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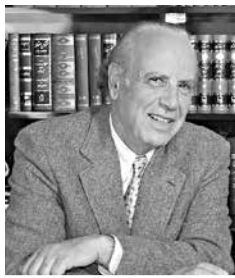
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I send my heartfelt greetings for the upcoming New Year to all of our supporters and readers in Iran and the Diaspora. May the New Year bring us all health, prosperity, equality, compassion and a peaceful planet. I pray for the innocent whose heartbreaking voices coming out of Iran are clearly heard; people yearning for their rights as human beings. I was hoping that I could write more pleasant news for this editorial. Unfortunately, the news out of Iran is more conflicting and disturbing. Sparkles of hope have diminished with President Trump's and his administration's threatening and divisive language. This, combined with Iran's oppressive government, has made life more confusing and discouraging for the people. Demonstrations, incarcerations, executions, unemployment, inflation, bankruptcies, the closing of factories, a bankrupt banking system and hunger are what Iranians face today. The underprivileged and middle-class citizens are becoming disheartened. And, if this is not enough the country has been ravished with severe storms and earthquakes. How much can people endure? How close are they to a breakdown? How close are they to giving up? So many other citizens and countries have collapsed with much less pressure? My anxiety for the people of Iran subsides a bit when I think of the history of their fortitude. How proud they are of their country and their determination to achieve. I pray that grows stronger, for it is the basis of their survival.

It is now the twentieth anniversary of the serial chain murders of writers, poets, professors, politicians and liberals in Iran. I felt compelled to address this. It seems relevant, since over the past few weeks the world, young and old, are obsessing and are appalled with the recent assassination and butchering of an Arab born, American resident. It is perplexing to me that most of us don't know the names of our neighbors, yet because of the constant coverage of his assassination Mr. Khashoggi has become a household name. The news of his disappearance and murder was like a bomb that exploded, not only in the US, but throughout the world. President Trump, using the excuse of American interest in the region and the hundred-billion-dollar deal with the Arabs, tried to disregard the truth of this atrocity. This behavior has shocked the nation! But where is the shock and media coverage of the daily bombing by the Saudis of innocent civilians in Yemen? Where is the shock and coverage of the starvation of innocent men, women and children in Yemen? Where is the shock and coverage over the women killed by bullets and bombs? The press, except for news sources in Persian, do not cover these atrocities nor of the butchering and killing of Iranians by the hands of the cruel present Iranian regime.

This takes us back to the twentieth anniversary of the chain murders, (this is the term used to describe serial murders and disappearances.) We never heard or read information from the beginning of the revolution on the shooting of General Gharani, Ayatollah Mottahhari and Taleghani who allegedly suffered and died from a sudden heart attack. Nor do we read or hear about the

death of Dr. Sami, who was the head of the Ministry of Health and the pioneer in introducing universal health in Iran. He was knifed and his skull was broken while in his office seeing patients.

These chain murders also included former Prime Minister Bakhtiar and a friend who were knifed and butchered in Paris; General Oveissi, Reza Mazlouman killed in Paris; the Mykonos Restaurant assassinations in Germany that killed three Iranian Kurdish opposition leaders and their translators; and in Tehran, the butchering and knifing of Dariush Forouhar and his wife Parvaneh Forouhar, who at the beginning of the revolution played an important role in the talks of not allowing the separation of Kurdistan. There was also the series of murders of scholars and writers like Mohammad Mokhtari and many others. They were choked to death; their butchered bodies were left to rot on the side of the road outside of the city in order for people to find their corpses and report their murders to the authorities.

Sadly, I remember Mr. Saidi Sirjani, an admired journalist and writer. God bless his soul., Mr. Saidi Sirjani came to the United States early in the revolution. We were together at a mutual friend's house. During that visit Mr. Sirjani (who was an avid skeptic and cynic of the regime in Iran) invited all who loved Iran to return and serve their homeland. He was heavily criticized by many as a collaborator of the regime after he returned to his beloved country. Following a letter that criticized the leadership of the revolution he was placed in prison and then assassinated allegedly by a cyanide suppository (still questioned.) Many young activists, who could have made great strides for the country, after spending time in prison for distribution of propaganda against the policies of the regime, were murdered. They are left behind without tombstones or names in a cemetery called Khavaran. Public hangings of many, in the name of theft and robberies, was another way to suppress or destroy oppositional voices.

It is now surprising that for the first time in twenty years we see more clearly that the government admitted responsibility for some of the atrocities and some of the assassinations exercised against oppositional forces. If we parallel the case of Khashoggi with these chain murders, there is a pattern. That pattern is leadership never taking responsibility for their acts but rather blaming the underdog. The underdog is then sentenced to years in prison and/or even executed. Another pattern that is noticed in these serial chain murders is the use of suicide. With this type of death, the parties are visibly known as martyrs, covering the real source of their demise. According to one foreign source "Deutsche Welle" recently the serial chain murders in Iran, after twenty years have been acknowledge as open wound.

When we reflect back on the last thirty-nine years post the revolution we are confronted by apathy and regret. The Revolution "right or wrong" began by many innocent young souls. Its purpose was to fight for freedom and the betterment of Iran. They wanted to improve Iran's policies. This Revolution was hijacked by corrupt and brutal individuals who while on their path to

power and dominance destroyed anyone or anything in its way.

Their path was paved with an eight-year war that killed over one million innocent young people who believed they fought for martyrdom and the protection of their homeland. Their path included a bankrupt economy, a hostage crisis, a corrupt government under Ahmadinejad. It also included the disappearance of eight hundred billion dollars of oil money, that reappeared in foreign banks, investments in bankrupt countries such as Venezuela and the extravagant travels of Ahmadinejad and his clan to third world countries all in the name of so called "brotherhood."

Today the doors of the outside world have been slammed shut to Iran and Iranians. Even countries like Russia and China only look out for their own interest by filling the pockets of the corrupt leadership of present Iran.

A government that stated they looked out for the underprivileged and to serve the people has in fact made them poorer, less fortunate and hungrier. It instead has filled the pockets of its corrupt system and individuals, who are heartless and deceitful. I pray that all faith has NOT left the hearts of all, even the believers who truly believed in the leadership of Iran. I pray that all hope is NOT gone. But I am frightened that the voice in my prayers is softer and weaker.

Remembering and recalling these series of events is heart-breaking and disgraceful. I still hope for the day, when this chapter of Iran's history is ended, and it becomes only a history learning lesson. A lesson the Germans took to heart. The horrific government of the Nazi's under Hitler's rule left the German people embarrassed and beaten. They were looked at by the outside world as Nazi's not Germans. This hindered the youth from achieving. They then changed. They focused on their love for their country, not the despicable acts of Nazi leadership. Iranians, especially its youth MUST do the same. They, like the Germans MUST have a new clear vision for Iran. Germans do not make any connection to their past, as a matter of fact they refer to that leadership as Nazis (outsider, not German). Nazi's and Germans are referred to as two separate entities and are not associated with one another.

I hope the day is soon when Iranians will isolate the old from the new and no longer allow themselves to be identified by the hateful behaviors of their past and present rulers. I hope the day is near when the outside world will again respect and love Iranians for their humanity. I hope the day is near when Iranians can travel freely to seek a higher education, to see family and friends. I hope the day is near when Iranians are not referred to as terrorists. I hope the day is near when the invisible walls that isolate Iran are removed. I hope the day is near when, the doors that were slammed shut to them, are reopened to freedom and hospitality. Many times, I have written on the pages of my editorial that the government of Iran is not representative of its people. This distinction is crucial to the survival of the humanity of Iranians.

Again, I wish our wonderful supporters, readers, Iranians, the diaspora and the rest of the world a Healthy and Happy New Year, one where my hopes become realities.

I end on this note with a Poem dedicated to our readers. It is written by the late Mohammad Mokhtari, one of the chain murder victims.

A Poem by Mohammad Mokhtari

The forehead is bruised from the attack

When they cross the graves of martyrs

When the chest deflects the air

And their clothes

On the slogan of the walls

He was doing

Those who love the clothes of mourning

Are covered

From the crowd

The legacy of the martyrs

Pull out

The flower was bursting in a hot spot

And now by the spikes

Cactus organs

They are over.

The fatty colposes from the holes of fear

Revolutionary pyramid

They are eaten

The shoulders of the people come up.

And wave



Happy New Year

Shahrokh Alavi

CONTINUE TO PERSEVERE

Dear Editor:

Your efforts and perseverance in continuing the publication of this great quarterly is really admirable.

All the best,
Ardeshir Lotfalian

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Dear Editor:

Just wanted to let you know that the piece you printed by me (Misleading Terminology) is getting a very high number of hits in academia.edu - well done and bravo to you & Persian Heritage!

Eradats, Kaveh

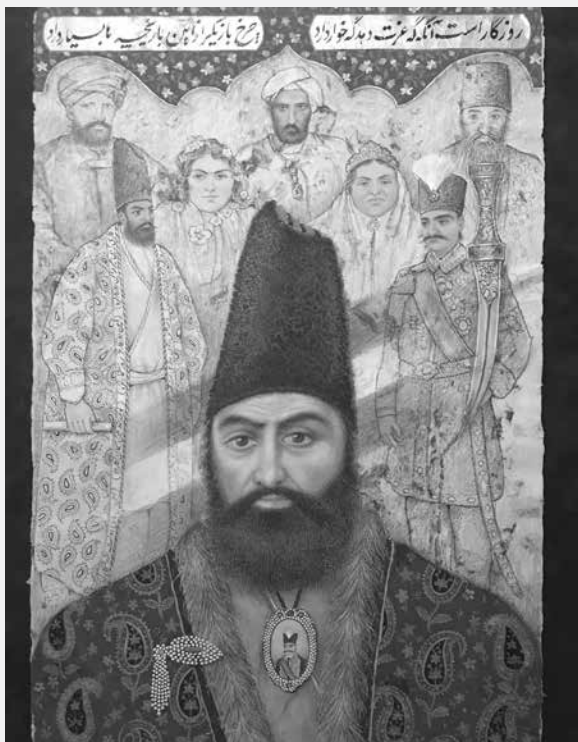
IMMIGRATION AND VISAS

Dear Editor:

I enjoyed Mr. Rahni's article and agree with most. He, however, compares early immigrants to the U.S. with those of today. All nations have differences among their citizens, but have allegiance to one.

Here allegiance remains to their birth country (in many cases) that is diminishing patriotism in this country. Seems unfair and disrespectful! And I am against the ban imposed on certain countries but having your family visit is not a constitutional right, the right is for you to travel freely. And the law trumps emotion.

KS (NJ)

**AMIRKABIR****A Work by MohammadAli Dowlatshahi**

Ali Dowlatshahi is an Iranian born artist whose gallery is located in Stamford, Connecticut. His works and fans range from political royalty to pop culture personalities. Mr. Dowlatshahi's work is often described as "intricate, love-laced and politically charged." He carefully renders designs from original masterpieces and is in public and private collections around the world. As to his subject matter his artistic motifs include floral patterns, geometrics, arabesques, mythical creatures, rosettes, paisley patterns, palmettos, medallions, border and marginal decorations, scrolls, curves, and hunting scenes that embody the sumptuous detail, rich texture, and elaborate ornamentation that constitute the glory of Persian art. These motifs also exemplify the Iranian artist's traditional devotion to symmetry, harmonious pattern, and purity of line and form.

**WHERE IS MY OIL?
CORRUPTION IN
IRAN'S OIL AND
GAS SECTOR**

Khosrow B. Semani

September 2018

This new journal is a comprehensive report on circumstances that surround the oil history of Iran. It addresses the past and present corruption that has plagued Iran's oil industry for decades. Iran's oil situation extends far beyond its borders. It is a global problem. It's most severe victims are the citizens of Iran and its Diaspora. The study that unfolds from his work clearly evidences how this global corruption has, is and will continue to undermine democracy. With this erosion comes a lack of trust.

Having said that I found the chapter that discusses prevention of corruption to be one of the most significant. The author discusses the necessity of transparency from licensees and contracts to Social and Economic Spending. His evaluation comes from the use of models developed by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, EITI. Through the use of this model they are able to identify the areas where the theft and loss of Iran's natural resources and revenues occur. There is a wealth of knowledge to be found in this book. It is a strongly suggested read if one is interested in global politics.

*Persian Heritage is pleased to announce that we will be publishing articles from **Where is My Oil?** in future additions.*



From "The Fireworks" series, acrylic on canvas by Niloofar Mohammadifar

CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN ART, at UMF Emery Community Arts Center

On September 20, 2018 UMF Emery Community Arts Center presented "Inner Fragments," an exhibition of art by 16 Iranian female artists. Curated by Iranian artists Parisa Ghaderi and Mahsa Soroudi, this striking show is the first-time many of these original works have been exhibited in the U.S.

Iranian art has a rich, profound and prominent art heritage, including outstanding Persian rugs, magnificent tile work, enormous rock reliefs and detailed Persian miniatures. Like many other countries, it has evolved over time and has found a unique voice in the modern contemporary art scene. Many of the artists participating in the exhibition live and work inside Iran and represent a new wave in contemporary Iranian art. They include: Hadieh Afshani, Mahshid Asoudekhah, Ghazaleh Baniahmad, Nasim Davari, Sanaz Dezfoulian, Narcisse E. Esfahani, Maryam Farahzadi, Elahe Farzi, Neda Moïnafshari, Niloofar Mohammadifar, Farnaz Rabieijah, Azadeh Ramezani Tabrizi, Nastaran Safaei, Mahshid Soroudi, Tarlan Tabar, Nazli Tahvili.

