



Persian Heritage

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PUBLISHED BY

PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.

A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes

Cover Price: \$6.00

Subscriptions: \$24.00/year (domestic);
\$30.00 & 50.00/year (International)

Typesetting & Layout
TALIEH PUBLICATIONS

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Vol. 22, No. 88

Winter 2017

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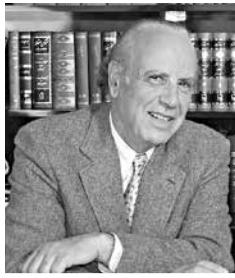
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Once again my warm wishes for a happy and healthy holiday to the people of the world, our readers and the Iranian diaspora. You have so gracefully engaged in upholding Persian values and continue to pass them on to future generations. And you still assimilate to your host countries in celebrating the holidays. I continue to hope that the coming New Year will be filled with health and joy for all especially the devastated people in Iran. These people for the last 40 years have endured not only devastation caused by nature but have also suffered from the tyranny of their leaders.

In the last week the devastation of the earthquake brought this suffering to light in the Province of Kermanshah and the surrounding villages. Over 40,000 homes and apartments were destroyed. Destroyed not so much by the severity of the earthquake, but because of the poor construction and engineering of the responsible parties. The Mehr Community (Mehr meaning "kindness and giving") was built, opposite its name, by a group of irresponsible cruel builders. This low income housing project was built for the underprivileged to provide shelter. As a result of this inadequate construction these people have lost everything including their lives. Those who fortunately survived face a future with little. This event was the worse world disaster and devastation in 2017. The inhumane individuals, responsible for the engineering and construction of this community lacked compassion. They did not even provide adequate building procedures to the only hospital in the community, which also was destroyed.

I remember during a visit to San Diego CA, a friend who was interested in purchasing real-estate in the area, sparked a conversation with my brother, a civil engineer. He emphasized the importance of checking the quake track line before purchasing any property. My brother very calmly explained that in California most builders make sure they don't build on quake track (fault) line, in order to minimize the damage in the event of an earthquake, especially due to the fact that California is so vulnerable to quakes.

Knowing how carefully they build in California reinforced my feelings of the irresponsibility of the builders in Kermanshah, a known vulnerable region to earthquakes... Apparently none of the required building codes were applied in this case; all they looked at was the profit they would make. As a result these building blocks, called apartment buildings, have crumbled and along with them the hope and dreams of an entire community.

If you look back at the history of the Eifel Tower in Paris, Mr. Eifel the architect, responsible for the construction of this world renowned structure, was charged with improper use of safety codes and was given a jail sentence. The authorities did not even consider the reputation of this genius architect while charging him with jail time. In Iran, unfortunately, illegal behavior

is overlooked by the leadership who work hand in hand with the corrupt and thieves who are looking out for their own interests. In this case when they are identified as guilty they will have the ability to flee, with their passports in hand.

I am not sure if you know this story but it is one I would like to share with you. It is regarding the building of one of the first bridges in Iran, built during Reza Shahs time (father of the latest Shah). The story goes that when he ordered the construction of the Veresk Bridge for the railroad to connect the northern part of Iran with Tehran, he also demanded that the architect responsible for the design and construction to be present on the day of the opening of the bridge. He was ordered to stand with his family under the bridge as the first train passed over. This was to ensure that all the proper codes and construction were applied to its construction, or the builder and family would be the first victims to improper engineering. Interesting enough the bridge still stands and it is a symbol of the rail system in Iran. This is an example showing how a compassionate leader looks out for his people. A true leader makes sure that his leadership encompasses values that will protect the citizens against the corrupt. They will prosecute those found responsible for illegal actions and carry out rightful punishment.

I am sad to have to witness how the wealth and livelihood of my birth country is being embezzled by the leadership, wealth being shipped out to foreign banks. This occurs while innocent children live in cities and attend schools poorly constructed under code. During the summer time they are forced to endure the heat of the sun and in the winter wet and slimy walls of these huts. How can a government allow this to happen to its own and yet, fund buildings of schools in Africa, South America, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon? During the airstrikes on Lebanon by Israel a few years ago, many buildings were destroyed especially in the Hezbollah areas. During an interview with one of the families that had endured the attack they gratefully thanked Iran for building them new homes, hospitals, schools and parks. They acknowledged the receipt of cash up to \$20,000.00 per family from the Iranian authorities. While the cash amount maybe exaggerated this story was frustrating to my ears. Especially when I hear that three days into the quake people were still without access to food and shelter. One of the villages did not even have access to drinking water. A witness stated that when the food trucks come around, people who are more aggressive over power those that are older and weaker resulting in improper distribution of the rations. Another frustrating and unfortunate issue is the lack of International media coverage of this natural disaster in Iran, a complete disregard to human life. But I was humbled by the pride and values of the people of Iran who joined together to volunteer and collect funds and brought food and supplies to the needy victims of this quake.

It is infuriating and humiliating that a few days into the quake there was a religious holiday. Over a million people were visiting the holy sites by foot in Iraq during the holy days. The publicity of these pilgrimages were all over the media in Iran and even the Mayor of Tehran stated that it was his responsibility to maintain the premises of these sites by Iranians in a foreign country. He took great pride in making these statements. The faith of individuals is personal and should be respected by all, but in retrospect, stated by many during these past weeks, it is important to realize our priorities. When in need we must look inside not outside, when a people of our birth place are in dire need of food and shelter, are crammed under the rubble of buildings and the loss of life is in your face. The lack of funds to provide help to those in need of schools and hospital is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable to the increase of homelessness of families; children wandering the streets and addiction on the rise.

It is despicable when all of this is happening on Iranian soil, the soil of our birth land, while billions are being spent on funding the development of countries who have long been responsible for the destruction of Iran and its people; using Iran's oil money to fund all this. What happened to the money that funded Hamas and the Palestinians? What good has it done for us? The Palestinians are on the side of the Saudis who have a thirst for Persian blood, and have always been their enemy.

The burden of this quake is prominent but inflation has become another added problem for the Iranian people. Food

prices have gone up drastically. The only source of food for some is bread, which is subsidized by the government. It has been announced that there will be a 15% increase in the price of traditional Persian breads in the market. This equates to an enormous amount of money for a family of four and will leave them financially unable to afford cheese or meat to their monthly expenses.

The images of disaster areas, the number of the death toll rising, the wounded, the grieving parents, inflation, news of theft, human rights inflictions, political prisoners, the news of a war breaking out with a country whose young Arab leader aligned himself with a full modern military (supplied by The West), world powers encouraging the young Saudi Arabia Crown Prince leader, emerging as a young Saddam Hussein, to try out their new military war heads on Iran, the news of dividing Iran into different parts, etc... daily OCCUPIES my mind and certainly occupies the minds all who seek peace and harmony. When will we see a new world order allowing Iran and its people their proper place in today's world?

Shahrokh Alavi

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APPRECIATION

Dear Dr. and Mrs. Ahkami,

Your generosity, kindness and support by remembering my beloved daughter, Roxana, in your valued magazine, *Persian Heritage*, are greatly appreciated. My family and I feel honored to have friends like you.

With sincerest regards,
Azar Aryanpour

LOVE THE YOUTH

Dear Editor:

I want to tell you that the cover featuring Mr. Bekhrad brought a smile to my face. It is so delightful to continue to read and learn about the accomplishments of the younger Iranian Americans. It is the drive of these young people that will secure their history as contributors to the United States. Thank you for always encouraging them.

IA, NJ

TRIBUTE

Dear Editor:

Your tribute to the passing of Ms. Mirzakhani was touching. All too often a person of young greatness is lost after the accomplishment. I will show this to my daughters and granddaughters to see how women can be everything in this modern world. That their accomplishments in society are not dependent on them giving up their femininity, family and nurturing ability.

It was obvious how much she loved and how that love was returned. I pray that she is not forgotten in mathematics and for

achievements as a mother.

HN, Ca

TO YOUR STAFF

Dear Editor:

All too often staffs that work diligently in projects are forgotten when it comes to thanks. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who volunteer their time in making this magazine *Persian Heritage* one of the best I have ever read. It is obvious how much love goes into this.

Thank you and Happy Holidays
RMS, NJ



Expelled Iranian Chess Player DORSA DERAKHSHANI Switches to U.S. Team



An Iranian chess player, Dorsa Derakhshani, who was expelled from the national team for attending an international competition without wearing hijab, has switched sides and joined the U.S. team. “Based on the [International Chess Federation, FIDE] statute, chess players who switch their nationality can after two years join the national team of their new country. Dorsa has also benefited from the same statute,” Mehr News Agency (Mehr News Agency) cited Iranian Chess Federation (IRCF) President Mehrdad Pahlavanzadeh as saying.

Iran Students News Agency (ISNA) also reported on the 19-year-old chess player’s decision on October 2, presenting Derakhshani as a chess woman grandmaster and international master.

ISNA says that over the past two years Dorsa participated in several international chess competitions without wearing hijab.

She was expelled from Iran’s national team for participating in the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess tournament in February without wearing hijab. Immediately after the tournament, the IRCF’s president announced, “In regards to the events in Gibraltar, Dorsa and her chess player brother, Borna, are going to be seriously confronted.” Derakhshani’s 15-year-old brother had played against Israeli grandmaster Alexander Huzman in Gibraltar despite an unwritten law in Iran that prohibits its athletes from competing against Israeli opponents. In January 2016, Iranian competitor Ehsan Ghaem-Maghami withdrew from a tournament in Switzerland when he learned he would be facing an Israeli in the fifth round.

However, Pahlavanzadeh now insists, “Dorsa was not a member of Iran’s national chess team. She played for Iran only one time in 2014.” Derakhshani is the second Iranian female chess player after Sara Khadim osh-Shari’a to achieve the prestigious titles of woman grandmaster at 18 and international grandmaster at the 87th Hastings International Chess Congress.

At 15, Derakhshani won the Asian Chess Championship in 2012 and came sixth in the World Youth Chess Championship in 2015.

In 2015, she accepted an offer by a Spanish club and moved to Barcelona to continue her studies at a university, as well.

Her registration has now been altered on FIDE’s website, and Pahlavanzadeh confirmed her switch to the U.S. Chess Federation. Derakhshani will join Nazi Paikidze on Team USA. The 23-year-old Russian-born Paikidze, who won the U.S. women’s championship in 2016, refused to compete in February’s Women’s World Chess Championship in Iran, protesting the country’s hijab law.

“I think it’s unacceptable to host a Women’s World Championship in a place where women do not have basic fundamental rights and are treated as second-class citizens,” she wrote in an Instagram post in September 2016. “For those saying that I don’t know anything about Iran: I have received the most support and gratitude from the people of Iran, who are facing this situation every day.”

FEMALES OUTNUMBER MALES BY 13% IN IRAN’S 2017 UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS



Tehran Times: As the final results for the Iranian university entrance exam, also known as Konkur, was announced on Saturday, it was revealed that females outnumber males in gaining admission to higher education by 49,062, or 13 percent higher than males. Out of 378,706 participants who were admitted to the universities nationwide 213,884 (56.5%) are females and 164,822 (43.5%) are males, YJC quoted Hossein Tavakkoli, an official with Sanjesh Organization which is in charge of holding the university entrance exam, as saying.

This year some 930,208 individuals including 548,434 females and 381,774 males took part in the exams. Students in the three main groups of mathematical sciences, experimental sciences, and human sciences and two other groups of arts and foreign languages compete against one another for the best result possible as their future is mostly determined by how they perform at the exam.

While by comparing the figures pertaining to the number of females and males taking part at the exam over the past two years, female participants usually outnumber the male both in sitting the exam and gaining admission to the universities more males would often manage to be among the top 10 scorers in three main groups of mathematical sciences, experimental sciences, and human sciences.

The fierce contest which normally engage students since they start high school is one of the major scientific competition in the country. Many students and their parents spend four years of their resources and energies on getting ready for the university entrance exam.

Despite the fact that universities have grown in number considerably over the past two decades still the cut-throat competition heats up every year as the number of seats at the top public universities are limited.

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SCULPTURE OF MARYAM MIRZAKHANI UNVEILED IN TEHRAN



TehranTimes: A sculpture of renowned Iranian mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani was unveiled on September 19, 2017 at the National Library and Archive of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NLAI) in Tehran.

Mirzakhani, 40, fought with cancer for four years and died of breast cancer at a hospital in the U.S. on July 14. The family of the late mathematician, the director of NLAI, Ashraf Boroujerdi, and other cultural and scientific personalities participated in the unveiling ceremony.

Maryam Mirzakhani, was the first-ever female winner of the prestigious Fields Medal prize

The two times gold medal winner in the International Mathematical Olympiad received her Bachelor of Science in mathematics from Iran's Sharif University of Technology in 1999 and earned a PhD degree in mathematics from Harvard University in 2004.

From 2004 to 2008 she was a Clay Mathematics Institute Research Fellow and an assistant professor at Princeton University. She was a professor at Stanford University. Her honors include the 2009 Blumenthal Award for the Advancement of Research in Pure Mathematics and the 2013 Satter Prize of the American Mathematical Society.

Mirzakhani also became the first woman and the first Iranian to be awarded a Fields Medal.

“WOMEN, THE ARCHITECTS OF PEACE” CONGRESS HELD IN TEHRAN

Tehran Times - An international congress with the theme of “women, the architects of peace” was held here on the occasion of the World Peace Day, which is annually marked on September 21.

The congress was held with the cooperation of the Institute for Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), The UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Peace and Democracy (UNESCO CHRPD) of Shahid Beheshti University, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

One of the recent initiatives of President Hassan Rouhani has been suggesting a world free of violence which have been approved in a resolution by the United Nations, she added.

BARJAM, the acronym for the Iran nuclear deal, is a great achievement toward promoting peace and security in the region, Dotsenko stated.

Although at the first year of United Nations' activity, women made up only one percent of peacekeepers, today, after seven decades, women compose 29 percent of peacekeepers, Dotsenko

announced.

Women play a vital role in peacekeeping, she said, emphasizing that women's presence in peacekeeping operations is promoting peace in the whole world.

Developing an approach to organizing peace in world is owing to women attempt on improving peace and women take responsibility of some part of peacekeeping operation.

The United Nations was created with the aim of removing war from the world and peace is the main priority of the UN, Dotsenko stated.

A number of 170 peace agreements have been signed during the long history of the UN and a number of 60 countries which were in war are currently in peace and security, she concluded.

