



# Persian Heritage

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# Persian Heritage

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<b>FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK</b>	6
<b>LETTERS TO THE EDITOR</b>	8
<b>NEWS</b>	
<b>Nezhat Amiri Smashes Iranian Taboos</b>	9
<b>The First Iranian Woman Director Oscar Nominee</b>	10
<b>COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>Shah's Illusions and Spiritual Beliefs</b>	13
<i>(Reza Vaghefi)</i>	
<b>THE ARTS &amp; CULTURE</b>	
<b>REVIEWS</b>	15
<b>Ties of Brotherhood</b> <i>(Rakeh Chaubey)</i>	17
<b>Cyrus' Influence on Thomas Jefferson</b>	18
<i>(Pouya Zarei)</i>	
<b>Rare Iranian Manuscript Registered in UNESCO</b>	19
<b>A Talk with Roxana</b> <i>(Lindsay Smoot)</i>	20
<b>Omar Khayyam Rubaiyat</b> <i>(Joobin Bekhrad)</i>	22
<b>A Short History of the Iranian Breads</b>	24
<b>I Am American</b>	26
<b>In Memory of Dr. M. Amir-Mokri</b>	29
<b>Passing of Jahangir Amouzegar</b>	30
<b>A Tribute to the Memory of All Loved Ones</b>	30
<b>An Interview with Ferris Rezvani</b>	31
<i>(Persian Heritage)</i>	

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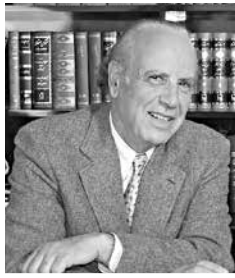
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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

With the coming Persian New Year, Norooz, and the arrival of Spring with its rebirth of beautiful nature and new beginnings, we celebrate the 23rd year of *Persian Heritage's* publication. Proudly we can say this has been without any interruption. As always, this is a special time for all of us at *Persian Heritage*, when I get to wish our dearest readers, in Iran and the Diaspora a very happy and healthy new year, one I hope will be filled with equality and liberty for Iran and its citizens.

Last year, like the past 37-38 years, was another difficult one for the Iranian people. External forces and pressures, especially from the United States, made attempts to cripple the regime in Iran, which led to more difficulty for the people. Economic burdens continue to weigh on the general population. Factories and manufacturers went out of business and their innocent workers lost their livelihoods. These innocent victims went months without pay. The hardships they felt and struggled with exploded into demonstrations on the streets of cities throughout Iran. The demonstrations, engineered by two powerful Ayatollahs, started in Mashad. The protest, however, as engineered and expected to proceed, grew in demands. The people demanded the end to the present regime, demanded a separation of church and state, demanded an end to corruption, demanded an end to the draining of the national treasury, demanded equality for men and women and demanded freedom of speech. The demonstrations began to spread to cities throughout the country. With the regime losing control of their orchestrated protest the demonstrators were confronted by harsh retaliations by the authorities. Unfortunately, the regime's armed military forces continue to overpower the demonstrators and hence the anticipated gains by the Iranian people were not as desired. The slogans, however, used by the demonstrators, were heard by the Diaspora and the demonstrators gained outside support in the United States and Western European countries. Groups took to the streets to demonstrate. In the United States some groups came with their own agendas causing a division in the Diaspora. The result was clear, outside support did not have much positive affect on the demonstrations inside Iran. Even more importantly, the division of the Diaspora clearly showed that changes in Iran will not come from those outsides of Iran. Change will come from Iranians living in Iran. They are the ones who are brave and suffer daily from the hardships imposed on them. They are the ones who will bring about a permanent CHANGE. They will bring about CHANGE, a CHANGE that may be slow to evolve, but one that will bring reforms that give equality to men and women, fairly deal with the corruption among the elite, stop the draining of the national treasury, see a separation of church and state, allow for political choice and allow freedom of speech.

One must applaud the bravery of young and older women in Iran's women's movement. These brave women stood on electri-

cal utility boxes at city squares. They removed their white headscarves and held them in their hands, waiving them, demanding an elimination of the law imposing the hijab. They stood in public and demanded equality for women in all aspects and did so in the name of peace. This movement had a startling effect on the world. It exposed a side of Iranian women never been seen before. In the last 37-38 years Iranian women have struggled for their rights from forced covering by the hijab, to rightful professions and employment. These women exemplify most of University students in Iran. These women are responsible for raising children through many hardships and introducing successful and brave young men and women into society. This time, single handedly by taking off their headscarves in public venues throughout Iran, they showed the world they are no longer willing to be victims of oppression. They are determined to stand strong against the reign of dictators, standing up for their rights despite the possible consequences by the government: arrest, prison and torture. The world watched as a *basiji* (government police) pushed a woman off the utility pedestal onto the ground. She fell face down. This image made its way around the world through news and social media. This unimaginable savagery by a regime will stay forever in the hearts and minds of the people.

This past year life became more and more difficult for the average person in Iran, weakening their hope for a better tomorrow. Iranians will again have to reach deep inside for additional strength to brave the days ahead. The earthquake in Kermanshah is a reminder of how the regime's incompetence became more visible in the eye of the citizens. A country with extraordinary resources and wealth, uses its finances to export weaponry and military support to its neighbors, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and pours millions into Venezuela and Africa to build hospitals and schools for the people of these states, and leaves its own earthquake victims without shelter, medical and living supplies after all these months. It is shameful to see such atrocities committed by a government against its own people. How can this government look at their citizens living in tents with their bodies covered by cold sores and frostbite? They have lost their basic living needs. It is shameful to see these conditions in a country so filled with wealth, a wealth used for its own agenda rather than for the betterment and survival of its citizens. Hospitals and schools are still not restored. This regime's lack of meaningful political dialogue diminished necessary aid from foreign countries to Iranian earthquake victims. It is not hard to understand that because of the rhetoric, Iran and Iranians have earned the worst reputation in the world. How ironic is it that Iran, one of the largest powers in the region, one of the greatest empires that ruled over 3900 BC, the oldest civilization, has become one of the most defamed countries in the world. A country that took pride in its human rights position under Cyrus the Great and a country

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

where the lyrics of the famous poet Saadi stands above the door of the United Nations (all humans are interconnected as one body), because of its political incompetency has been reduced to a rogue and terrorist nation.

It is a sad day when the bodies of young and old scholars are buried under the snowy hills of the mountains. Their lifeless bodies are unable to be found and delivered back to their loved ones for proper burial because of a plane crash; a plane that should have been grounded due to outdated parts unable to be purchased because of sanctions placed by the US and its Western European allies. How is it that Dubai and Qatar get to have the most modern planes made available to them and have interests in the airline industry, while Iranians and visitors to Iran must board old and outdated planes, placing the lives of its crew and passengers in danger, on a daily basis? Why isn't human life more important than politics? This was not an isolated incident, EVERYDAY we hear news of these incidents. EVERYDAY we learn of the demonstrators, asking only for their basic human rights, be silenced by the authorities. EVERYDAY we learn of women, asking only to be treated as equals, be pushed around and thrown into the prisons of Evin and others. EVERYDAY we learn about the Dervishes (Sufis) who are being brutalized by the authorities because their fellow members are silenced by the authorities. EVERYDAY we learn about the imprisonment of environmental scientists. EVERYDAY we learn about of the murders of famed scientists and others dead by alleged suicide. The alleged suicide of Professor Kavous

Seyed Emami an Iranian Canadian and well respected professor, environmentalist and scientist reminded me of the suicide of Saied Emami, known as an exterminator of human beings, who died some time ago. This is the new strategy of silencing unwanted voices.

I live with hope in my heart that by next year I will be able to write my editorial in *Persian Heritage* and it will be filled with good and joyful news and that pride will be returned to Iran and Iranians. I hope that I will be writing about an Iran, that will embrace the current Diaspora. I hope I will be writing about an Iran who welcomes its Diaspora back to Iran to take part in bringing Iran back to its days of greatness. I hope I will be writing to you about an Iran who will be able to retain its highly educated citizens in all fields of medicine, industry, technology, science, research, education and the arts, rather than an Iran who currently is witnessing a "brain drain" to the West. And, I hope that I will writing about an Iran and citizens, who while never losing their PRIDE and LOVE for their country, history and culture, will now be open to show and help the world to rediscover their Iran and its people, as it was when it first laid its imprint on the world.

Once again, as we celebrate Norooz, I wish our dearest readers and the world a peaceful, prosperous and kinder new year.

*Shahrokh Alavi*

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**A GREAT SELECTION**

Dear Editor:

As usual receiving and reading your journal gave me a long-lasting boost and pleasure. You lead the way to secure in protecting Iranian traditions, that are often forgotten. The variety of the articles published, interest and attract multi-cultural readers. You must be commended for these endeavors.

Another issue that deserves mentioning is your allocation of three different articles, one in English and two in Persian for one of the single most respected writers Dr. H. Guilak. One discussed his association with the late Mr. Hoveida, one was his biography and one on his political views in the article "United States, Israel, Iran."

This article signifies his overall deep understanding about politics playing out in the Middle East. He appears to be well aware of the longstanding animosity between the Arabs and Israel, which recently is being reignited by Saudi Arabia and other countries (those willing to keep the animosity to fulfill their exploitation of other regional countries.) I do not understand why Iran is taking religious sides with the Palestinians, while the Palestinians are or will be compromising with the Israelis sooner or later.

Saudi Arabia's animosity towards Iran is not new. Their political interest in the region and religious beliefs remain a constant. They never, ever will dare to go into a real war, it will just be with words. Saudi Arabia does not have enough of its own technical resources and relies on foreign support and mercenaries. Iran does not intend to get into an actual conflict but continues to solidify their existence by contracting or counteracting Saudi Arabia's rhetoric.

The population of Israel, as a whole, and Iranian Israelis love their native country, Iran, as they exhibited their desires in multiple roles held in Israel. But when it comes to terms of religion and Israel identity, they remain silent, which is understandable.

Once again, I sincerely commend Dr. Guilak views and understand the intensity of the political conflict in the Middle East.

*Respectfully*  
*Dr. Bijan Nikakhtar*

**LONG LIFE**

Dear Editor:

*Doroood.* May you live a long and healthy life and continue to keep our *Persian Heritage* ALIVE.

*J. Sedaghatfar*

**ALWAYS THANKFUL**

Dear Editor:

Thank you so much for the online copy of the magazine. I enjoyed reading several interesting articles, especially your interview with Dr. Guilak and his wife, Dr. Nahid Towfigh. I know them very well from the time that my husband, Dr. Shoja Sheikholeslamzadeh worked at the Namazee Hospital— extremely nice couple. Unfortunately, we have lost touch for many years.

With best wishes for a very delightful holiday season.

*Azar Aryanpour*

**GREAT INTERVIEW.**

Dear Editor:

Thanks for *Mirass Iran*. I know well Drs. Guilak and Nahid. Dr. Nahid Toufigh is one of my close relatives. Her father is the brother of my aunt's husband Azizollah Toufigh

I have met them both a couple of times here in the States at conferences. They are wonderful and great people. I read the article of the story of the University of Kerman and cried. I lived in Kerman for eight years from age 5 to 13. The article was very inspiring and heart warming.

*Thank you.*  
*Saradj*

**USE A LARGER FONT**

Thank you Dear Dr. Ahkami for publishing one of the best magazines for us Iranians and non-Iranians.

I have a suggestion for type of printing the magazine and I hope you would TAKE ACTION ON IT.

I wish you would use a larger font for printing the articles. At times I cannot even read the prints with my binoculars. We are getting old, however we are stuck. Be Merry anyway!

*Thank you again!*  
*Parviz Koupai*

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## The Conductor Smashing Iranian Taboos Over Women, and Music

Saeed Kamali Dehghan, *The Guardian*

In her 38-year career, which is as long as the history of the Islamic republic, Iran's first and only female conductor had led as many public performances as the number of fingers that hold her baton.

Last month, however, Nezhat Amiri conducted a 71-member orchestra performing at Tehran's most prestigious concert hall – a remarkable milestone in a country where it is considered taboo for state TV to show musical instruments, women are not allowed to sing solo and female musicians have been prevented from going on stage in provincial cities.

"From the beginning, I've swum against the current – I wasn't seen, the society didn't make any effort to nurture my skills and the ruling establishment turned its back on me," Amiri, 57, told the *Guardian*. "But I'm still doing it, I'm showing that there are ways, and there will always be."

Amiri's performance, part of the annual state Fajr music festival, brought 55 musicians and a 16-member choir – with women making up almost half of both groups – on stage for two hours, to play three pieces by masters of Persian classical music, including a work by the legendary composer Morteza Hannaneh, for the first time.

The *Naghme-Baran* (the melody of rain) ensemble had been practising for six months. All of them, including Amiri, worked for free. It was Amiri's first performance on such a large scale in 12 years, and took place at Vahdat auditorium, which was one of the world's best-equipped modern opera houses at the time of its inauguration, prior to the 1979 Islamic revolution. Even then, when Tehran hosted many music and dance performances, no Iranian female conductor appeared on the Vahdat stage. Amiri's most recent performance received unprecedented attention inside Iran. The reformist *Ghanoon* daily published an interview with her image on its front page alongside a headline quote: "I don't even earn as much as a construction worker."

Press TV, Iran's state English-language network broadcasting for a foreign audience, featured her performance. But restrictions still remain on domestic TV. One band, Pallet, once mimed their performance without their instruments, in a subtle protest that circumvented the censors.

Amiri, who has a master's degree in music composition from Tehran Arts University and studied under the acclaimed musician Parviz Mansouri, said although she had celebrated the importance of her performance, she could not remain silent about the challenges she had faced in the years leading up to it.