For these emerging artists, born after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's political and social turbulence has not been an obstacle in the development of their artistic voice. In fact, it has helped fuel and shape it. Their art has been overshadowed by revolution, war and sanctions. These industrious artists await an opportunity to showcase their artwork.

This exhibition portrays a slice of women's lives that is profound and beyond typical clichés. It is an invitation to forget the stereotypical images of Iran and women and it invites the viewer to be part of their intimate and private moments and through their lens. It will create a space for dialogue and constructive discussion between the artists and the American audience thus engaging in an artistic discourse regardless of political and geographical boundaries.

Taking steps towards familiarizing the community with the contemporary artists who may go disregarded or unseen due to the absence of fair exposure. In the recent years, she's been concerned about how contemporary Iranian art is being showcased in other countries and to what extent these expositions have presented Iranian contemporary art unaffected by popular stereotypes.

FARMINGTON, ME

IRAN'S YOUNG ENEMY TO ASSEMBLE \$1 MILLION FOR VICTIMS OF THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE IN PITTSBURGH

Following a deadly shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, some citizens and Muslim organizations in the United States have begun their efforts to express solidarity with the families of the victims of the shooting and to assist them, some of which have received media attention.

Among these actions, the 29-year-old Shaye Khatieri, an Iranian-born young man, has been able to raise around half a million dollars to help the victims of the shooting at the Jewish Synagogue in Pittsburgh. On Saturday, during a childhood ceremony at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Robert Bowers, who cried out "All Jews must die," shot dead and killed 11 people and wounded at least five people. Police have arrested the striker, 46, who lives in Pittsburgh.

In the middle of various reports on the incident, a young Iranian citizen has been brought to the attention of the media. The 29-year-old, who recently graduated from the university, first heard the news of a shooting at the home of his Jewish friend and decided to launch an online campaign to collect donations for the synagogue and survivors of this tragedy.

His campaign is called "Tree of Life". "I told myself first that if I helped raise \$18 or \$36, it would not be a big deal, but with the launch of the online campaign and asking for help from the people, I could have a much bigger impact," said the Iranian immigrant. According to CNN's correspondent, he seems to have been right and can accumulate a lot.

His primary goal was to reach the 50,000-dollar limit, but he had not yet started his campaign for 24 hours, which was about six times that.

The Johns Hopkins School of International Studies, which only took two minutes to launch this online campaign, now has raised the campaign's target to \$1 million. So far, more than 4,800 people have responded positively to his campaign.

**PERSIAN LEOPARD
SEEN FOR THIRD TIME
IN TWO YEARS
IN NORTH-CENTRAL IRAN**

Source: Tehran Times



A Persian leopard has been spotted for the third time within two years in Taleqan, a rural district located in Alborz province, north-central part of the country, ISNA reported. Farzin Hakimi the provincial department of environment chief said that rangers patrolling the area have observed a leopard laying on the mountain range and captured some photos. Taleqan is a desirable habitat for the leopards, as it is the third time environmentalists have succeeded sighting a leopard and capturing photos of this valuable species, he highlighted.

Referring to the role and importance of the precious species in wildlife habitats, Hakimi called on local environmental advocates to cooperate with the environmental forces in protecting this wildlife valuable species. On January 1, 2017, locals had taken pictures of a leopard in the protected area of Taleqan for the first time, and a year later on February 19, a leopard footprint had been spotted. The footprint picture is taken on February 19, and the leopard's image on January 1, 2017 in Taleqan protected area.

The Persian leopard is one of the nine sub-species of the world's leopards, which is considered to be the largest and is among the most endangered species in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Reducing the species feeding the leopards due to illegal hunting, changing habitats due to road construction and mining activities, fire, domestic animal hunting and illegal hunting of such precious species due to its skin are among the reasons led to their being endangered. In the Middle East, the largest population have survived in Iran



**A Loss of Uniqueness,
Blending the Playful
and Political,**

**SHIRIN ALIABADI,
DEAD AT 45**

Shirin Aliabadi, an Iranian artist, passed away from cancer this past October. She was to the art world, in a word,

unique. Her art represented a careful means of expression for women, as well as other Iranians within Iran who struggled with their desires and their reality.

As an artist it was her hope to show the world that the youth of Iran were not what was shown in the media; girls stripped of color without makeup or uniqueness, draped in the black chador. She instead showed reality. With heads still covered she photographed women who dared to put on makeup, show bleached or unbleached hair that sneaked out from the slipping off chador or scarf. She showed how they were beautiful and intended to stay that way.

Her two most notable pieces pushed her onto the world art scene like a rocket. "Miss Hybrid", 2008" is a portrait of a young woman wearing a denim jacket, colorful scarf with her exposed bleached blond hair, blowing a huge bubble and sporting a bandage over her nose indicating recent plastic surgery.

The second piece "Girls in Cars" depicts a car of young women with smiles, clearly ready to defy the rules and regulations set forth by their government. These women are strong and know how to manipulate the reality they are in and still show a level of respect to their government. This I call "true feminine power. This was and remains a very powerful and threatening message to their rulers. "I don't believe that you automatically become a rebel with a Hermès scarf around your neck," she said, but added that fashionable apparel can show the paradoxes with which modern Iranian women live, and allow them to convey "a passive rebellion".

Her death will not end the message her artwork carries. Shirin Aliabadi was born on March 10, 1973, in Tehran her mother, Maymanat, and her father Iraj. Both were artists, her mother artist taught at Tehran University and her father a poet worked for an insurance company. Her older brother, Ramin, mentored her in music, books and pop culture.

According to her husband, also an artist, Farhad Moshiri, Shirin and her family enjoyed a high standard of living until the Iranian revolution in 1979. At that point her parents lost their jobs, he said, but they still had the means to send her to study archaeology at the University of Paris, where she also earned a master's degree in art history. She had hoped to participate in excavations of the ancient Iranian civilization of Elam, but the Gulf War and other conflicts interfered.

She married Moshiri in 1993. The two shared a creative impulse and began making art together. "We just started making things — lamps, chairs, design objects," he said. "We'd buy broken old furniture and fix them up. Gradually we started to sell."

They deliberately avoided subject matter that could get them into trouble with the authorities, he said, such as nudity and anti-religious themes. "We wanted to find a language that allowed us to say something without having to shout, and that really became the focal point of our creativity," said Moshiri,

Her talent and her uniqueness as an artist and person will be missed. She is survived by her husband, mother and brother Ramon.

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2,500-year-old Persian Palace Found at Turkey's Oluz Mound

A reception chamber with columns and a throne chamber, which belong to a 2,500-year old Persian palace, were found during excavation at the Oluz Mound in the Göynücek district of Amasya province.

Amasya Governor Osman Varol visited the Oluz Mound to examine the excavations and to receive information about the technical and structural features of the excavation site. He announced that a new structure was discovered during the excavation. Emphasizing that finding ruins belonging to a 2,500-year old Persian palace excited them, Varol said "We visited the excavation site and had a chance to see what has been found. This is long-running work. We would like to thank the professor and those who contributed to this. We saw how tough the conditions are here. We especially would like to thank the professor for his contributions to science and to Amasya."

Istanbul University Archaeology Department faculty member and professor, Dr. Şevket Dönmez, is leading the excavation works; he said that movable cultural material ruins showed that a group of Persian-origin Akhemenids might have lived at the Oluz Mound in the year 450 B.C. The mound is located at 25 kilometers southwest of the Amasya city center.

Stressing that a Persian city was found during the excavation works this year, Dönmez said that "New units of this city have been revealed. We now know about a path, a mansion and a fire temple. All these are firsts in world history. A reception chamber with columns and a throne chamber have also started to emerge for the first time this year. We are in the beginning phase of the excavation work for these chambers. This current phase and discoveries are very exciting. These belong to a very significant period of the Anatolian Iron Age, Anatolian Old Age and Persian archaeology. "They are very important discoveries which will add to their identity and uniqueness. We have found six column bases so far. A clear plan has not yet been revealed, but hopefully we will find it in one or two years of excavation works. We found a bull figurine belonging to the Hittite period this year during excavations. There is a very big Hittite city under the Persian city. We think that it is Shanovhitta. It shows us that this is a traditional sacred city and every new civilization built a temple here. "We did not know that we would find such a Persian city. Neither such a temple nor such a reception chamber... We did not expect any of this," added Dönmez.

Twelve academics, 10 archaeologists and 15 archaeology students worked on the excavation. Dönmez said that they only expected to excavate a mid-Anatolian mound and find answers to their questions regarding the Iron Age culture. "However, we came across an entirely different situation. The entire world has started to watch Oluz Mound on the basis of Mid-Anatolian and Anatolian archaeology. I believe that it has started to become a significant center in updating and changing Anatolia's religious history after Göbeklitepe," added Dönmez.

ABOUT OLUZ MOUND

Oluz Mound is located on the Amasya-Çorum Highway. Measuring 280 by 260 meters, it covers nearly 45-decares of land, and is 15 meters above the plain level. The area was discovered between the years of 1997-99 during surface exploration conducted by a team led by Dr. Şevket Dönmez (who was an associate professor at that time). Later, excavation started under the leadership of Prof. Dönmez in 2007. Works were conducted from two different openings, called "A opening" located on the West side and "B opening" on the East side of the highest point on the hill. Two more openings were added, called C and D openings.■

Iranian Film Received Panda Award

October 19, 2018 in the UK



Iranian farmer Mahmud Mansuri (R) is seen guiding the crew of "In the Realm of the Spider-tailed Viper" in a scene from the documentary film.

The first Iranian documentary film to win the Panda Award in the U.K occurred on October 19, 2018. There were 800 film submissions to the Wildscreen film festival in the UK (held from October 15 – 19). Out of these 800 films, 37 films were nominated for the Panda award. Fourteen Panda awards were provided in 14 categories.

Wildscreen is ranked first in Wildlife in the world and was established in the UK 36 years ago.

The major goal of this festival is to convene the best photographers, filmmakers and creative professionals with the most committed conservationists to create compelling stories about the natural world; that inspire the wider public to experience it, feel part of it and protect it.

An Iranian film in the talent category received the first ever Panda award. The main goal of Spider-tailed viper film, produced by Mohammad Ala in Iran, is to protect the habitat of this creature. The award for the film and Mahmoud who did not get a visa to attend this festival was collected by its producer, Dr. Mohammad Ala. This Iranian film was produced in Iran with all Iranian crew and was funded by its independent producer which took six years to produce it.■

Iran And America: Why All The Enmity?

By John Limbert
(source:LobeLog)

At some time in the future, when officials in Washington and Tehran finally stop yelling at each other and start talking, they will ask themselves: “Why did we waste so much time hating each other?”

They are not there yet. Until they are, denunciations, accusations, and threats are still the order of the day. Several years ago, an honest Iranian diplomat told my students, “The basis of our foreign policy is opposition to you.” Iranian political scientist Mahmoud Sariolghalam recently wrote, “Anti-Americanism continues to serve as the *raison d’être* of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This has less to do with the nature of the American system and more to do with the fact that Iran has turned anti-Americanism into an identity.”

The result of these skewed Iranian priorities has been policy based on empty slogans and threats, inept diplomacy that-despite the efforts of some skilled individuals-has made Iran many enemies and few friends. Among the latter are the murderous regime in Damascus, and, ironically, the small and isolated Christian state of Armenia.

ANTI-IRANIANISM

Things are no better on the American side. Ask an Iranian woman how she became pregnant and she may tell you “*feshaar-e-atraafiaan*” (pressure from those around me). This U.S. administration has also been both pressured and conned by those around it. This bizarre coalition includes opportunistic right-wing Israeli politicians as well as Saudis who, encouraged by those who would sell them expensive weapons, find Iranian threats everywhere.

There are also some odd groups of diasporas Iranians-and their hired American shills-whose motives and grasp of conditions at home are problematic at best. All of these constituencies detested Obama for his efforts to establish civil discourse with a hostile Iran and change decades of futility into something more productive. They loudly denounce him and his policies, and thus both exploit President Trump’s fixations and play sweet music to his ears.

American officials’ foreign policy speeches on Iran, such as that of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the Heritage Foundation last May, devote more words to denouncing Obama’s policies than proposing anything coherent. Indeed, it’s difficult to know if the enemy is the Islamic Republic of Iran or Barack Obama. The former is an adversary, the latter an obsession.

The Trump administration has decreed that Iran is the embodiment of all evil. As such, it must be both feared and destroyed. If such a description requires stretching the truth and overstating the threat from Iran’s isolated and incompetent regime, then so be it. Facts do not matter. For example, according to a writer for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), Iran and its paramilitary Quds Force pose “a significant threat to the

American homeland.” Borrowing a term long-beloved by the American military, this administration has declared that Iran is “malign” (i.e. a cancer to be eliminated).

Last May, Pompeo listed 12 U.S. demands of Iran. His list was not a list. It was not an opening negotiating position. It was an ultimatum calling for complete surrender. If 12 demands were not enough, in recent Foreign Affairs article, he added a thirteenth: that Iran improve its human rights record.

About these demands, retired Foreign Service Officer Mark Fitzpatrick writes, “Imposing so many demands suggests a lack of focus. Having a dozen priorities means having none.” He adds that Trump administration statements suggest a “hidden agenda” of regime change for Iran.

In reality there is nothing hidden about this agenda. For whatever reasons, the Trump administration has decided that the Islamic Republic should not exist.

It is clear that this administration does not do irony. In his list of grievances against Iran, Pompeo accused Iran’s rulers of being a “mafia” that has enriched itself at public expense. Might he not find a similar group just a few blocks east of the State Department? He ends his Foreign Affairs article with a section called “The Power of Moral Clarity” in which he writes, “President Trump’s actions in confronting outlaw regimes stem from the belief that moral confrontation leads to diplomatic conciliation.”