“BREATH” PRODUCER PLEASED FEMALE FILMMAKER TO REPRESENT IRAN AT OSCARS

TehranTimes: Mohammad-Hossein Qasemi, the producer of Iran's submission to the 2018 Oscars “Breath”, who is also the husband of the film's director Narges Abyar, said that he was pleased Iran has sent a movie by a female filmmaker to the 90th Academy Awards.

“Women have a greater potential for making a film and competing at international events,” Qasemi told the Persian service of Tasnim.

In her an interview with the Persian service of MNA, Abyar called the choice of her film as Iran's submission to the Oscars a big event and added, “I suppose that women have been given more confidence.”

“Being a good film is not the sole criterion for winning an Oscar,” she said and added, “More measures such as arranging international screenings and having a contract with a reputable company for international distribution of the film are also requirements.”

Iranian Independents, a company marketing Iranian independent feature and documentary films, is the international distributor of “Breath”.

“I have complete confidence in the cinematic charter, aesthetics, theme and the high standards of ‘Breath’,” Mohammad Atebbai, the director of the company, wrote in a press release.

However, he asked the Cinema Organization of Iran to help the company in the promotion of the film in the international arena.

Abyar has said that she made “Breath” in praise of peace. The film shows how wars crush children's dreams and hopes for a bright future.

Abyar won the Golden Wolf for best director for “Breath”



at the 20th Black Nights Film Festival in Tallinn, Estonia in November 2016.

She also was picked as best director for the film at the Vancouver International Women in Film Festival in the Canadian city in March 2017.



The Board of Directors of the Iranian-American Scholarship Fund (IASF) awards an annual named scholarship from the general fund on behalf of the Iranian-American community, to honor and/or memorialize an academic of Iranian heritage whose outstanding work and contributions deserve this special recognition. This year, it is with great pride we allocate two such scholarships to Professor Cumrun Vafa of Harvard University and the late Professor Maryam Mirzakhani of Stanford University. Professor Vafa is the winner of 2017 Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics and the late Professor Maryam Mirzakhani was the first woman and the first of Iranian heritage to ever win mathematics' Field Medal. Their achievements in the field of physics and mathematics are a great inspiration to all and bring great pride to our global community. The IASF Board would like to extend sincere thanks to all who have supported this Scholarship Fund for the past 19 years. Scholarships for the 2017-18 academic year will be awarded to 25 outstanding applicants. This brings our total to 296 scholarships awarded to date. Our warm congratulations to this year's recipients.

2017-18 Special Scholarships

Korash Assani	U. of Cincinnati	The Cumrun Vafa Honorary Scholarship
Parmida Davarmanesh	Grand Valley State U.	The Maryam Mirzakhani Annual Memorial Scholarship
Aria Fani	PhD Candidate/UC Berkeley	The Nasser Ovissi Honorary Scholarship
	The Farhang and Parichehr Mehr Annual Honorary Scholarship	

2017-18 Graduate Recipients

Nazanin Abbaspour	San Diego State U.	The AIAP (Association of Iranian-American Professionals) Annual Scholarship, The Habib and Sharaeh Hariri Foundation Annual Scholarship
Ehsan Abbaszadeh	Columbia U.	The Zarrinkelk, Kashefpour, Co. Annual Scholarship, The Mojdehi Family Annual Scholarship
Samareh Dadashazar	Texas Tech U.	The Kaveh and Soraya Bagheri Family Annual Scholarship, The Abbas Bolandgray Annual Scholarship
Sara Emami	UC San Diego	The Massih and Haleh Tayebi Annual Scholarship
Shirin Mal Ganji	Cal Poly Pomona	The Akbar and Fariba Shokouhi Annual Scholarship, The IASF General Fund Scholarship
Venus S. Kamali	Tufts U.	The Samadi Family Annual Scholarship, The Amirnovin Family Annual Scholarship
Kamiar Kordi	Georgetown U.	The M. Ali Aghassi Annual Memorial Scholarship, The Susie and Kazem Niamir Memorial Scholarship
Ava Lewis	Loyola U.	The Shamsdeen Zayanderoudi Annual Memorial Scholarship, The Fred and Gita (Khadiji) Khoroushi Annual Scholarship
Rasa Mahmoudian	DePaul U.	The Soheil Nassiri Annual Memorial Scholarship
Nikou Pishvaresfahani	Ohio State U.	The Maheen Khatamee Memorial Scholarship, The SUSMA (Shiraz University School of Medical Sciences Alumni) Scholarship
Talin K. Sarkissian	Marshall B. Ketchum U.	The Behrooz and Nasrin (Owsia) Akbarnia Annual Scholarship, The Mahmood and Fereshteh Mahdavi Annual Scholarship
Aurash Soroosh	John Hopkins U.	The Habib Tayebi Annual Memorial Scholarship, The Belglys Tayebi Annual Memorial Scholarship
Tina Talesh	Western U. of Health Sci.	The Zarrinkelk & Siavash Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Scholarship, The Michael and Anita (Varzi) Akavan Annual Scholarship
Marriam Zarabi	The Wright Institutue	The Jafar Farnam Annual Scholarship, The Mahan Missaghieh Annual Memorial Scholarship

2017-18 Undergraduate Recipients

Marisa Asadian	U. of Utah	The IASF General Fund Scholarship
Ladan Navari	Ohio State U.	The Shahri and Sarah Estakhry Aghassi Annual Scholarship, The IASF General Fund Scholarship
Farid Rajabi Nia	U. of Virginia	The Jamshidi-Zadeh Annual Scholarship, The IASF General Fund Scholarship
Sepideh J. Bandegan	East Carolina U.	The Lotus Childrens Foundation Annual Scholarship
Ladan Nazary	UC San Diego	The Persian Cultural Center and ISSD Annual Scholarship, The Qualcomm Scholarship
Nika Khoobiyary	UC Irvine	The Atoosa Zahirnia Katouzian Annual Memorial Scholarship, The Jannat Bolandgray Annual Memorial Scholarship
Nastaran Navari	Ohio State U.	The Ali Hashemi Annual Memorial Scholarship, The Manouchehr Kavehzadeh Memorial scholarship
Melissa Oskouie	UCLA	The Rointun Bunshah Annual Memorial Scholarship, The IASF General Fund Scholarship

The scholarships listed by numbers have been established by

1. Family & Friends 2. Ms. Sarah Aghassi, Esq. 3. Mr. Shahyar and Mrs. Laleh Zayanderoudi 4. Roya Parviz & James Henderson 5. SUSMA-Shiraz University School of Medical Sciences Alumni
6. & 7 The Tayebi Family 8. IASF Board of Directors 9. Ms. Natasha Tayebi 10. Mr. Alex Katouzian 11. Dr. Leila Bolandgray & Dr. Raed Al-Nasr 12. Mrs. Farnaz Mehrayin
13. Mrs. Ehteram Haghparsat 14. Mrs. Zohreh Firoozabadi Bunshah

Our sincere thanks to the following (and those who wish to remain anonymous) for making the 2017-18 scholarships possible.

Sarah E. Aghassi; Behrooz & Nasrin (Owsia) Akbarnia; Michael & Anita (Varzi) Akavan; Amirnovin Family (Novin Corp.); Mohammad & Zohreh Ashrafzadeh; Association. of Iranian-American Professionals (AIAP); Kaveh & Soraya Bagheri; Abbas Bolandgray; Leila Bolandgray & Raed Al Nasr; Bridgewest Business Group; Zohreh Firoozabadi Bunshah; Chahriar Esmaili; Arsham Nejila Hatambeiki/Mahjoub; Shahri Estakhry; Jafar Farnam; Maryam & Richard Fuller; Habib & Sharaeh Hariri Foundation; Pari Hashemi; James Henderson; Iranian School of San Diego; Mohammad & Jila S. Jamshidi-Zadeh; Alex Katouzian; Fred & Gita (Khadiji) Khoroushi; Herminio Lievat; Mahmood & Fereshteh Mahdavi; The Mehr Family; Kourash & Farnaz Mehrayin; Khosrow & Shiva Nasr; Nutopia Inc.; Roya Parviz; Persian Cultural Center; Qualcomm; ReproMagic Print; Ali Samadi; Hessam Siavash; Akbar & Fariba Shokouhi; Shiraz University School of Medical Sciences Alumni Association (SUSMA); Minoo & Manutcher Sohaey; Kia Talai; Masood & Surinder Tayebi; Massih & Haleh Tayebi; Mehdi & Fariba (Teymourian) Chitgari; Zandian Family; Mardjan Zarabi; Hooman Zarrinkelk; Zarrinkelk & Kashefpour & Co. CPA; Shahyar & Laleh Zayanderoudi

The “Middle East”: An Invented Term from the 20th Century

Kaveh Farrokh & Sheda Vasseghi

Among one of the 20th century’s most enduring legacies is the invention of the term “*The Middle East*”. A brief examination of the origins of the “*Middle East*” term will reveal it to be a contrived geopolitical expression of Anglo-British origin. Despite this the “*Middle East*” term is often used by scholars, the media and laypersons, as if it were a valid, logical and scientific concept. More specifically the terms “*Middle East*” and “*Middle Eastern*” are often assumed to portray a cultural, anthropological and historical unity like the terms “*Europe*” and “*European*” for example. In practice the “*Middle East*” terminology has served to create profound misconceptions with respect to the greater West Asia region. As a simplistic term, the “*Middle East*” invention has done little to ease growing geopolitical issues at the international level.

This leads to the fundamental question of what are the origins of the term, “*The Middle East*”? The original inventor of the term was Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), an American lecturer who was also an Anglophile. As an advocate of the British Empire, Mahon sought to invent a term that would help rationalize London’s geopolitical interests in the Persian Gulf region in the early 20th century. At this time, it was clearly understood that Persia or Iran was culturally and historically distinct from its Arab neighbors in the Persian Gulf. As per Arab-speakers to the West of Iran in modern-day Iraq and Syria, these were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the First World War in 1918. Mahon first made mention of his invented term in an article entitled “*The Persian Gulf and International Relations*” in the September 1902 issue of the *National Review* based in London. In the article he wrote as follows: “*The Middle East, if I may adopt the term which I have not seen*”. By his own admission Mahon had admitted that the term “*Middle East*” is his own (non-scientific?) abstraction.

By the early 1900s, the Imperial British Navy had been converting the propulsion systems of its surface vessels from coal to oil. With oil rapidly becoming a critical international commodity for modern and industrialized economies it was critical for London to secure its supplies as much as possible. London had already obtained a

lucrative contract with the feckless Qajar government in Tehran, an arrangement known as the D’Arcy Concession of 1901. This agreement, signed by Mozzafareddin Shah Qajar (r. 1896-1907) and the Australian entrepreneur William K. D’Arcy (1849-1917) gave the British exclusive rights over all exploration, extraction and marketing of Iranian oil. The British were rewarded seven years later in 1908 when they discovered very large deposits of oil in Iran’s southwest (Khuzestan province). That same year the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (known today as British Petroleum) took over the enterprise and a year later in 1909 assumed the concession. It is notable that the British admiralty played a critical role in the setting up of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. It was Winston Churchill (1874-1965) the First Lord of the Admiralty (1911-1915 and 1939-1940), who worked to make oil the power source of Britain’s new generation of battleships. Churchill’s reason for this was simple: oil was more combustible than coal and provided much more heat resulting in the faster production of steam. This gave the new British battleships much more effective acceleration without the need to install more boilers (as in the coal-propulsion system). The end result was faster and more efficient battleships giving off less smoke. This in turn gave them a significant advantage over enemy warships in battle. Churchill was aware that Britain had no oil, which was located in other countries, notably in Iran’s southwest. He needed to secure as much of the international oil market for Britain as soon as possible, especially as petroleum was also becoming a major driving force for not only the Royal Navy, but also the booming economies of Western Europe especially Britain’s rival, Imperial Germany, as well as Russia, the United States and the emerging powerhouse of Japan. In addition, the Germans had discovered oil in nearby Ottoman-ruled Iraq, with the Imperial Russians already pumping oil from the oilfields of Baku, one of the southern Caucasian cities that Qajar Iran had surrendered to Russia in the early 19th century. Mahon had neatly encapsulated Imperial England’s geopolitical, military and economic interests in a region overlapping the Persian Gulf region, the Ottoman Empire’s south-

east region and Iran’s southwest. Mahon’s “*Middle East*” was now just as important to the British Empire as was Malta and the straits of Gibraltar.

Mahon’s invention was introduced into the international lexicon by Valentine Ignatius Chirol (1852-1929), the London-based *The Times* newspaper’s “...*special correspondent from Tehran*”. From the outset, it was clear that the “*Middle East*” was an elastic word stretched and fitted as conveniently defined by Anglo-Western perspectives and interests. This is evident in Chirol’s first article on the topic entitled “*The Middle Eastern Question*”. Chirol’s “*Middle East*” in the article is different from Mahon’s original version as it now includes “*Persia, Iraq, the east coast of Arabia, Afghanistan, and Tibet*”. Note Chirol’s arbitrary designation of Tibet as part of the “*Middle East*”; just as he (also arbitrarily) lumped Iran and Afghanistan with predominantly Arabian regions. Mention must also be made of Mark Sykes (1879-1919) the British Member of Parliament who did much to popularize the term “*Middle East*” during his speeches in front of the British Parliament.

The Mahon-Chirol term was a natural fit for Winston Churchill who after the end of the First World War in 1918 became the head of the British Empire’s “*Middle East Department*”. Churchill now had to work again at (re)defining what the “*Middle East*” actually is and which countries were to be bestowed membership into it. The new Churchill-defined “*Middle East*” now included the Suez Canal, the Sinai of Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman) and new countries carved out from the remains of the recently collapsed Ottoman Empire: Iraq, Kuwait, Trans-Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Churchill now removed Tibet and Afghanistan from his new “*Middle East*” equation for one primary reason: neither region has much oil. Thus the “*Middle East*” term only begins to make sense when seen as a colonial construct outlining British (and today Anglo-American-European) economic and geopolitical interests. Oil remains in 2017 as critical a commodity as it was in the early 20th century.

Interestingly it was only in 1942 when non-Arab Iran was officially affirmed as a

member of the “*Middle East*”. There were two primary reasons for this: (1) oil and gas and the role of the British Petroleum Company in Iran and (2) the Anglo-Americans wanting to support the Soviet Union in its war against the Nazi German invasion since June 22, 1941. It is worth noting that Churchill himself was aware of how artificial the “*Middle East*” terminology was. This is indicated by his statement in 1950: “*I had always felt that the name ‘Middle East’ for Egypt, the Levant, Syria, and Turkey was ill-chosen. This was the Near East.*” However “*Near East*” to whom? This was from an Anglo-European perspective with respect to the former Ottoman Empire that had encompassed modern-day Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel until the end of World War One. Put simply, these regions are “*Near*” to the European world, hence the term “*Near East*”. Perspective (geographic and/or geopolitical) has often propelled the formation of terminology. From Arab eyes for example North Africa is referred to as “*Maghreb*” (West) as this region is located to the west of the Arabic-speaking world.