"There's a fatigue. How many times can you continue knocking on a closed door?" she asked. "How many years can you remain silent and not talk about your sorrow? When sorrow becomes public, it needs a public remedy, too."

Prominent female conductors fight for recognition across the world; the recent appointment of Marin Alsop as the first woman to become artistic director of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra made international headlines.

Amiri acknowledged the difficulties of being a female



musician in Iran, but she said problems within the arts were more wide ranging. "Music in my country is like a child without parents, like an orphan," she said.

After the Islamic revolution, Iran started a crackdown on music – initially even banning uncontroversial traditional Persian music. Restrictions have since loosened, with pop and even rap and rock becoming popular. But the laws and codes governing the arts are ambiguous and, at times, arbitrary. Female musicians, in particular, face bigger and more fundamental problems. One recent image, shared widely online, shows a female musician who was blocked from appearing on stage in a provincial city peeking through the curtains, watching her male bandmates playing.

"After 38 years, the authorities need to come forward and make clear if music is haram [forbidden by Islamic law] or halal," said Amiri. "They should say whether women can perform on stage or not. We have one system, one country, how come in one city [Tehran] you can, in the others you can't?"

Under the current moderate administration of President Hassan Rouhani, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra – previously disbanded – has been revived. Amiri said pressure under his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was huge, but it also meant many turned to music to remain hopeful or as an expression of their resistance.

"You face so many challenges when you're a musician [in Iran]," Amiri said. "In our country, music is an art that, according to religious edicts, should not be given space, or priority ... We have lost generations of musicians, theoreticians, music historians – some people in this country have given their lives for music."

Yet, the incremental changes that have taken place under Rouhani have disappointed many. "I've seen many ups and downs, we're in downhill now ... now it's the era of losing hope after becoming hopeful," said Amiri.

Despite the challenges, Amiri says she wants to be "a symbol of hope". "You live because you have hope. Sometimes you know you'll be defeated, but you make the effort anyway. You know you have to try. My head was broken, but I wrapped it and stood up again, for a hundred times." Under the current moderate administration of President Hassan Rouhani, the Tehran Symphony Orchestra – previously disbanded – has been revived. Amiri said pressure under his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was huge, but it also meant many turned to music to remain hopeful or as an expression of their resistance.

## The First Iranian Woman Director Oscar-Nominee

By Parisa Hafezi, Reuters, 30 October 2017



Iran's first Oscar-nominated female director has challenged President Donald Trump to watch her film to see if its portrayal of ordinary Iranians' experience of war and revolution will change his views of her country.

The U.S. president has called Iran a "terrorist nation" for involvement in conflicts in the Middle East, and derided an international deal that scrapped sanctions on Iran in return for curbs on what many in the West believe was a nuclear weapons program. Narges Abyar's Farsi-language film "*Nafas*" (Breath) follows a young girl, Bahar, living through

the changes that follow Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution and the start of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980 with her impoverished family.

Her greatest fear is losing the chronically asthmatic father who is bringing her and her three brothers and sisters up on his own, and she spends much of her time making sure that he is still breathing. Bahar's devout grandmother, far from being kindly, punishes her for refusing to go to Koran school.

The film and Abyar's Oscar nomination have angered hardline conservatives in Iran's establishment, who call the Iran-Iraq war the "Sacred Defense" and consider the movie anti-Islamic.

"Three thousand (Iranian) children were killed during the war. Why should I not show all these?" Abyar told Reuters in an interview. "This film promotes peace."

She said it could also "help American society ... to understand that Iranians are not terrorists, as claimed by some politicians. Trump is using the language of threat against Iran ... what will he think if he watches *Nafas*? Will he continue to threaten Iran?"

The film's anti-war message runs alongside an exploration of what it means to be a woman in Iran, where Abyar lives and works.

"I chose Bahar because ... I wanted the world to understand all the limitations an Iranian girl faces ... Bahar was even banned from playing with her male cousin at a certain age ... At one point, Bahar says: 'I wish I were a boy,'" Abyar said.

"Outsiders may think it is the influence of the establishment or the religion, but it is not. It is the culture ... and even many women in Iran believe that men are more capable than women, and women should have fewer rights than men."

To follow in the footsteps of her male compatriot Asghar Farhadi, winner of the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film category in 2012 and 2016, would for Abyar be a recognition of her struggle against sexism in her industry and wider society.

"In Iran, like many other countries, women are disdained, considered second-class citizens ... As a woman, if you want to produce new ideas and be successful, you have to fight."

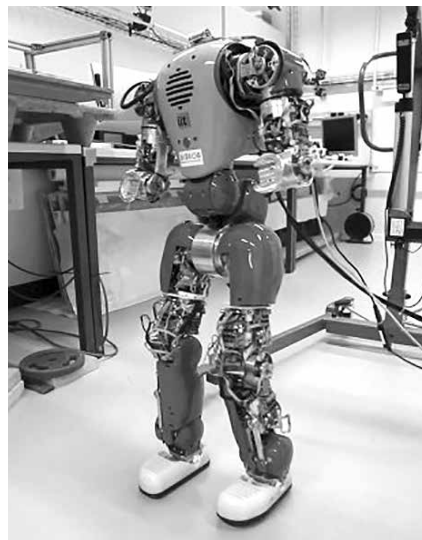
Iran's women are among the most highly educated in the Middle East and allowed to do most jobs, glass ceilings permitting. But under its Islamic legal system, they have fewer rights than men in areas including inheritance, divorce and child custody, and are subject to travel and dress restrictions. Abyar said she had hoped for more from the pragmatist president, Hassan Rouhani, who owed his 2013 and 2017 election victories in great part to women voters encouraged by his promises of social and cultural liberalization.

"Women's situation has improved a bit in Iran," she said. "But I was expecting improvement in more areas."

Abyar encountered less pressure than expected from the authorities to censor parts of her film, but added: "I cannot say that the government defended me when the film was criticized by hardliners."



## Sharif University's Mannequin Robot Among Top Eight



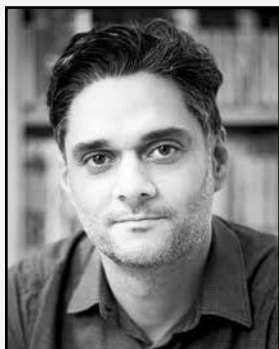
The mannequin robot of Sharif University of Technology ranked among the top eight in ICSR 2017 Robot Design Competition, Japan. Director of the Center of Excellence in Design, Robotics, and Automation of Sharif University of Technology Ali Meghdari said "22 countries attended the 9th International Conference on Social Robotics which was held last week in Tsukuba, Japan. ROMA robot mannequin of Sharif University of technology ranked among the top eight robot designs and received memorial award."

ROMA is the first Iranian mannequin robot which has been designed and produced by the students and professors at Sharif University of Technology," he added. Director of the Center of Excellence in Design, Robotics, and Automation of Sharif University of Technology asserted "attractive and unique design, kinetic abilities, humanoid joints in neck, shoulders and the elbows, 360 degrees rotation of the torso and movement controlling and programming through Android Apps are some of the features of this robot." "ROMA mannequin robot can also be programmed to carry out different kinetic scenarios consecutively, has access to artificial intelligence and can identify customers, move toward them and play an audio message (welcoming the customer and introducing the clothing item to them)," he added.

*Tehran Times*

**OMID NOOSHIN,  
UK director of 'Last Passenger', Dies**

Nooshin was best known for making 2013 thriller *Last Passenger*, starring Dougray Scott, Iddo Goldberg, Kara Tointon, Lindsay Duncan and David Schofield. The film, which sold well for Pathe International, earned Nooshin a Bifa nomination for best debut director.



Nooshin more recently co-scripted 2017 action-sci-fi *Kill Switch*, starring Dan Stevens and Berenice Marlohe. The film was sold by Film Nation Entertainment with buyers including US outfit Saban Film. The UK writer-director had been in development on his second directorial feature *Invalidate*, a US horror film being produced by Silver Linings Playbook and Chocolat executive producer Michelle Raimo. He was also attached as associate producer to previously announced sci-fi *Inversion*. Two-time Oscar-nominee Joe Walker, editor of *Blade Runner 2049* and *Arrival*, worked with Nooshin on *Last Passenger*. He said: "I joined Omid as film editor of *Last Passenger* in the final stages of a mountain already climbed. The emaciated finances scrambled for this ambitious thriller would barely dent the craft services budget on a routine movie, but in Omid's phenomenally inventive hands, that's something the audience would never spot. I was lucky to share those euphoric upper slopes with Omid and look out to a landscape of peaks, all his to conquer."

"Omid was a kind, ridiculously talented man. I was so happy he'd found tremendous love with Lucy and then to see the unadulterated joy that shone with the arrival of their daughter, Ava. I felt certain one day Omid would look back on a long body of work - he'd worked so bloody hard to get it started. It's tough to process such a loss, to his family, his friends, but also to the audiences who deserved to celebrate his name."

*Last Passenger* producers Ado Yoshizaki Cassuto and Zack Winfield told Screen: "Omid cared deeply about everything he did. From his work to his family, he was full of passion and had dreams of creating something wonderful and had the drive and talent to make it happen."

"From the first time we met it was clear that he was out-of-the-ordinary. He could describe practically every frame of a movie he's barely finished writing, and it was his determination and brilliance at convincing people to back him that got *Last Passenger* over the line. He was fiercely loyal to the people he worked with, and the messages we've received from people who were part of the *Last Passenger* journey are testament to the impact Omid and his film had on so many people's lives."

"It's impossible to believe he's no longer with us. What a terrible loss from someone with so much more to give."

Nooshin, who was born in Guildford, Surrey, died last Monday, January 15, 2018. He is survived by wife Lucy and daughter Ava.

**In the Memory of**

**POURAN D. ALEALI**

**1943 - 2017**



Poursan D. Aleali, age 74, died on November 26, 2017. Poursan was born in Tehran. Iran to the late Parviz Vakili-Taleghani and Aghamar Vakili-Taleghani.

Poursan attended the University in Iran where she was trained to be a nurse. Upon immigrating to the United States in the early 1970's she subsequently went back to school and received her

Master's Degree in Geriatric Psychology. She married her husband, Dr. Seyed Hossain Aleali, 51 years ago. Their marriage was a partnership and they navigated the difficulty of immigrating to the United States from Iran 50 years ago together, while leaving all of their family and friends behind.

In addition to raising her daughters, Marjan Aleali and Roxana Aleali, Poursan became a surrogate mother to Lily Khodadoost-Kamvar, who became a third daughter. After a few years of practicing psychology, Poursan worked as a practice secretary and office assistant for her husband for over a decade.

Family and friends were Poursan's passion and delight. She always welcomed people into her home and her heart. Poursan loved to entertain, and threw parties often. She loved to cook Persian food, and always ensured there was a lavish spread of food from her homeland for all to enjoy. Poursan was quite fond of dancing, and would be one of the first people on the dance floor at any gathering.

Poursan is survived by her husband and daughters; her sons-in law, Morad Kamvar, Derek Karim and Kevin Holtzman, her three grandchildren, Arianna Kamvar, Alysa, and Kamran Holtzman; her sisters and brothers-in-law, Azar and Parviz Dadyar and their children Labkhand, and her spouse Tim Quinn and Pani and her spouse Nima Noroozi, Nassrin and Bijan Vakili, and their children Golnaz, and her spouse Mehdi Shabestary, and Kayvan and her sister Iran Vakili-Taleghani; her two brothers, Mansoor Vakili-Taleghani and his wife Nassrin and Nasser Vakili-Taleghani; her sister-in-law, Vahideh Vakili Taleghani; her dearest friends, Farah and Houtan Aghili and numerous other relatives and close friends. She was predeceased by her brother, Mohsen Vakili-Taleghani.

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## Feathers of Fire: A Persian Epic

Directed by Hamid Rahmanian



A Persian Epic is a visually breathtaking cinematic shadow play for all ages, created by Hamid Rahmanian, a 2014 Guggenheim fellowship-winning filmmaker/visual artist.

*The play unfolds an action-packed magical tale of star-crossed lovers from the 10th-century Persian epic Shahnameh ('The Book of Kings'), – Zaul and Rudabeh, who triumph at the end against all odds.*

Rahmanian's graphics, derived from the visual tradition of the region, will be rendered as puppets, costumes, masks, scenography and digital animation, all of which will come to life in a "live animation" shadow casting technique perfected by shadow master Larry Reed on a cinema-size screen. The play also features an original score by the acclaimed musical team, Loga Ramin Torkian & Azam Ali. Feathers of Fire had its world premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2016.

Iran has a rich and diverse culture that very few people

outside the region are aware of. One such example, the Persian epic, Shahnameh, is one of the most important literary works of Iran, written over 1,000 years ago by the poet Ferdowsi.

*Our goal is to present a more holistic view of Middle Eastern cultures, particularly that of Iran to wider audiences by presenting stories and aspects of Shahnameh in different media, which we are collectively calling "The Shahnameh Project."*

FEATHERS OF FIRE: A PERSIAN EPIC, the shadow play, is the third part of "The Shahnameh Project."

### FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

There is a great power in live performance.

FEATHERS OF FIRE: A PERSIAN EPIC exposes children and adults to a broader view of this world. It introduces new characters and places, teaches them about the history of civilization and reinforces the positive attributes of what it means to be human.

It is our intention to highlight the strength of the culture and promote a more complex and interesting view of Iranian culture in the United States. With all performances, we intend to offer ancillary programming to bring the story and culture much closer to the audience.

Our focus especially will be young demographics. We will offer school matinees with chances for children to interact with artists, hands-on shadow theatre workshops and other fun activities, through which to inspire young minds for new perspectives on the people and cultures around them and beyond. We consider this as one of the essential aspects of FEATHERS OF FIRE: A PERSIAN EPIC.



