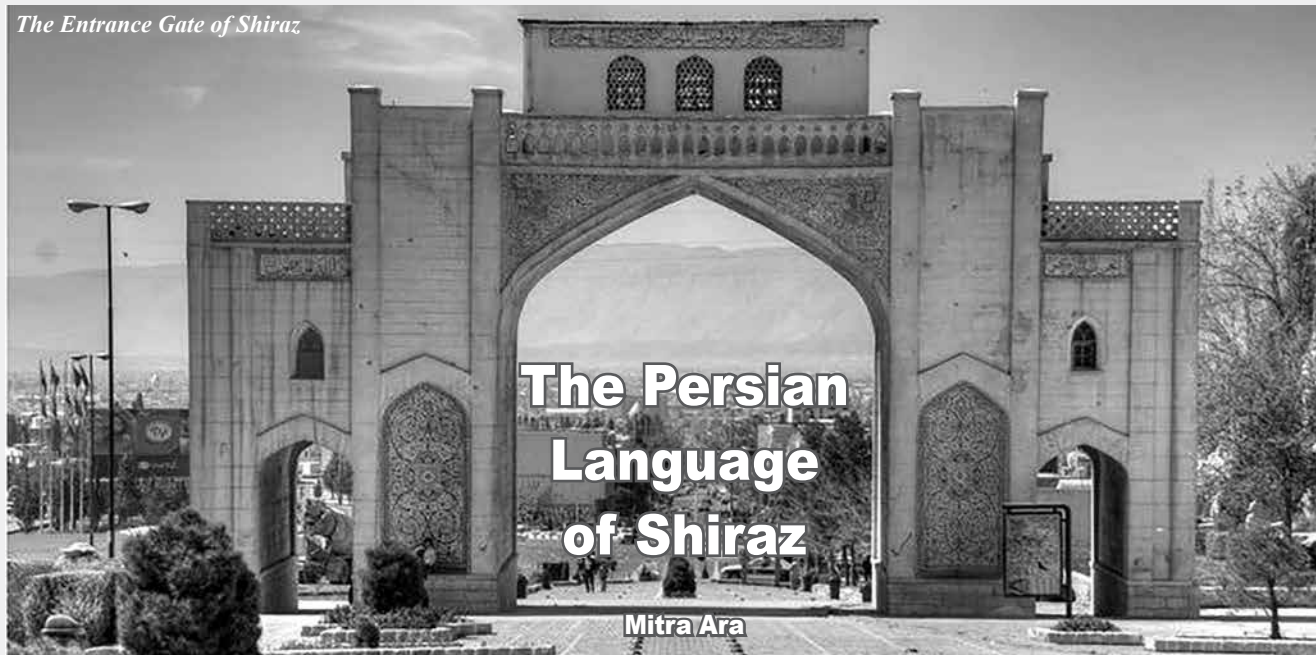
I prayed too often once
‘Till they laid down her coffin
In the dark womb of Mother Earth
Along with my faith!

2

How strange,
That the account of
her monumental existence
Has been stripped down
To just a few words on a tombstone!



The Entrance Gate of Shiraz



As languages are lost, so are their dialects and accents. To combat this, the standard approach to language preservation usually focuses on the language used by the most people, thus ensuring the language survives in its most popular form. While better than nothing, this process often fails to maintain less common versions, which eventually become lost forever, impacting identity. Because speakers most often associate their identities with their own specific dialects over a shared language and thus preserve that identity through the continuation of traditional speech, when language forms are lost identities are too.

Dialects, viewed as personal identities, serve as links to the past and a way to relate to and understand a history and culture. Individuals who share a common form of speech communicate with one another much more easily and effectively than with those who don't share the same speech form. Furthermore, a shared dialect communicates a collective likeness and sense of belonging to a unique community, distinct from all others; because of this, it tends to be more protected by its speakers, and therefore harder to research, than the language spoken by the larger population.

Today, the 87 known Iranian languages constitute one of the world's major language families, with an estimated 150–200 million speakers. The Iranian languages spoken in various regions by diverse peoples are linguistically categorized as the western group of the Indo-Iranian language

family, one of the earliest of the Indo-European language families, and is comprised of Indic, Iranian, and Nuristani, of which only the first two languages were recorded in antiquity. Indo-Iranian languages, much like all other languages in the Indo-European family, were initially spoken languages without writing systems.

The Iranian linguistic division is chronologically categorized by three periods: (1) Old Iranian (until c. 3rd century BCE); (2) Middle Iranian (from c. 3rd century BCE to c. 9th–10th century CE); and (3) New/Modern Iranian (from c. 9th–10th century CE to the present). The only Iranian language known in all three periods is Persian (Old, Middle, New/Modern), and was the language originally spoken in the southwestern province of Pars.