In the meantime, London’s strategists had been cultivating strong bonds with the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, once again due to the region’s strategic position and its potential for lucrative energy deposits. And like the “*Middle East*” case, new terms with no historical basis were invented as a means of promoting geopolitical interests. Sir Charles D. Belgrave (1894-1969), top advisor to Bahrain in the 1930s, soon invented the term “*Arabian Gulf*” possibly as a way of laying the foundation for future Arab-Iranian friction. Belgrave’s proposal for officially changing the name of the Persian Gulf to the “*Arabian Gulf*” was unsuccessful as were the subsequent efforts of British Petroleum employee and MI6 agent Roderic Owen (1921-2011) in the late 1950s. It remains unclear what analysis was used to justify changing the name of a historical region that has existed for thousands of years. Interestingly, Owen had written that the name [Persian Gulf] was “*unfair*” to the Arabs. This is certainly debatable, as Arabs and Persians have lived together in peace for thousands of years after the Battle of Qaddisiya in 637 CE. The Arabs themselves had had no problems in their historical records with the name “*Khaleej al-Faris*” [Persian Gulf] with maps published in Cairo and Saudi Arabia using this

correct term. It was pan-Arab nationalist Jamal (Gamal) Abdel Nasser (1918-1970) of Egypt who adopted the Belgrave-Owen invention. This is all the more ironic as despite his pan-Arabist rhetoric Nasser himself referred to the Persian Gulf by its correct name in official correspondence as indicated in a telegram he had sent on August 30, 1951. Like the British geopolitical specialists before him, Nasser knew the truth of history even as he was falsifying it.

It is a fact that before the invention of the “*Middle East*” in the early 20th century, Iran or Persia was considered culturally, historically and linguistically as wholly distinct from the Arabian realms and neither was she lumped or equated into a broad band of hypothetically monolithic “*Muslims*” (yet another debatable monolithic term lumping together peoples as disparate as Somalians, Bosnians, Indonesians, Albanians, Bangladeshis, Turks, etc.). Despite this documented history, the “*Middle East*” narrative has now become entrenched in the minds of Western politicians, media pundits and academics alike: the term continually appears as if it were a scientific fact. Neither Mahon, Chirol nor Churchill had consulted any historical experts when they invented this terminology. This makes it remarkable as to how and why the “*Middle East*” term has also become widespread (if not entrenched) within the “*Muslim world*”. There is now even in certain venues the assumption that “*Middle Eastern*” denotes a “*race*” implying some sort of common origin and history (i.e. “*Middle Eastern history*”).

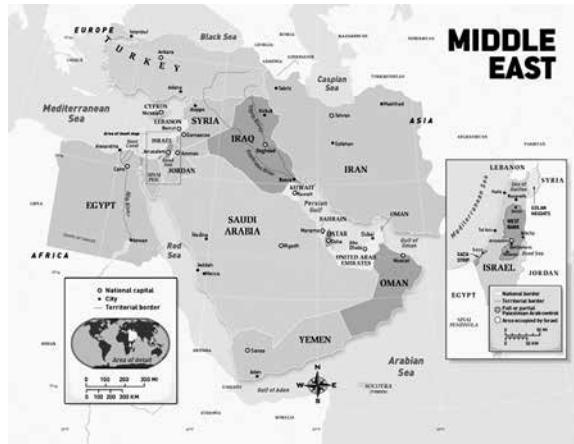
These misinforming terms are perhaps only dwarfed by the even more ambiguous and simplistic terms of “*Muslim race*”, “*Islamic World*” and “*Islamic History*”, etc. Despite the inaccuracy of these terms, there are now universities at the international

level with departments such as “*Middle East History*”, “*Middle Eastern Civilizations*”, “*Middle Eastern Cultures*” and “*Islamic History*”. Iran or Persia and Turkey and all Persianate cultures are subsumed under these headings when in fact what they have in common with the rest of the “*Muslim World*” and “*Middle East*” is the Islamic religion. By this logic are we to then assume that Russia, Guatemala, the Philippines, Austria and Mexico are one monolithic entity, culture or “*race*” just because they share the Christian faith?

The impact of the “*Muslim World*” and “*Middle East*” terminology has been especially significant in academia. A significant number of Western textbooks since the mid-20th century (especially after 1979) for example have been routinely misrepresenting Iranian scholars of the medieval era, especially those who transmitted learning (including Greek works) to the West, as “*Muslims*” or “*Arabs*”. These misrepresentations of Iranians may explain in part why a large proportion of modern-day Westerners often inaccurately attribute the scholastic achievements of Medieval Iranians to the “*Muslims*” whom they often equate with Arabs. The recent PhD Dissertation of Sheda Vasseghi (*The Positioning of Iranians and Iran in the Origins of Western Civilization*, University of New England, 2017, academic advising team: Marilyn Newell, Laura Bertonazzi and Kaveh Farrokh) for example has documented that Western persons (especially North Americans) tend to identify “*Middle Eastern History*” with Arabs and Muslims.

As further averred by Vasseghi: “*Given Mainstream Media’s negative portrayal of Arabs and Islam, textbooks do not sufficiently counter this bias by providing accurate and comprehensive information to avoid stereotyping and misconceptions about the Middle East. In lumping Iran with*

the Middle East as a whole, Iran’s position in the history of Western Civilization is not properly covered given Iran is not an Arab nation and Islam is not native to Iran ... Therefore, lumping Iran in the Middle East... is inaccurate ... This adds to the problem of Iran’s marginalization in that it keeps Iran colonized under a foreign identity (Arab) and a religious belief of non-Iranian origin (Islam) ... Not only do sources omit or ignore Iranians...but also they unjustly and grossly misrepresent Iranian peoples’ historical identity’. It is here where Arab scholars are



to be credited for questioning the “*Middle East*” term. Al-Ibrahim for example has noted on the gross inaccuracy of the term in the way it simplistically lumps non-Arabs into the same category as the Arab world (itself a very diverse and multifaceted cultural entity). More specifically the quote is: “...the term *Middle East*...tears up the Arab homeland as a distinct unit since it has always included non-Arab states”. In this definition by scholars such as Al-Ibrahim, a correct definition of an “Arab Middle East” would exclude the non-Arab states of Iran and Turkey. The cultural and parameters of this zone has been defined by Dessouki and Mattar as encompassing the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, the Arab regions of the Persian Gulf and of course the fertile Crescent.

A select number of Iranian academics have also begun to question the application of the “*Middle East*” and “*Muslim World*” terminologies. Salameh as recently as 2011 (Academic harlot-ism and renaming the ‘Persian Gulf’: The integrity of the George Washington University goes under hammer for \$4.5 m. *The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies*, link: <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/11129>) specifically rejects the term “*Arab World*” (as applied by Westerners) upon the “*Middle East*” as misleading as the region is host to non-Arabs such as Turks and Iranians (especially Kurds outside of Iran in Syria, Iraq and Turkey), all of whom have resisted assimilation into Arabian culture and language. He further avers that academia in general has chosen to ignore the highly diverse and multicultural characteristics of “*The Middle East*” in favor of simplistically labeling all peoples in the region as a single monolithic or Arabs. In contrast, note that Western media outlets, political arenas and academia are consistently quick to point out that while Israel is geographically in “*The Middle East*”, that country is considered as a non-Arab (even Western) country.

The first and foremost impact of the “*Middle East*” concept is in how Iranians continue to be classified by the majority of North Americans as an Arab country. Jack Shaheen for example had discovered as far back as the 1980s that over 80 percent of North Americans believe Iranians to be Arabs and Arabic-speaking. Again, the term “*Muslim*” (pronounced /Moozlem/ in North American outlets) appears to be the catalyst for these misconceptions – the notion that if a region is Islamic in religion (regardless of sect or denomination, etc.) then all persons associated with that region must somehow

be automatically Arabs and/or share the same language, culture and civilization. However not all Arabs are Islamic in faith as there are also Christian Arabs whose roots go back for centuries before the arrival of the Islamic religion. Thus, even the Western conception of Arabs is simplistic and misleading.

Words and terminologies can have a significant impact, especially when these are applied erroneously with respect to the understanding of identity and culture. Put simply, politically invented terminologies such as “*Middle East*” and “*Muslim World*” often represent a colonialist-economic power viewpoint. As noted previously, the intent of such terminology is not to necessarily provide an accurate understanding of culture and peoples, but instead serve to classify geographic regions together on the basis of occidental geopolitical and economic interests.

It is here where Kincheloe (2008, Pedagogy and the knowledge wars of the twenty-first century. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 1(1), Spring, 1-22) has made a critical observation on the impact of this on learning, knowledge and academia in general. He has critically examined the political machinations behind the control of knowledge and information by the transnational and elitist (profit-propelled) organizations. These forces, as averred by Kincheloe, have the power to control knowledge in the education systems and their standardized textbooks, the media and even the sciences. Kinchloe observes how the control of information by making it deliberately misleading, serves the political and economic objectives of the organizations cited.

This may partly explain why Kincheloe’s important articles have gone unnoticed in the wider academic, cultural and media domains at the international level. Nevertheless simply continuing to invent terminologies by pretending that historical (and scientific) contexts do not exist, serves to only widen the chasm of misunderstanding between peoples, cultures and religions at the international level. As human civilization enters a new dawn of technological achievements, the time may also have come to consider moving away from invented terminologies that widen misunderstandings and marginalization. The most effective tool in this endeavor is the process education, one that is independent of the machinations of geopolitical, partisan (i.e. left versus right, etc.) and corporate interests.

A Wonderful Gift Given



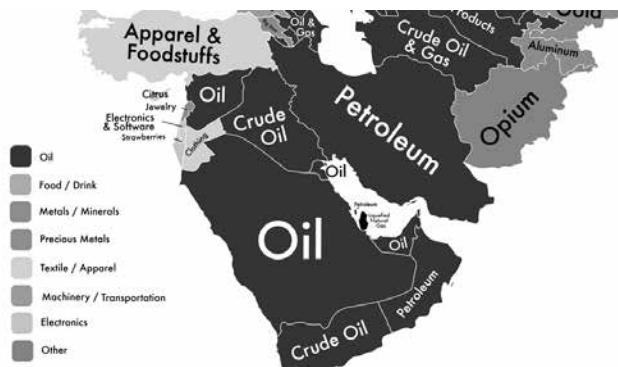
What could be better than providing an educational facility in a place that was absent of a university?

That is just engineer, businessman and philanthropist Alireza Afzalipour and his wife Fakhreh Saba, and opera singer did in Kerman.

Having no children, the couple sought to establish a university.

They planned to build a university and started their research by closely visiting 11 universities in Europe and almost all of universities in Iran. They finally chose Kerman for the location of the university. After preliminary studies, about 50 hectares was allocated to the construction on December 25, 1974 and the work began with his 600,000,000 Rials donation at the time. The university was officially opened on September ۱۶۸۵, ۱۵. Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman founded by him, is now one of the biggest universities in Iran and the region. The Medical School of the Kerman University of Medical Sciences and a 350-bed hospital in Kerman now bear his name.

Mr. Alireza Afzalipour was born on March 26, 1909 and passed on April 7, 1993. His wife Fakhreh Saba was born in 1920 and passed in 2007. She was the first female opera singer in Iran. She was the daughter of a cousin of the Iranian musician Abolhasan Saba. She started her primary and musical education in Iran and continued her higher education in France. She went to France in April 1947 and was accepted as one of the 20 students at the Conservatoire de Paris. Fakhreh Saba had a lot of notable students including Mansoureh Ghasri, Mohhammad Nouri and many others.



UNITED STATES... ISRAEL... IRAN

Hooshang Guilak

The Middle East? Where, thus far, the United States failed to show any leadership. Can American government prevent the brewing disaster in the region? U.S. administrations, have constantly exhibited total lack of basic knowledge for the area. They are unaware of the history of the people, erroneously leaning more on the nation's military power than on the statesmanship of her leaders, and worse of all relying on the information furnished by the so-called friends and confidants, who are neither.

The horrid incident of September eleventh, should not be judged only by its heinous consequences in the mainland USA, but also by the aftermath of what it brought to the nation. Americans, blindly, and without appropriate evaluation of what had happened embarked in a war, "The Iraq War" with a devastating self-inflected disaster. A war which, with the existing criteria should have never been started. The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hossein, a malignant individual as he was, had no hand in the terroristic incursion of the New York City. Then why the attack?

Who, if an individual; or which if a government, were guilty of giving wrong information to the Americans, if so why? What was their interest in the matter. Who, in the US government, were in favor of such policy and what was their motives or their interests in that war. It is clear that wrong information was given to the Media, and to the Congress. Why? Why our Media failed to research the sources of that factitious information? Why our Senators and members of our Congress did not ask for further documentation?

This war was not the only mishap committed by the United States. The American government handled every problem in the Middle East and North Africa with utmost maladroitness; the mess in Syria, the disaster in Libya, and the problems in Egypt, and the list can go on.

At the present; the existing animosities between the governments of Israel and Iran, are not something to be ignored. We are cognizant of the rhetoric of the Mullahs in Tehran: "We have to wipe Israel off the map." We are conscious of the Israelis wanting an attack on Iran. Now, and in this matter, where the U.S. is heading?

For several decades, the present Israel's prime minister, Mr. Netanyahu, has been deeply engaged in pushing United States to a war with Iran. Thus far his attempts have been unsuccessful. However, now, we are dealing with three leaders with basically the same mentality, even though they are superficially quite different: a politician, a businessman and a man of God! They represent three different religious sects: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. With all the apparent differences, they are so much alike; demagogues, fanatics, agitators and disingenuous.

To this three, we must add the ruler of the Saudi Arabia's, King Salman bin Abdolaziz Al Saud, who reminds me of D'Artagnan's

servant, Planchet in Alexander Dumas' "Les Trois Mousquetaires", trying to act like a musketeer.

The animosities between Iran and Saudi Arabia, caused Netanyahu to befriend King Salman against Iran, apparently a necessity of the times. This closeness began some time ago and is in full bloom now.

The alliance of President Trump with the Saudis and Netanyahu, creates a dangerous triangle. If unchecked, we may be witnessing the start of another war in the Middle East and specifically in the Persian Gulf, something that Netanyahu has been advocating for decades. The recent sale of armament to the Saudis by Trump may be the prelude for a war, with the Saudis, being the assigned perpetrator.