# SHAH'S ILLUSIONS AND SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

**M. Reza Vaghefi, Ph.D**

His Majesty said “We have no doubt that God looks after us until we complete the mission we have adopted for the people this land”. Assadolah Alam’s Memoire Volume 6, page 177, edited by A.N. Alikhani. And so goes Shah’s understanding of his standing with the Almighty. One wonders what to make of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s mind at that moment. This statement by Shah at the time was accompanied by similar one in the sense that Shah was so emboldened, or given absolutely wrong information about a host of things including a statement that “We will soon arrive at the gate of great civilization”. It had also been circulated through the Office of the Prime Minister Hoveida that Iran will be one of the world’s five major economies in a few years. All such statements were either based on total lack of knowledge about the economy or were simply mentioned to make Shah happy. Assadolah Alam did not at least, in his memoires, hesitate to mention that he was quite sure that officials attending the highest gathering in in Shah’s presence, the High Economic Council, did not tell Shah the truth about the chaotic nature of the economy, deterioration in the physical infrastructure of and complete lack of coordination among economic actors in the system. They did not dare say a word, or they may not come back.

## Desperate Moments

Jamsheed Amoozegar was a competent civil servant who had served in Government in many position beginning with the Ministry of Health portfolio. Many other prestigious responsibilities followed when he was finally appointed the Prime Minister I 1977. In about less than a year into his term, a movie house was put on fire in Abadan, in Southwest of the country and Amoozegar resigned’. Sherif-emami, another Shah loyalist and proven incompetent in previous job, was put in charge of Govern-

ment but the turmoil accentuated after that tragedy, did not stop.

Rumer began to circulate and find an audience that previous prime minister, Dr. Ali Amini, may get the job. Dr. Amini was an experience politician and probably he could muster enough capable people to stabilize the conditions. In preparations to present his slate and a plan to the Shah, Dr. Amini had asked one of his aides, a Tehran University professor, to assemble a group of well-informed people to meet with him and recommend some solutions. As a former Dean of College of Economics at Teheran University, I was one of the people to meet with the potential prime minister.

Dr. Amini had been in politics for a long time. An Iranian Ambassador to Washington during the late John Kennedy’s presidency, had created an opportunity for him to show-case his penchant for structural change in Iran. Upon his return to Iran he was appointed Prime Minister when he brought in to the government people like Arsanjohny who was eager to initiate some land reform and convince the Shah that such reform was absolutely essential for the country’s progress. Dr. Amini was also the signatory to the debatable Oil Agreement (Consortium) signed a year after the overthrow of legitimately elected Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh who pioneered nationalization of Iranian oil industry. Such colorful professional history made Dr. Amini, himself, target of the emerging mass opposition although not pronounced. Regardless of such background there seemed to be a glimmer of hope for Dr. Amini to assume the role of the Prime minister at such critical time. And that is why he was trying to find the market conditions, sort of, limited as they were. As we were seating around Dr. Amini asked what would be the appropriate questions that he may utter at the presence His Imperial Majesty the Shah. The audience raised some issues



that had created the turmoil and the strata of society that were responsible for the disturbances. Then he began to raise questions and all of sudden asked me (the author) my opinion. Here I found an opportunity to lay out what had been going on, dangerously, and creating potential social and political vacuum. I referred to actual decision by the Shah which had created the political crisis. I told Dr. Amini to please tell the Shah that he and his father had done remarkable things for Iran in terms of physical infrastructure. The objective facts that every Iranian recognized. Some top-rated universities, a cross-country railroad connecting North to South, creation of steel mills, modern roads and a host of other things including national security and unrivaled army and air force in the region. But they had failed in creating political leaders that could lead these institutions and assets in times of crises. As a matter of fact, they both had eliminated the possibilities that such leaders would emerge and lead the nation. Experienced and honest and well respected people like Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh who was put under house arrest after a foreign- inspired Coup, and deprived of specialized medical help when, if available, would have saved his life. And of course, there were quite a few others who had earned respect of the nation and would have followed their guidance but they were isolated and sent to exile. Also, Hid Majesty had done worse that

his father. When his father was sent to exile by the Allied forces, at least he had left a great statement like M.A. Foroughi who took the helm and stabilized the country. His Majesty has left no none.

Dr. Amini listened to my comments and he seemed to have agreed with me. The session ended in about three hours and I had a feeling that he agreed with most of the issues raised by the audience. Dr. Mossadegh's main crime was that he had told the Shah that he should reign and not rule. This was the in Constitution of 1909, which would have saved the regime. But this was not to Shah's liking and he over short period after the Coup, took control of major levers of power: security forces including Intelligence, energy sector the main stay of the government and foreign policy, which meant when things went really bad he had no one to blame and the people blamed him for all sorts of shortages and mismanagement.

### Shah's Religious Beliefs

On numerous occasions, Shah ex-

presses his deep belief in religion as mentioned in the preamble. Sometimes in July of 1977, in a conversation with late Assadolah Alam, the Minister of the Imperial Court, and at this time Shah's most intimate subordinate-friend, Shah mentions that "because of his experience (two assassination attempts on his life) he believed that God will protect him as he has in the past", (Alam's Memoire Vol.6, p.538) It seems that the man with so much power in his hand depended on almighty to save his regime too. He seems not to differentiate between his personal affair and the affairs of the state and that they both will be protected by God.

While Shah believed in such a metaphysical force to protect him and his regime there were forces proceeding methodically and meticulously to uproot the regime and apparently extensive security system was unaware or unwilling to counter these offensives forces, under the radar.

Therefore, when the eruption of massive demonstration was reported to

the King, he shockingly asked "Where are our supporters", the ones that had been organized by the government on special occasions, the answer was "At their homes and warming up" because it was winter and the weather was unusually cold in January 1979. Shah got the message. But there were no Foroughis or Mossadeghs to calm the people by taking the helm and bringing tranquility to the scene. Out pouring of anti-Shah continued until he left. She did not realize the affairs of the state that required implementation of Realpolitik cannot be relegated to Almighty and expect some spiritual being resolve shortages of basic necessities which are true functions of meticulous planning of scarce resources or a competitive market system. In the absence of the latter he would have had to allow the former function. But he had dismantled the former's analysis and recommendations in 1973 which had predicted massive inflation which indeed created the much of the turmoil. Obviously, God had nothing to do with such outcome, but unwarranted ambitions did.

## REVIEWS

## CIRCASSIA: BORN TO BE FREE

Adel Bashqawi

This book provides the history of Circassia, a small European nation in the northwestern Caucasus. It explains the Tsarist Russian invasion of this nation and the ensuing genocide which forced a mass migration. As a result of this history, most Circassians today live in the diaspora. Adel Bashqawi, himself a descendant of Circassian immigrants forcibly deported from their homeland into the Ottoman Empire, felt obligated to highlight a virtually forgotten period in the history of the Circassian nation.

This book will attract the interest of readers wanting to be informed about the many challenges facing the Circassian issue. This book elaborates on a variety of affairs of concern to Circassians and non-Circassians alike, notably those of academic interest and human rights issues.

The Circassian tragedy is analyzed in detail by Bashqawi. While this has received little attention in Western historiography, up to 90 percent of Circassians are reported by Bashqawi as having been deported from their homeland. They are today scattered in scores of countries around the world, with the rest dispersed in their motherland, living in several Russian administrative enclaves. Today, the integral elements of the entire Circassian nation are at stake, not just in territorial terms, but their language and culture.

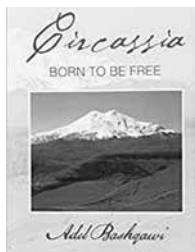
The book describes how a nation has struggled to defend its very existence, identity, freedom and the very future of its generations who have endured a tremendous amount over the decades as a result of the already cited the Tsarist invasion. The Circassians have had to adapt to the conditions imposed by their displacement into the lands of diaspora, concomitant with a constant struggle against alienation.

A distinguishing feature of this book is that it deals with the issue of the Circassian identity and proposes possible legal methods with which the Circassians can utilize in order to re-attain their cultural rights.

This book also examines political issues not discussed in several books discussing Circassia and Circassians. By linking the past to the present, Bashqawi arrives at a vision for the future. he also cogently argues that simply ignoring the issues is no longer an adaptive option.

It is also argued that optimism and solidarity are required to preserve the culture, heritage, language, and the entire nation of the Circassians.

The book demonstrates how the Circassians have the potential of linking and uniting over the internet. The use of traditional print media, modern and advanced communications, and social media have provided solid foundations for helping the Circassians connect across the globe. Thus far, the internet has aided with the following: teaching the Circassian Adigha language, preserving culture, acquiring eBooks, addressing children's concerns, establishing communications, connecting activists, disseminating information about the Circassian issue, learning Circassian history, sharing petitions, finding research centers, reaching libraries, accessing archives, bookstores, and other important matters.



### THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS Prospects for Regional Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (Contemporary Central Asia: Societies, Politics, and Cultures)

Shireen T. Hunter

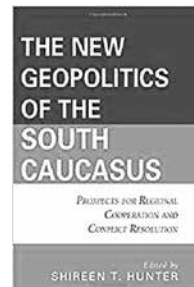
Publisher: Lexington Books, November 2017

This collection surveys the three South Caucasian states' economic, social and political evolution since their independence in 1991. It assesses their successes and failures in these areas, including their attempts to build new national identities and value systems to replace Soviet-era structures. It explains the interplay of domestic and international factors that have affected their performance and influenced the balance of their successes and shortcomings. It focuses on the policies pursued by key regional and international actors towards the region and assesses the effects of regional and international rivalries on these states' development, as well as on the prospects for regional cooperation and conflict resolution. Finally, it analyzes a number regional and international developments which could affect the future trajectory of these states' evolution.

Shireen T. Hunter has brought together a truly international team of experts to examine the complex geopolitics of the South Caucasus. The breadth and depth of analysis on key questions—such as state-building, democracy, and US–Russian rivalry—present the reader with a rich and textured account of the region. This volume is a tour de force on the interplay of global and regional dynamics which have made the geopolitics of the South Caucasus a continuing source of challenges and opportunities. (Shahram Akbarzadeh, Deakin University)

Shireen T. Hunter, herself an expert in Caucasian and Central Asian affairs, has gathered an exceptional team of specialists on the local histories, recent experiences, and geopolitics affecting the three South Caucasian republics—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Geography may be destiny, but surviving and thriving in an area contested for centuries by Iran, Russia, and Turkey requires both diplomatic and political skills as well as good luck. In essays written with deep local knowledge and exceptional clarity, leading specialists guide the reader through the intricacies and complexities of the region. If you want to understand the past, present, and the future of the South Caucasian peoples, this is the book with which to begin. (Ronald Grigor Suny, University of Michigan)

This study puts today's volatile South Caucasus in its proper historical and geopolitical context. Readers new to the subject will become conversant with the main issues; old hands will find much to ponder and discuss. Shireen T. Hunter's own unique perspective is especially valuable. (John Evans, former US Ambassador to Armenia)



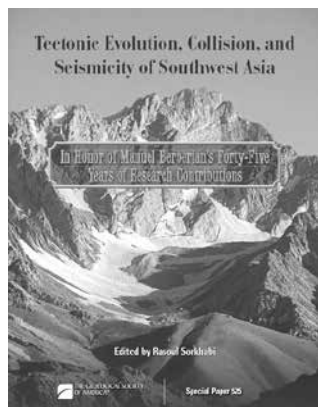
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## A NEW BOOK ON THE GEOLOGY AND EARTHQUAKES OF IRAN

Rasoul Sorkhabi

by the Geological Society of America



Iran lies at a critically important geologic region – at the collision zone of the Arabian and Eurasian tectonic plates. This tectonic setting gives Iran and surrounding countries the natural riches of high mountains as well as disastrous earthquakes. A new book published by the Geological Society of America highlights the geologic history and earthquake tectonics of Iran and the surrounding

lands in the Caucasus and Anatolia. The volume published in December 2017 is titled *Tectonic Evolution, Collision, and Seismicity of Southwest Asia: In Honor of Manuel Berberian's Forty-Five Years of Research Contributions*. The book came out of a conference held on October 29, 2013 in Denver, Colorado, during the 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America. Edited by Professor Rasoul Sorkhabi of the University of Utah, the huge book in 675 pages consists of 19 research papers, most of which deal with the tectonics and earthquakes of Iranian Plateau. Both the conference and the book were in recognition of Professor Manuel Berberian's lifetime research contributions to geological knowledge, active tectonics and earthquake science of Iran. Berberian born in 1945 in Tehran to an Iranian Armenian family holds a PhD in geology from Cambridge and worked at the Geological Survey of Iran from 1971 until 1990 when he migrated to the USA. His publications (in English and Persian) include an impressive list of more than 110 research papers, over 200 geological reports and maps, and 11 books. His most recent book, *Earthquakes and Coseismic Surface Faulting on the Iranian Plateau*, was published in 2014 by Elsevier and is a monumental report on the earthquakes of Iran spanning centuries.

In his introduction to the book, Professor Sorkhabi writes that the geologic record of Iran “has important implications for understanding the tectonic evolution of Asia as well as the ongoing processes of structural deformation and the development of petroliferous sedimentary basin in the region. In addition, Cenozoic tectonics of the region has direct relevance for hazardous seismic activity, landscape development, and climatic changes that have shaped the region's ecosphere.” The introductory chapter is followed by a biography and bibliography of Manuel Berberian (also written by the editor).

The book opens with an important paper by Dr. Berberian on the history of geologic thinking and research in Iran from Zoroastrian mythology to the modern geologic work

(roughly from 1200 BCE to 1980). A second paper titled “Tehran: An Earthquake Time Bomb” authored by Manuel Berberian and Professor Robert Yeats of Oregon State University is particularly timely in view of the recent destructive earthquakes in Iran.