Old Iranian languages found in texts are written in Avestan and Old Persian, as well as the lesser-documented Median and Scythian; Middle Iranian languages, such as Alanic, Bactrian, Chorasmian, Khotanese, Middle Scythian, Middle Persian (also known as Pahlavi), Parthian, Sogdian, and Tumshuqese; and New/Modern Iranian languages, with several hundred variations, among which the most widely spoken forms are New Persian (also known as Farsi, Dari, Hazaragi, and Tajiki in the native language), Pashto, Ossetic, Zazaki, Kurdish, Talysh, Lori, and Baluchi.

Historically, the name *Pars* first appears as *Parsuwash/Parsua* in Assyrian records as early as the 1st millennium BCE,

during the reign of Salmanassar III. The name *Parsua* (Old Iranian—Parsava; Old Persian—Parsa) is mentioned when denoting the Iranian tribes, and was also adopted to refer to a region in southwestern *Iran* (*Eran*) where Persians first settled in today's province of Pars, previously referred to as *Anshan* by the Elamites.

The term *Persian* is derived from *Parsa* (Old Persian, the language of the first Persian empire, the Achaemenid), Greek *Persis*, and Latin *Persia*. After Alexander's invasion and defeat of the Persian Achaemenid in the 4th century BCE, Greeks began using *Persis* to refer to several things, including Cyrus the Great, the founder of the first Persian Empire, the Achaemenid, and his domain and people, thereby establishing his language for all in the entire territory under the dominion of Cyrus. Thus the term *Persia/Persian*—as the general name of the territory, as well as the language, people, literature, poetry, arts, and music—remained in use.

Today, the term *Farsi*, referencing the Persian people, culture, literature, and language, is the Arabic pronunciation of *Parsi*, after the province where the language originated in the state of *Pars* (Arabicized pronunciation, *Fars*). Due to the lack of the *p* phoneme in Standard Arabic, *p* was replaced with *f*; thus *Parsi* became *Farsi*. Further, in identifying the “Persian” language, we refrain from referencing the language using its autoglotonyms (a word that a language uses to refer to itself), such

as *Dari*, *Farsi*, *Hazaragi*, and *Tajiki* (native names for Persian used only in their language and writing), so the name of the language in English remains as *Persian*.

Shirazi-Persian, an assortment of modern western Iranian languages and dialects, is spoken in the city of Shiraz, the capital of the southwestern province of Fars/Pars in the country of Iran (Persia), located on the West Asian continent. The name *Shiraz* perhaps came from the name *T/Shirazzish*, engraved on the 2nd millennium BCE Elamite clay tablet recovered in southwestern Shiraz, in reference to a fortress by the same name on the site, later referred to as the *Qasr-e Abu Nasr* (Palace of Abu Nasr) or *Takht-e Sulayman* (Throne of Solomon). Early and late Sasanian rock-relief carvings and the major fire temples found in and near the city suggest Shiraz was a highly-populated administrative town.

Marked as the cultural center of the country, the city of Shiraz is traditionally named the Tower of Saints (*borj-e awlia'*), the Abode of Knowledge (*dar al-'elm*), and the Seat of Government (*dar al-molk*). Shiraz is celebrated for its world-renowned poets, mystics, saints, gardens, roses, nightingales, and many other wonderful attributes. Among the luminaries of Shiraz are the world-renowned mystic poets Sa'di (13th CE) and Hafez (14th CE), and the master of Illuminationist philosophy, Mulla Sadra (16th–17th CE). Shiraz is also known for its wine, and so Shiraz was appropriately chosen for a type of red wine mainly produced in Australia.

Linguistically, variations of a language, with differences in vocabularies, structures, and phonetics, are recognized as dialects, and, if the differences are limited to phonetics, they are recognized as accents. For this reason, every language may have several dialects, and each dialect may have several accents.

In numerous cases of Shirazi Persian, which is usually considered an accent of the F/Pars dialect, vocabulary, word usage, and structure differ greatly from Standard Persian. For this reason, they are uniquely Shirazi, and considered a dialect and not an accent. For instance, numerous verbs have two separate meanings, usages, and structures—one similar to Standard Persian, and one with a totally separate meaning, usage, and conjugation format that is specifically Shirazi. Further, there exist key phonetic differences between Shirazi and Standard

Persian, two of the chief ones being vowel and consonant alterations in Shirazi.

As a final point, Shirazi can be considered both a dialect and an accent because, in addition to the distinctive way it is spoken, it is comprised of particular sounds, individual vocabulary, and unique grammatical inflections. The dialect of Shiraz is spoken with various accents, based on different geographical regions, as well as diverse social groups. Even so, because the argument is beyond the scope of this introduction, for the sake of generalization and to avoid confusion, I refer to Shirazi as an accent.