Really? It does? Tell that to the ghost of Jamal Khashoggi. If you can find it.

SOURCES OF ANGER

There is no reason and there is every reason for this enmity. On the Iranian side, Sariolghalam has well identified the cause. The aging political elite-which has been in power almost 40 years-has decided that anti-Americanism will keep it in its offices and palaces a little longer. It has long exploited Iran’s historical grievances, real and imagined-the CIA-sponsored coup d’etat of 1953, the subsequent support for an autocratic Shah, support for Iraq during the ruinous Iran-Iraq war, the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988, and rumors of American support for separatist movements among Iran’s ethnic minorities.

The endless repetition of stale slogans has had unintended consequences among Iran’s young and well-educated population. “Any country our government denounces so adamantly,” goes the reasoning, “can’t be all bad. In fact, it must be pretty good if our regime dislikes it so much.” Long gone are the mass marches and demonstrations of the 1980s when millions would turn out to chant “death to” this or that on instruction.

On the American side, in addition to “pressure from those around us” and the president’s insecurities and inferiority complex vis-a-vis his predecessor, there is a third factor: Iran humiliated the United States 40 years ago during the 1979-81 hostage crisis. Although many anti-Iranian chest-beaters remember little from that time, if they were alive at all, the grievance remains and they want revenge. They are not ready to forgive, forget, or understand. Their basic problem is not that Iranians acted shamefully and refuse to admit it.

Their real issue is that the Iranians refused to act as they were expected to-as an inferior species of human being who would accept domination by outside powers. When they insisted, in the words of Arthur Miller’s Linda in *Death of a Salesman* that “attention must be paid,” they made people angry.

It does not help matters that the Islamic Republic has created its own blind spot for that episode. It still pretends that the event

is either something to celebrate or something unrelated to today that happened “a long time ago in a galaxy far away.” As long as one side nurses its humiliation and the other side refuses to acknowledge a disgraceful history, the sore continues to fester and the two sides will wallow in enmity and self-righteousness, enjoying what President Obama aptly called “the satisfying purity of indignation.”

Despite all this blind enmity, there still may be a way off this road to nowhere on which both sides have been stuck for so long. There was a glimpse of a better way at an October 2018 event at Harvard’s Belfer Center, when an Iranian-American in the audience politely asked Wendy Sherman, former undersecretary of state for political affairs, about her ill-considered 2013 remark at a Senate hearing that “deception is in Iranians’ DNA.” Without hesitation, Sherman replied, “I screwed up.”

How powerful (and how difficult to say) are those three words. One never hears them in today’s political climate, where the preferred discourse is “I’m right and you’re an idiot/thief/fool/terrorist.” But in acknowledging mistakes, as difficult as it might be, lies great power and wisdom—and a first step on a path out of the swamp of futility and pointless hostility for these two nations. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

John Limbert is a retired Foreign Service Officer. A former deputy assistant secretary of state for Iranian affairs, he also served at the US Embassy in Tehran where he was held hostage for 14 months. He’s the author of Negotiating with Iran: Wrestling the Ghosts of History for the US Institute of Peace.

IRANIAN WOMEN ALLOWED INTO TOP TEHRAN FOOTBALL MATCH FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 37 YEARS

Hundreds of Iranian women have been allowed to attend a top-league Tehran football match for the first time in 37 years.

An estimated 500 women – out of a crowd of about 80,000 – were permitted to watch the Asia Champions League football final in Tehran, separated from male fans.

Most were said to be relatives of players or members of women’s teams, but the move is being seen as a possible permanent end to the exclusion of women from top matches.

Football’s world governing body Fifa is working with Iran to halt the ban.

Iranian women and girls have not been allowed to attend men’s sporting events for much of the 39 years since the Islamic revolution, and have not had access to matches involving top clubs since 1981. But foreign female fans have been allowed to attend some games.

The semi-official news agency Tasnim said an unspecified number of women went to the Azadi [Freedom] Stadium to watch local team Persepolis play against Japan’s Kashima Antlers, but a reporter estimated the number of female spectators at 500.

The women joined in with chanting in support of Persepolis, Iran’s best-supported club.

In March, 35 women were detained for trying to attend a match between Persepolis and another Tehran team.

However, in June women were allowed to watch their national team play in the World Cup against Spain.

And last month about 100 women were allowed to watch a friendly between Iran and Bolivia, but restrictions were quickly reinstated.

Open Stadiums, a group that campaigns for access to venues for women in Iran, handed a petition to Fifa this week signed by more than 200,000 people.

Ending the exclusion “has been our dream for decades”, a spokeswoman for the group told the agency. “We are also excluded from public happiness and excitement.”

Kashima beat Persepolis 2-0 on aggregate.



IS ISLAM A WESTERN RELIGION ?

by Juan Cole

historynewsnetwork.org/article/170142

Donald Trump announced “Islam hates us” and then went on to exclude citizens of five Muslim-majority countries from the United States, on the grounds that they are inherently violent and require “extreme vetting.” In the language of critical social theory, Trump “othered” Islam, declaring it intrinsically un-American. It was Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) who introduced a new perspective on the distinction between self and other, arguing that women in her era differentiated themselves with regard to men, whereas men needed no such reference point. She wrote, “He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other.” Her insight is just as apposite to the relationship of Christian European culture and Islam. But what if, as I argue in my new book, *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace amid the Clash of Empires*, Islam is not Other for those of European cultural heritage but very much Self?

The late Roman Empire with its capital in Constantinople had been unfairly neglected by historians until recently, when under the impact of scholars such as Averil Cameron and Peter Brown, the field of late antiquity has burgeoned. That empire made key contributions to our own world. Much law in Europe and the Americas is based on the Code of Justinian (r. 527-565). A legacy of intolerance could also be argued. The Christian Roman Empire outlawed the remnants of paganism and at some points in the sixth and seventh centuries attempted to prohibit the practice of Judaism. On its margins, German Arianism and Near Eastern Islam grew up.

As Peter Sarris, Garth Fowden and Glen Bowersock have argued, the Prophet Muhammad (c. 567-632) was much more a man of Roman late antiquity than most historians writing before the past decade had realized. Jacob of Edessa (640-708) observed that Muhammad went for trade from his native Western Arabia to Palestine and the eparchies or provinces of Roman Arabia and “Syrian Phoenecia.” The Iranian emperor Khosrow II invaded the Roman Near East in 603. In 614 his armies took Jerusalem, allegedly with the help of the large Jewish community in First Palestine, which had felt poorly treated by Constantinople. By 619 Egypt had fallen. Muhammad’s prophetic ministry for the most part coincided with this era of expansive Iranian rule and Roman retrenchment.

The Qur’an is a clear partisan for Rome in this era. In a passage likely stemming from the fall of Damascus in 613, the chapter of Rome 30:1–6 says: “Rome lies vanquished in the nearest province. But in the wake of their defeat, they will triumph after a few years. Before and after, it is God who is in command. On that day, the believers will rejoice in the victory of God; he causes to triumph whomever he will, and he is the Mighty, the Merciful. It is the promise of God; God does not break his promises, but most people do not know it.” This verse does not simply predict a Roman comeback (something expected by Muhammad’s contemporary, the early seventh-century historian Theophylaktos Simokates as well). It identifies this expected triumph of Constantinople over the Iranian capital of Ctesiphon

with the “victory of God” at which Muhammad’s faithful will “rejoice.” As Bowersock has recently shown in his *Crucible of Islam*, the Qur’an took sides with Emperor Herakleios (r. 610-641) against the aggressor, Khosrow II. In the teens, when Muhammad was based in the small West Arabian desert port of Mecca between his journeys to Gaza and Damascus, he preached monotheism and peace-making and turning the other cheek. Stories 28:52–54 says, “They will be given their reward twice over inasmuch as they patiently endured, and repel evil with good deeds and shared the provisions we gave them. And when they hear abusive talk, they turn away from it and say, ‘to us our deeds and to you yours; peace be upon you—we do not seek out the unruly.’” This ethos makes sense of the Qur’an’s opprobrium toward the Sasanians, who were clear aggressors in the war. Spoils 8:61 denounced belligerent warfare, saying, “If they incline toward peace, you must incline toward it.”

In 622 Muhammad and his followers were forced to emigrate to nearby Medina by militant pagans who had, as Bowersock pointed out, joined with Iran according to an eighth-century Muslim source. The pagan Meccans allied with local Bedouin to launch three wars on the nascent community of Muhammad in Medina. The Qur’an begins instructing the Prophet and his followers to defend themselves from lethal attacks, deploying arguments for just war in the Ciceronian tradition and sounding at times very much like Augustine of Hippo or Ambrose of Milan on that subject.

Moreover, the Qur’an depicts these small battles as helping to protect Christian churches to the north from the predations of the Arab tribes serving as foederati or military allies of the Sasanians. The Pilgrimage 22:39–40 observes: “He endorsed those who fought because they had been wronged, and in truth God is able to aid them—those who were expelled from their homes unjustly, solely for saying our lord is God. Had God not checked one people with another, then monasteries, churches, oratories and places of worship wherein God is much mentioned would have been razed to the ground.”

The ample evidence in the Qur’an for the alliance of Muhammad and his believers with the Roman Empire and with Christians was typically downplayed before Bowersock. This historical reality has been obscured by polemicists on both sides on Christian-Muslim conflict, whereas there has been a significant history of peaceful coexistence and political alliance between the two. The Qur’an’s preference for peace but allowance for purely defensive war has been little understood either by Western polemicists or Muslim extremists. It does not differ in any significant way from the stance of church fathers such as Augustine and Ambrose, and that it resembles in many particulars the positions of Cicero underscore the Roman context of the Qur’an. Imagining Muhammad back into the world of Roman late antiquity, as I urge we do in my book, erases the Self-Other divide and allows us to see in Muhammad and Islam a sibling with a common ancestor rather than an alien. ■

Juan Cole is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan and the proprietor of the Informed Comment news site. His most recent book is Muhammad: Prophet of Peace amid the Clash of Empires

An Arbor (Informed Comment) – Sen. Lindsay Graham joked on Fox Cable News that he might do a genetic test to see if he has Native American ancestry, as Sen. Elizabeth Warren does. Then he added that it might show he has Iranian ancestry. “That,” he observed, “would be terrible.”

Florida house candidate, Iranian-American Anna Eskamani, denounced the senator’s bigotry.

There are no races in the 19th century sense of pure bloodlines. Rather, peoples have mixed extensively with one another through history. About 5 percent of Southern whites in the US have recent African ancestry.

During the last Ice Age, most of Europe was uninhabitable, with 3 miles of ice on top of it. After the ice melted around 12,000 years ago, people made their way into the continent. From about 9,000 years ago they came in part from what are now Syria and Turkey, including peoples who had been involved in invention of agriculture. Those who came in from the east often brought Indo-European languages with them.

Olander’s (2018) tree of Indo-European languages. Presented at Languages and migrations in pre-historic Europe (7-12 Aug 2018), h/t indo-europe.eu.

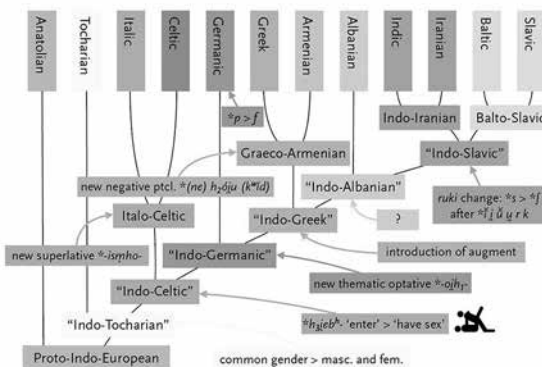
The evidence for the relationship of Europeans and Iranians is thus first of all linguistic. English and Persian, for instance, clearly derive from a common ancestor. Yes, that’s right. Iranian President Hasan Rouhani and Lindsey Graham speak variants of the same ancient Indo-European language, and since language and genes tend to be passed on by families, it is likely that they are related.

After someone published Graham’s phone number and address, he complained during the Kavanaugh hearings that people were “banging on my door” all night.

The English word “door” has an exact cognate in the Persian that is Iran’s official language. It is “dar.” Or the late Sen. John McCain said that Graham was “like a little brother” to him. In Persian, the word for brother is “baradar,” which is obviously just a variant of the same word, keeping the b, d/th, and r.

YES, SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM, YOU HAVE IRANIAN ANCESTRY AND SHOULD BE PROUD

JUAN COLE



The Indo-European family tree

When Lindsey Graham threatened Democrats over their questioning of Kavanaugh over his alleged history of sexual abuse, Graham said, “if this is the new norm” then Democrats should worry about their nominees.

New in Persian is nau.

Name in Persian is nam.

Star is setareh (take out the vowels in each language and you can see it is the same word). When Lindsey Graham pondered the phenomenon of Trump, he was using a verb cognate to the Persian pendar (to think).

The linguistic heritage is strong evidence for common ancestry. But then there is evidence that people from northwestern Iran and the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia, areas where Iranian languages were spoken thousands of years ago, helped populate Europe.

The Minoans and Mycenaeans, the ancestors of the Greeks, had genetic heritage from eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, where ancestors of the Iranians lived. Iranians, especially those based in the Zagros mountains, also migrated to India. Ancient Persian and old Sanskrit are very close.

The HV haplotype or chromosome sequence is found both in Britain and Iran.