A press release about this book by the Geological Society of America reads: “Southwest Asia is one of the most remarkable regions on Earth in terms of active faulting and folding, large-magnitude earthquakes, volcanic landscapes, petroliferous foreland basins, historical civilizations as well as geologic outcrops that display the protracted and complex 540-m.y. stratigraphic record of Earth's Phanerozoic Era. Emerged from the birth and demise of the Paleo-Tethys and Neo-Tethys oceans, southwest Asia is currently the locus of ongoing tectonic collision between the Eurasia-Arabia continental plates. The region is characterized by the high plateaus of Iran and Anatolia fringed by the lofty ranges of Zagros, Alborz, Caucasus, Taurus, and Pontic mountains; the region also includes the strategic marine domains of the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Caspian, and Mediterranean. This 19-chapter volume, published in honor of Manuel Berberian, a preeminent geologist from the region, brings together a wealth of new data, analyses, and frontier research on the geologic evolution, collisional tectonics, active deformation, and historical and modern seismicity of key areas in southwest Asia.”

*The photo (courtesy of Dr. Mohammad Fakhari) shows Zard Kuh, the highest summit on the Zagros Range.*

## TIES OF BROTHERHOOD the Trail of Fire and Mustard to Hindostan....

RAKESH CHAUBEY

A story is told in Hindostan of a girl who was married off and had to go live at her husband's home in a nearby village. When she was about to leave, she took a bag of mustard seeds along with her. As she sat in the cart, she kept on scattering seeds on the flank of dirt road. She wept. She missed her parents and her siblings. Adjustment in her husband's house was hard. Winter came. She missed her parents more than ever. Finally came noruz (called Holi in Hindostan). She went out of her house and saw the lovely yellow flowers blooming. She began to run alongside the flowers and after a lot of running and resting - a few hours later she found herself back at her home with her parents and siblings!

March is around the corner. *Chahr Sambesuri* will be celebrated soon. Neither most Persians nor most Indians know that there may not be a trail of mustard between them, but there certainly is a trail of fire that runs between them. It is an ancient bridge of fire that binds the Persians and the Hindostani people by a bond of brotherhood, that is not visible to most unless they look into the history of both people.

Today we have a wall of fanatic Arabized Pakistan between the Persians and the Hindostanis, but not too long ago the two cultures interfaced with each other and there was thriving trade, travel and interaction between the two. In fact, the languages and customs of North India are so similar that when people learn about it their jaws drop in awe.

### THE TRAIL OF FIRE

Come spring, the people of Persia build small bonfires and celebrate the festival of Chahrshambe suri - The fourth Wednesday of the sun. They light small bonfires and jump over them and chant, "Sorkhiye tu az man, Zardiye man az tu!" It is a ritual of purity where people consign their maladies to fire and purify themselves. The mythology behind it is the story of King Kaikawoos who had a young son named Seiavash. Late in life, Kaikawoos married a young woman named Saudaba. Saudaba developed tender feelings towards Seiavash but Seiavash was not ready to blight the sanctity of the mother-son relationship. Rebuffed and rejected, Saudaba complained to the King that Seiavash had behaved inappropriately towards her. The king did not know who to believe.



So he ordered both Saudaba and Seiavash to walk through fire. As the story goes, Saudaba was burnt and Seiavash escaped unhurt.

Come spring, the people of Hindostan build big bonfires and take fire from there to light and purify the stoves at their homes (an ancient ritual when a communal fire was kept burning in every village and people borrowed from it). The mythology behind this ritual is the story of King Hirankashyap, his son

Prahlad and daughter Holika. Similar confusion caused both Prahlad and Holika to go through the fire. Holika died and Prahlad survived.

Now tell me, are you not shaking your head in amazement?

### Lets look at the trail of fire!

In Spring the Arya people from Armenia celebrate a Water festival called Vardavar and come Easter they light fires (these days the church has made them give up the bonfire and makes them light candles)

In Spring the Arya people of Persian (Iran) celebrate Chahrshambe Suri and observe Noruz (New Year) a few days later. They invite people and place the Haft seen with Ajeel and sprouts to mark the arrival of the growing season.

In Spring the Arya people of Afghanistan celebrate the new year by lighting bonfires and flying kites (Remember the book Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini?).

In Spring, the Arya people who became Sikh, celebrate Lohri (where they light bonfires) and celebrate Baisakhi (New year - similar to Noruz). They fly kites during this festival much like their Afghan brothers.

In Spring, the Arya people who came to be called Hindus celebrate Holi. They light up bonfires on the night of the full moon and the next day, much like the Armenian brothers who throw water at each other for Vardavar, they throw colored water and powders at each other. They too fly kites during the Spring festivities.

Now you have run with me along the mustard plants and we are back at our home - which is our Arya identity.

This Noruz accept my greetings from Hindostan. Our brotherhood and our culture may last forever, regardless of how we have been taught to pray. In our hearts you are Khurshidis and we are Suryavanshis. One and the same thing!

# CYRUS' INFLUENCE ON THOMAS JEFFERSON and the Foundations of Modern America

**POUYA ZAREI** (MSc University of Sorbonne, Paris)

**“I advise you to regularly study history and literature in both [Greek and Latin]. Start in Greek first with the “Cyrus script.”**

These sentences are part of the letter Thomas Francis Epps, author of the Declaration of Independence, authored by the Founding Fathers of America and the third president of the country, wrote to his grandfather Francis Epps almost two hundred years ago.

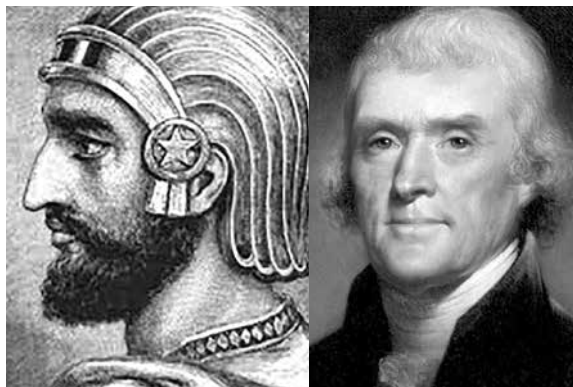
The book that he recommends to read is the *Kourosname* or “In the Cultivation of Cyrus” of the work of Xenophon, a Greek historian of the 5th century BC, in which he directed the life of Cyrus II, the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty.

Jefferson, in another letter to his Italian friend, Philippe Mazi, asks for a fresh translation of that Italian book. At least four different versions of the *Cyrus* script have been recorded in Jefferson’s personal library, and Jefferson has compared his two versions of the book with one of his own lines. Why *Cyrus* and *Cyrus* in the Thomas J. Jefferson’s *World of Thought* to establish a Secular American Democrat have a special place in the time of his life and his conception of the ideal political system.

## Thomas Jefferson and the Enlightenment

Thomas Jefferson, as one of the greatest figures in the Enlightenment, was in the tradition of the prominent political philosophers of his time. The philosophers who tried to build their ideas on the works of the iconic figures of ancient Greece and Rome and find the remains of the works of the predecessors of the material for the establishment of a new military. Among them, one can mention Hobbes and Machiavelli.

In the second half of the 18th century, and before the American revolution, against the royal rule of the United Kingdom, the Enlightenment tradition was at the peak of the revelation of the ancient Greek and Roman monuments. Thomas Jefferson, a young man at William College and Mary Virginia, was generally influ-



enced by Scottish and English political philosophers such as Hutcheson and John Locke to classical Greek and Latin works. His love for the Greek and Roman classical works reflected in his private letters, which is shared by John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, the founding fathers of America.

## Cyrus Book or Kouros Education

Xenophon, a disciple of Socrates and a historian of the 5th century BCE, wrote in the book of *Cyrus* or *Cyrus* education, with a simple effect on the life of Cyrus II, the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty. This book has been closely associated with Iranians since its inception in the *Cyrus* Small squad in the years 401-400 BC and its acquaintance.

Among the prominent Greek and Roman historians, he is not considered a thorough and comprehensive historiography, and his style of speaking, far from his contemporary language, is in the middle of reality and imagination. In other words, although his book is not entirely devoid of historical authenticity, it does, however, include a historic storytelling in terms of style. For him, the history of *Cyrus*’s life is of secondary importance and, as stated in the opening pages of the book, the thought of writing this book has come to mind when he thinks about the causes of the failure of popular governments.

The kingdom of *Cyrus* is for him an example of a just rule over a large multitude of people from different nations and nations. As a result, he chooses him as a model for pouring the foundation of

an ideal empire. Xenophon, using several examples of *Cyrus*’s life, expresses the dimensions of political leadership of a society. Thus, history is used as a tool to express its desirable moral system and use it to grow society.

Xenophon’s *Kourosnameh*, which was forgotten after the great influence of the ancient world (including Alexander Macedonian and Julius Caesar), was restored in the post-liberation period and the beginning of the Enlightenment, and with new translations inspired political philosophers.

From Nicolas Machiavelli and Jean Jacques Rousseau to Benjamin Franklin, he was impressed by the rejection of medieval political thought, the construction of the modern society, and the way *Selah*’s government was governed by Xenophon and the ethical system that he presented in the *Cyrus* Book. In America, in addition to Jefferson, John Adams also referred to a curiosity book as a textbook. Now, through the manuscripts of John Canyon Adams, 18, we can find out how his father John Adams has been obliged to read Josephson’s *Chooochron* in his study period in order to be ready for government jobs.

## Cyrus’s Lessons for American Secularism

Thomas Jefferson is among the first political personalities in the modern world who has broken down the institution of religion from the government and tried to implement it. The Religious Freedom Charter, which he wrote 240 years ago, and the foundation of church separation from the government in Virginia, and later in the United States Constitution, are the first legal texts that guarantee the impartiality of sovereignty over religion. Nearly 80 years after the death of Jefferson, a similar charter was drafted and passed to approve the separation of religion from the government in France with the efforts of Aristide Bryant.

For Jefferson, this separation did not go a long way toward eliminating religion, which guaranteed the protection of the rights of all religions in society. According to him, having religious beliefs did not

have conflicts with the belief in secularism. While political opponents of Thomas Jefferson introduced him as an anti-Semite, he believed himself to be the end of the individual's life [under the school of deity]. As stated in Jefferson's writings, he always referred to his success in establishing the principle of separation of religion from the institution of government and its implementation, and ultimately called it one of three great works of his life in Omar, and he wrote it along with the honor of your writing Draft US Independence Declaration on its gravestone.

The experience of Cyrus the Achaemenid in adopting a policy of religious tolerance and non-imposition of the official religion reflected in the curiousness represents Jefferson's move towards a state that, while broadening its scope and leading the crises, guarantees freedom of opinion. It would seem that if Cyrus had succeeded in securing the ancients in the ancient world with the degree of abandonment and the existence of primitive religious sects in an endless conflict, they would guarantee the impartiality of the state on an extent to the extent of the Achaemenid empire, it is repeated. At the time of writing the Jefferson Religious Freedom Charter, 112 years before the Cyrus Human Rights Core Principle The archpoms of the British Assyriologist of Persia were excavated out of the soil by the royal archeologist, and historic circles of the existence of a plan embodying the revival of the rights of religious minorities during his reign, Cyrus's tolerance was reached through Greek and Latin sources of modernity. Effectiveness of Thomas Jefferson This means the rule of a number of Achaemenid kings in the notes that he was on the margins of the book "Treatise on the manners and spirit of nations" by Voltaire, political philosopher of the Enlightenment in France wrote the eyes there and seen that the failure to impose a state religion and the religious tolerance of Darius I, who was drawn along the Achaemenid Cyrus monarchy.

### The Founding Fathers of America and the Cross of Absolute Autocracy

One of the concerns of the founding fathers of America after the establishment of the new government was the question of whether a righteous government can reach and extend on a scale around a continent (in this case, the United States with multiple states and internal chaos resulting

from the revolution)? The answer to this concern is the introduction of the Achaemenid Empire in the time of Cyrus as a model of the successful operation of a broad-based, ethical and legalist political system. A model that shows how ethical values can be integrated into the administration of government. The new political system that Jefferson and his entourage had achieved (by rebuilding the Athenian direct democracy and transforming it into a territorially representative democracy) did not fit into the autonomous autocracy system of Cyrus. However, the blow of the moral spirit in his government, the type of justice and the manner in which power balances in vast areas could have inspired them in the emerging American democracy. On the other hand, at the onset of the Republican system in the United States, while the pillars of the constitutions were not adequately explained and tested, there was a fear of concentrating power in the president and turning him into absolute power.

Hence, the founding fathers were obsessed with discussing the scope of the authority and the manner in which the first person was governed. In the meantime, the image that Xenophon possessed from the ethical attributes and the virtues of Cyrus in power in the curiousness was a scroll that could point out the deviation from the original path.

An American Iranian scholar, Richard Fray, was busy studying research on the impact of Cyrus the Great on the founding fathers of America in his later years. Hence, the founding fathers were obsessed with discussing the scope of the authority and the manner in which the first person was governed. In the meantime, the image that Xenophon possessed from the ethical attributes and the virtues of Cyrus in power in the curiousness was a scroll that could point out the deviation from the original path.

At the same time that Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues searched for the modern rule of thought and the foundations of new political ideas in the ruins of the Cyrus Empire in the Greek and Latin works, in Iran he was known as the tombstone and his grave stone called the Mausoleum of the Prophet Solomon. It was still time that in 1818, British diplomat and British explorer Robert Kirper, after a thousand years of obscurity, would have to show that the stone building on the Murghab plain of Iran is the same as the Achaemenid Cyrus monastery.

## Rare Iranian Manuscript Registered in UNESCO Memory of the World

Tehran Times: The book is preserved at the library of Tehran's Golestan Palace Museum, Farhad Nazari, an official of Iran's Culture Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, told the Persian service of ISNA on Tuesday. As noted by Nazari: "*Numerous versions of the book are kept at various libraries around the world...*" Nazari added that the book kept at the Golestan Palace Museum is one of the most splendid versions that represents artistic and cultural values.