Based on what we know of Saudis, it will take very little to entice them for an attack on Iran. They see Iran as the greatest danger to their ruling in the area. With such war, Netanyahu gets his wishes, disintegration of Iran and Mr. Trump gets to sell more arms to the Arabs. These will be a prelude in sinking the world into another disaster.

Trump is already questioning Iran's conformity with the nuclear deal. Like most of his expressed opinions, he has no proof to back his claims. Why? Is he repeating the Master's voice? Where does the U.S. government gets its information? Who are the people that are feeding American governing body with erroneous information? Why is Israel so anxious for the United States to attack Iran? What is the role of Israel, more appropriately, Israeli hardliners in the US government? These questions and a lot more.

Before embarking on discussion of the subject, let me put forth a few points:

1. We should consider that the point of discussion is not the Jewish people, nor the Jewish faith. The matter of consideration and under analysis is an entity, a state or country called "Israel" and its government. It is most important to adhere to this principal. In many occasions, the Israeli hardliners try to connect these two together. Therefore, implying any criticism of the state of Israel, is considered as castigation of the Jewish people and Judaism.
2. The Jewish people, throughout the history, have shown their magnificent intelligence, their tolerance, their remarkable resilience and their achievements in every aspect of life: literatures, music, science, etc. They have lived well with most nations, and complied with the laws of their countries, even when they were mistreated by many. I have seen them in Iran and easily can vouch for their great dedication and cooperation with the government and the people of the country.
3. The existence of Israel should be accepted and respected. They

must be allowed to live as a free nation in peace and harmony with all others. What they have done in the short time of the country's existence, and the progress achieved is nothing short of a miracle. I have witnessed their progresses personally.

4. However, all said, Israeli hardliners should stop their animosity toward the Palestinians and try not to follow the line of the Nazi Germany. I harbor no preferential treatment for the Palestinian, except for the fact that Israeli hardliner's action is causing severe turmoil in the Middle East, leading to disaster in the area and hurting Israelis and their causes.

Their hardliner's behavior reminds me of Saadi's story in his book of *Boustan*: A man was sitting on the tip of a branch, cutting it off at its junction to the trunk. Just then, the proprietor saw him and thought aloud: "This man is committing a terrible act, not to anyone but to himself. This is exactly what the Israeli hardliners are doing: Sitting on the tip of the branch and cutting it off at its connection."

After WWII, when the atrocities of the Nazi Germany were discovered, the world was in shock by what they had done to the so-called non-Aryan people, and specifically to those of the Jewish faith. The Jews of the world became recipient of sympathy and much love from everywhere and everyone. After conquering Palestine by Israelites, the bickering animosities existing between Arabs and the Jews surfaced and blossomed into an open clash, and leading to all-out war.

The people of the newly created Jewish State, had to work hard to keep their existence despite the surmounting enmities with the surrounding Moslem countries. It was not easy. They worked hard and with diligence, to maintain and safeguard their new home state.

In Europe and the United States, they embarked with extensive propaganda, using everything in their arsenal to discourage or even to shut any criticism coming on to their direction. In many instances overdoing, and overstepping the appropriate measures. They used terms like: Jew hater, Jew killer, anti-Semitism, etc. This supposedly defensive mechanism was misused and abused so often and to the point that it lost its meanings and values.

In the United States, they created organizations that have been interfering with the affairs of state both internally and specifically in the international arena and pointedly in the Middle East. The conflict worsened as the Israel government was overtaken by the hardliners. With the unconditional support of the United States government, they became bolder in their mistreatment of Palestinians.

The repercussion to this action came from the Europeans, who were watching closely the Israeli-Palestinian relation. Palestinians became hostage to the Israeli hardliners, to the point that ex-president of the USA, Mr. Carter, compared Israeli Government action to that of the apartheid regime of South Africa. Under numerous, and non-meritorious excuses, Palestinians' properties were and are being confiscated one by one and used to house Israelis.

The hardliners have been using a method known in the medical field as the "Besredka method; (Alexander Besredka)." It consists of desensitization of a markedly sensitive disorder by using miniscule and repeated doses of the antigen. So, I feel that the hardliners have been confiscating one house at a time to desensitize the world toward their action of destroying the lives of the Palestinians.

This problem is quite clear to Europeans, but unfortunately, the Americans, including the U.S. Government, have shown total inadequacy in comprehending the gravity of this action. Failure of the Israeli hardliners to abide by any rules or regulations has

played a significant role in turning Europe against Israel. The consequences of such behavior have been the revival of anti-Semitism in Europe, as we are witnessing.

The hardliner's techniques in the United States is also backfiring. Many are not buying their rhetoric. I cannot forget what they have done to the White House Correspondent, Helen Thomas, when she thought aloud her opinion about Israel. In response to the question posed by Rabbi David Nesenoff asking her what Israel must do. Her response was, "Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine." What a disaster was created! Insensitive and inappropriate that her comment was, but it was her opinion and she is entitling to that.

Under the auspices of the Hardliners, she was crucified by all officials and supposedly independent organizations: The White House Correspondent Associate called her remarks "Indefensible"; Robert Gibbs, White House Spokesman said her comments were, Offensive and Reprehensible. In January 2011, the Society of Professional Journalists voted to retire Helen Thomas Award of Lifetime Achievement. The Anti-Defamation League demanded that all honors that she had received should be rescinded by stating, "Thomas had clearly, unequivocally revealed herself as vulgar and anti-Semite."

The Israeli hardliners and their agents wanted to put the fear of life in anybody ever trying to say or act on a measure against their wishes. I have no doubt that the repercussion of all those statements expressed by different organizations supported by the Israelis', did not go un-noticed by the Americans. In other words, the hardliner's' action made many of these people aware of the underlying problems. In a word, no Americans want agents of a foreign government to interfere with their way of life, irrespective of what or who they represent.

The concept of utilizing the word "Judeo-Christianity", has been another of their tactics. The phrase that was first used by George Orwell in 1939 to describe the "Judeo-Christian scheme of morals", became a God given gift for bringing the Christian Americans under the Israeli hardliners grip. Its popularization in the second half of the twentieth century by Israeli Organizations in the U.S. was to solidify the thinking of the Christian hardliners to the Israeli hardliners for the ultimate and unquestionable support for Israel.

Israeli hardliners wanted to cultivate and strengthen the religious unity of the Americans and Israelis. I have heard many times these words from my deeply religious Christian friends, while showing their support for Israel. The idea gained momentum after attacks of Moslems Jihadists in Europe and the United States.

The influence of Israeli hardliners on the officials of the United States has increased exponentially since the creation of Israel. Their domination over multiple American administrations has been to the point that severely threatens the welfare of the United States. The American policies have been secondary to that of Israel. The amount of money spent by the Israelis and their supporters on the U.S. election is colossal.

Just to show their influence on the U.S. political hierarchy, it suffices to recite the invitation of Netanyahu by John Boehner, Speaker of the House, to address the joint session of the congress, against the approval of the U.S. administration. He became so bold as to criticize our president in his address to Congress. The election of several our congressman, congresswomen and senators supporting Israel vs those who were independent, is well known and proven.

As I have so vividly presented the fact that the U.S. Government was so much dependent on the British policies during the

twentieth century (Book: *Fire Beneath the Ashes*), now they are under the spell of the Israeli hardliners. This group has contributed more than any of our enemies toward our mishaps around the world.

Decades ago, during the early stage of the cold war, a newspaper in Tehran, describing the Soviet's appetite for incorporating parts of other nation's lands to their own, wrote: "The Russians want that around Russia; and around and around Russia; and around, and around, and around Russia there should be only governments friendly to the Soviets."

This attitude fits so beautifully the behavior of today's Israel. They want that: around Israel; and around and around Israel; and around, and around, and around Israel there be no government ever capable of causing them harm. Their involvement and actions to bring down and destroy Iraq, Libya, Syria, and their present goal a war with Iran, are examples of this belief.

Iran, has been on the top of their list for a long while, even during the Shah's regime that was so friendly toward them. They did their best to prevent United States from selling sophisticated military equipment to Iran, such as AWACS Planes. During such time, the Israel government had representation in Iran (the only Moslem nation partially recognizing Israel) and their agricultural experts were working in that country as consultants.

Mr. Netanyahu has no loyalty toward America or Americans. He and the hardliners want for the U.S. army to be at their command and ready to eliminate, on demand, any of their perceived enemies. All evidence points to the fact that they had a hand in convincing Bush the second to attack Iraq and as a result the United States and the free world, suffered an irreparable loss. The Israeli hardliners disliked Saddam Hossein and Moammar Khadafy. For obvious reason and probably not unjustifiably, they hate the present Iranian regime.

They have tried and still are trying hard, especially under President Trump, to influence the U.S. for an attack on Iran. It is unbelievable of how many times Netanyahu and other Israeli hardliners have predicted, from the late 1980's, that Iran is going to have nuclear arsenal in the "next two to five years."

A few years ago, Mr. Freilich, of Netanyahu's circle, while at Harvard, gave a speech at the invitation of World Affair Consul in Houston, about U.S. Iran and Israel. It was a well-attended luncheon meeting. Three questions were asked of the attendants on pre-and post-lecture: Shall the US attack Iran; do you support an attack by Israel on Iran; and shall US defend Israel if attacked by Iran. The pre-and post-lecture's answers were almost identical.

The pre-lecture questionnaire for the first and second questions were approximately 75% negative and 25% positive. For the third portion to majority of about 75% felt that The United States should help Israel, if it is attacked by Iran. It was amazing that Mr. Freilich's lecture in favor of action against Iran, did not change any opinions.

During the book signing ceremony, he was asked, "Why Israel, so anxious to attack Iran, does not do it itself?"

"The United States is more equipped for that undertakings." Was his answer.

Americans have suffered so much in the Middle East. Most of them do not want to repeat and or renew the Iraq's experience. If we carefully examine what these hardliners have done, it becomes clear that they, in part, were and are responsible for the creations of the terrorist groups, such as ISIS.

During Mr. Obama's presidency, he stood relatively firm, toward the unreasonable demands of Netanyahu. Now, Mr. Trump,

with his allegiance toward the hardliners and against his own Secretary of State's report, that Iranians are satisfying their responsibility to the nuclear agreement, stated that, "Iranians are not complying, in spirit (whatever it means) with the agreement." A line that his Ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Nicky Haley has recently been murmuring.

The question that comes up: "Is the United States government with the instigation of the Israeli hardliners preparing Saudi Arabia for an attack on Iran, as Presidents Carter and Reagan did, with Saddam Hossein and his attack on Iran, in early 1980's?"

REVIEWS

ITALIAN SCHOLARS PUBLISH BOOK ON IRANIAN ARCHITECTURE



Tehran Times: Three Italian scholars have published their latest research on Iranian architecture in a book titled “Through Iran: Cities, Architecture, Landscapes” (*Attraverso l'Iran. Città, architettura, paesaggi*).

Manfredi Edizioni in the Italian city Imola is the publisher of the book, which carries materials that Alessandra De Cesaris, Giorgio Di Giorgio and Laura Valeria Ferretti gathered about Iranian architecture during several trips to the country since 2010.

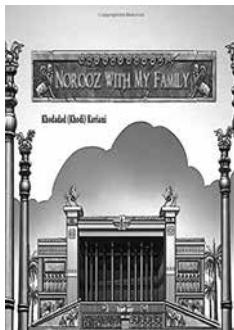
The book also provides a comparison of architecture in Iran’s warm and cold regions.

The book also contains numerous photographs, sketches and drawings by the authors of Iran’s various localities and landscapes.

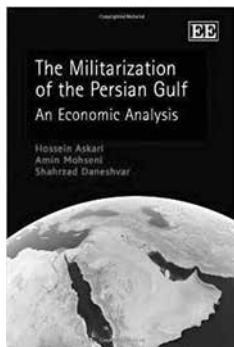
NOROOZ WITH MY FAMILY
Dr. Khodadad (Khodi) Kaviani

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (February 16, 2017)

A sister and her brother share with classmates their Norooz (New Year) experiences. They live in Yazd, Iran, the city of beautiful wind catchers. They talk about spring cleaning, carpet washing, *chaarshanbeh soori*, preparing the Haft-Seen, plus other activities during this festive time of year. They reveal why people say, “Norooz Peerooz! [Wishing you a victorious Norooz!], and King Jamsheed’s association with Norooz, the start of spring! They also learn about the Zoroastrian roots of Haft-Seen. This illustrated book is written in poetry.

THE MILITARIZATION OF THE PERSIAN GULF:
AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Hossein Askari, Amin Mohseni, Shahrzad Daneshvar



The Persian Gulf is arguably the most militarized region in the world. The authors of this insightful book examine military expenditures, arms imports and military deployment to analyze how and why this came to be. Muslim teachings have much to say about peace, war and economics, and this book explores the ways in which Islamic thought affects military and economic developments.

The authors find that heavy militarization is the result of a combination of factors, including oil wealth disparities among the countries in the region, high oil revenues, corruption and foreign interference. The authors detail and discuss these factors, and follow this analysis with an assessment of the effects of high military expenditures

- wars, conflicts, regional instability - and their heavy economic toll in retarding development and growth. The book concludes by suggesting ways that military expenditures may be reduced to benefit regional peace, stability and economic prosperity.

Scholars and students in economics, political science and international affairs as well as anyone interested in the Middle East will find this book timely and illuminating.

Iranian Wrestlers Rush
to Help Quake-Stricken People

Members of the Iran men’s national freestyle and Greco-Roman teams have rushed to aid the victims of the recent earthquake in Kermanshah province in the western part of the country, which has left at least 500 people dead, thousands of others injured and dozens of villages destroyed. More than 12,000 homes have also been completely destroyed in the incident.



Queen of Iran's Skies' Tells Story of Her Paragliding Career

Fatemeh Eftekhari, who has become known as the "Queen of Iran's Skies", is the first Iranian female pilot taking part in international competitions. She has great stories to tell about her success.

Eftekhari is the only woman from Iran who participates in international competitions and gets qualified for the World Cup.

Her last success was achieved in Kazakhstan, where she won the bronze medal in the international paragliding competitions. This tournament was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from August 22 to 29.

Here are excerpts from the *Jame Jam* newspaper's interview with the "Queen of Iranian Skies":

In recent years, it has been quite normal to give titles to female athletes. As in men's sports, there is now a huge number of titles such as Rex, General, Hercules, Magician, etc., in women's sports, and we know athletes with their titles.