Moreover, having Iranian heritage should be a matter of pride for all who share it. The Iranians in Iran itself created the

Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanid Empires, among the great states of the ancient and late-antique worlds, the Zoroastrian religion of which contributed to the rise of monotheism, prophethood and ideas about resurrection and millenarianism. (I tell the story of the great war between the Sasanians and the Eastern Roman Empire, 603-629, which formed the backdrop for the rise of Islam, in my new book Muhammad: Prophet of Peace amid the Clash of Empires.)

The Abbasid Empire, which was in most of its features Iranian despite being ruled by Muslims, was a civilizational beacon. Harun al-Rashid was debating points in Plato and Aristotle at a time when Charlemagne was trying to learn to write out his signature.

This site surveys inventions made in Iran. The Cyrus cylinder is a charter of human rights (and Cyrus bestowed freedom of religion on the Jews). Cyrus also established a sort of pony express for mail delivery across his vast empire. The American Founding Fathers openly admitted to being influenced by the legacy of Cyrus via Xenophon’s Cyropaedia.

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

“Then that ancient religion of the Magi fell, that the conqueror Darius had respected, as he never disturbed the religion of conquered peoples. The Magi regarded their religion as the most ancient and the most pure. The knowledge that they had of mathematics, astronomy and of history augmented their enmity toward the conquerors the Arabs, who were so ignorant. They [the Magi] could not abandon their religion, consecrated for so many centuries. Then most of them retreated to the extremities of Persia and India. It is there that they live today, under the name Gaurs or Guebres” — Thomas Jefferson, The Commonplace Book of Thomas Jefferson, ed. Gilbert Chinard, 1926, p.334-35; passage translated by R.N. Frye

Iranians of Muslim faith made breakthroughs like algebra and the algorithm (you’re welcome, Google). How far we have fallen as a civilization since the 18th century, from Enlightenment thinkers who knew the world to our current crew of buffoons, racists and ignoramuses. ■

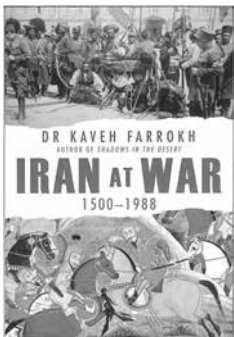
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REVIEWS

IRAN AT WAR: 1500-1988

Kaveh Farrokh

(Osprey Publishing, 2011)



Kaveh Farrokh's third textbook, *Iran at War: 1500-1988* (Osprey Publishing, 2011) has been translated into Persian by one of the most prestigious academic Persian-language publishing houses, known as Qoqnoos Publishers. The translation (ایران در جنگ) has been conducted by Maryam Saremi. Qoqnoos has translated into Persian academic textbooks by scholars such as David Nicolle, Josef Wiesehofer, Duncan head, Touraj Atabaki, Nino Piglokevskaya, Sandra Mackey,

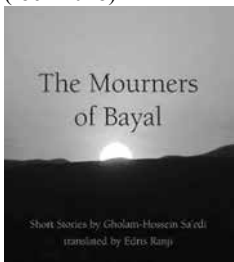
Touraj Daryae, Mohammed Dandamaev, Agrar Aliev, Christopher Foster, and Mary Boyce.

THE MOURNERS BAYAL

SHORT STORIES BY GHOLAM-HOSSEIN SA'EDI

Translated by Edris Ranji

(Ibex 2018)



A brilliant collection of eight stories that are integrated and circle around the imaginary Iranian village called Bayal. Each is intriguing and entices the reader to continue to the next episode. In the end, you will be left with your own deep thoughts of life and how to decide what its truth and what is mystical.

A LEXICON OF THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE OF SHIRAZ

Mitra Ara

(Ibex 2018)



This book is not only interesting for one who has a command of the Persian language as native tongue or studied, wondering where, how and why a certain aspect of their language is spoken different or has a different meaning, depending on location or region.

For those who are just attempting to learn the language the book acts as a wonderful resource. A better understanding of the origin of the word can

often lead to a better understanding of the language itself. A great presentation and easy to follow.

YEMEN

Edited and Prefaced by Ardeshir Zahedi

(Ibex 2018)

A well-done reference book for the story of Yemen. This country has been defined by sound bites and paper headlines. Little is known, by the public, as to how Yemen came to be and

why it is in the state it now resides.

It is considered to be one of the poorest counties in the world, which unfortunately results in deprivation of spirit and self-direction. Face it, goals are hard to hang onto when your bellies ache from hunger and children die at your feet.

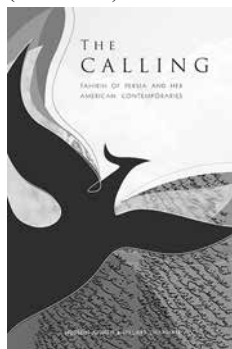
In reading this book any person should have to care. But the world has been desensitized to long term suffering for others. We cry, pray and mourn for a few hours or days and then BOOM back to normal.

If you objectively read the facts presented and compare them to other sources you will find that the people of Yemen have been left in the cold, while its leaders thrive, and surrounding leaders thrive. The fate of this country was cast decades ago and unless another purpose other than humanitarian, is found to fight for these people, its history does not have a happy ending. Its soil and its citizens will continue to be used as the game board for surrounding countries, the West and yes, the Far East. Yemen has been forgotten by world leaders except at the end of their terms, when there are no political stakes. I look forward to world leaders who step up to the plate once their leadership begins. And, I look forward to world leaders who say Yemen needs to be saved, even if the only reward they will receive is a thank you from a starving child, mother or father.

THE CALLING, TAHIRIH OF PERSIA AND HER AMERICAN CONTEMPORARIES

Hussein Ahdieh and Hillary Chapman

(Ibex 2018)



Movements are powerful, and the present has not cornered the market on their importance, be it positive or negative. In the pages of this book you will learn about a spiritual movement started in the mid 1800'. It is noted that this movement allegedly "swept" across two countries, the United States and Persia. While on the surface these two countries appear to be dissimilar in so many ways, but their underlying compatibility seems more genuine. The faith filled women of this

movement proceeded so as workers, motivators, instigators and leaders.

In Iran it was Tahirih of Qazvin who led the movement. The book is her journey and the influences on her culture and world culture. The book discusses classification of women and how in both Iran and the United States women were always considered to be secondary citizens. Seems to me that the only way you, as a woman, can feel as if you are second class. That is if you accept the title in the first place. And, for every woman who does not accept it, each of you are your own movement.

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We are generally, from childhood, knowledgeable about the mythical and immortal persona of 'Amu Nowruz (uncle New Year). But are we familiar with his inner feelings? Do we know who his acquaintances are, or who is privy to his intimate sentiments? Do we know what brook rejuvenates him, replenishes his merry temperament, and makes him eternal? Let us spend this New Year with him and his friends and become acquainted with his concerns. After all, his joys and sorrows are our joys and sorrows, too.

Once upon a time, in a village near the ancient city of Hamadan, there lived a kind and vivacious man. He knew almost everyone in his ancestral village and everyone in the village, and its environs, knew him. Wherever he went, he took his happiness and joy with him or, at least, so it appeared. The village children called him Uncle.

On this morning before Charshanbe Suri, the last Wednesday of the Persian year, as had been his custom for centuries, he got out of bed, drank a cup of hot water, and had a quick breakfast. Then he donned a long, baggy pair of black trousers and walked to the mirror. There he trimmed his thick, black beard and combed his long, curly hair. From the closet, he got a long, green garment with a slit on each side. Over that traditional Iranian costume, he wore a red shawl, which rode around his slim waist and covered most of his long-stemmed pipe. He completed the ensemble with a black, felt hat that he took from a peg on the wall. At the threshold, he sat on the short platform and pulled his homemade, cotton shoes over his feet. Finally, before taking his walking stick from beside the door and striding out, he picked up a large, worn out, empty bag and threw it over his shoulder.

Uncle had performed this ritual for as long as he remembered and had done it with a particular pleasure. In recent years, however, a feeling of unease had been creeping in and upsetting his usual joyfulness. While in years past he had been virtually oblivious about the future, on this day, however, coming events seemed foreboding. He was getting increasingly apprehensive about the fate of the village and its children.

In years past, on this particular morn-

ing, whenever he had walked out of the house, he had been greeted by an assembly of children in their new Nowruz clothing—some standing at the door, some sitting on the spacious platforms at the entrance to his house, some perched on the roofs, and still others twittering in the trees along his path. They had greeted him with laughter and joy. Their laughter had reverberated throughout the locality and made everyone cheerful. Troops of musicians with Haji Firuz had thronged in the streets and alleyways; clowns with their dancing bears and buffoons with their baboons had amused passers-by for small change. Uncle, with a



Uncle's Complaint: Tale of a Rejuvenation

Part one

Dr. Iraj Bashiri

steady mien, had walked to the end of the road and left the village.

But today, the platforms were deserted. No one was there to greet him. There was no sign of joy, no laughter of small children and no bears and buffoons.

Walking down the winding alleys, Uncle recalled happier and more pleasant days, when laughing and chattering children followed him from the door of his house to the outskirts of the village. The younger ones fell behind and returned home while the older ones trailed him along the rocky road all the way to the foot of the mountain asking for toys, woolen scarves, socks, and other such things. The whimsical ones asked for mountain goats and baby deer. Uncle listened eagerly to their requests saying, "O.K., will do... Won't forget... You got it!..." as he continued on his way.

When he passed the rock on which the older children used to sit and watch

him climb, he stopped, looked back at the village, and sighed. "I feel sorry for my fellow villagers," he said to himself, "I wish I knew how to awaken them!"

Before he began his climb, Uncle stopped at the foot of the mountain and refreshed himself by drinking from the pure water of the spring gushing from the rocks. Like every other time, drinking the water altered Uncle's outlook. It was as if a window was opened and he was allowed to enter the past. He felt he was privy to the thought processes of his ancestors. Uncle always learned from the experience of his ancestors and used his knowledge to guide the future generations.

The aroma of the blooming land permeated the mountainside. The sight of the newly appearing rhubarbs, red mountain tulips, orchids, and other wild flowers pleased him. Nature, unlike his fellow villagers who had abandoned him, welcomed Uncle as it had done before. Once again, he found himself in a world that seemed to be immune to change.

Uncle climbed most of the morning, reaching the summit about noon. There he sat on a boulder and looked around. On one side, he could see the beautiful city of Hamadan and, near it, his tiny village. On the other side lay an enchanting green valley recently freed of the winter snow. Springing from somewhere below his boulder, a brook wound

itself around bushes and through the ruins of some forgotten fortresses, and tumbled down the mountainside. At the foot of the mountain, the brook joined a sizable river that flowed at the bottom of the valley. Beside the river, there was a small thicket, and between Uncle and the thicket there were some waterfalls. Among the thick foliage at the bottom, Uncle could distinguish the silhouette of an abandoned mill and in the bluish mist far-off he could make out shiny lakes and indications of houses and fields. Uncle intended to reach the mill as quickly as he could.

At the foot of the mountain, where the brook joined the river, Uncle halted to watch the turtles and the snakes basking in the sun and the small birds that chirped merrily flying in and out of the bushes. The freedom that those creatures enjoyed made Uncle happy and brought him a special sense of relief. The cares of the village

gradually released their grip on him and he felt rejuvenated—just as he had felt years and years ago. He breathed the fresh air as he walked along the river in the direction of the mill.

The mill's appearance had hardly changed. Its low door, mossy stone walls, and thatched roof had stayed the same. He stood at the closed door for a short while and listened to the water cascading down the well of the mill. Then he rapped on the heavy wooden door with his knuckles. There was no answer. He knocked again, this time more loudly. The door opened. A middle-aged man appeared in the doorway. He wore a white peasant's shirt without a collar and a pair of black, baggy pants. He had long, curly black hair. He greeted Uncle warmly, hugged him tightly, and ushered him into the mill.

The mill's interior was in great contrast to its outward appearance. It was a large hall decorated in the traditional Iranian style with beautiful Persian carpets hung on the walls and a korsi set up on the far side. Around the korsi lay richly decorated pillows of down and draped over the korsi was a heavy, colorful silk quilt. On top of the korsi, there was a hookah, a basket of fruit, a bowl of pomegranate seeds, and a tray filled with roasted sunflower, pumpkin, and melon seeds.

The foreground of this traditional Nowruz display consisted of a tablecloth on which was arranged an assortment of Nowruz decorative objects. Uncle, looking at the display, said "Happy Nowruz, Mashiya. I wish all the best for you and Mashiyaneh during the next year and for many years to come!"

Mashiya said, "Happy Nowruz to you, too, son. We also wish you the best of years."

The sofreh was displayed on a table that floated on a pool of fresh water. Colorful flowers surrounded the pool. Beautiful red fish swam in the pool among the budding lotus leaves. Here and there, the reflection of the plants and the flowers on the water, enhanced by the faint hues of oranges, apples, and the goldfish created a beautiful scene.

None of that was new to Uncle. He had spent his childhood in this enchanting valley and, thereafter, had visited the place quite frequently. He could not detect even a small change. The occupants who, in a way, stood for Uncle's parents, were always gracious to him, listened to him, and tried very hard to keep all discomfort and unhappiness away from his eventful life.

In return, Uncle, too, loved them deeply.

His host showed Uncle to his place at the korsi where he could rest. Uncle thrust his feet and a good portion of his torso under the quilt, felt the warmth of the hearth under the korsi, and asked, "Where is Mashiyaneh? Isn't she here?"

"She will be back shortly," said Mashiya with a warm smile. "She went out to the river to fetch water for the animals..."

Even as Mashiya spoke, the door opened and Mashiyaneh entered. She was dressed in a long, white gown over which she had thrown a heavy coat. She greeted Uncle, took off the coat, and walked by the display. Her black tresses flowed over her shoulders and a mild smile crossed her lips. She was charming and unforgettable. Looking at her reminded Uncle of his childhood days. Mashiyaneh came to the korsi, stood where she intended to sit, then bent gently, lifted the edge of the quilt, and thrust her feet under it. Uncle felt the cold emanating from her feet.