As one of the oldest living accents of the Persian language, Shirazi continues to use many words and expressions rooted in the Pahlavi Middle Persian. Further, the city of Shiraz, positioned at the crossroads of myriad cultures and languages for centuries, has also been influenced by the English, French, Italian, and Spanish, as well as by the nomadic, migratory tribes of the Arabs, Lurs, and Turks.

Today, the Shirazi accent is commonly recognized in three distinct forms: (1) pedigree (*asīl*) Shirazi; (2) moderate (*ma'moli*) Shirazi; and (3) new (*no*) Shirazi. Despite their particularities, they are all still rooted in old Shirazi (*Shirazi-e asīl*). As the city of Shiraz continues to expand and merge with neighboring non-Shirazi towns, receiving migrants from the surrounding provinces and countries, both its language and culture continue to experience rapid change.

This observable transformation further adds to the divide as to how the language is spoken among the generations. Old Shirazi, similar to other regional accents, is often deemed retrograde by the new generation simply because it is so different than the Tehrani accent—the way the language is spoken in the capital city of Iran—which is recognized as the standard city accent, causing many think of Old Shirazi as being inferior, much in the same way some think certain geographical American English accents are “backward.” Because of this cultural aspect, some speakers feel forced to adopt a more conventional mode of speaking.

Today, various ethnicities inhabit the state of F/Pars, mostly with their own unique languages and dialects. The major ethnic groups in the state are Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Circassians, Georgians, Kurds, Lurs, Persians, Qashqais, Tajiks, and Afghans (including Pashtūns, Haz-

aras, and other Iranian language speakers from Afghanistan not associated with the aforementioned ethnic groups).

The book, *A Lexicon of the Persian Language of Shiraz*, focuses on the Shirazi accent of the Modern Persian language, with speech forms that are characteristic of diverse cultural and social communities. The goal of this compilation is to emphasize the major vocabulary and phonetic processes in today's Shirazi Persian in order to contribute to an understanding of the similarities, as well as the differences, between Shirazi and Standard Persian. Further, it is intended to highlight the importance of preserving the Persian language, dialects, and accents, showing this lexis to be important as a conveyor of history, the arts, culture, and folklore.

Those teaching and learning Modern Persian outside the language's native homeland (Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan), with its myriad dialects and accents, will benefit from viewing Standard Modern Persian next to its non-standard equivalent, as well as their multilingual translations. This polyglot is designed for English speakers learning Standard Persian and/or Shirazi, and for Persian speakers studying Shirazi and/or English. It is also a valuable dictionary for translators of these languages, and enthusiasts of the Persian lyric poets of Shiraz. Moreover, this volume establishes a model for the creation of similar projects aiming to preserve Iranian languages and their many dialects.

In review of this book, Dr. Wheeler M. Thackston Jr., Professor of the Practice in Persian and Other Near Eastern Languages at Harvard University, comments: “While Iranian languages, ancient and modern, have received a good deal of scholarly attention, little attention has been paid to regional variants of modern Persian. Dr. Mitra Ara has made a significant contribution in this regard with her glossary of Shirazi vocabulary and idioms. The user will find a number of interesting items in this list, some cognate with standard Persian but with slightly different significations and others with no discernible Persian antecedents. This collection is particularly valuable because it has been made before the push for standardization of Persian will have succeeded in annihilating regionalisms in the language. If we had such a glossary for thirteenth-century Shirazi we would understand more of Sa'di's dialect poetry.”

(Above excerpts are from the mentioned book by Mitra Ara: https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Mitra+Ara&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss)

I like my Persian compatriots' long standing love affair with nothingness. And I say "Persian" to include a literary/linguistic country from Samarqand, Bokhara, Herat, to Balkh, Dushanbe, Ashqabad, Konja, Baku, Ganja... from Tehran all the way to TehrAngeles... rather than a country with political borders. We love nothingness and all its paraphernalia with a passion. After all what is Persian poetry, our most cherished national pass-time, but elaborate, polished, worked on nothingness?

It is the most abstract of all fine arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry, in order from the most concrete to the most abstract). Also, Persians do not "write" poetry, they "say" it.

Once you have memorized a poem, a ghazal from Hafez or Sa'di or Rumi, it is there: voila, polished, elaborate, filigreed, pure thought, nothingness, heech, the secret that sits in the middle and knows. Our long-standing love affair, our 1000-year-old meditation with Rudaki and Ferdowsi, Khayyam, Rumi, to Sepehri, Farrokhzad, Lotfalian, Bahrami, Samandar, Kadkani, Behbahani, Attar... Mohammad Reza Aalipayam....add your own list ...

We have been meditating to the music of Ney, the flute, a hollow reed full of air: nothingness music from the void, air, wind dancing in an empty reed, turning round and round, as if around the Sun: Shams, and whirling in and out of strategically placed "holes" in the reed, more nothingness, the space between the notes that makes the music.