In football, Elham Farahmand is titled 'David Beckham' and in billiard Akram Amini is known as the 'Genius'. Now Fatemeh Eftekhari is titled as the 'Queen of the Skies'.

WOMEN'S FLIGHT SOCIETY

We have seen so many pictures of Fatemeh in the skies that we thought she was the only active paragliding pilot in Iran, but we were wrong. "In the last two or three years, I was the only woman pilot who actively participated in international competi-



tions and took them seriously, but there are a lot of female pilots flying in Iran, and day by day we see more and more of them," she said. "Five years ago, in consultation with several other active women in the paragliding, we formed a cyber group and discussed the scientific issues of flying.

This group was called the Women's Flight Society. By forming such virtual groups, we shared the photos and videos of women's flights and got to know each other. Those who were more experienced were answering questions by novices.

This was the result of our efforts within the past four years. Now more women are taking part in the competitions, and this September we have two competitions in Iran, which I hope will be held with the presence of women," Eftekhari said.

NUMEROUS MEDALS FOR IRANIAN FLYING WOMAN

Eftekhari is undoubtedly one of the best woman paragliding pilots in the world. She wins medals after medals and is considered to be an athlete who never finishes a competition empty-handed. "Every year, I take part in three international competitions. For many years, I have won gold, silver and bronze medals. I have not returned from a competition without a medal. The last one I participated in was Kazakhstan. There were 115 pilots from 22 countries, of which 25 were female ones. The best pilots in the world were present at the competition. I won the bronze medal in the sports class, which is shared by men and women. In the team competitions, 'Zagros Cloud' from Iran came in first place with a significant difference from the second. A Korean participant won the title in the women's section, and the second place went to a Russian pilot while I won the bronze medal. I had also participated in Turkey's Kayseri competitions a few days before the event in Kazakhstan. In Turkey, Iran's Mohammad Semnani won the gold medal in men's class and I won the gold medal in women's class. There, the competitions were very tough and serious," Eftekhari added.

CALM OF THE PILOT LADY

At the end of our interview with Fatemeh Eftekhari, she said, "I have no particular purpose for flying. For many years, I have been among the first 10 paragliding pilots in Iran. My records are no longer exciting for me. Now my goal is to bring more ladies to the women's sports community. I am very happy now as my efforts in this field have been fruitful. It gives me calm of mind."

Is Iran the World's Greatest Untapped Skiing Destination?

Lucy Aspden (19 October 2017)



For most skiers and snowboarders the idea of an off-piste paradise normally conjures up thoughts of Alaska's majestic peaks, Verbier's world-famous freeride terrain or Japan's legendary powder fields.

Many, forgivably, would not consider looking to the mountains of Iran.

But hoping to lift the curtain on Iran's off-piste terrain is Snoworks, a UK-based provider of ski courses around the world. The company has announced a new trip to Iran's top resorts for British skiers next March, run in conjunction with tour operator Mountain Heaven.

Mountain Heaven MD Nick Williams visited the country in March 2016 and was impressed enough by the terrain, food, friendly people and atmospheric mountain cafés to launch holidays. The Snoworks trip combines four of Iran's main ski resorts: Dizin, Shemshak, Darbandsar and Tochal.

All the resorts have untapped off-piste areas that are accessed by lift, but most skiers and snowboarders have probably never heard of them. Mountain Heaven also offers a holiday to Dizin, Shemshak and Darbandsar which, while not recommended for beginners, is more piste based.

The Alborz mountains, in northern Iran, stretch from the border with Azerbaijan and along the western and southern coast of the Caspian Sea. These holidays visit resorts in the centre of the mountain range, north of the Iranian capital of Tehran.

Iran's ski areas reach altitudes that overshadow those of even the highest resorts in the Alps. Val Thorens, Europe's loftiest resort, sits at 2,300m with slopes ascending to just over 3,000m, and the highest mountain in the Alps, Mont Blanc, rockets to 4,810m. In comparison, Mount

Damavand in Iran reaches 5,610m – just 285m short of Mount Kilimanjaro – and the resorts in the area all sit comfortably over 2,000m, with the ski areas reaching 3,600m and above.

The predominantly dry air that hits the Alborz mountains from the desert means that the slopes and backcountry terrain are covered in light dry powder, the perfect recipe for off-piste skiing.

"Skiing in Iran offers a true adventure, combining amazing culture and unforgettable skiing experiences," said Phil Smith, director of Snoworks.

"We'll be flying into Tehran with a city stopover before heading high up into the Alborz Mountain Range north of Tehran. Skiing in Iran is little known outside of the country, but there's an immense mountain range, largely untapped."

Designed to entice confident off-piste skiers to try a lesser-known destination, the Snoworks trip isn't for the faint-hearted. It involves ski touring in the Iranian backcountry and off-piste riding in all types of terrain. Snoworks advises that those taking part in the adventure must reach its level five standard, which requires the participants to be confident in tackling black runs in any conditions, as well as moguls, steep slopes and untracked off piste.

With 12 places available on the trip, Snoworks is offering only a select few snow-sports fans the chance to tap into Iran's off-piste secrets. For those who prefer to explore the pistes, Mountain Heaven's eight-day trip is for up to 20 people.

The skiing altitude in Iran may beat its European cousins, but the infrastructure is far less developed – a trait that makes it attractive to the handful of adventurous skiers and snowboarders who have visited.

A two-hour drive north from Tehran, Dizin is the country's biggest resort, sitting at 2,650m. Its slopes reach 3,600m and are supplied by three gondolas and 12 chairs. Shemshak (2,550m), the second-largest resort, has two chairlifts; Darbandsar (2,550m) has just one; and Tochal (1,950m), the smallest of the resorts, has two slow-moving gondolas.

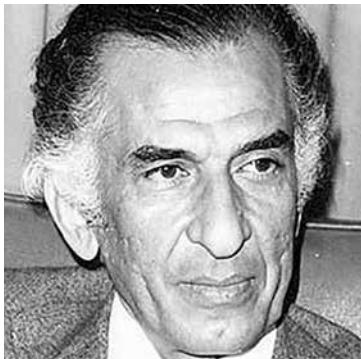
While ski holidays from the UK to Iran are a new innovation, this is not the first time skiing in the country has hit the headlines. The opening of the Barin Hotel in Shemshak took the world by storm in 2016, when it was labelled one of the coolest ski hotels ever built.

Extreme skiing isn't a new phenomenon in the country, either. In 2016, professional skier Fabian Lentsch and his friends took on the dirt spines of Qeshm Island in Iran, making fresh tracks in the middle of the desert.

Snoworks offers a number of different courses, ranging from off-piste coaching to ski instructor qualifications. Courses take place throughout the year in destinations around the world, including France, Austria, Chile, Japan, Norway and Kyrgyzstan.

Snoworks is running its trip from March 10 – 18 2018, costing £2,545 per person, based on two sharing a room. The price includes transfers, bed & breakfast accommodation provided by Ski Adventure Iran in partnership with Mountain Heaven, evening meals in ski resorts, visa approval service, guiding instruction from Snoworks and entrance fees for any sightseeing in Tehran. The piste-based Mountain Heaven trip is March 3 – 12 2018 and costs £1,300 per person based on two sharing. Price includes all hotels and breakfasts, half-board accommodation in ski resorts, sightseeing and transfers.

A BLOODY SUNDAY



VIENNA, AUSTRIA

SUNDAY DECEMBER 21, 1975

the third and last part

JAMSHID AMOUZGAR

The late Prime Minister of Iran from 7 August 1977 to 27 August 1978
and the Minister of Interior in 1974-1977

“I did my best for the release of everyone here”, he told Yamani and me. To our dismay he followed his statement with “But to no avail.” However, in an off-hand way he told us that he had been successful in getting Carlos’s promise that no harm would befall us. He then bade us farewell and left the plane.

In the meantime, the wounded man was taken to a hospital in the city, and all of the members of five delegations - namely, those of Algeria, Niger, Gabon, Venezuela and Ecuador – were released. Valentine Hernandez was overcome with emotion at his parting. He offered to take a message to my wife. But what messages could I give, except to say that I was still alive? I thanked him and wished him well. I was indeed happy that he was free.

Our stop in Algiers lasted a bit more than two hours. We were soon ready for another take-off only this time with less pay-load. Mr. Abdossalam Belaid, the then Minister of Energy and Industry of Algeria volunteered to accompany us to the next port of call which was Tripoli, Lybia. It was indeed a noble gesture on his part.

* * *

Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, the then-Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia, is a kind, compassionate, courageous, intelligent, thoughtful man, and a most talented and conscientious person endowed with a strong sense of duty and loyalty to friends. As a brilliant debater with a sharp mind he was the star of OPEC since its formation. He always attracted more journalists, reporters, and photographers than the rest of the OPEC ministers combined. Though not related to the Saudi royal family, he always bore an aristocratic demeanor. He had a long conversation with Carlos in Vienna, during the course of which Carlos had told him that after leaving Algiers and Tripoli we would be taken to Baghdad where all the remaining hostages, except him and me, would be released. We two were to be taken to South Yemen, where we would be handed over to the authorities for whatever justice they might see fit to administer. And if for any reason, the plan failed, he was sorry he had to kill him and me although he had no personal grudge against him. Yamani had kept all this conversation to himself not to scare me. I was only told by him when we were safely seated in Mr. Bouteflicka’s car at the end of the harrowing ordeal. However, considering the fact that the Iranian armed forces had taken part in the war against the South Yemen-backed rebels in Zhofar, and that the long-standing feud between the Saudis and South Yemen had hardly abated, I reflected grimly that no crystal ball was needed to foresee the kind of justice that would be meted to us. No! The future most certainly did not bode well for us.

I was beginning to suffer a bout of self-pity. Why should this happen to me? Was this the reward for so many years of honest dedicated service to my country? Was this the meaning of justice?

These and other questions kept humming in my mind. And then I thought of the countless number of honest and dedicated people, those unsung heroes, who, in the prime of life had lost their lives in the service of their country, and who had not received a fraction of the benefits I was enjoying. Suddenly I felt ashamed for having succumbed to feelings of self-pity. I recalled the mystic words of Jalaluddin Rumi, the thirteenth-century Persian philosopher/poet, the beautiful translation of which by Edward G. Brown I give below -

I died from mineral and plant became;
Died from the plant and took a sentient frame;
Died from the beast, and donned a human dress;
When by my dying did I e'er grow less?

But what about the agony that my wife and family will have to go through, I thought.

“When we get to Baghdad I shall ask for the release of everyone”, the words of sympathy from the Iraqi Minister of Oil interrupted my gloomy thoughts. Was the man telepathic?

* * *

We reached Tripoli after dusk. The long stretch of bright neon lights marked the otherwise unnoticeable shoreline. The plane landed and was led to a remote part of the airport. But no one was there to meet us, and in spite of Carlos’s repeated attempts to establish contact through the control tower nobody came toward us! Carlos was now visibly impatient, and began to nervously pace up and down the aisle, intermittently looking at his watch. He was beginning to lose control, which made us all ever more tense. We all tried to avoid his menacing gaze.

The silence was almost palpable. Long agonizing minutes later, it was broken by the roar of a

motor brigade approaching our plane. Suddenly all was excitement and relief at the sight of Mr. Jallud, the Libyan Prime Minister. He warmly embraced and shook hands with Carlos and, totally ignoring us, the two of them proceeded toward the cockpit and sat down facing each other. There was a long *tete-atete*, from which we could not glean anything, even though we were able to see their gesticulations and lip moments- much like watching a silent movie. In the end Mr. Jallud got up, walked past us, and casting an icy glance at me, without a word left the plane. The scene was most bizarre, rather like an Alfred Hitchcock movie.

Upon the departure of Mr. Jallud Carlos burst into a furious tirade. “These people are not revolutionaries”, he exclaimed. “They cannot handle even a simple job. They are good only for the mosque”.

According to Carlos he had been promised a four-engine jet plane on arrival at Tripoli to fly us non-stop to Baghdad. To his

dismay, after what he considered a humiliating delay, he was now told that Libya did not have an available plane of the required type, and that all efforts to charter one had been unsuccessful. No wonder then that he had burst into an outrage at the complete upsetting of his plans.

"Perhaps with a stop in Damascus the Caravelle could make it to Baghdad", I volunteered, in an effort to ease the tension, without realizing the problems that that would raise for Yamani and myself.

"Fly to Damascus!", exclaimed Carlos in a loud voice. "Over my dead body!"

It was then that I realized the depth of resentment and rivalry that existed between the various factions struggling for the Palestinian cause.

In Tripoli Carlos released the members of four more delegations: the Libyans (understandably), the Indonesians, the Iraqis, and the Kuwaitis. Before taking off from Tripoli, however, Carlos approached Yamani and me. "One member of each of your two delegations can get off here", he said.

There were four of us in the Iranian delegation. I told my three colleagues to decide amongst themselves as to which one should be freed. At first none of them was willing to go - perhaps out of loyalty to me, or fear from the uncertainty in Libya.

"Look", I counseled. "This is an opportunity for one of you to go free in the company of the other delegation members. Why hesitate?"

After more consultation, the youngest member of the delegate was ready to go. From the Saudi delegation too, the choice fell on a young economist, huge and redoubtable, though with a pleasant countenance. "When I first saw him in the conference room", Carlos told of him, "I said to myself he could crush me with the sheer weight of his body."

But the quiet, reflective and loyal young man would not leave without his Minister. The scene was a most touching one, and showed the depth of loyalty and faithfulness of the young man toward his superior. He was still dragging his feet.

"Hurry up, the car cannot wait all night", Carlos admonished.

With tears welling in his eyes the gentle giant hugged Sheikh Yamani and in a voice shaking with emotion pleaded with Carlos, "Please do not harm my Minister".

By now we were in the small hours of morning. The plane cleared the runway and once again we were air-borne. The patience, the stamina, and the selflessness of the two crew members was beyond anyone's expectation. They were truly admirable.

As the plane reached its cruising altitude I looked out through the tiny window and saw that it was a clear night and that the bright sky was studded with a myriad shining stars. An enchanting moon was lighting the night sky. It was reminiscent of many a similar night that I had spent in my youth in the seemingly boundless deserts of the Iranian plateau on trips undertaken under the aegis of the US "Point Four Program", in the search for ground water for the small villages scattered throughout Iran.

Suddenly the Big Dipper caught my attention. Since we had not been told of our next destination I could now at least figure out, with some relief, that we were heading westward.

* * *

Little by little physical fatigue, as well as mental stress, was taking its toll. I was dozing off involuntarily - but not for long. It seemed we were destined not to have a moment without excitement. Another unexpected event now was to shake us awake.