Beside Mashiyaneh was a brazier at the side of which a pot of tea was steeping. The aroma of the tea and the fragrance of the flowers mingled with Mashiyaneh's natural perfume. Mashiyaneh poured a cup of tea and offered it to the guest. Mashiya offered him fruits and nuts.

In years past, the mere sight of Mashiya and Mashiyaneh had transported Uncle from moroseness to a world of dreams, a world where earthly difference did not exist and misery and poverty were forbidden. This year Uncle was reluctant; he did not wish to be easily transported into a world of illusions and make-believe. Mashiya had already felt Uncle's unease, at the time he had opened the door of the mill and welcomed him. To cheer Uncle up, Mashiya said, "This was a cold year, son. We hardly had enough senjed for the display!"

Uncle surveyed the haft-sin, the centerpiece of the display. In a round wooden tray, there were seven things. Around a beautifully budding hyacinth plant lay a red apple, a handful of crimson senjed, several bulbs of garlic, some sumac, a pinch of nigella seeds, and a cup of vinegar. Uncle believed that those items were the remaining vestiges of the Holy Immortals of the old religion; their very existence sustained the world. The sight boosted Uncle's morale. "Yet," he said, "it is not so much the cold that bothers people. The very thought of the arrival of spring, the blossoming of the trees, and the Nowruz house cleaning rejuvenates even the most incredulous of

them."

Looking across the korsi at Uncle's sad face, Mashiya realized that Uncle's unhappiness had become much deeper than previous years. He tried to persuade Uncle to talk about what bothered him. "Spring has arrived," he said. "What possibly could mar the happiness that Nowruz brings?"

Uncle sighed and said, "Spring is indeed here. No doubt about that. But is its luster here, too? How often should I say that Nowruz is gradually losing its luster. People no longer cherish the firm beliefs of their forefathers. Each year fewer and fewer bother to put henna on their hands, color eggs, toast wheat berries and sunflower seeds. . . . Rather than visiting each other, they practically run away from each other. They even travel to avoid the traditional Nowruz visitations. Many immigrate and settle among strangers without even looking behind them." Then he murmured, "That is at least what it looks like in our parts."

Then nodding his head knowingly concluded, "This is not a new phenomenon. It is a creeping trend that is becoming worse each year. Last year in particular it was difficult. It was like living in a state of continuous mourning. All year long, the whole village was clad in black. The question is, a wake for whom? The dead being mourned do not belong to us!"

Mashiyaneh, who had been listening to Uncle's complaint, said, "Son, don't be unhappy! As they say, the world has its ups and downs. Don't allow yourself to be overtaken by grief. Be patient. This year will be different. I promise."

Uncle was somewhat disappointed in Mashiyaneh. He felt that she was not taking him, and his complaint, seriously. He said, "You are not living under the conditions that I live." Then he corrected himself and said, "I mean that your children over there are experiencing. Come to think of it, forty or fifty years ago I, too, would not have been able to imagine what I am telling you. But, unfortunately, it is a reality over there, just on the other side of the mountain."

Mashiyaneh responded calmly but firmly, "Well, I don't know about that, son. We, too, have had our share of difficulty. A time came, in fact, not long ago, when our valley lost almost all its wealth and verdure. It was a horrendous time. It happened before you were born."

Uncle was taken aback. He had always admired the spunk of this ancient couple living through the harsh winters of the mountain range. But he knew nothing

about the horrendous time that Mashiyaneh was referring to.

"It sounds ominous," he said. "How did that happen?"

"Through our own fault. We unknowingly brought it upon ourselves. Or maybe I should say by disregarding our age-old traditions they brought it upon us."

Uncle turned to Mashiya and asked, "Mashiya, what is the story? What calamity befell you?"

Mashiya said, "It is a long story. I will give you the short version. A fiend, actually a man-eating viper demon in the guise of a beautiful woman, came to the valley and settled among us. The men, especially the young, were enchanted by her. After some time, she moved her family and relatives in from their original homeland, somewhere far away, Yemen, I think it was called, to the valley. They settled upstream from us. In time, against all our objections, they built many dams upstream and diverted the water in the river to irrigate their newly created orchards and fields. Downstream, the river went dry and the mill stopped. Before long, the lush valley and its fields were turned into a wasteland. People lost their livelihood and became destitute. Many left the valley."

"Are the waterfalls where the dams were?"

"They are," said Mashiya. "Their intention was a total takeover of the valley. They created conflict among us so that brother killed brother and father killed son without remorse..."

"I am surprised that you allowed that," said Uncle shaking his head.

"We were taken by surprise. On the surface, being inherently secretive, they pretended that they loved our culture and supported our traditions. In reality, however, that was not the case. They wrote beautiful poetry in celebration of Nowruz, but in their hearts they hated Charshanbe Suri, Nowruz, and our other celebrations. They devised every scheme to erase them from the face of the earth..."

"That is astounding. You all are so wise..."

"Wisdom had nothing to do with it. What was involved was lack of respect for the integrity of human beings, for progressive science, and for societal justice. They networked and as soon as an opportunity occurred, they took control of the valley. Before long, their inhumane aggressive and chauvinistic behavior turned the people of the valley into their virtual slaves. Furthermore, it turned out that even before

they became rulers, they had facilitated the departure of our people from the valley, especially those who posed a threat to their future enterprise. In fact, the practice continued after they took control as well. As for the rest of us, they suppressed us mercilessly. They treated the women harshly, restive women in particular. Assaults and rapes were normal. On your way here you must have seen the ruins of their fortresses, homes, and temples."

"I have seen those ruins many times, but I did not know that there was a story behind them," said Uncle and added, "As I said, your discussion would have frightened me years ago; but, today, you are retelling my own story to me. What intrigues me the most is that there are so many similarities. Did those, let's call them 'intruders,' respect the integrity of human life?"

"Not really," responded Mashiyaneh without hesitation. "Of course I should preface that with saying that they made a sharp distinction between the people of the valley and their own people. The life and property of the people of the valley were expendable. But the life and property of their own people, who were distinct by language and costume, were fully respected. They supported each other. In sum, they were arrogant and self-centered. Their women were nowhere to be seen. They, themselves, too, rarely came down to the valley. They administered affairs through agents."

"Did they respect animal life?"

"No," responded Mashiya and added, "How should I put it? They were very unlike us. We respect all living beings, especially dogs for their loyalty and for guarding our flocks and, indeed, our own lives. They, on the contrary, exercised a vendetta against dogs and hurt them without reason. Their children, in particular, were vicious..."

Mashiyaneh interrupted Mashiya, saying, "helpless and unprotected dogs suffered the most, of course, but the other wild life, too, was not immune. They liked hunting and killed animals for the fun of it. For instance, if we had not prevented it, they would have hunted down all the lions and today you would not be able to find a single lion."

"How about the environment? Did they respect the environment?"

"No," said Mashiyaneh. As we have been saying, they virtually dried up the valley by the dams they built to irrigate their fields and orchards. The draught they

created was intense. They cut many of the trees and many more were turned into charcoal. To retain some of the verdure, we planted saplings. Even those were destroyed. As I said, human life in the valley was not their concern. How could they be mindful about animals and plants!"

"Let me ask this last question. It is a very important one," said Uncle. "Did they practice nepotism?"

"That was their worst feature," replied Mashiyaneh. "In fact, I can say nepotism, in its tribal version, was the mainstay of their strength."

"They kept long narratives about peoples and places," added Mashiya. "Their own people and places, of course. They kept secret genealogies indicating where their people lived, and what their relation was to the viper at the center. They knew exactly who did and who did not belong. Everything: jobs, housing, water distribution, field supervision, every single affair was organized on the basis of the contents of those documents."

"Under those harsh circumstances, didn't a time come when you could no longer take it?" Uncle asked.

"It did," said Mashiyaneh. That was the time that they wanted to replace our holy ones with theirs."

"What was the difference?"

"Our holy ones were absolute and divine with universal concerns. Their holy ones were of this world and had tombs in Yemen. There were several upstream as well."

Uncle asked again: "If they had succeeded, what was the harm to your society?"

Mashiya said, "That would lead to ancestor worship. That meant we too would build places for the worship of their ancestors and forget about our own holy ones..."

Uncle wanted to say something, but decided not to. Instead, he asked, "If they were as deeply entrenched as you tell me, how did you dislodge them?" "Or did you?"

"At the end, they were forming the upper crust," said Mashiya. "Of course, they started in the valley but, before long, rose above all of us both in wealth and prestige. Their sons and daughters lived in luxury and studied in Yemen, while the people of the valley were obliged to work in the hell that they had created around them so that they could add more wealth to their assets in Yemen."

to be continued



Tea in Iranian Culture

Compiled By: Firouzeh Mirrazavi

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Every morning, in houses all over Iran, a gas burner flickers to life under a kettle that will continue to boil all day. It boils through morning prayers, lunches of rice and kebabs, afternoon conversation and late into the evening meal, sustaining talk of politics, gossip and news well into the night.

The kettle contains tea, one of the most important cornerstones of Iranian culture, and the tea house is its centuries-old keeper.

Tea production is a major industry in the Caspian Sea area and a large part of its economy. Before 1900, there was no tea production in Iran, but in 1895, an Iranian diplomat named Kashef Al Saltaneh decided to change that.

At the time the English had a strict monopoly of tea production in India, with rigid rules against non-Europeans engaging in this trade.

Kashef Al Saltaneh, who had studied in Paris as a young man and was fluent in French, went to India, posed as a French businessman, learned the trade and smuggled some tea saplings and seeds to Iran.

After six years of experimentation, he introduced his first product to the market, and started the industry that revolutionized the economy of two northern states, Gilan and Mazandaran, and made Iranians avid tea drinkers.

He is known today as the father of Iranian Tea, and his mausoleum, in the city of Lahijan, houses the tea museum.”

Further reading reveals that Kashef Al Saltaneh’s other honorable titles include Prince Mohammad Mirza, Iranian ambassador to India, and first mayor of Tehran. Moreover, the stash that commenced the tea plantation might have actually been 3,000 saplings!

Tea houses, or chaikhanehs, have been in existence since the Persian Empire. They gained prominence after the 15th century, when coffee was abandoned in favour of tea leaves that were easier to come by through China’s Silk Road.

Though once the purview of men, chaikhanehs have increasingly become frequented by all members of society, and especially by Iran’s large youth population.

Iranian tea comes in a variety of subtle flavours, but its defining characteristic is its deep reddish-brown colour, which

tea-drinkers can choose to dilute with water depending on their preference. Despite its cultivation in the country’s northern provinces, other teas from Sri Lanka and India are also widely consumed as the country imports a majority of its tea in order to meet the large demand.

Most chaikhanehs will serve tea on the stronger side unless otherwise indicated by the drinker. The stronger the tea, the higher the concentration of tannin and caffeine, so a good cup of tea is like a good cup of coffee for those who take it straight. Because of its bitterness, many prefer to have sugar with their tea. The traditional way to do this is to take a sugar cube and place it between your teeth.

You then sip the tea and allow the sugar to melt. Iranians, especially in colder regions of the country, find this a convenient way to drink multiple cups. Crystal, or rock sugar, can be found throughout the country and bought in spice shops for this specific purpose.

The taking of tea is a ritual unto itself: most meetings or formal occasions will begin with the offering of tea, and most meals will end with it. Some chaikhanehs have takhts, or low-rise platforms covered in rugs and pillows that you may recline on. Remove your shoes before doing so; most meals are served on a tablecloth laid at your feet.

Traditionally, tea is served from a samovar, a heating vessel originally imported into Persia from Russia.

Literally meaning “self-boiler”, the samovar is used to keep water hot for prolonged periods of time through a fuel-filled pipe in the middle of the structure that heats the contents surrounding it. Made from copper, brass, silver or gold, the samovar is still used throughout Russia, central Asia and Iran, and ornate versions from the -Qajar dynasty may still be found in use.

Chaikhanehs come in all shapes and forms, from the simple kitchen-turned-tea room in villages to ornate venues in urban centres, and from underground venues to popular tourist destinations.

The Azari Tea House in Tehran is one of the most famous chaikhanehs known to tourists and locals, with its detailed architecture and traditional decoration. In existence since the 14th century, this chaikhaneh on Vali Asr street contains one of the more interesting embellishments to emerge from tea house culture: teahouse painting.

A continuation of the royal paintings from the Qajar era, tea house paintings illustrate religious and mythical themes, with Hakim Abu’l Qasim Firdowsi’s poetic epic, Shahnameh, often the focus of many such illustrations.

The Sakas

Part seven

Michael McClain

For some reason, there seems to be a sort of obsession to claim some sort of special kinship between the Iranian peoples on the one hand and the Germanic peoples on the other. There would appear to be no factual reason for this, but I am not going to bore the reader with a lot of psychobabble.

There has been a great deal of debate as to the location of the original homeland of the Indo-European peoples. Some theories in said connection are obviously not based on objective facts, but rather on nationalist or ethnic biases: for example, I have seen the northwestern part of the Indian Subcontinent, central Europe and even Scandinavia proclaimed as the or minimal Indo-European homeland. Yes, central Europe and what is called "Aryana Vaeja" in Avestan may have been secondary centers of dispersion (and, in so vast an area between the Atlantic and the borders of Bengal, some secondary centers of diffusion would seem to have been almost inevitable). Christopher I. Beckwith says:

Based on words referring to flora, fauna, and other things, as well as on archaeology and historical sources, it has been concluded that the Proto-Indo-European homeland was in Central Eurasia, specifically in the steppe-forest zone between the southern Ural Mountains, the North Caucasus, and the Black Sea. The location given by C. I. Beckwith as the original homeland of the Indo-European peoples has the advantage of at least being near the center of the vast region occupied by Indo-European people. Also note that originally all Indo-European peoples not only the Germanic peoples, belonged to the Central Eurasian Culture complex.