Yes Sir, nothingness is a serious business here.

Our favorite national drink: tea... which is aromatic hot water: nothingness

Our favorite national fruit: the fine little fragrant, Persian cucumber, mostly water, lots of taste and flavor, near zero calories, heech. And we consider those cucumbers as fruits, not some third rate vegetable.

Persian watermelon belongs in the same category as our cucumbers.

Our favorite snack: "tokhme" roasted watermelon seeds, pumpkin seeds,

Pear seeds or anchoochak, even apple seeds.

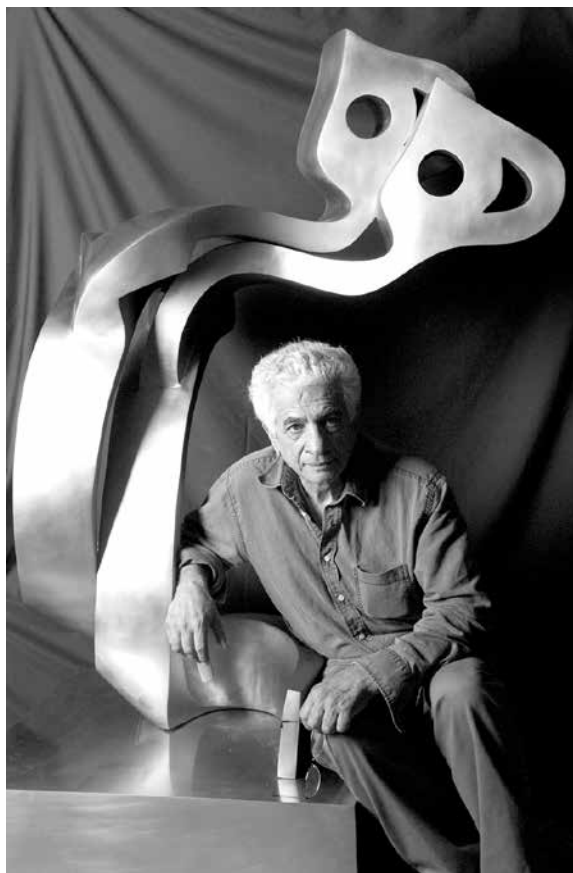
Once my Mom was on a bus trip, going from New York around the USA, Seattle, California Texas, Florida. Next to her was seated an American lady who was puzzled and greatly

Heech Revisited

*Nothingness being
what it is for us Persians:
tangible, a real thing*
HEECH SCULPTURE,

by Parviz Tanavoli

Goli Farrell



intrigued by my mother eating something for hours, that smelled extremely good and appetizing but invisible. She kept taking something out of a large transparent bag and eating it, but there seemed to be nothing in the bag. My mother says that finally the lady took out her glasses out of her bag and put them on to see just what on earth was going on.

My mother finally decided to put her out of her confusion by telling her that she had roasted something like 80 apple seeds and that was what had kept her happy, satisfied, and made the travel time pass much faster and more enjoyably. But Mom said that she was sort of embarrassed to offer the lady this microscopic but delicious and healthy, low calorie snack.

One of our greatest living artists, Parviz Tanavoli, has concretized, given body to this long love affair with his set of NOTHING/HEECH sculptures that are incredibly beautiful. In another group of works, Tanavoli calls one of his magnificent huge, shiny bronze sculptures: *vahdate vojud!* Only a Persian could do that. Unity of Being. Oneness of Existence.

Tanavoli has also a painting that is called "*Bolboli barg e goli khoshrang dar menghaar daashi*" (the Nightingale with a beautiful flower on her beak) that made me cry. The nightingale has a red lock on the beak, signifying forced silence. Nothingness.

Another great sculptor, Abdollah Hesam, among many beautiful works, has a mural sculpture of a man with a closed zipper on the mouth.

Nothingness being what it is / for us Persians:

tangible, a real thing, heech,
has a free standing, independent,
bona fide name of its own, "heech"
having nothing to do with "no" nor with "thing" /
in fact, nothing to do with negation at all.

The silence between the notes that makes the music.

Having been brought up on Hafez, Rudaki, Nezami, Rumi...

We walk on air, on nothing,
high, intoxicated without any visible intoxicant
our addictive substance being: art, poetry, love, ecstasy
yes sir, Ecstasy being a real thing to us

Tangible and in daily use / not the powder/ but the real thing.

And now this new-fangled Internet, the lovely WWW has

brought about the ultimate union of the lovers, the *vesaal*, between us and our beloved heech, our centuries old love of the ethereal heech, the phenomenal way in which Persians have taken to the Internet, like ducks to water. Our newly rekindled, rejuvenated love affair with this “virtual” world of an invisible “web” of radio waves, is the consummation of a long-awaited reunion of the lovers, Romeo and Juliette NOT dying, but living happily ever after, watching the sunset together, seeing their children grow. All the marvelous Persian web sites and the emails criss-crossing the continents and the oceans, have created a virtual home, a “*vatan*”.