As the plane approached the Tunisian capital, Carlos suddenly decided to try his luck in the land of Carthage. He ordered the pilot

to make a landing in Tunis. The control tower apparently refused permission for landing. Carlos, now quite upset by the set-back in Libya, was livid with rage. "Land anyway!", he barked.

The plane nosed down toward the runway. But all of a sudden, the runway lights were turned off. Concerned with the safety of the plane and its passengers and very likely not familiar enough with the site, the pilot warned that it would be too risky to try landing. The plane was now rapidly losing altitude and everybody was nervously watching Carlos, wide-eyed and waiting.

"Pull up", he hesitantly decided.

It was now clear that exhaustion, and the strains of more than forty-five hours of sleepless tension were telling on our captors as well. The strain must have been extreme, for they had to be constantly on the alert. The female member of the group, apparently suffering from some stomach upset, began vomiting. Carlos provided her with some medicine and helped her lie down. The young nervous debutant was slumped on a seat, half asleep. Carlos was losing the ever-readiness and strength of his team. And that made him even more nervous. There was something strange, and distinctly at variance, with his earlier cool and collected behavior. He would stare menacingly at anyone who dared look him in the eye. The whole atmosphere seemed suffused with the silence of deep anxiety and fear.

* * *

Now dawn was breaking in the east with a pale glow I leaned back in my seat and watched the sky gradually lighting up as the sun slowly kept rising behind us. Below, once again the white houses of Algiers in the distance began to loom perceptibly larger in my tiny window. The plane landed and taxied to a stop in a remote corner.

"We are going to make a decision about you in a "democratic" manner, Carlos abruptly informed Yamani and me. And without further delay he entered into a huddled conversation with the members of his gang. Little did I understand at the time as to what he meant by this remark. But the look of concern in Yamani (who seemed more aware of what was intended) was enough to warn me that something momentous was about to happen.

After several agonizing minutes the group concluded its "democratic" caucus. Carlos got up, walked by us, and left the plane. Meanwhile the crew and the remaining delegations also left the plane, leaving only Yamani, myself, and the remaining members of our two delegations on hoard under siege.

How long the harrowing siege, enforced by the pointed barrels of machine guns, lasted I do not remember. I only recall that after what seemed like hours Carlos showed up, tense and angry with the fire of hell in his eyes. He walked down the aisle followed by his accomplices. There ensued what appeared to be a heated discussion among them. Time appeared to flow past heavily, as in a slow motion film. Finally came the unexpected climax. The whole gang, led by Carlos, approached us.

"This time", Carlos began addressing Yamani and me in a tense commanding tone indicative of a deep accumulation of fury inside, "I let you go free. But I warn you I will get at you again, no matter where you convene your conference. There is no escape from us." I thought somehow that his threats smacked of desperation. Nonetheless we all stood silent and immobile while he continued with his fiery harangue for several more minutes. He threatened that his trained associates would get us in our own countries. Then, as if his allotted time was up, he suddenly left the plane, followed by his entourage.

Strange as it may seem, for a while we were left in limbo. We did not know exactly what to make of this last unexpected act of

his. Someone suggested we would be better off staying on board until some official from Algeria showed up. "Why?" I asked.

"One never knows. Carlos could be waiting for you outside the plane. By leaving the plane you run the risk of getting shot. Later he could claim he was jumped upon, and that he acted in self defense", our colleague explained. This didn't make any sense, I thought. He could have shot us on board under the same pretense.

As a mater of fact Sheikh Yamani later told me that when Carlos called his gang together for his "democratic" caucus he wanted to inform them of his decision to murder Yamani and me, after releasing everyone else. Another colleague argued that as a last-ditch attempt they might have planted a time bomb on board. He pointed to the abrupt departure of Carlos and his gang from the plane as evidence.

In the end, we decided to leave the plane. Cautiously, and one by one, we labored descending the steep metal steps. What a heavenly sight! Warm rays of golden sunshine were beaming down from a cloudless blue sky. The crisp fresh December air luxuriously filled our lungs. No trace of Carlos or his pointed sub-machine guns. We looked about us, but so elated had we become that we saw no one in sight. Slowly and cautiously we began to walk away from the plane. In the far distance a white stucco building caught the eye. We moved toward it. After so many harrowing hours on the plane it was indeed a pleasure to walk on solid ground. We had walked about a hundred yards before we became aware of some people coming toward us. Soon the familiar face of Mr. Bouteflicka came into focus. He gave us bear hugs and introduced his colleagues, the Minister of the Interior and the Chief of the Security Organization. Together, in a state of happy reunion, we walked to the air terminal building. The main hall on the ground floor was empty, except for a few security guards and a couple of service employees. Mr. Bouteflicka offered us a seat on a couch and himself sat between Mr. Yamani and me. The Interior Minister and Security Chief sat across a table facing us. They informed us that our nightmare was not quite over yet. Carlos and his entourage were in the adjoining room. As a last-ditch effort, seemingly a face-saving one, Carlos had insisted that prior to our release our respective governments must agree to broadcast the text of the political manifesto over the national networks. "I don't think the Iranian government would have a quarrel with that", I said.

"Inshaallah!", exclaimed Mr. Bouteflicka, who then left us to contact Riyadh and Tehran. While he was gone refreshments were served. We were still uneasily conscious of our next-door neighbors. After a seemingly long time Mr. Bouteflicka returned beaming with a happy smile. Both governments had consented to the conditions and he had so informed Carlos. It seemed the nightmare was at long last over.

All of a sudden Carlos 's deputy - the man who was the first to storm the conference room in Vienna - appeared, as if from nowhere, in front of us. No one quite knew what to make of his unexpected appearance. He was offered a glass of orange juice, which he refused. He began a vociferous verbal attack on Sheikh Yamani in Arabic. Meanwhile he surreptitiously tried to reach in his belt, but the Security Chief quickly jumped and grabbed his arm. But the man continued with his insults as he was being led away under our astonished gaze. A few minutes later the Security Chief returned and recounted the amazing story that the man had actually intended to shoot Yamani there and then. Incredibly his hidden small pistol had been overlooked by the security guards!

Understandably we now were anxious to get out of the place as quickly as possible and be as far as possible away from Carlos

and his gang. As if reading our thoughts Mr. Bouteflicka took Sheikh Yamani and me to his home in a car driven by himself. In his house we were greeted by His Highness Prince Saud el Faisal, who is now the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, and who happened to be in Algiers on a private visit. We all thanked God that the frightful nightmare was finally over.

Mr. Bouteflicka recounted part of the conversation that he had had with Carlos on Monday, when the plane first landed in Algiers.

"I pleaded with Carlos for the release of everyone, but to no avail. Carlos was adamantly against releasing the Saudis and the Iranians", he continued. "I told him if he was after ransom money I would contact the two governments."

Carlos had replied that he had already been paid for this operation. Months later I came across reports in some highly regarded magazines reporting payments of several million dollars by the Saudi flight over the Mediterranean was uneventful. We stopped for refueling at Istanbul, and delayed our departure for two hours longer than necessary so that the plane would not arrive in Tehran before the scheduled 9:00 a.m. time in the morning.

The first person to greet me on landing at the Mehrabad airport in Tehran was my wife. She was admirably composed and in full control, though I was aware that the agony she had gone through was no less than mine, if indeed not more. Huge crowds of well-wishers gave me a rousing welcome.

Those closer to the plane honored me with sincere handshakes and bear hugs. Reporters hungrily were hoping for first-hand news, but for some reason, unknown even to myself, I declined to appease their curiosity. In fact, this account of the whole harrowing experience as re-lived by me, if it appears in print, will be for the first time.

Accompanied by my wife I went straight to my parents. Their unsuccessful efforts to hold back their tears touched me deeply. Their sincere belief in God, and their strong faith in the benevolence of His mysterious ways humbled me. I then proceeded to the Imperial Palace where the Shah was expecting me. He was serene and intently listened to my account of the events; "who do you suppose master-minded the plot and for what purpose?"

I replied that circumstantial evidence points to a radical group ENCOURAGED and financed by an Arab country and blessed by another Arab government. As to their purpose, I believe, they wanted to humiliate and frighten the "so-called" pro-American governments of the region, and pass along a signal about the increasing power of the radical groups throughout the world.

Thus, came to its end the story of my several brushes with DEATH. I spent the day with my wife, but not the way it was planned. You cannot force destiny out of your life by planning, I thought.



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Shab-e Yalda: A WARM WELCOME TO WINTER, Felicitous Farewell to Fall

TehranTimes, December, 2016



PHOTO: A marquetry work by artist Qumars Sayyad depicts a rural Iranian family reunion celebrating the Yalda Night.

Once again, Iranians from all walks of life and all around the globe are arranging to celebrate Shab-e Yalda (Yalda Night), which falls on December 20. The auspicious yet thousands-year-old occasion, known as the longest and darkest night of the year, marks the last eve of autumn and the beginning of winter.

Shab-e Yalda is also called Shab-e Chelleh that literally meaning the night of the forty.

One of the dominant features of the feast is *Chelleh Neshini* (sitting for Chelleh), a social context during which families and friends usually gather in the cozy ambiance of home of an elder such as grandparents, aunts or uncles to rejoice in warmth of one another's company.

Some opt for making phone calls to friends and close relatives or send text messages to congratulate them on this night. Guests are served with fresh fruits and colorful Ajil (a mixture of dry fruits, seeds and nuts) in bowls.

To Iranians however, the dry fruits are somehow a remi-

niscence of the abundance of summer and the fresh fruits are an invocation for food during winter.

Watermelon and pomegranates as symbols of bounty are the traditional fresh fruits of this night. It is believed that eating watermelon before the arrival of winter can immunize one against cold and illness.

All food items are arranged on a spread known as Sofreh (traditional table cloth available in various materials and patterns), usually by women of the house.

Following a fresh and hot dinner, people recite poetry, narrate stories, chant, play musical instruments or just chat in the coziness of their company until midnight or so.

Of all ancient rituals, there are mostly two festivals that are unanimously celebrated by Iranians today, Yalda Night and the Persian New Year or Nowruz that means the birth of a new day.

From a wider point of view, human beings often mourn some endings and celebrate most beginnings. The Iranian nation has strong so-

cial and historical fibers to celebrate when it comes to the death of a season that gives birth to another.

Welcome to Winter Varies Region to Region

Yalda Night is celebrated in different parts of the country traditionally as a welcome to winter, though it encompasses regional variations and themes. In what follows some of them have been given:

Natives to the northwestern Azarbaijan region believe that eating watermelon will not let the cold of winter into their bones. Also, on this night, new brides carry gifts to brides-to-be of the family.

In Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan Province, local musicians known as 'Aashigh' play traditional instruments and sing songs from ancient Persian legends on Yalda. Aashighs are local artists who play a great role in preserving oral culture and they can recite poetry spontaneously.

In the northwestern Ardabil Province, people ask the Chelleh Bozorg (first forty days of winter) to promise them to be moderate as they wish for a good winter time.

Families in the southern city of Shiraz, Fars Province, spread a Sofreh (Persian table cloth, mostly spread on the floor) which is not very different from the Persian New Year spread.

They normally place a mirror and an artistic depiction of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam, on the spread. In addition to typical Yalda food items, Halva Shekari (a kind of paste made of sugar, butter and

sesame seeds) and Ranginak (Persian date cakes) are also served.

In the northern province of Gilan, however, Yalda is never complete without watermelons. It is assumed that anyone who eats watermelons on this day would not be thirsty in summer and cold in winter. Aoknous is a tempting and indispensable Gilani dish on Yalda Night.

People in the southeastern Kerman Province stay up most part of the night to welcome the arrival of the legendary Gharoun (Croesus) who is believed to bring wood for poor families in the disguise of a woodcutter.

The wood logs would then turn into gold and bring prosperity and luck to the house. The ritual is of course a symbolic one. One of the oldest Yalda rituals in the western Lorestan Province was when a group of small and teenage boys would go to the rooftops of houses and throw down their bags tied to the end of a long scarf from the chimney holes.

They would sing songs, wishing prosperity and happiness for the owner who would fill their bag with Yalda treats. The children would state their gratitude accordingly by singing songs of merriment.

In the villages of north-eastern Khorasan Province the groom's family sends out gifts with a group of musical instrument players to the bride-to-be's house.

In this province, after dinner and festivities, people read out verses from the Shahnameh, a long epic poem by illustrious Persian poet Fer-

dowski.

In one of the villages of Garmsar, north-central Semnan Province, people of one family or clan get together over a meal of khorous polo (cockcrow meat and rice dish), after which they chitchat with jokes, anecdotes and short stories.

It is customary for people in the western province of Kermanshah that they stay up most of the night by eating, singing and telling stories to abide with the mother of the world in giving birth to her daughter, the sun.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Yalda Night is celebrated on the last day of Azar (the last month of autumn) and before the first day of Dey (the first month of winter).
- Watermelon and pomegranate are amongst the most distinguished features of Yalda Night, though a few days before Yalda, the fruits' prices may soar.

- Yalda, though not very common, is a female Persian name.
- In ancient Iranian calendar, winter is divided into two parts, Chelleh Bozorg (the bigger forty) from 22nd of December to 30th of January and Chelleh Koochak (the smaller forty) from 30th January to 10th of March.
- The word Yalda, meaning birth, was imported from Syriac into the Persian language by the Syriac Christians.
- Narratives say that Yalda Night marks the birth of winter and the triumph of the sun as the days grow longer and colder.
- Ancient Iranians assumed Naneh Sarma begins to descend on earth by Yalda Night. Literally meaning coldness grandma, Naneh Sarma is a folklore Persian character who brings in the coldness during the winter-time.

World Heritage Volunteers Help Raise Awareness of Persian Qanats

Source: Tehran Times



A cluster of World Heritage Volunteers (WHV) has spotlighted essentials to conserve and promote Persian qanats, a UNESCO registered heritage that provides exceptional testimony to cultural traditions in desert areas with an arid climate.

Within the framework of the UNESCO World Heritage Education Program, WHV Initiative was launched in 2008 in collaboration with the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) to mobilize and involve young people and youth organizations in World Heritage preservation and promotion.

Yazd, a central Iranian city famous for its aqueducts (qanats), played host to the WHV campaign from August 23 to September 6. "The event aimed at raising awareness about the vulnerable condition of the qanat and promoted its value and importance, while involving youth in the conservation and the improvement of the conditions of the aqueduct," UNESCO reported.



An incredibly wise man and a passionate food lover once opined that if the divine creator has taken pains to give us delicious and exquisite things to eat, the least we can do is to prepare them well and serve them with ceremony. This axiom of festive spirit is perhaps the most evident feature that lies at the core of Iranian culinary.