Rashid al-Din was a physician and historian to the court of Ghazan Khan (1271-1304), an Ilkhanid ruler who commissioned him to write the *Jami al-Tawarikh*. However, it was completed during the reign of Oljaitu who ruled from 1307 to 1316. The *Jami' al-Tawarikh* covers the history of the Mongols, the Chinese, Franks and Indians. The book is the tenth item that has been inscribed UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list.

The Kulliyat-i Sadi, Persian poet Sadi's *Bustan* (The Orchard) and *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden), and the *Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik* (The Book of Itineraries and Kingdoms) by Abu Is'haq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Istakhri both were inscribed on the list in one file in 2015.

Earlier in 2013, a collection of selected maps of Iran from the Qajar era (1779-1926), was added to the list.

"*At-Tafhim*" written by Abu Rayhan Biruni (973-1048 CE) and "*Khamseh*" composed by Nezami Ganjavi (c. 1141-1209 CE) were other Iranian books registered on the list in 2011. A collection of Iran's administrative documents dating back to the Safavid era was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list in 2009. In addition, the *Shahnameh of Baysunqur*, one of three ancient copies of Ferdowsi's epic masterpiece, and the Endowment Deed of Rab-e Rashidi are two other Iranian works that were registered on the list in 2007

Generous, humble, loving, and devoted are all words I would use to describe Roxana Sheikh, a wonderful person, mother, and friend. Roxana came into my life a few years ago when her daughter Kimya and I became friends. Kimya is now my best friend and like a younger sister to me, much like her mom is my second mother. I chose to interview Roxana so I could find out her life history and how she came to be the amazing woman she is.

When I first asked Roxana if I could interview her for a project at school she immediately replied with a yes, as she is always willing to do anything she can to help others especially when it comes to education. Although I feel very comfortable talking to Roxana about anything I still wanted to choose my questions wisely, however she assured me not to be shy. I conducted my first interview, which included more basic questions about where she was born and attended school as well as some information about her family.

Roxana Sharif was born in Cleveland, Ohio to parents of Iranian ancestry in 1958. She moved to Tehran, Iran with her parents at the age of three and lived there with her two brothers and a close-knit circle of relatives. She attended the American School in Tehran, and was tutored in her native language at home while taking piano and ballet lessons. Through her school and her family, she was exposed to many sports, including horseback riding, skiing and ice-skating. After graduating from high school, she came to the United States to attend college. In 1976, she enrolled in American University at Washington D.C. where she got a graduate degree in Education and later moved to New Jersey for her PhD in Education Administration.

Roxana is fluent in English, Farsi, and also French for which she spent summers in France, Switzerland, and Belgium. She is a worldly woman who has traveled a great deal and is familiar with many cultures. During the first interview, our conversation turned to information about her family. I could hear from her voice how much family meant to her and how she adored each and every family member. Her words came alive when she spoke of her family, helping me to form images of them in my head with a smile. She described her father as “a chubby, bald, and energetic man known throughout the country as a caring and highly skilled orthopedic surgeon who had once been the Secretary of Health and Welfare before Iran’s Revolution of 1979. Roxana described her father as an informed and zealot man who really helped modernize Iran’s healthcare and social security system. “He always reminded us to be grounded, even though, financially, we could afford a more affluent lifestyle. He also encouraged my brothers and I to do volunteer works for the needy as he never stopped to perform charity surgery despite his enormous responsibilities,” Roxana said. Immediately I connected this to a quality about her that I value so much, her generosity and humble personality and the willingness to help others whenever she can.

Roxana then talked of her mother: a beautiful, graceful, and smart woman who “taught literature at the university, was an excellent orator who spoke with fluency and ease, and mesmerized people by her ability to speak and write stories.” Once again I instantly connected these qualities to Roxana and the way she charms people by her easy but passionate personality whether she listens or talks to people. According to Roxana, her mother “believed that as a teacher she was not only responsible for educating women intellectually, but also socially by making them aware of their civil rights. “After the revolution and living in America, I solely credit her for pushing us to finish our education and becoming professionals under very difficult circumstances.”

I asked Roxana about her siblings. She told me that she has

## A Talk with

# Roxana

Roxana Sheikh



By: Lindsay Smoot

*Generous, humble, loving, and devoted are all words I would use to describe Roxana Sheikh, a wonderful person, mother, and friend.*

two brothers, both younger than her. Ramin, only a year and a half behind Roxana, is someone I have actually met. To Roxana, Ramin is more than a brother. He is her soul mate. To this day they still watch out for each other and keep one another’s secrets. Ramin, the president of a General Contracting Company, has a sweet sense of humor and an active personality. A former high school soccer player, and a guardian to Roxana’s three children after their father passed away ten years ago, Ramin lives just down the street from Roxana, and is always available for her children, Kayvan, Kamron, and Kimya. “The word ‘uncle’ is not sufficient enough to describe his loving support. My brother is an exceptional man with a kind heart large enough for my family as well as others.”

Babak, her second brother, is five years younger than her. Even though he is married with a child of his own on the way, he still finds time for Roxana and her children. From an early age, Babak’s special photographic memory and discipline was evident. Always well behaved and studious, he followed a path in medicine like his father. What touched me most about Babak was when Roxana told me that he had declined his admittance to an Ivy League undergraduate schools to attend Rutgers not only to be with his older brother and boost his ego, but to help family financially by paying much less tuition. His selfless act reflects the importance of family unit in their household. Babak later attended Columbia Medical School with a scholarship and is now a practicing orthopedic surgeon in Florida.

From all these accounts, I learned how Roxana grew to become such a special individual. I have learned that she gets her kindness, readiness to help, and energy from her father; and her beauty, grace, and storytelling abilities from her mother. She gets her generosity and big heart that touches many lives from her brother Ramin; and the trait of putting others first from her younger brother, Babak. Roxana is also capable of spreading these wonderful qualities to anyone who touches her. Obviously, she has grown in a uniquely special family.

My second interview with Roxana consisted of deeper questions about her Persian culture and what life was really like in Iran. Never having been to the Middle East and only hearing about Iran through the media, I was eager to know what it was like back then when she was growing up. I asked Roxana what was her best memory from her home country and her response brought Tehran alive to me. “The smell and sounds of a normal day!” she said. “If you walked around your neighborhood around lunchtime, the



aromatic smells of different foods would make your mouth water. I loved walking by open windows, smelling and hearing the sounds of the pots and pans, imagining what was being cooked and the family for which it was being prepared. I also miss the sweet chanting of the street peddlers, selling different things.”

What she described was so much different from what I am used to living in America. My hometown has both neighborhoods and homes that are very spread out from each other, and the development complexes do not resemble the type of childhood experience that Roxana describes.

When I asked her what growing up in her home and neighborhood was like her first words were, “It was wonderful.” Their house was directly next to her grandparents’ and within half a block from her aunt’s and uncle’s homes. Unlike in our culture where babysitting plays a major role in raising our kids, Roxana explained that there were always relatives and friends available to watch them. The neighborhood was safe, and the neighbors were friendly. “We depended on the caring and watchful eyes of the neighbor,” she said and I found that very comforting. If only our American society worked the same way today!

In Iran, tall walls that provided security and privacy surrounded each house. Inside, Roxana said, the kids chased each other around the yard and were able to play in the pool noisily without disturbing the neighbors or being bothered by intruders. However, Roxana was sure to point out, the walls did not keep people away. She remembered always having their house filled with guests, both relatives and friends. “No one ever needed an invitation to visit us. Our home was always welcome to guests.” I can see how this part of her culture has still remained with her, her home always open to friends and family. I know that I can always stop by her house whether they are expecting me or not. This is not usually the case with most American households. Never have I felt so welcome and part of someone else’s family as I do with Roxana’s family.

I asked Roxana to tell me about the Persian culture and the role religion played in her home. She said she grew up in a secular home atmosphere that was not religious but respectful of the faith and the faithful. “No formal religion was practiced at home, however, since it was practiced around us, the awareness was always present.” By listening to her grandparents’ stories she learned about doing good deeds, being respectful of people, and a few other stuff like the concepts of Karma and heaven and hell.

I asked her about special traditional or national celebrations that were important in her life. Roxana replied instantly that, “The most colorful and joyful celebration has been Norooz—the Persian New Year—that begins on the first day of spring and stretches for thirteen days. It’s an ancient festivity that goes back to over 3,000 years.”

Norooz, she explained, is not a religious holiday but a celebration of the resurrection of nature each spring. The Persian New Year is a combination of Halloween (trick or treating); Easter (coloring eggs and dressing the children in beautiful, bright colors); and Christmas (decorating the homes, exchanging gifts, baking cookies and entertaining guests.) Roxana said that every item on the New Year Eve’s table including the flowers, eggs and foods, represents hopes for, well-being, prosperity and happiness. In the American culture, New Year’s Eve is most widely known as a time for dressing in formal attire, usually consisting of the colors silver, black, and gold, counting down for the New Year and popping bottles of champagne. Americans typically make “New Year’s Resolutions” which are commitments made at the beginning of the year involving things an individual wants to work on. These resolutions are

not taken seriously and usually broken just a few weeks into the New Year. In the Persian culture, however, the New Year is a time of reunion with friends and relative during the two-week holiday, starting with the eldest and ending with the youngest, disregard of the social status.

At the end of the interview I Asked Roxana what she cherished most about her culture. “Respecting the elders,” she said. “At a young age you learn to stand when they enter the room, greet them properly, offer your chair to them, carry their bags, and make appropriate conversation. You are, in return, treated the same by them. Even the merchant whose store you enter, or a stranger in the street who gives you directions to a place, is respectful of you.” Roxana insists that those good traits are still evident in the Iranian culture today even though the political system has changed.

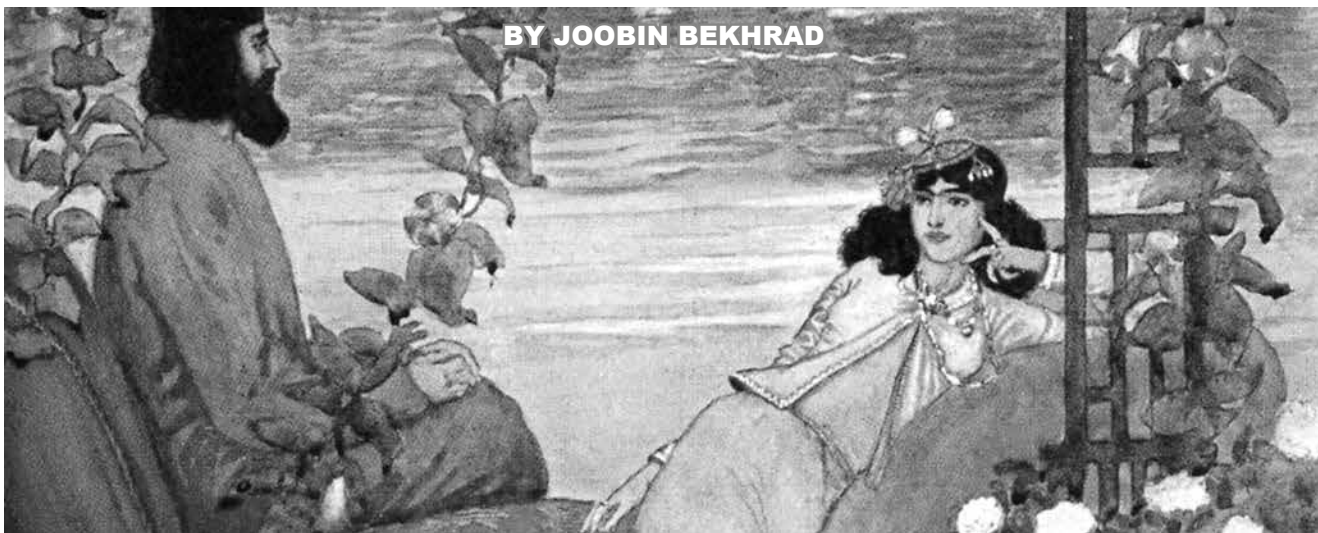
When I asked her what cultural influences are still held important to her, she chose close family ties, hospitality towards guests, and the tolerance of social diversity. I did not need further explanation of her because all these traits were so evident in her personality.<sup>n</sup> “Do you think your culture has been passed down to your children?” I asked. She replied that her children understand some Persian, and love the food, and the Persian New Year festivities. But on a more serious note she told me, “I hope they have also learned to be loyal to family members and respectful and kind to all people. I believe that being exposed to another culture has widened their horizon.”

When it comes to analyzing my fieldwork, I must keep in my mind one of Michael Agar’s first points in his work, *Culture: An Upgrade*, when he discusses the concept of the word “culture.” He indicates that one of the negative issues of this word is how it has been distorted, “it makes us think we understand everything about a person or a group when in fact we’ve just noticed a part and over generalized it into an outdated stereotype” (Agar 2). I cannot help but agree with this statement because no matter how much we try to locate ourselves in a particular culture we will never fully understand it. However, by learning about and trying to understand different cultures is step closer than sitting back and creating stereotypes. After doing some fieldwork of my own, I have really learned that “all have different perspectives, on what they believe, on what they value,” (Agar 10). I find this a very important deduction from my research to note. This helps shape different kinds of people and a society in a whole. The specific aspects that Roxana values from her culture make her who she is. Her cultural background makes her stand out from others because she appreciates and values things that most Americans take for granted.