The *dot.com* world has encouraged me to the point that I want to go back and rewrite the script, changing some chapters of our history: King Mahmud Ghaznavi will NOT be influenced by the bad guys in his entourage and will change his mind and pay Ferdowsi the promised golden treasure. What is more, he will take Ferdowsi to live beside him in the Palace, the way Lorenzo di Medici (Il Magnifico) took young Michelangelo to live and work in his palace, and even built a sculpture garden for him.

Rostam will recognize his son Sohrab BEFORE he is killed and together they will go and find Rudabeh and they will build

a magnificent house and garden in Zabolstan. The garden is so lovely that Simorgh decides to go live there as well. After all, Simorgh is the one who raised Rostam’s father, Zaal e Nariman. Shams Tabrizi visits them too, from time to time. Bijan and Manijeh also.

And Mirza Taqi Khan e Amir Kabir will NOT be killed and instead he will build many other *DarolFonuns* polytechnics all over Iran. He will also rebuild the Ark of Bam, and repair Apadana, in Persepolis.

And Mansour Hallaj will NOT be hanged and he will tell us to sit down upon the ground beside him and will tell us, in great detail and in a leisurely manner, while having tea and *baqlava*, and maybe *gaz* from Isphahan, all about the “truth” and we shall ask him to elaborate, and he will reveal “THE secret”.

And Emam Hosein will NOT be killed, and instead Yazid and Shemr will change their minds and bring nice drinks and ice water to the desert, and then will take them all back to have dinner together.

And Rabe’eh will live happily with her beloved (who will NOT be killed by her brother) and she will write lots of nice love poems and we will take her chocolates on Valentine’s day.

Poetry’s Position in Iranian Culture

Ebrahim Fakouri



In comparison to other cultures, poetry and poets have a special position in Iranian culture. In many cities of Iran, streets are named after great poets such as Ferdowsi, Saadi and Hafez. The history of Persian literature is the history of Persian poetry. The foreign scholars and writers who have lived in Iran and those who are familiar with the Iranian culture and Persian literature, such as Edward Browne and Terence Ward, have been impressed with the high esteem which Iranians have for their poets. For Edward Brown the history of Persian literature is the history of Iranian thought and the poetry has been the medium for expression of philosophical and literary ideas. Terence Ward compares the position of poetry in Persian culture to the position of opera in Italian culture. One major reason for this position is that poetry, especially *Shahnameh* Ferdowsi, is credited for the revival of the Persian language and Persian culture throughout centuries and numerous foreign invasions.

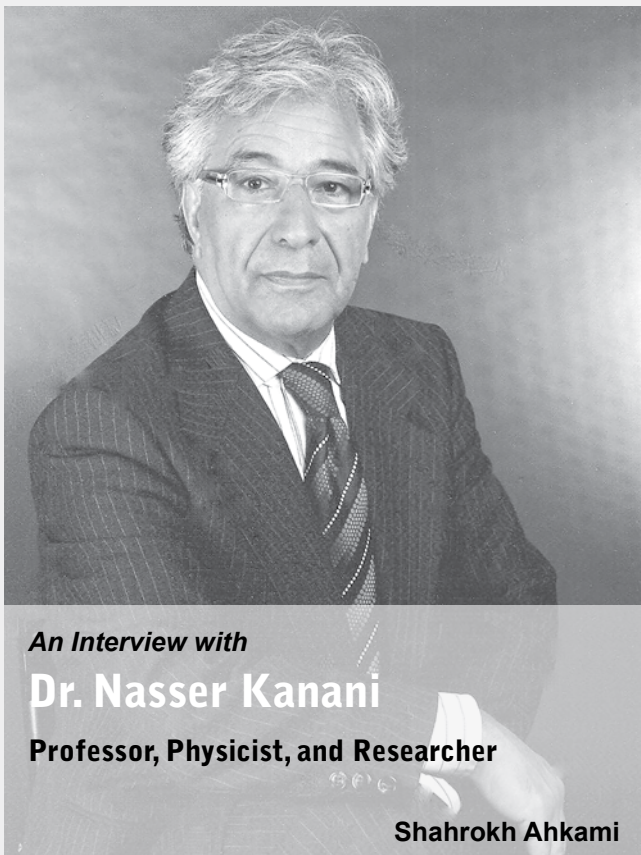
Another reason for the importance of poetry is its resiliency for survival under restrictive and at times stifling political, social or religious conditions. Poetry is an art and poets are creative artists, the language of poetry can be ambiguous and hence open to different interpretations. Poetry can flourish and survive the adverse effects

of political and religious suppression better than other media for artistic and creative expressions such as music, paintings, sculpture and expressive arts. That is the reason that throughout several centuries other fine arts and literary works did not flourish the same as poetry.