For reasons now unknown, about four thousand years ago the Proto-Indo-European peoples began migrating from their original homeland. Mr. Beckwith continues: "Their migration out of Central Eurasia proper appears to have taken place in three distinct stages. The initial movement or first wave occurred at the very end of the third millennium (BC), and the third wave late in the second millennium BC or beginning of the first millennium BC. ... The second wave of migrations out of the steppe zone and its vicinity then began, it included the peoples who spoke Group B dialects - Indic, Greek, Italic, Germanic, and Armenian."

The second wave period ended with Iranians dominating all of the Central Eurasian steppe zone and with the Germanic peoples in temperate zone Central Europe." In other words, the Germanic peoples separated from the Iranian peoples at a very early stage of the Indo-European "diaspora". Indeed, as we shall see, if the Goths had not migrated from southern Sweden to the northern shores of the Black Sea around the beginning of the Christian Era, it would likely be the case that, of all Indo-European peoples, it would be the Germanic peoples who are least influenced by and had fewest affinities with the Iranian peoples.

In these pages, we have already spoken of the Goths and how strongly influenced they were by the Sarmatians and Alans. Even after migrating to the shores of the Black Sea, the Goths remained in contact with their Scandinavian homeland; the proofs of this are abundant. Iranian, or, more precisely, Saka - elements are quite visible in Viking art. Says Mikhail Rostovtzeff:

"What is extremely important, that out of all these elements the

Sarmatians (and Alans) created a peculiar culture and an original and characteristic style of art. I refer to the renaissance of the Scythian animal style, which combined with the use of precious stones and enamel, led to the formation in the Russian (and Ukrainian) Steppes, of the polychrome style of jewelry which was adopted by the Goths and is wrongly called Gothic. The style is not Gothic at all, it is Iranian ... The fibulae are more numerous, larger, more massive and more complicated: the types remain the same, but the forms are exaggerated. Lastly, in the system of decoration, the predominant process is this diversification of the surface by means of garnets cut to geometric shapes and surrounded by golden cloisonné: although the older practice is by no means abandoned, that of stones inlaid in hollows and surrounded by a wire in pseudo-granulation. It cannot be doubted that a new wave spread over the almost wholly Sarmatian culture of Panticapaeum (Kerch). This was undoubtedly the Germanic, the Gothic wave ...

These new forms were deeply influenced by Sarmatian art. I would instance the (re)introduction of the animal style in the ornamentation - the use of birds' heads, the lion, and so forth; and the constant occurrence of fibulae in the shape of animals, such as were widespread in the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus - (the strait between the Crimean Peninsula and the Taman Peninsula - from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD. But I see no novelty in the technical processes which were employed in the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus before their (the Goths') arrival: embossing, false filigree, cloisonné. They (the Goths) also appropriated the polychrome style of decoration with all its rules.

Their (the Goths) predilection for the garnet is nothing new. Before their (the Goths') time, the garnet was the most popular of precious stones with the Sarmatians, no doubt because it was the cheapest and the easiest to work. Lastly, the development of the cloisonné combined with cut garnets was merely the natural outcome of principles which had been observed in the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus long before the arrival of the Goths."

Viking Art also contains Celtic elements. As the Goths were strongly influenced by the Celts as well as the Iranians or Sakas, said Celtic elements may also have been brought to Scandinavia by the Goths. However, the Vikings were in early contact with the Celts of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands; it is possible that said Celtic elements in Viking art reached Scandinavia from both sources mentioned above.

Though ultimately derived from non-Scandinavian, non-Viking sources, Viking art is unique and cannot be confused with either Saka or Celtic art. Unmistakable Iranian elements also appear in the Viking sagas. As Martin Whittock and Hannah Whittock note in *Tales of Valhalla*, "This is the story of a magic sword. Different manuscripts and traditions render its name as "Tyrfing", "Tirfing" or "Tyrving". The names are obscure and may be related to that of the Tervingi: these were a part of the Goth tribe. Roman sources of the fourth century record this tribal name in the form "Tervingi") note that in my book I note that "Tervingi" is an early name used to refer to the Visigoths). By the fourth century AD this group was living on the Danubian plain in west of the Dniester river, which today rises in Ukraine and then flows through Moldova, before finally returning to Ukrainian territory and flowing into the Black Sea. The accounts of this magic sword are preserved in stories known as "the Tyrfing Cycle".

These are collections of Norse legends found in the Poetic Edda (which includes a poem called "Hervararkvida") and in the "Hervarar Saga", which contains other traditions about this sword. The name of the sword is also used in this saga to indicate the tribal group of the Goths. This may indicate a Norse tradition that these eastern lands of "Kiev-Rus" (through which Norse adventures had travelled and some

had married into the ruling dynasties) were places of mystery. The dwarfs too have names attested in several traditions. That of Dvalin (who together with another dwarf named Durinis one of those who forged Tyrting) is found in both the poem "Grimnismal" in the Poetic Edda and in the story called "Gylfaginning" in the Prose Edda. With regards to Princess Eyfura, the twelfth century book entitled *Gesta Danorum* (Deeds of the Danes), compiled by Saxo Grammaticus, identified her as the daughter of a king whose name was Frodi. This may indicate that the character had a tradition apart from the sword legend and may have been incorporated into that account to enhance its local Scandinavian (as opposed to Black Sea Gothic) color.

These features of these traditions are very much in keeping with the 'legendary' material found in these stories, where some material that would be at home in the Norse 'myths' is intermingled with the dealings of real (or probably real) tribes and peoples.

In these legendary accounts, we also hear garbled echoes of real conflicts that occurred between the Gothic tribes (of Norse origin), living north west of the Black Sea, and invading Hun tribes in the fourth century. These conflicts, occurred in the period of migrations, that accompanied the end of the Roman Empire. Because of the Scandinavian origins of the Goths and because of later Scandinavian exploration of the eastern lands as they travelled towards the Byzantine Empire and the Caspian Sea, these conflicts became woven into later Norse legends. In this way, magic swords and migration period tribes are brought together in a curious blend of fiction and history.

"Myrkvithr" (Milkwood) was later to make an appearance in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. In the *Volsung Saga* Say Maryn Whittock and Hannah Whittock in *Tales of Valhalla*: "While the feasting was underway a stranger entered the hall." He was tall and wore a hooded cape that overshadowed his features. But it could be seen that he had only one eye and that his hair was grey with age; he entered the hall barefoot.

In his hand he carried a sword, which he plunged into the great tree that stood in the center of the hall. Then to the astonished assembly he declared that whosoever could draw the sword from the trunk would have it as a gift and could own no better sword. Then, as all eyes were fixed on him, he left. All tried and failed - starting with the noblest there - to pull out the blade. Then, at last, Sigmund, the son of king Volsung, came forward. He clutched the hilt and easily drew out the sword where others had failed. At the sight of this, King Siggeir of Gotland offered him three times the sword's weight in gold if Sigmund would give it to him. To which Sigmund replied that if Siggeir had been meant to have the sword then he would have been able to pull it from the tree."

The above story forcefully reminds one of "the sword in the stone" or "the sword in the anvil" from the Arthurian Cycle of the Welsh-Bretonic tradition. Now, it is generally recognized that much of the Welsh-Bretonic epic tradition - possibly including "Tristan and Isolde," though this may be of purely Celtic origin - is in large part inspired by Alanic mercenary cavalry sent to Great Britain and Brittany by the Romans and that the "sword in the stone" or "sword in the anvil" motif is ultimately derived from the sword worship practiced by the Saka peoples Scythians, Sarmatians and Alans. This sword-worship was adopted by the Goths from the Sarmatians and Arabs after they had arrived on the shores of the Black Sea.

Says Herwig Wolfram in *History of the Goths*: "The Gothic 1 and is here (in Viking saga *Hervarasaga*) Tyrffinger, the same name that is given to the mythical hereditary sword of the Goths. This presupposes that the Scythian Ares-Mars, who was the incarnation of the incarnation of the people and the land and who also manifested himself in the shape of a sword, had been accepted as a Gothic god." In the

middle of the 4th century AD, there was a king of the royal clan of the Ostrogoths known -as "Amal" or- "Amalung" who ruled a kingdom or empire which extended from the Danube to the Don or Volga which was called "the Kingdom of Germans and Scythians". The name of this Ostrogothic king was "Airmnareiks" in the original Gothic, "Hermanric" or "Ermanric in Old High German, and "Jormunrekkr" in old Norse. The "Rosomoni" were probably a clan of the Ostrogoths".

An unnamed member of the Rosomoni somehow betrayed Airmnareiks but escaped to the Huns. Furious, Airmnareiks had Sunilda or Swanheld, the wife of the traitor, drawn and quartered. Infuriated by this, Ammius and Sarus, the brothers of Sunilda, attempted to avenge their sister, wounding Airmnareiks. In the Prose Edda, Say Martyn Whittock and Hannah: "In Denmark, Gudrun had with her the beautiful Swanhild, child of Sigurd. She was chosen to be the bride of King Jormunrekkr (or "Airmnareiks" in the original Gothic) the Great of the Ostrogoths.

But when he sent his son to fetch her, he and Swanhild decided to marry each other instead of Swanhild marrying old King Jormunrekkr or "Airmnareiks". When King Jormunrekkr heard of this, he had his son executed and Swanhild trampled to death under the hooves of his horses and those of his nobles. When Gudrun heard that her daughter had been killed, she sent her three sons to Kill King Jormunrekkr, but they fell out among themselves and two of them murdered the third because he was the favorite of their mother. When they reached King Jormunrekkr, they cut off his arms and legs, but without their brother to assist them, they did not cut off his head and so his head alerted his men who stoned the two brothers to death, and so died the sons of Gudrun."

It is generally if not universally agreed that that the Iranian

fravashies are the originals of the Viking valkyries. Unfortunately, the common concept of the valkyries is derived from the operas of Richard Wagner. Says M. Schwartz concerning the Fravashis: "Fravashis are both 1.) the spirits of the departed righteous, such as we find in cults of heroes and vancestors: & 2.) the pre-existent doubles of all living things (which modern theosophists call

astral bodies), including even Ahura Mazda/ The Fravashies support and sustain the entire world/ Very much like the Valkyries, they are described as armed females flying on their mounts, destroying demonic forces. The annual festival festival of the Fravashis was known as Hamaspathmaedava: houses were carefully cleaned and otherwise made ready for the coming of the spirits, who were received with ritual offerings of food and clothing."

Says Ehsan Yarshater of the Fravashis: "Like the Indian Pitaras, the Fravashis were the souls of the departed and their cult may have had its origin in a form of ancestor worship. Bailey, he suggested an etymology" which would indicate that they were originally the departed spirits of heroes and that later the concept was enlarged to include all mortals - dead, born and unborn.

The Fravashis were conceived as invisible powerful beings who could assist their kinsmen and ward off harm from them if properly commemorated with offerings and prayers. In the *Farvardin Yasht* which is dedicated to them, only the Fravashis of the righteous are invoked. Say Martyn Whittock and Hannah Whittock concerning the Valkyries:

"The Valkyries are a particularly interesting female dimension of the Norse mythological world. They are the choosers of the slain who live in Valhalla but are sent to earth to collect those warriors chosen by Odin. However, as an intermediat is used to convey Odin's wishes, there is a possibility of these wishes being subverted. Valkyries are often depicted as semi-divine beings, but they can also be royal princesses who decide to take on this role. Valkyries can fall in love and can protect and bring good luck to their chosen hero in battle. The warriors, no matter how brave or strong, they are, do not have the ultimate control; this control over victory, glory, life and death is left to the hands of women who belong to both the mythological and human world.

This enables the hero to initially escape death, but he is not able to escape it forever and his involvement with the Valkyries invariably leads him onto a collision course with previous lovers or family members. This is a common theme in the Eddic heroic poems, with those of Helgi Hundingsbane built around the love and battle of the hero and his Valkyrie lover, leading to his ultimate demise. ...

"Oyhers among the goddess of the Asyniur are those called Valkyries. They serve in Valhalla and serve drinks to those warriors chosen to live there. They include those named Hrist, Mist, Skeggiold, Skogul, Hlokk and Reginleif.) In some sagas Brynhilde is a Valkyrie. The Valkyries are sent by Odin to attend every battle that occurs. There they decide who shall live and who shall die; who shall be defeated and who shall be victorious. Those Valkyries called Gunn, Rora, and Skulf (who is a Norn) are those who decide among the warriors who will die."

There are indeed Iranian or Saka and even mythology. All evidence indicates that said elements were brought to the ancestors of the Vikings by the Goths, who maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland even after they had migrated to the shores of Black Sea where they became so strongly Iranized or Sakaized. One proof of the above is that in Viking literature are found Gothic names and words - Gothic and old Norse are both Germanic languages, but not identical compare the original Gothic "Airmnareiks" with the old Norse "Jormunrekkr".

On the other hand, there are no Iranian nor Saka names nor words found in Viking literature. We now return to Christopher I. Beckwith: "Finally, the third wave, or Group C (of Indo-European peoples) migrated. It consisted of the Celtic, Baltic (since Lithuanian is the living language which is closest to the original Indo-European language, it is surprising that Mr. Beckwith devotes so little space to the Baltic peoples), Slavic, Albanian and Iranian peoples who remained in the homeland in Central Eurasia proper outside the region inhabited by the Group B peoples (including the Germanic peoples). The Celtic, Albanian, Slavian, and Baltic peoples moved westward, northwestward, and northward away from the Iranians, who nevertheless continued to expand and to dominate them, most strongly the Celts and Slavs."