As I look back on the interviews to further reflect, I specifically remember when I asked Roxana what she cherished most about her culture. She spoke of the formality learned during her childhood. She highly valued the respect given towards elders and strangers. I find this worthy to note because this is something I feel America lacks. The concept of respect has evolved over the years. I have heard many teachers and parents say that children in today’s society get away with a lot more than they used to because they lack respect. From the Persian culture, I take away that respectful behavior is something that stands out and hopefully that will never change. What I have learned through these interviews is that the qualities I admire in Roxana are ones that she has learned from her childhood and the way she was brought up. When I compare her childhood to families raised in America I see a great difference. Priorities vary among cultures and I personally feel that in Iran they have got it right. I find it very important that Roxana has not lost her valuable ethics she learned as a little girl.

## Omár Khayyám's Rubáiyát (Quatrains)

BY JOOBIN BEKHRAD



**In 1909, two London bookbinders were commissioned to create a book that would become one of the most bedazzling the world had beheld. Jobbin Bekhrad reveals how it ended up at the bottom of the Atlantic – and how it still influences today.**

“When the Titanic went down on the night of April 14 1912 in the sea off the New World, its most eminent victim was a book...” French-Lebanese author Amin Maalouf may have been stretching it a bit in his 1988 historical novel *Samarkand*. Or not, depending on whom you were to ask at the time. The book in question was a fictional manuscript of the *Rubáiyát* (Quatrains) by the 11th-Century Iranian polymath Omár Khayyám, prized because it was the only one in existence. In fact, a plethora of copies of the volume of Persian poems existed. There was, however, at the time the Titanic made its ill-fated voyage, one that outshone them all – not in terms of what was written within, but rather, it’s almost otherworldly appearance. It was *this* very real manuscript that served as the inspiration for Maalouf’s ac-

claimed novel. “At the bottom of the Atlantic there is a book,” he writes in its introduction. “I am going to tell you its history.”

“Whoso desireth a peacock must endure the trials of Hindustan’, says a popular Persian proverb. While this particular one refers to the Iranian monarch Nader Shah Afshar’s sacking of Delhi and looting of the famed Peacock Throne (amongst other things) in the mid-18th Century, it might just as well have been coined a few centuries later in London. With a desire to revive medieval traditions of bejeweled bookbinding, George Sutcliffe and Francis Sangorski were renowned throughout the city in the early 1900s for their opulent and over-the-top designs. Accordingly, it was to them that Henry Sotheran’s, a bookstore on Sackville Street, went to commission a book like no other.

*Over 1000 precious and semi-precious stones – rubies, turquoises, emeralds, and others – were used in its making, as well as 600 sheets of 22-karat gold leaf*

Cost, according to Sotheran’s, was to be no object; the bookbinders were given

carte blanche to let their imagination go wild and conjure the most bedazzling book the world would ever behold. Completed in 1911 after two years of intensive labor, the book – of Edward FitzGerald’s loose Victorian interpretations of Omar Khayyám’s poems, illustrated by Elihu Vedder – came to be known as ‘The Great Omar’, as well as ‘The Book Wonderful’, on account of its sheer splendor. Gracing its gilded cover were three peacocks with bejeweled tails, surrounded by intricate patterns and floral sprays typical of medieval Persian manuscripts, while a Greek *bouzouki* could be seen on the back. Over 1000 precious and semi-precious stones – rubies, turquoises, emeralds, and others – were used in its making, as well as nearly 5000 pieces of leather, silver, ivory, and ebony inlays, and 600 sheets of 22-karat gold leaf.

### The Great Omar

Although intended to be shipped to New York by Sotheran’s, the booksellers declined to pay the heavy duty imposed on it at US customs. It was returned to England, where it was bought by Ga-

briel Wells at a Sotheby’s auction for £450 – less than half its reserve price of £1,000. Wells, like Sotheran’s before him, intended to have the masterpiece shipped to America. Unluckily for him – and the world – it couldn’t be taken aboard the ship originally chosen.

The Titanic was next in line, and the rest needs no explanation. The story, however, didn’t end with the sinking of the Titanic, or even Sangorski’s strange death by drowning some weeks afterwards. Sutcliffe’s nephew Stanley Bray was determined to revive not only the memory of the Great Omar, but also the book itself. Using Sangorski’s original drawings, he managed – after a grueling six years – to replicate the book, which was placed in a bank vault.

The Great Omar, it seemed, had been born under a bad sign, for, during the London Blitz of World War Two, it was – not unlike the poet’s wine jugs, symbolic of human frailty – dashed to pieces. Shaken, but not shattered, Bray once again rolled up his sleeves to produce yet another version of his uncle’s swan song. This time, however, its making wasn’t a

matter of years, but decades. Completed after 40 years of on-and-off work, Bray's tribulations were realized in another stunning reproduction, which he loaned to the British Library, and which his estate bequeathed to the institution following his death, where it can be seen today. "I am not in the least bit superstitious," Bray remarked shortly before his demise, "even though they do say that the peacock is a symbol of disaster".

**FitzOmar**

What was the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, and who was this enigmatic personage with whom Sotheran's, as well as innumerable others, were fascinated? An 11th-Century polymath from eastern Iran, Khayyám was revered in his lifetime for his groundbreaking work in astronomy and mathematics. As with other Iranian polymaths like Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Khayyám was also a poet. That said, his poetry was unlike that of any other Persian poet before him, and he has occupied, for centuries, a place wholly unique in the grand corpus of classical Persian literature.

*He well understood the transience of life and the inevitability of death, and the importance of seizing the all-too-brief moment we are allotted on earth*

Owing to his inquisitive nature, Khayyám questioned things most around him took for granted: faith, the hereafter, and the meaning of life itself. He had little confidence in the promises of religion, with its talk of Heaven and Hell, and even expressed doubts regarding the logic of God. There was only one thing Khayyám was certain about, and which he cherished: *this* life.

He well understood – perhaps owing to the turbulent times during which he lived (Iran, then under Turkic occupation, had recently been

invaded by Arabs, and the Mongol hordes would soon raze his homeland to the ground) – the transience of life and the inevitability of death, and the importance of seizing the all-too-brief moment we are allotted on earth. Any talk of the afterlife or religion he deemed hot air. As he wrote:

*No one has seen Heaven or Hell, O heart of mine; Who, say you, has come from that realm, O heart of mine? Our hopes and fears are pinned to that to which, Save a name and notion, we can naught else assign.*

Although he often lamented the ephemerality of life, he also resolved to enjoy himself – with copious amounts of wine (and a few sweethearts, too).

If Goethe had been enamoured of Hafez, and Voltaire Sa'di, the Victorian poet Edward FitzGerald found a kindred Iranian spirit in Khayyám, 'The Old Tentmaker'.

When he turned his attention to Khayyám, he had already translated from the Persian Jami's Salaman and Absal, as well as an abridged version of Attar's Conference of the Birds.

It was the Rubáiyát, however, that was to prove his magnum opus. Although not exactly a translation of the original Persian poems, Fitzgerald's very loose interpretation captured, to no small degree, the spirit of the Rubáiyát and the poet's *Welt-*

*anschauung* – hence the reference to the author as 'Fitz Omar'.

While it enjoyed little popularity upon its release, the slim yet profound volume soon came to enjoy a popularity Fitzgerald could never have imagined. In the late 19th Century, an elite literary salon in London – the still-active Omar Khayyám Club – was named after Khayyám. Fitzgerald's rendition of the Rubáiyát also served as a source of inspiration for Pre-Raphaelite artists such as William Morris, who produced two illuminated manuscripts of it, the second of which also contained illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones.

Countless other editions were also produced, with every manner of illustration, by artists such as Edmund Dulac and Edmund Joseph Sullivan. One illustration by the latter, in fact, later came to grace the Grateful Dead's self-titled 1971 album.

Elsewhere, the acclaimed short story writer Hector Hugh Munro chose the *nom de plume* 'Saki' (the title Khayyám used to address his cupbearer), while Agatha Christie's 1942 novel *The Moving Finger* had a Fitz Omar poem as its namesake. That's not to mention the 1957 Hollywood film made about Khayyám, US actor Alfred Drake's **1960 recitation** of the entire Rubáiyát, and Martin Luther King's quotation of him in a 1967 anti-war speech (he beat Bill Clinton to it by a few decades), amongst many

other instances. In the 1950s, the Rubáiyát was so popular that more than half of it could be found in the compendiums Bartlett's Quotations and The Oxford Book of Quotations.

The Not-so-Old Tentmaker

Khayyám's poetry has, undeniably, stood the test of time. In his native Iran, he is a towering figure whose book of verse, like that of Hafez's, is very much a household staple.

FitzGerald's rendition of the Rubáiyát is still, in spite of the prodigious liberties he took, the most well-known English version of it by far, and an English classic in its own right. Elsewhere around the world, his poems can be read in virtually every language imaginable. As such, it's perhaps no mystery why Sotheran's chose the Rubáiyát as the *raison d'être* of Sutcliffe and Sangorski's bound marvel. But why? How could the words of an 11th-Century polymath have any relevance not only in the Victorian era and the mid-20th Century, but also today?

The answer lies in the timelessness of the Rubáiyát, and its universal truths that know not culture, religion, or creed. Indeed, in today's uncertain times, the Rubáiyát may be even more relevant than during the tumultuous times in which it was originally written. What would the author of the most luxurious book of poetry ever made have to say about our mad, mad world, were he around today? Perhaps, to quote the sage:

*How swiftly does this caravan of life pass;  
Seek thou the moment that with joy does lapse.  
Saghi, why lament tomorrow's misfortunes today?  
Bring forth the chalice, for the night shall pass.*

All poetry translations by the author.

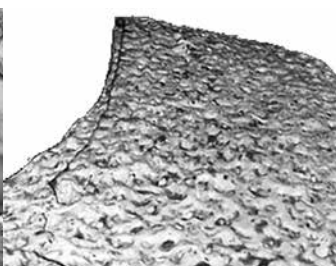




Home made Nān-e tāftūn (tāftān)



Traditional Iranian baking oven in Dargaz



The Nān-e Sangak



The Nān-e Barbari

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE IRANIAN NĀN (BREAD)

HÉLÈNE DESMET-GRÉGOIRE

Encyclopedia Iranica on December 15, 1989

The Persian term for Bread is *nān* (for etymology, see Bailey, *Dictionary*, p. 179, s.v. *nāmji*). In modern Iran bread is the dietary staple food for the population and accounts, on the average, for 70 percent of the daily caloric intake.

In the Iranian languages the words for “bread” inherited from old Iranian seem to reflect two different early methods of baking (Harmatta). Harmatta suggests that the practice of baking bread “covered,” that is, in ashes, is reflected in the word *nayan*, found especially in the eastern Iranian languages (Sogdian, Baluchi, Pashto, etc.) and Armenian *nkan*, a loanword from Iranian (Parthian), which must be derived from Old Iranian *\*nikana-* (lit., that which is buried or covered), as well as in the form *\*bakand* found in Choresmian, probably from Old Iranian *\*upakanta-* “covered, buried” (for the Choresmian forms, see Benzing, pp. 170f. s.v. *bkn-* “to fill,” *bknd* “bread,” p. 521 s.v. *pknd*). On the other hand, the practice of baking bread “uncovered,” in an oven, seems to be reflected in the common Persian word *nān* (Mid., NPers., and western Iranian dialects), probably derived from Old Iranian *\*nayna-* “naked.” Modern Iranian languages and dialects possess a large variety of names for “bread,” both inherited from earlier Iranian languages and borrowed.

Bread is mentioned in both

the Sasanian inscriptions of the 3rd-4th centuries and in the 9th-century Pahlavi texts. Šāpūr I (a.d. 240-70) ordered that one lamb, one *grīw* and five *hōfan* of bread, and four *pās* of wine should be sacrificed daily at the fire temples for his own soul, the souls of the close family, and the members of his court (Back, pp. 337, 344, 367); bread was also given the souls of the righteous to eat in paradise (inscriptions of Kirdēr, ed. Back, p. 468). In the *Draxt āsōrīg* (The Babylonian tree), a poem about a contest between a date palm and a goat over precedence (see, e.g., Boyce, “Middle Persian Literature,” p. 55), the date palm maintains that those who do not have wine and bread can satiate themselves with dates instead (ed. Nawwābī, pp. 52-53). In the *Bundahišn* we are told that garden herbs such as rue, parsley, coriander, and leek are suitable for eating with bread (TD<sub>2</sub>, p. 117.14; tr. Anklesaria, 16.17, pp. 148-49). In the *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* it is said that those who throw bread to dogs will themselves be torn by devils looking like dogs (Gignoux, pp. 94, 188), and finally Ahriman himself taunts the evil that they accomplished his works though they ate the bread of Ohrmazd (Gignoux, pp. 136, 214).

In both Middle and New Persian the expression *nān xwardan/k'ordan* also signifies “to eat, have a meal” in general. In Middle Persian it

is found in the inscription of Šāpūr Sakānšāh at Persepolis from the reign of Šāpūr II (Back, p. 493), in Manichean texts (see Boyce, *Reader*, p. 44 text n 1; Sundermann, p. 497), and in Pahlavi. For instance, in the *Bundahišn* it is said regarding the resurrection and the “final body” that just as Mašyē and Mašyānē, when they grew up from the earth, first drank water and then gradually added food, milk, and so on to their diet, men, when they die, will reverse the process, ceasing first to eat meat, then to drink milk, and then to eat at all (*nān xwardan-iz*) and will end by drinking only water.

In modern Iran bread is the dietary staple food for the population and accounts, on the average, for 70% of the daily caloric intake. Several studies conducted in rural and urban environments have shown variations in the proportion of proteins supplied by bread, from 60% among farmers to 34% among landowners (Bahadori and Klodian; Olszyna-Marzys; Hedayat and Sen Gupta).