While in the West a great number of artistic works were supported by the kings, nobility and wealthy patrons for writing symphonies and operas or painting portraits and engaging in other creative endeavors, in Iran poets only sporadically received such support. This support on occasion has provided the poets access to the power structure and influence on decision makers.

Additionally, Persian poetry has been used for teaching values, admonitions, encouragement, moral behavior and the way of life. It is inevitable that with such pervasive utilization of poetry undesirable uses can emerge, for example using poetry as a “fact” in support of an argument or as evidence of correctness of a position in controversial issues. In such instances, the poet is considered learned, wise and an authority on the subject. Of course, the poets are not responsible for this misuse of poetry. The educational establishment should not allow this to happen, particularly at the elementary and high school level. Another pervasive misuse of poetry, particularly in Hafez’s case, is the use of his poetry to help the indecisive reader for showing the best course of action.

In short, Persian poetry has preserved the Persian language and has intricately permeated through Iranian culture. As such it should be studied with comprehension, taught with precision and preserved with appreciation for future Persian speaking people.



An Interview with

Dr. Nasser Kanani

Professor, Physicist, and Researcher

Shahrokh Ahkami

Please tell us about your childhood, adolescent and your studies in Iran

This is according to my mother. I was born in Mashad. My birth certificate however was registered in Tehran, consequently on paper my birthplace is Tehran. My childhood was spent in the Shemiran area of Tehran where I attended kindergarten. My elementary education was completed in Tehran. We then moved to Kerman. I finished 6th grade in that city and then we moved around the country between Tehran and other cities in Iran. I did complete high school in Teheran in mathematics. My father held a very important position in the Mine and Industry Ministry. He traveled extensively with that position and took us with him anytime he was assigned to a new city. As a result, my education after elementary school took place in different cities in Iran.

Was it easy for you to adapt to these changes?

While it was interesting, all this moving did have its difficulties. I had to adapt and assimilate into the fabric of new subcultures in different parts of the country. In the end, this traveling around the entire country allowed me to have a greater appreciation of the people and subcultures in different parts of Iran. Perhaps this is the reason I have a deep sense of connection to my country.

I know there is an interesting story behind your last name, can you tell us about that?

Yes. As you know my last name is Kanani. I remember my

grandmother telling me the story of the time when family names became mandated by the government. One day she took her three sons by the names of Moussa, Issa and my father Youssef to the ministry to register and choose an official last name for her family. The officer in charge asked her what her choice for a last name would be. She responded, "I don't know yet."

The officer then looked at her three sons, especially at my father who was a very attractive child and named Youssef. He looked at my grandmother and said, "Madam why don't you choose the last name of Kanani? It certainly goes well with the first names of your children especially Youssef."

A very cute story! What made you decide to move to Austria and later to Germany to continue with your higher education?

I was very fortunate! My family was well versed in the arts, literature and music. They instilled their passion in me as a young child. On Fridays we would get together as a family at our house. We had a variety of instruments and poetry would be recited. So, it was natural that I developed an interest in the arts and music. But it was by my father's recommendation that I take music lessons from the famous professor Hossein Malik. I started playing the *santur*. My love for music was encouraged by my family and they made the decision to send me to Austria, after my high school graduation, to study music in Vienna. Shortly after I came to the realization that music studies were not the route I wanted to take for my future. I decided to continue my education in engineering, since my major in high school was in mathematics and I received good grades. I transferred over to the university in Leoben, Austria. I should interject here that I did not drop my love for music and literature, instead continued my studies on my own. Halfway through my university studies I decided to continue my education in Germany, because of its reputation in industrial engineering. Accordingly, I transferred to the University of Berlin and majored in hardware and industrial engineering.

What was it like going to school in Germany, do you have any special memories?

In all honesty my biggest wish was to return to my beloved country Iran. I wanted to return to the arms of my loving family. So, after graduation my first step was to go to the Iranian consulate in Berlin. The first requirement for my reentry was that *Savak* security services had to approve my work. The second step was for me, upon my return, to serve in the army. I was shocked why they were putting these requirements on a young graduate who wanted to return home to serve his country. At that time, I was offered a position by a reputable organization in Germany, as an assistant professor at the University of Berlin. I accepted and decided to continue my doctorate PHD in physics, instead of being interrogated by the *Savak* and serving in the army. After receiving my doctorate, I was still interested in returning to Iran, but there was another requirement. In addition to the two others I had to join the political party of the regime, *Rastakhiz*. Not wanting to do that I accepted another offer by the university for a continuation in my studies and to become a full professor that required only German speaking individuals with the highest grades. Thus, I continued my life in Germany.