Enriched with a colorful and yet a healthy diversity of dishes that are peculiar to various regions of this country, Iranian food is highly popular in the east and the west for its freshness and deliciousness. The Persian kitchen has the ability to retain its uniqueness by preparing meals within a range of subtle and yet contrasting flavors, such as a combination of sweet and sour or mild and rarely, spicy.

Generally, in Persian cooking food is not overpowered with spices. While herbs, spices and sometimes fruits are used for seasoning and garnishing, the flavors are quite subtle and delicate as in the design patterns of a Persian carpet.

Persian cooking largely relies on rice as one of the main ingredients, which is an affordable and readily available staple in everyday diet. A typical Iranian meal is often a full plate of chelo (plain cooked rice) topped with vegetables, meat or fish. The mild flavor of rice provides a delightful contrast to the seasoned meat and vegetable toppings.

NAAN (BREAD)

Another staple food of Iran is naan (bread), typically a round, flat bread that can either be baked or cooked over a bed of small stones. While in villages, locals make their own naan, several varieties of fresh-from-the-oven bread is easily purchasable at naan shops in the cities.

After lamb, which is Iran's favorite meat, beef and chicken are commonly eaten in stews as well as in the form of the popular kabab (kebab), which is actually meat grilled on a skewer. Fish is

Notes on Iranian Cuisine

Maryam Ala Amjadi
Tehran Times

common as well, particularly in the North and the neighboring Caspian Sea towns where it is found fresh. In addition, there are a number of dishes prepared with a combination of herbs, grains, pulses, vegetables and even fruits.

A bowl or platter of seasonal fresh fruits and dishes of herbs and vegetables which may be considered "exotic" (like dates and figs) in some other countries, are standard side dishes to most meals. They are also very creatively combined with meats in order to form flavored accessories to the main dishes. The dolma, for example, is one such dish. The term actually describes any vegetable or fruit stuffed with rice-meat mixture. The stuffed grape leaves are the most popular form of dolma.

Today, Persian cuisine is gaining popularity in multicultural cities and cosmopolitan arenas, particularly Los Angeles, Vancouver, Washington D.C., Toronto and London. These cities have significant Iranian population.

Some similar traits of Persian cookery can be found in the cuisines of a few other nations such as the Turks and the Greeks, mainly due to cultural and historical contacts among Iran and these nations. For instance, the kabab which is found worldwide today initially originated in Persia and was later on adopted by the Middle East and Turkey. There are of course many distinct features that set Iranian cuisine apart from other Middle Eastern food.

First and foremost, Iran's rich agriculture and diverse regional climates provide high quality food items and a natural wide diversity of herbs and vegetables. Iranian cookery, therefore, begins with high quality ingredients which preserve a strong natural taste, smell and texture. Secondly, most dishes are a work of art and delicacy and like other artistic works of this land, they are a little more time consuming in terms of preparation. Thirdly, the food is prepared fresh and



served fresh. Fourth, less salt and oil are used in Iranian cooking as compared to other Middle Eastern cooking, a positive feature which makes Iranian cuisine, a healthy and hearty choice in one go. Moreover, side dishes shape a colorful panorama on the Iranian table. Spinach and yogurt, minced shallots in curd, lentil soup, a range of salads with olive oil and vinegar dressing, pickled fruits and vegetables peculiar to various regions of Iran are some of the side dishes that accompany the main edibles.

Rising above the ingredients of Iranian cooking, one can claim that food is undoubtedly a fundamental part of the Persian heritage. Each item is a tasty representation of geographical aestheticism in a range of colors and scents specific to those regions. Eating is associated with a great deal of social events, as in births, funerals, weddings and many other rituals that convince us of the fact that culinary traditions are intertwined with Iran's history, religion, culture and even literature. Some ingredients are even used as metaphors in Iranian poetry and prose: Honey colored eyes, peach colored complexion, laughing mouth like pistachio, pomegranate colored lips, hazelnut-like noses, red apple cheeks, almond-shaped eyes and many others.

DEEP DISH DELIGHTS AT PERSIAN RESTAURANTS

Even through economic slumps, restaurants in Iran are an ever growing industry. After cafés, they are the most popular hangouts for the Iranian youth particularly in the capital. Moreover, with their tradition setting and unique ambience, they are also a compelling tourist attraction both inside and outside the country as they generally observe the standards of cleanliness and hygiene.

Restaurants are majorly categorized by the type of dishes and services they provide. In a very typical and traditional restaurant, also known as sofreh khaaneh

you can expect kabaabs done in a variety of styles: soft kababs, such as koobideh (minced meat kabab), pure meat kababs such as chenjeh (lamb chop kabab), bakhtiyari (a combination of roasted chicken and meat pieces on skewers) and a few others. These kababs as well as almost all stews are served with plain rice, side dishes and a popular yogurt based drink called doogh.

SOFREH KHANEH

Sofreh khaneh has flat wooden day beds with large cushions laid out for the diners to recline on as they eat. Sometimes the beds are laid out in a small garden. There are of course many restaurants that offer the same traditional food in the standard restaurant settings but for its relaxed and unique ambience, the sofreh khaneh continues to evolve into an even more popular place, where families and closed ones can bond over food.

MODERN PIZZERIAS FACE THE KABAB TRADITION

The much younger generation, however, seems to have developed an increasing preference for fast food which has naturally resulted in the establishment of small and big fast food outlets, where one can usually find a variety of pizza, steak, hamburger, fried chicken etc.

Known humorously as ‘keshlogh-meh’ (elastic loaves), a modified Persian word, pizza done in an assortment of styles and flavors, continues to remain a very popular fast food dish among young Iranians.

Despite the allure, however, the youth still know where to turn if they are, in the long run, looking for wholesomeness and deliciousness in one plate: the gastronomic charms of the traditional Persian platter. Restaurants serving traditional Iranian dishes, like the cholo kabab are still the most crowded and favored

places.

International cuisines are also currently in trend. Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Thai and Mexican food have become quite popular in recent years, primarily in Tehran.

FACTS ABOUT FOOD AND TABLE MANNERS IN IRAN

Fork and spoon are the main pieces of cutlery used at the Iranian table. A knife is rarely used at lunch or dinner.

When invited as a guest to lunch or dinner, expect to be offered second and even third helpings. Initial refusals will be assumed to be polite gestures (ta’arof, a sign of social decorum) and are taken mildly.

Iranians usually eat a handful of herbs and greens along with their meals. Known as sabzi khordan (edible greens) these herbs are typically a combination of chives, spring onions, mint leaves, basil, tarragon, radish, parsley and dill, often along with handful of walnuts, naan and a piece of feta cheese.

In most modern house settings food is eaten at the table but in a more traditional atmosphere, sofreh (table cloth like garment) available in a range of material and design pattern is spread on a Persian rug or table. Even in modern houses, some meals are still served on the floor and the sofreh is spread on the dining table.

There are four major types of flat breads (naan) and about ten types of unflat and sweet breads available in various shapes and sizes in the art of Iranian bakery.

Iranians revere bread to a great extent and do not discard or throw away stale bread along with other trash. Leftovers are usually disposed in separate containers. A practical way to refrain from unwanted disposal of bread was the formerly popular custom of trading dried bread for salt or fruit baskets with hawkers who roamed around for this purpose,

a tradition that has been fading out, but still in practice in rural areas.

Black tea is an all time beverage in Iran. It would not be an exaggeration to call it the national drink of the country. It is mostly drunk along with sugar cubes and on occasion with sweets. The sugar cubes are taken between the teeth and then the tea is sipped.

Grown mostly in Iran’s northern Caspian provinces and prized mainly for its aroma, rice is indeed the jewel of Persian cuisine. What distinguishes Iranian rice dishes is the range of methods in which this ingredient can come to life in a Persian kitchen.

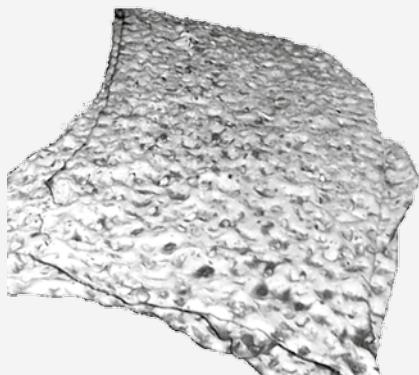
Iranians consume rice daily in ways that somehow elevate it; sometimes it is as simple as boiling it in salt and oil and at times, it can be a ritual of running it half cooked through a sieve, throwing it back into the pot to fully steam and develop, then enriching it with a dash of saffron on the top and creating a golden crust (tahdig) at the bottom of the pot which comes out in different shapes and flavors, after the top of the pot is emptied and served, usually with a combination of another ingredient.

The main typical Persian dishes are a blend of rice with meat, chicken or fish but rice can also be prepared as the main dish per se:

On occasion, Persian rice dishes are richly studded with fruits, nuts, herbs and spices but more than often, rice is seen as an a companion to other dishes.

Another distinct feature in the tradition of rice eating as compared to rice eaters in the west that, when served with stew (khoreshht) of either meat or chicken; rice is used as an edible bed where both items are mixed in proportion by the consumer before they are eaten.

The two main national rice dishes are chelo and polo (white rice alone or with addition of meat and/or vegetables and herbs).





In the Memory of Behrouz Nournia

**Behrouz:
Our Friend for Always**

Pari Azarm Motamedi
(Vancouver, Canada, October 2017)

Friendship produces, between us, a partnership in all our interests. No one can live happily who has regard to himself alone and transforms everything into a question of his own utility: You must live for your neighbour if you would live for yourself.

These words of Seneca, the ancient Roman philosopher describe how Behrouz Nournia lived his life and how he related to his many friends, and to me among those many. From the very first days of meeting him when we had just entered the faculty of architecture, Tehran University, throughout the 53 years of our long and solid friendship, to his very last days, Behrouz. was a selfless and caring friend. He possessed the rare ability to become a true partner to the interests of his many friends, doing whatever he could for the wellbeing and happiness of each of them.

How fortunate I feel for having met him and for our enduring friendship and what a great loss is his passing ...

From those first weeks of architecture school he became like a brother to me, perceptive, attentive and discerning. In the unfamiliar atmosphere of our freshman year in the fine art school he was like a solid anchor on whose wisdom, decency and kind-heartedness we could all count. Soon our families and siblings met and became friends. When I got married my husband and Behrouz got to know each other and over the years developed a close and sincere friendship. Later he became like an uncle to our sons. He was a friend for our family in the serene days of joy and happiness, and in the rough times, the anxious times, our times of loss and sorrow.

Away from Iran, living in two different countries, we visited often in New York, in Vancouver, or in Tehran. We would walk endless hours to visit art galleries, attend a concert, listen to a

talk, or find a special restaurant. Mansour and I enjoyed the times we had with him, having dinner and trying a new recipe he had invented, listening to music, talking through the night into the early morning hours about art and politics and about life, about this unpredictable, ephemeral life ... In the last few months we visited and spent time with him at his home and in the hospitals. He still smiled, never complained and still cared about our comfort. He wanted to make sure we had eaten and that we could get some sleep. We could not talk much as he was losing his strength. But we played cards on white sheets on the hospital table or bed and he sometimes joined in singing the familiar Persian songs that he often sang and now Nana Ian, his sister, and Mansour sang to cheer him up. In the last several months he was surrounded every day with his family and many friends and with so much love. It was the love he had given us all that now encircled him.

Behrouz was a very accomplished artist. His creativity was limitless and his work of the highest calibre. He was a true artist who practiced his art with the same dignity and sincerity with which he lived his life. He was well known and respected in the important cultural and artistic environments in New York but he never used his contacts or affiliations for the promotion of his own art. Instead he eagerly introduced young, talented artists whom he met over the years to curators, gallery owners or senior artists, encouraging and supporting them in any way he could. He donated his art to charities and for different cultural causes including the Encyclopaedia Iranica. On the day of the celebration of his life, after his passing, his impressive art was projected on huge walls of the High Line Park in Manhattan, a place that he loved and that was the venue of our last outdoor expedition together in May 2017. On our subsequent visits we were together in hospitals and in his home surrounded by his powerful, beautiful art. His last paintings were two small watercolours, which he created on his hospital bed and gave as gifts to his two physiotherapists. On the day we came home from the hospital in a friend's car he gestured to a building in Manhattan, showing me the interesting architectural detail.

His love of beauty and art, his love of life, his care and compassion towards his family and friends persisted to his very last day. Behrouz was a role model for many of us. I will cherish the memories with him and will miss his joyful and wise presence always.

A painting by Behrouz Nournia





Why the Rise of Iranian-Americans in Tech Is No Surprise

Longtime Expedia CEO Dara Khosrowshahi has put Iranians and Iranian-Americans in the spotlight. In part, that's because the 48-year-old, just elected to become Uber's new CEO, fled Iran with his family at age 9 to escape the Iranian Revolution. In part, his ties to other people of Iranian descent in the U.S. tech world are, well, extensive.

As The Washington Post noted in an article earlier today, Khosrowshahi's brother, Kaveh Khosrowshahi, is a managing director with Allen & Co. His cousin, Amir Khosrowshahi, co-founded Nervana, an artificial intelligence company that Intel acquired last year for more than \$400 million. He is also cousins with Hadi and Ali Partovi, high-powered twins who are both founders and tech investors.

As if that's not enough, the Post says two other family members include Farzad "Fuzzy" Khosrowshahi, who played a role in creating Google spreadsheets, and Avid Larizadeh Duggan, a London-based general partner at GV.

Venture capitalist Pejman Nozad, who was practically penniless and unable to speak English when he moved to the U.S. from Iran in 1992, says that neither Khosrowshahi's success, nor that of his extended network, should come as a shock to anyone who knows how Iranian families tend to operate — putting family and friends first, followed closely by a dedication to study, particularly of math and science.

"Math and science are so rooted in Iranian culture," says Nozad, who today co-manages the venture firm Pear, which he co-founded roughly four years ago with friend and fellow investor Mar Hershenson.

Nozad points to Maryam Mirzakhani, the first woman and first Iranian to win the Fields Medal, often described as the rough equivalent of a Nobel Prize for mathematicians. (Sadly, Mirzakhani, who was most recently a professor at Stanford, passed away last month at age 40, a victim of aggressive breast cancer.)

Nozad also evokes Sharif University of Technology in Iran, which has produced large numbers of PhD students for Stanford, as Newsweek once noted. In fact, the report praised Sharif as having "one of the best undergraduate electrical-engineering programs in the world."