Note that the Celts, and to a lesser extent the Slavs, remained united with the Iranians and were strongly dominated by them long after the Germanic peoples had separated from the Iranians and moved to the northwest. One is reminded of the Kievan Rus' chanson de geste, *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, which contains Slavic, Celtic and Iranian elements, but no Germanic elements except for a few Viking personal names, including "Igor", derived from the old Norse "Ingvar".

No full, comprehensive account has been written concerning the many relations and affinities between the Celts on the one hand and the Iranian peoples on the other. Such a work would fill several volumes and would require the work of numerous specialists in many fields. The connection between the Celts and Iranians may well have continued until the coming of the Huns. Even later, the Iranian or Saka elements within the Welsh-Breton branch of the Celtic epic tradition, brought to Celtic Britain and Brittany by Sarmatian and Alanic mercenaries brought to those regions by the Romans are well known. This last may or may not include the romance of "Tristan and Isolt", which became part of the Arthurian Cycle, though its origin may be purely Celtic. Also, the personal name "Alan" may be derived from the Alans. The name "Alan" itself may be derived from "Aryan", as the confusion between "L" and "R" is common and well known.

Some Iranian-Celtic affinities are perfectly obvious. "Parisi" is the name of a Celtic tribe in Gaul (from which name is derived the name of the city of Paris), Celtic Britain and western Andalusia (the Romans were surprised to find "Persians" in the Iberian Peninsula). Yes, the territory of the Parisi of what today western Andalusia is included the area of Donana and the shrine of "Nuestra Senora del Rocio" (Our Lady of the Mist), mentioned earlier in these pages. "Scotia" was a name used by the Romans to refer to homeland. The name "Scotia" is derived from "Scotta", a Celtic queen in Spain, whose name, like Scythian, is derived from the North Iranian *Skuda, which is in turn derived from the Indo-European *skudo, from *skeudo, meaning "archer".

Scotta, of course was considered to have been of Scythian origin. A migration from Ireland in the 4th century AD, brought the Gaelic language to the Scottish Highlands, and gave the name "Scotland" to the land which the Romans had called "Caledonia".

The name "Ireland" is really a Viking word, the ancient Celtic name being "Erinn", or "Erin" in more modern Gaelic. The name "Erin" is known in the feminine personal name "Erin", as well as the expression "Erin go Bragh" and in a number of songs, such as "Come Back to Erin".

The kinship between "Aryan", "Iran" and "Erinn" is clear enough. There is no space here to even begin a treatment of the Celtic-Iranian affinities. In my book I give some space to this topic, but only touch the surface. I recommend that the reader investigate this vast and most fascinating field. ■



Given Caspian seals, the sole marine mammals inhabiting the Caspian Sea, have fallen into a drastic decline pushing the specie towards extinction, Iranian ships in the Caspian Sea will display Caspian seal image, deputy environment chief for marine affairs has said. Caspian Seal (*Pusa caspica*), one of the smallest members of the earless seal family, are unique in that they are found exclusively in the brackish Caspian Sea. They can be found not only along the shorelines, but also on the many rocky islands and floating blocks of ice that dot the Caspian Sea. By doing so, Iran spread the message of “the need for preserving the Caspian seal” to the world, ISNA quoted Parvin Farshchi as saying on Saturday.

Due to the importance of preserving the precious species, and the sympathy and cooperation between the maritime or-

IRANIAN SHIPS TO CARRY MESSAGE OF PRESERVING CASPIAN SEALS

Source: Tehran Times

ganizations, the project has been jointly implemented by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines Company and the Department of Environment, she said. Pointing to the precious animal being in serious danger of extinction, she noted that the Caspian seal population which stood at about one million in the 90s, wouldn't have decline, if serious measures have been taken to preserve them. “Neither Iran not any other littoral countries were or are authorized to fish Caspian seal.”

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times in November 2017, Farshchi said that poaching activities in other Caspian Sea littoral countries and also bycatch in Iran are of the threats pushing the precious animals towards extinction with 90 percent decline in the population density.

Referring to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), she said that Caspian seals were included on Appendices I and II of the Convention by Iranian Department of Environment (DOE) efforts.

As per the Appendix I of the Conven-

tion, poaching and illegal fishing activities is banned to save the animals from extinction, while Iran has not had a share in illegal fishing of the species since the very beginning, she concluded.

Over the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CMS COP12) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), administered by UN Environment on October 28, 2017, Caspian seals were included on Appendices I and II of the Convention.

According to the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals Website, Appendix I comprises migratory species that have been assessed as being in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of their range. Appendix II covers migratory species that have an unfavorable conservation status and that require international agreements for their conservation and management, as well as those that have a conservation status which would significantly benefit from the international cooperation that could be achieved by an international agreement.

IRAN'S FASCINATING WAY TO TELL FORTUNES

The Tradition of Fal-e Hafez

By Joobin Bekhrad

The tradition of fal-e Hafez has been practiced in Iran – and elsewhere in the Persian-speaking world, such as Afghanistan – for centuries.

I was sauntering about the foothills of the mountains in Tehran with my friend Jamshid, and Shirin, a girl he was courting. A friend of Shirin's had just been diagnosed with cancer, and Jamshid and I were trying to console her, insisting that everything would turn out fine – but to no avail. As we were walking towards one of my haunts for chai and *ghalyan* (water pipes), we came across a wizened old man with a canary perched on a little box of colored cards.

"Wait," Shirin told us, walking towards him while drawing money from her purse. She handed him a note, closed her eyes and clasped her hands together while the little bird hopped about and pulled out a card at random with its beak. As she read the poem written on the back, a smile broke out on her face.

"What does it say?" Jamshid asked her. "Thank God," Shirin replied with a sigh, reading the opening line: "Joseph the lost shall return to Canaan – grieve not." It means she's going to be OK."

OF LOVE AND WINE

Poetry occupies a particularly hallowed space in Iranian culture. Far from merely appreciating poetry as an art form, we Iranians – of all backgrounds and socio-economic classes – live and breathe it. A street sweeper will quote *Khayyām* on the transience of life, just as a taxi driver will recite the mystic verse of Rumi and a politician will invoke the patriotism of Ferdowsi. On the other hand, my great-uncle, just like Voltaire, loved the instructive Sa'di to the point that he chose our family name (Bekhrad, meaning 'wise') from a line in one of his poems. However, when it comes to Persian belles-lettres, it is Hafez who unquestionably reigns supreme in the hearts and minds of Iranians.

A 14th-Century poet, Hafez spent most of his life in his native Shiraz, now popularly known as the 'City of Poets'. He is best known for his *ghazals* (love poems), which constitute the bulk of his compendium, *Divan*. In his poems, he writes chiefly of love and wine, as well as the brazen hypocrisy of holy men and



religious authorities. Never one for putting up appearances, Hafez preferred to engage in what some called 'sin' rather than pass himself off as a paragon of virtue. Written in a florid, yet lucid and highly readable, style, the collected works of his *Divan* represent what many believe to be the glittering zenith of Persian poetry.

As beloved as Hafez's poetry is, it is perhaps just as controversial as it was when it was written – a fact that might account for its immense popularity throughout the centuries. In modern-day Iran, Hafez is peerless, adored as an almost godlike figure. His poetry is often sung and set to classical Persian music. His tomb in Shiraz incessantly bustles with devotees, admirers and tourists from around the world. Most interesting, however, is the popular Iranian tradition of using Hafez's poems for divination; in other words, what Shirin did that day in Tehran.

THE 'TONGUE OF THE UNSEEN'

Known as *fal-e Hafez* (which roughly translates to 'divination via Hafez'), the tradition involves consulting the poet – known as *Lesan ol Gheyb* ('Tongue of the Unseen') – for questions about the future, as well as guidance regarding difficult decisions and dilemmas.

The tradition of fal-e Hafez has been practiced in Iran (and elsewhere in the Persian-speaking world, such as Afghanistan) for centuries. According to a well-known story, it originated upon the death of the poet. In a 1768 letter to the Orientalist Sir William Jones, the Hungarian nobleman Count Károly Reviczky, who had 'read [the story] somewhere', wrote that some holy men were unsure what to do with Hafez's corpse on account of 'the licentiousness of his poetry'. A dispute ensued as to whether or not they should bury him, after which, Reviczky writes, 'they left the decision to a divination in use amongst them, by opening his book at random, and taking the first couplet which occurred'.

It was Hafez's lucky day, for these were the words that were chanced upon:

*From the corpse of Hafez shrink thou not;
Though drowned in sin, Heaven is his lot.**

Just as it's little wonder that Hafez's poetry is so adored amongst Iranians, so too is the custom of fal-e Hafez. Since time immemorial, Iranians have been a deeply inquisitive people, ever looking to uncover hidden meaning and mystery in the world around them. According to Columbia University's *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, the Byzantine historian Agathias, for instance, wrote of Zoroastrian priests who saw the future in flames. In Iran's national epic, the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), Ferdowsi tells (in just one of the book's many accounts of divination) how the monarch Khosrow Parviz interpreted the accidental falling of a quince from the top of his throne as an omen of his impending death and the demise of the Sassanian dynasty. In more modern times, as Persian literature scholar Mahmoud Omidsharar writes in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Iranians have used playing cards – and even chickpeas – to tell their fortunes; and, while some also use other books of Persian verse (such as Rumi's *Masnavi*), as well as the Koran, Omidsharar posits that Hafez's *Divan* is undoubtedly the most popular medium when it comes to bibliomancy in Iran.

Fal-e Hafez can be done anywhere, as long as the Divan is at hand

Today, you can have your fortune told by the bard of Shiraz just about anywhere in Iran. Men with trained birds proffer their cards of poetry on busy streets as well as

at popular recreational spots for locals and tourists, such as Darband in Tehran where Shirin had hers told, and Hafez's tomb in Shiraz. In major cities like Tehran, which are notorious for their often near-stagnant traffic, children (sans the gimmicky birds) gather at bustling intersections to do the rounds at lengthy red lights, letting curious passengers pick out poetry cards at random to (hopefully) set their hearts at ease.

While vendors of Hafez poem-cards abound throughout Iran, fal-e Hafez can be done anywhere, as long as the Divan is at hand. Just think of a question (never to be divulged to anyone) and turn to a page in the book at random for the response. Should I take that trip to Venice?

Is my lover cheating on me? Will I get the job? As says the proverb, only God and Hafez of Shiraz know the answer – which will chiefly lie in the first couplet that one sees. Iranians consult the poet any time they so desire, although major Iranian festivities marking turning points – such as Norooz (the Iranian New Year) and Shab-e Yalda (the Winter Solstice) – are particularly popular occasions.

Shirin was fortunate to receive a positive response from Hafez, who doesn't al-

ways have good news in store. That same year, I, too, closed my eyes, asked a question in my mind and reverently opened the Divan at random. Iran was to play Argentina the following day in the 2014 World Cup, and I wanted to know if our boys would send Lionel Messi off the field with his tail between his legs. It was with much dismay that my eyes fell on the following lines:

*For this age's sorrows,
to which no end I see,
Save purple wine,
I know no other remedy.**

As I soon found out, it wasn't only wine that Hafez knew a thing or two about, but the World Cup, too. As sure as he'd put it, it was Messi who sent us packing, and not the other way around.

A POET FOR ALL SEASONS

I have Sa'di as my namesake and Khayyám as my hero – but it is with Hafez that I, like the overwhelming majority of my compatriots, live. As a child, I could never understand my paternal grandmother's fascination with Hafez, or why my maternal grandfather used to quote the poet day and night, and keep a threadbare

copy of his Divan on his living-room table, like some sort of permanent fixture (it's still there).

Least of all could I appreciate how, on Shab-e Yalda, my aunt would close her eyes, whisper something to herself, and open that same threadbare Divan to see what 'dissolute old Hafez' (as Friedrich Engels once described the poet in a letter to Karl Marx) had to say in response to her questions. With time, I have come not only to obsess over the beauty of Hafez's poetry and consider him a kindred spirit, but also to develop a penchant for fal-e Hafez. I don't believe in fate or predestination, and in no way vouch for the efficacy of the poet as an all-round problem solver. Yet, in true Iranian spirit, I constantly find myself turning to him whenever I have a burning question or need advice on a sensitive issue.

Sure, it was quite a downer when Hafez told me Iran wouldn't beat Argentina; but there's an indescribable joy and comfort I feel when the poet assures (and sometimes, reassures) me that everything's going to be OK. And isn't that what we all, Iranian or otherwise, want to know – or at least believe?