What made you move to the United States?

It was never my plan to stay in Germany and continue my higher education. But as the Persian saying goes, “Your welfare is in what happens.” This all happened at a time when I was self-searching my future. I thought about my degrees in chemical and electrical engineering and in what direction my life should go. I then received an offer from MIT in Boston for a five-year research program in atomic and biochemical studies. I packed my bags and was on my way to the United States.

I have an interesting memory from my travels to the U.S.. I had a very nice gentleman sitting next to me on my flight. He started a conversation with me and I found out that he was the one responsible for inviting me to do the research study at MIT. He looked at me and said, “You must be a genius!” Of course, I was surprised by his comment and responded by saying, “That is not so.” He casually responded by saying, “then perhaps they had made a mistake in choosing you!”

Besides MIT, I also was invited by the University of Gainesville in Florida and the University of Sakaria in Turkey.

Please tell us about your studies in mathematics and physics and its relationship to music and the arts?

As I had stated earlier growing up I had a great interest in music and the arts and spent most of my free time reading a variety of books. I was very fortunate to come across a number of literary works that were translated from English, French and Russian into Persian. This introduced me to their cultures and literary works. I remember attending a conference in France many years ago where I met up with a French scholar. We had a wonderful discussion on French literature and the arts. He was amazed by the fact that these works were translated into Persian, accessing these works were easy and how Iranians had so much knowledge about French literary works. I am certain you recall that in Iran during high school Iranian students had the choice of majoring in sciences, mathematics or literature. Naturally mathematics was always the number one choice due to more future opportunities.

What inspired you to write about Hafiz and Goethe?

Twenty-five years ago I came to the decision that it was my duty or responsibility to introduce the great poets and literary Iranian scholars and Persian literature to interested Germans. I did this by creating a conversation through slides and writings. I first started with famous mathematicians such as Kharazmi, Khayyam, my favorite and Khajeh Nasir-al-dinToussi and the scholars Razi and Ibn Sina. It became evident to me during these seminars that the German attendees and others had a deep interest in Persian scholars in other fields.

Their interest in Persian literature by Ferdowsi, Khayyam and Hafiz and Persian music encouraged me to pursue my interest in writing about it. All my writings are based on extensive research including western scholarly findings; this brought in more credibility and with that more interest and a larger audience. Finding scholarly research in the West required a great deal of research and hard work. I was, however, able to find an overabundance of information. It all could not be covered in these seminars and conferences, so I decided to start putting these collections in books. I started with three books in Persian on Kharazmi, one book in English on Hafiz and his *Divan*, based on western scholars, and a book in German, which is currently in print.

Tell us about the other series of books you have written and how you discovered that the origin of the battery was invented by the Persians?

I have always had an interest in reading books by European and American authors that focused on sciences and were translated into Persian. It bewildered me why these scientific authors never mentioned Persian scholars and/or scientists in these books. When I became familiar with English, German and Italian and started reading books in these languages, I discovered that books written in the original languages did write about the history of sciences and scientists from Iran. Surprisingly, I discovered that the battery was invented by the Parthians. I must emphasize that building a battery is a simple task and can happen by accident. This is exactly what happened during the Parthian Empire. All it takes is to take two metal sticks and place them into an acidic liquid solution (any juice or wine). What occurs between the two metals is an electric magnetic field and more than likely the Parthians used this process for many things. I have given numerous talks and written extensive journals on this discovery. In 2004 I published a book on this subject titled the *Parthian Battery*. Later the book was translated into German and Russian and eventually into Persian by my dear friend Dr. Shahmiri. The opening of the Museum of Sciences and Technology in Tehran displayed a model of this battery created by a group of young science students. The same group was kind enough to create a smaller model which they dedicated to me. The rest of my books are about technical science.

Can you please tell us about your work on the Shahnameh and how it was used against the Nazis during the Hitler reign of power?

I always wondered when the Western Scholars, without a political agenda, became interested in Persian culture, literature, science and history and introduced it into their scholarly research. In pursuit of this discovery I did extensive research. Included in my research was finding the western scholars who had an interest in Ferdowsi and the Shahnameh. I was interested to see the name of the first western scholar who wrote about this subject matter. As I was doing my research, using ancient books and the internet, I came across a series of postcards published back in 1942. The postcards had Persian miniature artistry on them displaying Hitler and Gobles, identifying them as the devils found in the story of the Shahnameh. The devil (Zahak who had a snake on each shoulder) of the Shahnameh, like Hitler and Gobles, created a blood bath of the surrounding world. In the Shahnameh there was a savior, Kaveh the blacksmith, who took the reign of horror away from the villain on the battle on the mountain of Damavand. Likewise, on these postcards from 1942, there were saviors depicted as Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt. The artist’s name on these postcards is British artist Kimon Evan Marengo. This story was broadcasted on the BBC by the idea of Mojtaba Minoi. It was intended as a propaganda tool to make Iranians rise up against the German Nazis and support the allies Russia, Britain and the United States.