In most of Iran bread consists of flat, thin cakes made from wheat flour. Only in the Caspian provinces is there a different tradition, baking bread from rice flour, *nān-e berenjī*, already mentioned by medieval writers (Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 381, tr. Kramers, p. 371; Moqaddasī, p. 354; Ebn Esfandiār, p. 76; see berenj); this type is, however, meeting increasing competi-

tion from commercially baked wheat bread (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 79). Rice bread is generally baked on a metal tray (*sāj*) or on the bottom of an inverted pottery bowl placed on a tripod. Among certain groups of pastoral nomads (e.g., Bakṭīārī and Boir-Aḥmad) varying proportions of acorn flour (*balūt*) are occasionally mixed with wheat flour, especially during periods of famine. The bread made this way is called *kalg* (Digard, pp. 191-92).

Several types of bread can be distinguished, depending on whether they are produced commercially or domestically and, particularly, on the baking method: oven or tray. In the towns the quality of the flour seems to be a determining element in distinguishing types of bread. Such distinctions are more vague in rural areas, where the flour is often ground without sifting and, thus, generally has a high percentage of extraction (90-95%).

Similar baking techniques are used throughout the country (Wulff, pp. 292-95), and utensils and ovens are perfectly adapted to the type of bread produced. The most common kind of oven (*tanūr*), used both in bakeries and village houses, where it constitutes one of the built-in features (Bromberger, 1974, p. 34; Martin, p. 28; Desmet-Grégoire; Bazin and Bromberger, p. 81), is a truncated cone made from dried or baked earth, with or without

a flue, standing on the floor or sunk below it. The fire is in the bottom, so that bread may be pressed against the inner walls for baking. Among pastoral nomads, on the other hand, after the dough has been kneaded in a metal pan (*mazama*, *majama*), which is used because of its firmness, it is transferred to a tray or an iron baking sheet (*sāj*) placed over the fire, for baking. Many pastoral nomads, such as in the regions of Tāleš, Gāleš and Šāhsevan (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 80), also use a more rudimentary technique: the raw dough is baked on ashes (*nān-e ātaš*) or pressed against a hot stone.

In urban settings, where most of the bread is purchased from bakeries equipped with a *tanūr*, four main types of bread are found: *tāftūn* (*taftān*), *lavāš* (*nān-e tīrī*), *nān-e sangak*, and *nān-e barbarī*. The first two types are very similar, differentiated only by the types of flour used and the relative thickness of a slab. *Tāftūn*, probably the most popular bread in Iran, is made from a mixture of white and whole-wheat flours, *lavāš* (very similar to *tāftūn*) from white flour forming a more or less leavened dough. In the bakeries, after flour, water, and salt have been poured together in a trough (*taḡār*, *taštak*) and leavening (*kaṃīr-māya*, *āb-e torš*, *āji kaṃīra*) has been added (for *lavāš*), the dough is kneaded (*varz dādan*) by the dough maker (*kaṃīrgīr*, *kalīfa*) and an assistant (*vardast*), who usually does most of the work; it is then left to rise (*var āmadan*). A dough insufficiently kneaded or baked prematurely gives a kind of tough bread called *nān-e čeḡer*. When the dough is ready one person (*čānagīr*) rolls out pieces (*čāna*) with a rolling pin (*vardana*, *čūba*) on a board of wooden strips (*kūna*) or an inverted pottery basin, while another (*šāter*) places the rolled pieces on a cushion (*nānband*, *nāvand*, *bāleštak*, *raftāda*) stuffed with straw and

covered with cotton, by means of which he can press them against the oven walls without burning his hands. After baking for a minute or so, the bread is picked off the oven wall by an assistant (*nānvāssūn*, i.e., *nān-vā-estān*) who uses a skewer or double-pronged fork (*nānčīn*, *sīk*, *došāka*) with a wooden handle. To make especially crisp bread (*nān-e berešta*, *nān-e dandāi*) bakers often make holes in the bread with a kind of comb (*danda zadan*) just before placing it in the oven. *Lavāš*, no more than 2 or 3 mm thick, is the thinnest bread found in Iran.

*Nān-e sangak* is a flat, thin bread 3 to 5 mm thick and about 70 cm long; the leavened dough is made from especially milled flour. It is baked in an oven (*tanūr-e sangakī*, *kūra*) consisting of a sloping brick shelf covered with red-hot pebbles (*sangak*, hence the name), which leave their imprints on the bread, and traditionally heated by dry shrubs (*kār*) or firewood (*hīzom*). In recent years oil has become the major fuel used by urban bakers.

At least two men, the *kaṃīrgīr* and *šāter*, are required to make *sangak*. The *šāter* stands in front of the oven and flattens the dough by hand on a slightly convex wooden slab (*sarak*) attached to a very long wooden handle (*pārū*); he then quickly thrusts the *sarak* into the oven, sliding the dough onto the pebbles. After a couple of minutes the *šāter* or the *nūnvāssūn* (also called *ātašandāz*) removes it with a skewer or double-prong fork. The *sarak* rests in a cleft stick, which permits the *šāter* to slide it back and forth more easily; the broad end is set on a ledge next to the oven while the dough is being applied.

*Nān-e sangak*, often sprinkled with poppy seeds (*kašḡāš*) or black caraway seeds (*sīāhdāna*; *Nigella sativa*), is the bread commonly

served with *āb-gūšt*: it is usually torn in pieces (*tarīd*, *telīd*), soaked in the *āb-gūšt*, and eaten with a spoon as an integral part of the dish. It is also the bread that usually accompanies *gūšt-e kūbīda*, the solid ingredients of *āb-gūšt* mashed and eaten separately from the liquid.

*Nān-e barbarī* (named after a “Barbar” community that settled south of Tehran during the Qajar period; see Dehḡodā s.v.) is a flat, oval bread 3 to 4 cm thick and about 70 cm long; it is made from pieces of leavened dough weighing about 900 grams each. The flour used has a rate of extraction of 70 to 75 %, and *nān-e barbarī* thus resembles European breads, though it is baked by the same method as *nān-e sangak*. It is more expensive than other breads but, where available, is commonly eaten for breakfast (often with cheese) by those who can afford it.

In rural areas, where bread is made at home, the making of bread is a strictly womanly task, and the frequency of baking (daily, weekly, etc.) varies according to the seasonal activities. *Lavāš* seems the most common. Since the primary ingredient (wheat) and the method of preparation are not standardized, the product can vary in thickness and in the amount of leavening added. It can be kept for several weeks wrapped in a napkin (*sofra*) and placed in a basket (*sabad*) or in a cupboard of dried earth (*nāndān*); for that reason it is very common in western Iran, especially in winter, when daily baking is difficult and the bread keeps longer because of the cold.

The *Nān-e Lavāš* sold in a market in Yerevan, Armenia (Source: Wiquijote in Public Domain).

Another kind of bread, thicker than *lavāš*,

is also made in the villages; the dough, made from a flour with high rates of extraction, salt, water, and leaven, is left to stand for a rather long time, or else it rises during baking. A single cook can flatten the pieces of dough by hand and press several at a time against the oven walls with a cushion; baking time is about 30 minutes. The name of this bread varies from region to region: It is called *gerda* around Hamadān, *panjakeš* around Tāleš, *kūlas* or *kūlūs* east of the Safīdrūd. It is a tasty bread made for special occasions, or when little time is available, for example when the women take part in the agricultural activities in summer (Desmet-Grégoire, pp. 271-73). Compared to the bread more common in villages or the bread specific to pastoral nomads, it seems to be an intermediate type of bread, which can be baked, for ten minutes, either on a tray (Digard, pp. 190-91) or in a *tanūr*. It keeps for no more than a day or two and thus is usually made every day.

Aside from breads baked for normal consumption, there are special kinds for the holidays; because the dough is enriched with milk, sugar, honey, eggs, shortening, or yogurt these breads (*nān-e šīrī*, *faṭīr*, *nān-e šīrīn*, *nān-e šīrmāl*) are actually closer to pastry. Bread of European type (*nān-e tōst*, *nān-e māšīnī*) can also be found in Tehran and other large cities (Olszyna-Marzys: Tual, p. 10).



Shopkeepers at a bread outlet in a Tehran street in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Source: Poolnews.ir).

I Am American  
I Am American  
I Am American  
I Am American

I am black, white, yellow, brown and red;  
I am a Democrat, Republican or Independent;  
I am an immigrant or natural born citizen and though I too have felt the pain of discrimination it has not been as severe as others. Discrimination I fear is a hateful characteristic of the human race, one we unfortunately share. I hope, however, that when we see a genuine act of discrimination occurring, we remember how we felt as the victim and find a peaceful and logical way to end it;  
I am Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Agnostic, Atheist;  
I enjoy all kinds of food, music, culture and holiday traditions;  
But as an American I mostly enjoy the traditions of the fourth of July, apple pie, hot dogs and Chevrolet;

**I Am American I Am Proud**

I am proud to come from three immigrant grandparents;  
I am proud and moved by the stories of their struggles to come to the United States;  
I am humbled by the obstacles they overcame to make a new home;  
I am proud that they struggled to learn English in order to find a job;  
I am proud of the long hours they worked to make ends meet;  
I am proud that they did not look for a free hand out rather then work;  
I am proud that they instilled in my parents the same work and moral ethic;  
I am proud that my parents have instilled that in me;  
I am proud that diversity was not something they were forced to do but rather something that just came naturally;  
I am proud that my grandparents and parents shared friendships with those different than I in race, ethnicity, religion, and political view, in other words we didn't see a difference and I am proud for how much I learned through their

friendships;  
I am proud that they taught me to treat people as I want to be treated;  
I am proud that they taught me to judge one by their acts not their appearance;  
I am proud that they taught me to accept that we could only afford the \$5.00 sneaker and to wear them proudly, to be humble and kind;  
I am proud that they taught me to save for my future;  
I am proud that though they never finished high school, that they wanted better for me;  
I am proud that our leadership understood that hard working citizens may fall on hard times and developed social programs to assist them through it.

**I Am an American, But I Am Disappointed**

I am disappointed some stay on social programs for the wrong reasons, leaving less for the real needy;  
I am disappointed that politicians cannot get these programs in order and cast out those undeserving, rather than create more putting this country into fur-



ther financial peril ;

I am disappointed that some find having a second job to better their family is less important than a social event;

I am disappointed that we say we respect life yet do little to show it after it begins;

I am disappointed that some do not understand the value of having children ;

I am disappointed by those who by choice come to my country and expect;

I am disappointed by those who think I should change my traditions and customs for them because they are offended rather than introduce theirs to my traditions;

I am disappointed that we do not fully embrace and make welcome those who genuinely want to become and live the American dream emotionally and financially;

I am disappointed by those who are not willing to immerse themselves into learning English rather than expecting we provide an interpreter;

I am disappointed by those who have not struggled or suffered at the hands of discrimination in our history, expect to reap the same benefits without contribution;

I am disappointed by those who don't appreciate what it means to hold an American passport;

I am disappointed by those who don't understand that we are not perfect ;

I am disappointed by those, who voluntarily came here and then cheer for the country of their birth rather than the team representing the stars and stripes; I am disappointed by the politicians who put forth policy and platforms and use race, religion and ethnicity for political gain, caring little for them after the election;

I am disappointed by people who try to categorize us by age, gender, religion, ethnicity, language;

I am disappointed that in order to run for president of this country home available chance of winning, you have to be a multi millionaire;

I am disappointed in the amount of money raised for political campaigns, money that could be well spent on other things to benefit the citizens;

I am disappointed that citizenship in the United States is so easily attainable causing its importance to be diluted;

I am disappointed that we allow dual citizenship. Is it fair that someone

not born here has an "opt out" country during hard times and war;

I am disappointed that a sports skill is more important than an education;

I am disappointed that a win in sports is so important that talented American athletes are replaced with non citizens with a higher skill;

I am disappointed that the win of a game is more important than integrity;

I am disappointed with the ban placed on a number of countries, because it is the innocent citizens who are hurt;

### I Am an American and I Hope

I hope that we will erase the word minority from our lives;

I hope that we realize that there will always be those who have and those who don't and not to allow ourselves to be bitter over it;

I hope that we see that what is best for the country does not always mean you agree with it;

I hope we realize that only through hard work and fiscal responsibility, is our path to success, **not our clothes, the house we live in , the car we drive;**

I hope we learn to blame ourselves when we falter instead of someone else;

I hope we learn to love;

I hope that, while we have the right to protest against everything in this country, that we do so without invading the rights of another or taking the life of another;

I hope that celebrities and athletes do not use entertainment venues as a political platform. I go to these events to escape the madness;

I hope we remain globally kind, but understand that our fellow citizens young and old should be the first receivers;

I hope we understand that sometimes donating your time and lending a helping hand is more valuable than money

I hope that we always take pride in ourselves and our neighborhoods;

I hope we respect the neighborhood we live in and not litter, if one can disrespect the ground God has given us to live in, then disrespecting everything else is easy;

I hope that journalists and politicians listen to what they say and realize and how their constituency expects to put them before the party they represent;

I hope we truly begin to understand the financial peril this country is in;

I hope that I do not see a civil war in this country when the solution to most of our problems is through using and understanding the meaning of the words tolerance , ethics, hard work, education, family values (regardless of sexual choice) most of which do not need money to make a difference;

I hope that WE THE PEOPLE learn and understand that we cannot allow anything to divide us as citizens;

When this happens we become defenders of political systems rather than defenders of our Constitution;

I hope that we learn that we cannot always get what we want, but through compromise we can find a new wholeness;

I hope that we all learn to respect each other --- something that I have found over the past decade that we have lost;

And I hope that while we have the right to disagree with a President that we will listen and try to understand what the President (any president) is saying, rather than allowing the media to interpret it for us;

I hope that we learn to understand that a perfect orator is not always the best leader and the imperfect orator is not always the worse;

I hope we understand that a president will not always be able to deliver on the promise but by not supporting a president elected from any political party will not benefit anyone. It will only fuel those who wish to divide us as a people, as a nation, as a friend and as a neighbor;

I hope tonight you will pray for this flag, pray for this nation, pray for those who died, will die or were injured defending it , pray for our citizens who are suffering and pray that our President (whoever it may be at the time) will guide us through all these storms. Continue to protest against unfairness but do so in a manner that is meaningful and reasonable.