Interestingly, the university was co-founded by the Partovi brothers' father, Firooz, who was also the school's first professor. It's also where Mirzakhani nabbed her undergraduate degree.

As for what else could be at work, Nozad suggests that a focus on looking after other Iranians is key. Speaking of the Iranians he knows, he calls them "all really kind and caring and compassionate," a trait that he insists extends to the corporate workplace. "We are raised to care for each other and I think we treat companies like family, too."

Certainly, Khosrowshahi seems to have won over employees at Expedia, more than 2,200 of whom gave him such high marks that he was recently ranked 39 of 100 of the top-rated CEOs in the U.S. at the jobs website Glassdoor.

Nozad is himself known as a masterful networker and has created a welcoming atmosphere at Pear, formerly called Pejman Mar Ventures. (StrictlyVC reported on its micro community in the making back in 2014.)

Further, he notes, in Palo Alto, San Francisco and Vancouver, a broader swath of Iranians and Iranian-Americans meet up in informal Friday breakfasts called Noon Barbari — named after a popular Persian flatbread that's eaten with a cheese like feta or jam. Guests can come and leave any time, but they know that networking, support and a free flow of ideas is always on the menu.

Yet a third factor may come into play, suggests Nozad, whose family fled from Tehran to Germany in the 1980s, and who famously sold rugs to tech millionaires before becoming a full-time investor. Like

a lot of people with something to prove, many Iranians have had a lot to overcome in order to get to the U.S., and they don't take life in this country for granted.

"Most of us started our lives in America with next to nothing — at ground zero," says Nozad. "But America never judged me based on my country of origin or my language or my heritage or my religion. I've been given every single opportunity, and I'm forever grateful for it."

Success isn't lost on Nozad, or on Khosrowshahi, or many in the Iranian community, which partly explains why many members have become vocal about their opposition to the policy and rhetoric of President Trump, who has actively worked to slow Muslim Americans from entering into the U.S., including from Iran.

Shortly after Trump's first travel ban was issued, Khosrowshahi sent a memo to Expedia employees, saying that Trump's maneuverings could result in an "ever so slightly less dangerous as a place to live, but it will certainly be seen as a smaller nation, one that is inward-looking versus forward thinking, reactionary versus visionary."

His cousin, Hadi Partovi, echoed the same sentiment when talking with The Atlantic earlier this year. "Americans use products created by Iranians, or go to doctor's offices and are treated by Iranians regularly," said Partovi, who co-founded the tech-backed nonprofit Code.org with his brother, Ali. "This is not a culture that threatens America, and for us to reject immigration from the country for a false sense of security seems wrong to me."

In fairness to the current administration, Iranians started raising the alarm a year earlier, when former President Barack Obama signed a law that they believed paved the way for the Muslim ban. More than 30 VCs and CEOs sent an open letter to Congress, slamming "discriminatory" travel laws.

A list of other successful people of Iranian descent who work in tech was created earlier today by entrepreneur Ali Tahmaseb and is worth checking out. On it: Google's former chief business officer (and now Twitter's executive chairman) Omid Kordestani; eBay founder Pierre Omidyar; investor Shervin Pishevar; and Tinder's Sean Rad, among many others.

Not included on the list, which doesn't claim to be comprehensive: Serial entrepreneur Anousheh Ansari, an engineer who, in 2006, became the first Iranian in space. She made the trip several days after her 40th birthday.



Maryam Pirband you are among the top young Iranian women who have moved up the ladder of success. It seems you continue to have an ever trying spirit to achieve the highest goals. Let's start however with your college education.

Thank you for the compliment. After graduating high school I entered college with a major in Business/Economics and earned my BA degree 3.5 years later, and an Associate Degree in English, Business Communications. During this same time I was gainfully employed on the side and taking the national qualification exam to enter civil service I fortunately passed it at top levels. With the score, I was able to be hired by Iran Air. I also started a sub carrier on the side.

Where did you begin your study of film?

I studied for 3 years in film direction at The Youth Cinema Society and the Center for Young Cinematographers and also entered the field of film and drama. I was assisting and script supervising for Kambusia Partovi.

You have extensive experience in acting, script writing and directing television serials and theatre plays, can you expound on that?

Over the course of my career in this business I have produced more than 20 titles in short subject, documentary films, television shows, industrial promotions, TV and screen commercials. Additionally I have been able to publish two books on film script.

I have also had the honor to be present and active in many

An Interview with MS. MARYAM PIRBAND

Persian Heritage

Ms. Pirband won "Best Female Director Award" for short films at the International Film Festival of AOF (Action on Film) 2017 in Las Vegas.

international film festivals and receive awards for my work. When asked I am always happy to be part of judging panels at many international film festivals in Iran (Salamat, Nahal and Salman Farsi...), and the Documentary Film Festival in Kurdistan (Iraq) and the Action On Film Festival in the U.S.

Ms. Pirband, studying your accomplishments and number of your completed works, the first thing that comes to mind is that 'how many years have you been active in the film industry'?"

This is the question that I have often been asked. I have been active in the film and cinema for nine years.

Can you tell us, how did you change the direction of your life and carrier so suddenly? This was a huge decision since your position of employment came with job security.

Yes. I have a restless nature and spirit which cannot stay in one place. From my childhood, I was trained to be multi-functional. When I was hired at Iran Air, I did not have any free time, because I was painting freelance painting on the side and was active in professional sports. I was a member of Iran Air Women's swimming team. Still I remained unsatisfied and restless. Books were my best friend and comfort. I read a lot and still do. I remember how much I wanted to write and put my ideas and complaints on paper. One day I wrote a short story about a woman whose home was burning in a vicious fire but she could not move to save herself. My co-worker, a very nice lady, read my story and was really affected by it. She cried her eyes out on my shoulder and said "you have drawn the picture of my life and pains."

As a result, I had decided to start writing. Then one day I thought telling the story with pictures would be a lot more interesting. In addition to my regular job, which was very demanding, I pursued my interest in art to the point that I could no longer continue the status quo. I had to cut the chains of government employment and really go for it. There were many recommendations and opinions not to do so, but I finally left my job with 10 years of seniority, opened my wings and flew away.

Do you regret that decision?

No, not at all. I think I made the right decision. My movement has opened many other doors, and am sometime sorry I

did not make the decision earlier. If anything, I am remorseful for not doing it earlier.

How did you make so much progress as a newcomer in this field so fast? Your work (Dance with Me) was entered in Cann Festival only four years after starting your career. How do you explain this?

I can only say that I had so much excitement in going forward and making progress in my field and creating movies that I could not think of anything else. I make films that tickle my intelligence and sensations to create characters and situations, and let them take over and lead the way. You could say that in many ways and instances, I have been lucky and I hope the lucky streak continues.

Dance with me is a short film with a special narrative technique about a young woman with an unwanted pregnancy who is not officially married to her partner. This makes the situation very complicated in Iranian society, especially since the father of the child is missing in the upheavals of post-election demonstrations in 2008 in Iran. This has made the situation much worse for the young mother to be. So, she has to make the decision to terminate the pregnancy or keep the fatherless child. With either decision, she will face great pain, hardship and problem with the authorities. She seeks the help of a doctor friend who prescribes an abortion pill and recommends for her to not take it when alone and while dancing to a fast beat music after taking it; a dance to kill her baby. She is alone in the last seen dancing to the fast beats wearing new colorful clothes in a very strange mood. She picks up the pill and continues dancing but never actually takes the pill.

It is a very interesting subject and you found a very special means of presentation for it. I am told that it has been entered in many film festivals.

Yes. This film, like my other works, has been presented in many festivals. The last one was a few months ago in the Black Star Festival in AFRICA.

Let's talk about AOF Film Festival in Las Vegas. When was this festival established?

This international film festival was established 13 years ago. Last year, they contacted me to introduce some works from the Iranian film industry. I welcomed the opportunity and suggested to have a separate section for Iranian films since there are so many good films in Iran lately that deserve recognition. After several meetings and my perseverance in the matter, we finally got their agreement. I sent an announcement and invitation to the film industry in Tehran and included a P.O.Box address to collect films from interested producers and directors who wanted to register their works in the festival. Many Iranian film makers registered and sixty films were shown.

Last year, an important event in the festival was the presence of renowned Iranian actor Behrouz Vosoughi. He was at the closing ceremony and was honored as a pioneer in the field. Pouran Derakhshandeh was awarded Best Director and Shahab Hosseini won the Best Actor recognition. Other awards were given for short subject, documentary, animation and experimental films.

This year, for the second time, the same course was continued at the event and again 60 films were chosen and shown. Ms. Gohar

Khairandish was awarded Best Actor, Marjan Ashrafizadeh, Best Director, Abbas Zaranji won 1st Director awards, Toweiq Amani won the prize for Best Short Film, Maryam Ketabforoush won for Best Animation and M. R. Asslani won Best Documentary.

What is your role in this festival?

I am a member of the panel of judges.

We found out you were awarded the title of "Best Woman Director" in the international section of the main festival.

Yes. I was awarded the prize in the main section of the international festival, in which I did not have any role, for my film "Silence". When I was called to the podium to receive the award for my short film, I was shocked because I was not prepared for it and did not have any idea that my work was a candidate for the award. I knew that my film was noticed and liked by viewers as well as the festival team, but did not know that it was being considered for an award. Silence was awarded Best Director in it's first screening at the Iranian National Film Festival and gained universal praise and award in numerous festivals internationally and was shown at the Marina Del Ray Film Festival.

I read in the industry news bulletins that you did some dangerous work in making this film?

Yes. Many viewers became very excited from the beginning to the end, I have personally witnessed it in the theaters. This is a film about a young mother who is deaf and dumb, and has a very difficult and strange job. She hangs from the façade of tall buildings with a rope and washes windows as she lowers herself.

On one of the days, as she is lowering her platform from floor to floor, noticing different activities on each, she is faced with a bloody confrontation between a man and a woman on the 4th floor. The woman suddenly jumps out of the window and into the arms of the window washer.

The point here is that I played the role of the woman jumping out of the 4th floor window and it was me who did the jumping, not a stunt woman. There was no camera trick and after checking the photos and films behind the seen, everyone was doubly surprised.

Did you have any experience as a stunt woman before this film? I have seen some pictures and interviews on the cover of industry magazines from 2008 and 2009 that carried your picture and the title of "First Stunt Woman". Is the film "Silence" also a step in the same direction?

Yes. I joined, with some other girls, the team of the late Payman Abadi stunt team in 2008. On that team, I was the first girl who would do some stunt work, which was part of my acting in my first film "Sayab", directed by M.A. Sajjadi. But my real interest and heart lay in directing the sections of action films. I was training to that end and became the first Iranian woman to direct action films. In 2008 the movie, P6 (parking#6) started on this road and that film fortunately attracted a lot of attention and enthusiasm.

So no, I am not really after the title of stunt woman, or first

or last of anything. I follow the course and direction of work that I enjoy doing in my field. I took part in all stunt exercises until recently and even became a volunteer member of Tehran's fire department. I love excitement and believe it helps sharpen my sense of creativity. After the sad and painful demise of dear Payman, I exercise repeatedly all I had learned in stunt work from him, and am always proud of being part of his team in the short time that he spent in Iran.

What are you doing presently?

I am finishing up writing a script for a new film which is commissioned by a group, which is planning to film it in California. I am also working on a film script that I am planning to direct, which will be made mostly in Los Angeles. Additionally, I am busy writing a collection of short stories that I hope to finish soon.



**Historical POL-E KHAJU Bridge in Isfahan:
Architecturally Interesting, Visually Appealing**

Source: Tehran Times

To experience Isfahan, a vibrant tourist city in central Iran, it is most magical to walk across Pol-e Khaju at sunset when the 17th-century bridge is lit by glorious colors. A total of 23 arches, decorative motifs and tiles, adjoining arcades and an octagonal pavilion embedded right in the middle are amongst main features of the picturesque bridge that spans Zayandeh-Rood, one of the largest rivers in the central Iranian Plateau.

Zayandeh-Rood is less roaring nowadays and usually bone dry in the summertime due to decades of the harsh climate change.

In its heyday, the central passageway on the upper level of the bridge was utilized by horse-riders and carts while the vaulted paths on either side were dedicated to pedestrians.

Measuring 133 meters long and 12 meters wide, Pol-e Khaju is equipped with several sluice gates under its lower archways that doubles it as a dam. The monument was completed around 1650 under the patronage of Shah Abbas II, the seventh Safavid king who ruled the country from 1642 to 1666. It used to be a temporary hangout for the king and the royal family of the time and later turned to a place for public meetings where locals, domestic and foreign travelers come to revel in a cozy atmosphere and take the air.

Narratives say that the bridge replaced the ruins of an older one, which dated to the time of Tamerlane, the Turco-Mongol conqueror who reigned from 1370 to 1405.

Abundant Persian gardens, gorgeous Islamic buildings, historic bazaars and picturesque bridges along with ubiquitous tree-lined boulevards gives the city a significant visual appeal.

UNDER TOURISTS' EYES

Here is a select of comments that visitors to the bridge have posted to TripAdvisor, one of the most popular travel websites in the world:

'Fascinating structure'

I'm no expert on architecture. All I can say is that this structure is worth visiting in late afternoon and if possible, go back in the evening to see it all lit up. This bridge spans a river that is bone dry in the summer and acts as a dam when the rain starts. It's known for its unique Persian architecture and is one of the well-known wonders of Isfahan. Well worth a visit. (Robert E. from Virginia, the U.S.; visited August 2017)

'The most beautiful of Isfahan bridges'

Great piece of architecture and a contact with local community - art and architecture students come to draw it, families to take a stroll, teenagers to hang out. A must when in Isfahan! If you plan to see all 4 of the bridges (or the 3 that are most centrally located) - I would suggest to end your walk with Khaju, as it's truly the prettiest of them. (Maria D. from Poland; visited May 2017)

'Beautiful moments beautiful bridge'

I visited the bridge during the day and the atmosphere was special. That's why I decided to come back for sunrise to take pictures and experience the morning activities! This was a very good decision as there was regular come and go from people going to work, people who had spent the night there sleeping, couples enjoying the sunrise, gentlemen singing and joining in groups for conversation, etc. This was magic and I'm glad I did go! Wonderful experience. (Aumuc from Germany; visited May 2017)

'A must to experience the ambience of Isfahan'

Great place to spend the evenings. Always busy with locals and very scenic. Sit in the arches and listen to the singing locals mainly men exercising their vocal cords. Stunning place and in my opinion a good place to experience Isfahan. Very relaxing and enjoyable. We went there every evening during our visit and miss it greatly. (Mo. D. from the UK; visited May 2017)