Tell us about your sweet as well as sad memories outside of Iran.

Most of us living as Iranian Diaspora have good and heart-

broken memories. We also have taken hard learned lessons away that have helped us evolve into better beings. I have lived and studied in several different countries. I ask that you allow me to refrain from answering this question as it is too emotional for me.

Can you cover some of your experiences with young students both inside and outside the country?

When we say young people, we must acknowledge that we no longer belong to this group of individuals. Accordingly, when we pass on judgement and try to evaluate their work, we must be conscience and respectful of the generational differences. Remember we were also judged at the time by our predecessors and we suffered good or bad as a result. I must say that young people today who are living outside of the country are doing their best with every opportunity they are given. Those that are born and raised in other countries have a very different perspective than I do. Culturally their values vary because they are very involved with the environment and outside factors. Young Iranians, living in Iran, because of my limited experience and time with them, appear to have different view of the world.



Their concerns are mostly about the future and opportunities concerning education and work. Even though they have tight family bonds, they are looking for any opportunity to leave and find their future outside Iran. My wish would have been for these young people to be able to find those opportunities inside Iran and not seek refuge outside, in America or Europe. For the past 100 years we have been exporting our children to outside countries and it looks like we will continue this path. Isn't it time for us to stop and think about how this action is detrimental to Iran, causing negative impact financially, emotionally and economically? About 10 years ago I started working with groups of professors to develop programs that can help bring about a new beginning for young people. These programs have been very successful.

What has inspired you to pursue new discoveries on Persian literature and arts?

My interest in Parthian literature and art goes back to my childhood years with my family, who loved art and literature. Interest and research, however, does not make an asset to society. It is not a prescription to truism as a human being. What comes first is the culture that one is born into and their love for its land is more important in being an expert in a field.

As Iranians our culture plays a daily role in our lives. We brag and we dismiss our culture daily in everything we do. We take pride in our kings and kings' men yet ignore their bad deeds. My life philosophy and work ethic is that we live and learn all cultures, keep some and give some to other cultures. We are not alone on this planet. We have contributed to society and other cultures as they to ours. This is the path I have taken in my passion for researching the impact and influences of a variety of other cultures and how ours has influenced theirs. We live in a world of intercultural influences.

Please give us a brief overlook at your relationship with Iran and Iranians both on a positive and negative note.

Even though I have lived a large portion of my life outside of Iran and made Germany my place of residence, my heart still beats for my birthplace Iran. Every opportunity I have I take a two to three-week trip to Iran to visit. The Iran I know does not only entail the history, literature and the arts that I have dedicated my life's research. Being there and being able to physically touch its soil is equally important to me. The images we see today of Iran are the deep pain, sorrow and the hardships the people are feeling. Their will to survive is deeply rooted in Persian culture and way of life. This is creating heartfelt emotions that are contributing to the upheaval within the hearts of the people.

What are your future plans?

The outcome of years of work in this field has resulted in a few professors and scholars who have been trained by me to develop a path to continuing the research and the work I started many years ago. Today I can say that I have a plan of action just like everyone else does in their life, but as far as these plans coming to fruition still remains in question. My plan is to continue my research on the history, arts and literary findings of ancient Persia.

Unfortunately, this is all I am capable of and hope that this will be a small contribution to my country and homeland. I truly believe that there are others out there that are working hard towards creating a better society, with more economic and financial comfort for the people of Iran. I believe this is true and all of us are working towards the betterment of a society that remains in difficult times.

What made you decide to choose Germany as your full time residence?

As I mentioned, I made several attempts to go back to Iran. Since my efforts towards this goal were not successful I made my home in a European state and Germany became my choice for residency. It is the country that feeds my needs and my nature as close to home as possible. It has been my hope that I can at least contribute to Iran while living in Germany.

Do you have a wish for Iran and its' younger generation?

One wish I have is for Iranians, wherever we live in this vast world, to always work towards embracing Iran's values and culture and to develop a mindset to enhance and further develop our birthland. It doesn't matter how many languages you speak or how intellectual you are.

Remember there are those who are not literate but contribute more to society and have a heartfelt responsibility towards the betterment of their home country. They contribute for the betterment of the country not for their own interests.

Have you received awards for your scientific achievements and cultural activities?

Yes, several awards for both. The one that makes me the proudest is a collection called *Kuschner's Deutscher Grelehrten-Kalender* (German Scholar's Calendar), which is exclusive to the German scientists. Since 1985 every year each new edition contains a report on my scientific activities, even though I am not German.