And to all of my future Presidents, I hope that you will continue to stand up to those who seek to harm us internally or externally , and while I hope that you can accomplish this with grace and stature, in the end do whatever it takes to defend our honor and our people against those who seek to harm us.

*In the Memory of*

**Dr. Mahvash Amir-Mokri**



Recently, we lost a valuable Iranian asset, Dr. Mavash Amir-Mokri, who was a dear friend to my family and *Persian Heritage*. She was as devoted to her role as mother and wife as she was to her profession as a physician. Nothing came between what Mahvash considered a goal.

In 2006, *Persian Heritage* interviewed her for our Spring issue. We received such positive feedback from our readers that we decided to reprint parts of it in this issue. We will miss her desperately but she will forever remain in our hearts.

***Please tell us about your childhood, primary and secondary schools, and your studies at the University.***

I was born in Ardebil on February 7, 1939, a few months after the start of World War II. At that time my father, a physician, was serving his obligatory mission in that province. A few months after my birth, our family returned to Tehran and settled in the north west of Tehran, at the time a developing neighborhood around Tehran University. During the war, even as a child I could feel the effects of war.

Many days I watched the Indian soldiers passing by. Occasionally American military, while I was walking the streets with my parents they lifted me up into the air and with kindness gave me some candy. Older children of our neighborhood were getting small packages of dates from the Indian military. People had to stand in long lines for bread. People were worried and unhappy about the war, occupation of the country and escalating prices. I might have been about three or four years old, when, one day coming back home with my mother, I heard a huge explosion caused by an improvised device that killed our neighbor's twenty-one-year-old son. This type of event was not only painful for the community but seemed to be indicative of

the more ominous influence of the Soviets on our youths.

At age seven, I was registered at Ferdowsi primary school on avenue Takht-Jamshid.

The school was quite close to our house. I could walk to school and was able to hear the school bells from our house. To me this school was like a shrine....

Following success at the entrance examination, I entered medical school at Tehran University. In my last school year, I married Dr. Ebrahim Amir-Mokri and at the conclusion of my internship, we came to the United States with our son Cyrus, then four months old.

***Why didn't you pursue studies in the United States to specialize?***

While my husband was continuing his education, I felt the need of my children to have their mother at their side. This feeling was so overwhelming that I was unable to leave the care of my children to a stranger. I have never regretted my decision. Five years later, when we went back to Iran, five-year-old Cyrus spoke Persian as well as English; as you know this is not the case for the vast majority of Iranian parents raising their children in the United States. Mina, who was two years old, spoke mostly Persian.

***Tell us about your life when you returned to Iran.***

Upon our return to Iran, my children were older and I had the luxury of having my dear mother to look after them, so I decided to continue with my education. I always liked the social and public health aspects of medicine; therefore, I entered the School of Public Health at Tehran University and after graduation took a position in the Planned Parenthood section of the Ministry of Health....

What I regarded as an unhealthy work atmosphere in the ministry prompted my resignation. Because of my husband's very success full practice in pathology and laboratory medicine, I decided to follow that line of study to be of some help to him. By the time I finished my residency, the revolution had started, our children were abroad and we had to join them in the United States.

***What made you interested in studies in Persian culture***

***and history?***

Following the revolution, for me, like many other Iranians a disturbing question remained unanswered" that question was: how did a country with such a rich culture and history regress and deteriorate so quickly – culturally, socially and I started studying Persian history and culture. Meanwhile I decided to study Western culture and English literature by enrolling in Rosary College (now Dominican University). At this time, my children were students at the University of Chicago and this gave me access to the library of that university with a huge inventory of books about Persian history, literature and culture....

***Tell us about your book, Norooz, and the motivation in writing it.***

After returning to the United States, I soon realized that Iranians were more eager than the past to celebrate *NoeRooz*..... I participated in some *Norooz* celebrations and in a short lime realized the fact that I knew very little about the origin and history of this celebration. ...

At times the information floating around was wrong or misleading like the name of *Haftseen* (seven "s") being called *Haftseen* or even *Hafiseen*. At this time, there was activity among Iranians in Illinois to have *Norooz* officially recognized as an Iranian holiday. I was asked to write an article about this celebration and its importance for Iranians. With the efforts of Mr. Normandi, this booklet was published in English and Persian. This was followed by the official declaration of *Norooz* as an Iranian holiday by the governor of the State of Illinois.....

***What is your wish for Iran and Iranians in the future?***

Freedom, because only with freedom based on their great historical and cultural heritage can they achieve the social and cultural progress that they deserve.

***Do you have any message for young Iranians living in Iran and abroad?***

Work hard, increase your knowledge and do well in any field you have chosen.

Never forget your cultural and historical heritage and never lose hope.



**JAHANGIR AMOUEZGAR  
DIES AT 98**



Jahangir Amouzegar (January 13, 1920 – January 17, 2018) was an Iranian economist, academic and politician.

An economist by training, Amouzegar served as Minister of Commerce and Minister of Finance of Iran from 26 May 1962 until 19 July 1962. He also acted as an executive director of the International Monetary Fund.

Amouzegar held a bachelor's degree in economics from Tehran University. He pursued his studies and eventually got a doctorate from UCLA.

His brother, Jamshid Amouzegar, was a Prime Minister of Iran during the Shah's reign. He died on 17, January 2018 in the United States, 4 days after his 98th birthday.

He has three books that have been published: "Managing the Oil Wealth: Opec's Windfalls and Pitfalls", "The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution: The Pahlavis' Triumph and Tragedy" and "The Islamic Republic of Iran: Reflections on an Emerging Economy."

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***A Tribute to the Memory  
of All Loved Ones***

**The Train Of Life**

At birth we boarded the train and met our parents,  
 And we believe they will always travel on our side.  
 However, at some station  
 Our parents will step down from the train,  
 Leaving us on this journey alone.

As time goes by,  
 Other people will board the train;  
 And they will be significant  
 I.e. Our siblings, friends, children,  
 And even the love of your life.

Many will step down  
 And leave a permanent vacuum.  
 Others will go so unnoticed  
 That we don't realize  
 They vacated their seats.

This train ride will be full of joy,  
 Sorrow, fantasy, expectations,  
 Hellos, goodbyes, and farewells.  
 Success consists of having a good relationship  
 With all passengers  
 Requiring that we give the best of ourselves.  
 The mystery to everyone is:  
 We do not know at which station  
 We ourselves will step down.

So, we must live in the best way,  
 Love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are.  
 It is important to do this  
 Because when the time comes for us to step down  
 And leave our seats empty  
 We should leave behind beautiful memories  
 For those who will continue to travel  
 on the train of life.  
 I wish you a joyful journey on the train of life.  
 Reap success and give lots of love.

**UNCOVERED 'GIRL FROM  
ENGHELAB STREET'**



Iranians appear to have taken inspiration from a woman who landed in jail late last month for a peaceful protest against Iran's strict Islamic dress code, echoing frustration at official restrictions on women's appearance in public. A number of women have ditched their head scarves around the country since 31-year-old Vida Movahedi's daring but silent plea for greater freedom for tens of millions of women in Iran.

Movahedi became a symbol of defiance after she stood on a metal utilities box on a busy street in the Iranian capital a month ago and silently waved a white scarf from a stick to challenge the obligation since Iran's 1979 revolution for women to wear head scarves. She was dubbed "the girl from Enghelab Street".

Now Iranians on social media praising the protesters claim "the girl from Enghelab Street" has proliferated, and photos testifying to a budding headache for Iranian authorities emerged one after the other on social media on January 29.

They show at least nine other women posing in similar fashion in Tehran and the central Iranian city of Isfahan. One has reportedly been detained by the authorities, while the fates of the others are unclear.

Iran's clerically dominated authorities insist that women, even foreign visitors, must cover their head and hair in public with a scarf, known as the hijab.

In the photos, the women's heads are uncovered as they stand on utility boxes or other objects on the streets of Tehran with scarves held up on sticks.

One woman who was said to have been arrested and was identified as Narguess Hosseini, stood at the same spot as Movahedi.

An Interview with

## FERRIS REZVANI

**CAR DESIGNER**

Persian Heritage

*Thank you for granting this interview to Persian Heritage, we are delighted to share your story with our readers. Let's start with where you were born and your family background.*

Thank you for this opportunity. I was born in Iran. My dad was an F4 Phantom fighter pilot. So, I grew up surrounded by air force fighter plans and culture. My family immigrated to the US in 1984 when I was 9 years old. Initially we settled down in Madison, Wisconsin.

*Where did you begin your interest in cars and fighter aircraft?*

As I stated since my father was a fighter pilot being surrounded by this sparked my interest. As to cars I fell in love with car design at a very young age.

*When did you leave Wisconsin?*

We moved to California in 1987 so my father could start businesses. His career as a pilot however, remained a great influence on me. I wanted to be a fighter pilot like him, but various health limitations prevented that dream. I defaulted to my interest in car designs. All my books while growing up were about military aircraft, tanks and cars. After I graduated college, I entered into a career in Software but I got bored very quickly. After some thought I decided to start a car company and create the same high speed thrill of flying on the ground.

*Entering into car design and production is not easy.*

No but I am fearless when it comes to doing something. I work very hard and always find a way.

*Are there any other individuals who inspired you and car designs?*

Yes, definitely my biggest inspirations have been successful people who have not given in such as Elon Musk, who I have a lot of respect for. I also believe in partnerships with other companies and brands and I am good in bringing people together. I love the story of the small company who is willing to think outside the box and take on the big players. In my case I wanted to bring beautiful and exotic designs to life, cars that people can drive every day.

*Tell us about the first design.*

We started with the BEAST and frankly the BEAST has



taken control over me. Our designs became very popular and well received. Fortunately, we received orders and continued to perfect our target market. While I didn't plan on becoming an entrepreneur, it just simply happened once I began design and creation of vehicles. In order to make this my living I knew I would have to work and market hard in order to create sales.

To be honest with you the finance and accounting to me are the most boring parts of a business and I don't like spending time on it.

*Having said that the automotive industry and aerospace are the two most capital intensive industries on earth. To do so requires a careful approach to building.*

*Is it correct to say then that since they are the most capital intensive that regulations make going forward difficult?*

Yes. There are also worldwide regulations on road legal status and emissions compliance. So, there are lots of barriers.

*How then did you become successful or rather make it work?*

I started the company with \$5,000 and now three years later we have our 3rd model. How we got to this position was via a lot of hard work. But, I believe when you love something it doesn't feel like work. We work seven days a week and love every minute of it. It just doesn't feel like work and we also remind ourselves that we are competing with billion dollar companies that have unlimited funds!

We, the little guys, are setting trends and doing what it takes bigger companies millions of dollars to do. I am proud of what we've achieved with such little capital.

*To date what are your sales statistics?*

We have sold six BEAST models, four BEAST ALPHA Models and have four TANK cars currently on order. We considered the BEAST to be the sexy car but it had a very limited audience because it lacked doors and was track focused. BEAST ALPHA was a road going car with a broader appeal. TANK is the new Hummer. it's designed to be that tough, rough, military style SUV. While there are many companies that perform engine upgrades or bumper kits, we focus on creating all new unique cars that are out of the ordinary. We like to create new designs.

***What makes your cars and vehicles unique?***

The design and exclusivity which provide a pure driving experience. Today's sports cars have become increasingly isolating in their feel. None of the exotics like Ferrari, Lamborghini and McLaren provide manual transmissions anymore. They only provide automatics further isolating the driving experience. The BEAST and BEAST ALPHA provide that race car experience on the road.

***How difficult are these machines to manufacture?***

It is their complexity on a small scale and in low volume that is the most difficult aspect. In order to make it successful. Though I am the CEO, I am also the janitor. I wear many hats from marketing, to finance, to strategy to design, to manufacturing to customer relationships; sometimes it can be overwhelming to have so many balls simultaneously in the air. We are a young company and I have my name on it. Having your name on a company makes you want to be sure of its success. Rezvani represents a brand that is focused on design and uniqueness. My name is on it therefore it's my reputation and I have to ensure it is successful.

***What does the future hold?***

In the next few years we'll be focusing on perfecting our models, lowering manufacturing costs and building models that are driven by passion and that large companies won't build. We will be coming out with a little brother of the TANK.

***What words can you leave for our readers seeking to be successful in business?***

As an immigrant, I faced adversity. But it's that experience of overcoming adversity that showed me and will show that, one can do anything. I like taking the best of all cultures around the world.



**A STUDENT OF IRAN,  
NOW THE DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAN  
ANTI-CANCER INSTITUTE**

Forbes's website reported on a successful Iranian woman who came to the United States with a student visa a bit late, but is now the director of an anti-cancer drug firm with a budget of \$20 million.



Nazli Azimi, 48, came to the United States with a student visa after the Islamic Revolution, whose father was an army officer and lived in secret, in Iran after the revolution. Due to problems in Iran, Nazli took visas from the US Embassy in Turkey to study medicine at the University of Maryland. Her brothers live in Iran.

Nazli Azimi then worked for some time at the National Institutes of Health in the United States, known as NIH, and is now the Managing Director of Biosynthesis Therapy, an active company in the development of anticancer drugs and immune system diseases. The company has a budget of \$20 million and is based in Irvine, California.

Nazli Azimi already had a skin care center in 2010 and started the business of Bayoniz, which now has 13 employees. Nazli Azimi says it needs at least \$ 300 million before selling and selling drugs for sale. .