**All translations are by the author*



In the Memory of Dr. Vida Tavafaghi Vida

Vida was born from a very talented mother on May 28, 1938, in Tehran, Iran. Her father was an Officer in the Army. She was the third child of the family after a girl and a boy. She finished primary school in Tehran and immediately after that her father's mission was changed to Isfahan, the historic city in the South West of Iran. She finished high school at Behesht Aien in Isfahan ranking first in every grade. Immediately after high school she took the entrance exam to medical school (5000 participants or which 300 were needed). She passed the test immediately and started medical school the same year. It was in her second year of medical school she met Amir. Amir was champion and manager of the table tennis team of the medical school and Vida became a member of the women's team. From this point their relationship continued and they became mixed double partners in table tennis and got the first rank in the Tehran University between all colleges of the university. Soon they became engaged

and then married during their internship in 1963. She joined the Army during medical school and after finishing medical school she had to work in the Health Department of the Army. While serving in that capacity, she passed her ECFMG exam. After hard efforts, finally the Army agreed to let her go to the United States for her specialty in OB-Gyn. During this time, she had 2 children, a boy Parham and a girl Pedramin. Vida moved to the United States on Christmas Eve of 1968 alone. Amir was in the middle of his 3rd year residency in general surgery at Sina Hospital of Tehran Medical School and had to still pass his ECFMG exam too. During his chief residency, he passed the exam and immediately after he with the children moved to the United States in 1970. At this point, Vida had finished a year of internship and already had started her first-year dermatology residency at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, MD. She finished her training in Dermatology in 1972 and at this time, Amir was accepted as Fellow in Pediatric Surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital in New York City. Meanwhile, she was accepted at NYU as an instructor for dermatologic surgery. They lived in New York City for one year and after passing State Boards immediately returned to Iran. She started her job as chief of the only Department of Dermatology in Army Health Care at 501 Army Hospital in Tehran. She also published a few papers there. In the meantime, she had her private practice too. Right after the revolution Amir and the children went back to the United States and she joined them after a few months. She made tremendous efforts to find a job and to start her private practice, which she finally opened in Wayne, NJ, the place we have been living for 37 years. During her practice, Vida was interested in dermatologic surgery. She started with liposuction after spending a few months with Dr. Illus, the father of the tumescent technique, in Paris. She was the first doing liposuction in New Jersey, then lipo injections and her innovative technique of hand rejuvenation with fat injections.

Historic and Cultural Interactions Between Islam and Judaism, Muslims and Jews

2nd and the last part

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The Banu Nadir tribe was expelled from Medina in 625 CE (3 AH) after an alleged attempt to assassinate the prophet Mohammad a few months after the Battle of Uhud. In that battle, an army of 3,000 men of Meccan pagans (Quraysh tribe) attacked a Muslim force in Medina (around 700 defending men), and despite early success in the battlefield, Muslims had very heavy losses.

The Banu Qurayza tribe was vanquished after the Battle of Trench in 627 CE (5 AH), when a combined force of more than 10,000 men from the pagan Meccan Quraysh tribe and many of the Bedouin pagan tribes of the Arabian peninsula united forces under the Jewish leadership of Huyayy ibn Akhtab to conquer Medina and eradicate Muslims once and for all. After a month of an unsuccessful siege of Medina, behind a trench dug by the Muslims and adverse weather conditions, the pagans retreated with heavy losses back to Mecca. During the unsuccessful siege of Medina, the pagans secretly negotiated with the Jews of the Banu Qurayza to provide them with a safe passage to attack the city from behind. This was considered a violation of the peace treaty (the constitution of Medina). The prophet Mohammad ordered a siege of the Banu Qurayza fortresses. After their defeat, he asked them to appoint a judge of their choice to rule on the act of treason they had committed. The Banu Qurayza agreed to accept whatever verdict Sa'ad ibn Mua'dh (the leader of their former ally, the Aus tribe) would pass on them. Sa'ad, who himself was severely wounded in the Battle of Trench, invoked the Torah and declared treason as an unpardonable offense and sentenced all adult males to be executed and the women and the children be taken as war captives (Quran 33:26-27). However, some historians have disputed that the Banu Qurayza men were killed on quite such a large scale. It has been argued that Ibn Ishaq gathered information from descendants of the Qurayza Jews, who embellished or manufactured the details of the incident.

The negative and derogatory verses in the Quran against the Jews (Quran 2:65, 5:60, 7:166) appeared after these events and were directed toward the wrongdoers among the Jews who disobeyed the laws of God as revealed in the Torah, who broke the Sabbath, and took usury, which was strictly prohibited for them and for the Muslims, and who were not grateful for the goods bestowed on them by God, and had altered their holy scripture (Quran 3:63, 71; 4:46, 160-161; 5:41-44, 63-64, 82; 6:91). In the Quran's style of timely narratives, the references to the Jews and other groups were only to certain populations, and pertained to a certain period of history, and were devoid of racial and religious profiling. The Jewish people in general, and Judaism were not the targets of these remarks, and the criticisms dealt mainly with the wrongdoers among the Jews. At the same time, the Quran gives legitimacy to the Jews and the Christians where it says that those among them who truly believe in the God, the Day of Judgment, and do good in this life, should have no fear on the Day of Judgment (Quran 2:62 & 5:69),¹⁰ and praises the high virtues among some of the followers of the Book (Christians and Jews) (Quran 3:113-115),¹¹ and praises those Jews who guide others in the way of the truth and act justly (Quran 7:159).

As the people of the Book, the Christians and the Jews in the territories governed by Muslims enjoyed more protection than the followers of other faiths, and were given a minority status of "dhimmi" with rights to own property, practice their religion, maintain their places of worship, and be judged by their own judges according to their own jurisprudence, engage in commerce and operate their own schools, in exchange for a special poll tax called "Jizya". Also, they would not be drafted into the army at wartime and they would receive all the protections that Muslims enjoyed as citizens of those communities. Moreover, they were exempt from the regular tax (Zakat) that Muslims had to pay to the government on a yearly basis.

It was at the time of the second right-

eous (Rashidun) caliph after the Prophet Mohammad's death, Umar ibn al-Khattab (641 CE, 19 AH), that the Holy Land of Hijaz (Mecca and Medina and their surroundings) became forbidden to the non-Muslims, and they were only allowed in the Red Sea port of Jidda (Jeddah). He also set aside the Christian ban on the Jews and allowed them into Jerusalem for worship. At the same time some restrictive conditions were codified known as "Pact of Umar" that gave the Jews and the Christians a second-class citizen status. However, despite the dhimmi status, the Jews were still better off under the Muslim rule than under the Byzantine Christian rule.

While the dhimmi status indicated a second-class citizenship, it did not prevent a good working relationship and even friendship between the Muslims and the Jews. As individuals, the Jews reached high positions under various Muslim rulers, rabbinical courts were recognized to judge the Jews in their disputes, and the Jewish leaders were recognized to represent the Jewish communities.

After Ali ibn Abutaleb, the fourth righteous caliph after the Prophet Mohammad's death, was assassinated in 661 CE (40 AH), Muawiyah who was the Muslim ruler of Syria took over the entire Muslim empire and established the Umayyad dynasty. The Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads in 750 CE in a bloody revolt, notably by the support from the "mawali" (converted Iranians) led by an Iranian general Abu Muslim Khorasani. The sole survivor of the Umayyad royal family, Prince Abd al-Rahman I fled to Spain that had been under Umayyad rule since 711 CE, and established a new dynasty at Cordoba, Spain. His descendant, Abd al-Rahman III proclaimed the caliphate of Cordoba in 929 CE independent from the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad.

During the Abbasid caliphate in the Muslim Middle East, there was a gradual revival of the Persian (Iranian) culture and influence, and the old Arab aristocracy was partially replaced by a Muslim Iranian administration. The Iranians had

an ancient civilization that had extensive interactions with the civilizations of India and China. The Iranian converts introduced advanced technologies in agriculture and irrigation, medicine, mathematics and astronomy, as well as a universal philosophy, and a tradition of efficient state administration. During the Abbasid dynasty, Baghdad was the capital city and seat of power in the Muslim world. It became a center for higher learning, arts and sciences, attracting people of knowledge, philosophers, architects, musicians, poets and intellectuals from all around the world. The books of past scientists and philosophers were actively translated from the Greek, Persian, Indian, and Chinese languages into Arabic, and soon the Arabic language became the means of conveying knowledge and new discoveries to the world, much as the English language is today. Muslim physicians and scientists of Persia (Iran) wrote the prefaces in Arabic for more widespread public use in the Islamic world.

The Islamic civilization flourished most in the medieval period 900 – 1200 CE in both Baghdad and Cordoba-Spain, as did the Jewish civilization in the Muslim territories. As the Arabic language became the state and intellectual language of the Middle East, North Africa and Muslim Spain, the Jews living in these territories adopted Arabic as a means of communication, and for several centuries most of the Jewish religious and secular intellectual production was in the Arabic written in Hebrew letters. Following the pioneering works of Rabbi Saadya Gaon in Iraq, some of the greatest Jewish classics by Ibn Pakudah, Maimonides and Halevi were written in the Arabic language, which had become a legitimate tool of creation of scientific and philosophical discoveries and thoughts.

The region in Spain ruled by the Muslims, called al-Andalusia, became a center for intellectuals, poets, philosophers, and scientists of the time. The adoption of the Arabic language enabled the educated Jews to actively participate in the dominant culture, and to have access to all recent Muslim intellectual achievements in science and philosophy, as well as to the Greek intellectual heritage, which had been best preserved by the Muslim scholars. The Jews became active participants in a variety of professions, such as medicine, commerce, finance, and agriculture. The meticulous regard, which Muslim-linguists had for the Arabic grammar and style influ-

enced Jewish linguists to study Hebrew and led to a renaissance in the Jewish poetry in Hebrew that paralleled the Arabic in meter and styles. During this period some of the greatest intellectual works in philosophy, law, grammar, and natural sciences appeared in both the Jewish and Muslim worlds. Adoption of the Arabic language and a Judeo-Arabic culture greatly facilitated assimilation of the Jews in Muslim countries, and their active participation in international trade in caravans linking east and west of the vast Muslim territories. This led to the emergence of a class of wealthy Jews in the courts of Muslim rulers who served as the bankers and financiers.

When Muslims conquered south of Spain in 711 CE, they were generally welcomed and assisted by the local Jews, and once conquered, the defense of Cordoba was left in the hands of the Jews under Muslim rule. By the time Umayyad rule was established by Abd al-Rahman I in 755 CE, waves of Jewish immigrants escaped a century of persecution under the Christian rule in Europe, as well as the Jews from the Mediterranean region, and also from the Muslim territories from Morocco to Babylon joined the native Jewish communities there, and thus, a highly enriched-Sephardic Jewish culture was created by a mixture of these very diverse Jewish traditions from all over the world. The Jewish scholars from around the world were invited to Cordoba. During the reign of Abd al-Rahman III (912-961 CE) who proclaimed a Muslim Caliphate (independent from Baghdad) in Cordoba-Spain (929 CE), the Jews developed their own (independent of Baghdad) Jewish community, culture and Talmudic authority. Under the influence of the Muslim linguists and grammarians, a new generation of Hebrew linguists and grammarians emerged, who applied the same meticulousness that the Muslim linguists and scholars applied to the study of Arabic (the language of the Quran) to the study of Hebrew (the language of Torah). The Jewish poetry in Hebrew had a renaissance in style and meter in this period. Celebrated poets, such as Solomon ibn Gabriol, Yehuda, Halevi, Abraham and Moses ibn Ezra, as well as linguists, such as Dunash ben Labrat (innovator of Hebrew metric poetry), and Menahem ben Saruq (compiler of the first Hebrew dictionary) were some of the prominent figures of this period. Hasdai ibn Shaprut, the Jewish counselor in customs and foreign trade to Abd al-Rahman III, himself a poet and a man of letters, encouraged and supported

Sephardic Jewish works in linguistics, religion, nature, politics and music.

In the fertile multicultural environment of al-Andalus, the Jewish and Muslim scholars made significant strides in astronomy, astrology, optics, geometry, medicine, philosophy, and literary works. They developed astrolabes to calculate latitudes and improved astronomical tables and instruments for navigation. Abraham ibn Ezra, a Jewish poet and scholar, wrote three books on arithmetic and number theory. Many books of science and philosophy were translated from the Greek into Arabic, Hebrew and Latin, and had a great influence on the intellectual movement and renaissance later in the rest of Europe.

The good fortune of the Jews in the Muslim Spain (al-Andalusia) that started in 711 peaked by mid 12th century when Jewish communities had flourished throughout Spain's Islamic centers of power, Granada, Cordoba, Merida, Lucena, Saragossa, and Seville. The culture of Sephardic Judaism was shaped in this unique multicultural, diverse society where the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews lived together, interacted freely and created a culture full of vitality.

The culturally fertile and open society of al-Andalus ended in mid 12th century with the coming of Almohads (al-Muwahhidun = "the monotheists", a Moroccan Berber Muslim movement founded in the 12th century) from north of Africa (Morocco) to help defend the Muslim Spain against the Spanish Christians who were pushing the Muslims southward. The whole of the Islamic Spain was under the rule of Almohads by 1172 CE. Their dominance continued till 1212 CE, after which they gradually lost territories to an alliance of Christian forces from north of Spain, so that the great Moorish cities of Cordova and Seville had fallen to the Christian forces by 1236 CE and 1248 CE, respectively. Jews were severely restricted under the Almohads' reign and many chose to move northward to the newly conquered Christian lands, where they were temporarily treated better. Among those were Maimonides (aka Moses ben Maimon, Musa bin Maymun, Rambam) and his family, a great medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher, legalist and physician, who became one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages. They settled in Fez in Morocco, and later on in Fustat, Egypt around 1168 CE. While in Cairo, he composed his acclaimed 14-volume commentary on the Mishna Torah that still carries significant canonical authority as a codification

of Talmudic law. He worked as a rabbi, physician, and philosopher in Morocco and Egypt. He was influenced by the earlier Muslim Scholars and philosophers such as Al-Farabi (Alpharabius, 872-950) and Avicenna (ibn Sina, 980–1037), and his contemporary Averroes (ibn Rushd, 1126-1198), and he in his turn became recognized as a prominent philosopher and polymath in both the Jewish and Islamic worlds. Gaining widespread recognition, he was appointed as court physician to Sultan Saladin and the Egypt royal family. Maimonides died in 1204 in Fustat, Egypt.

By the thirteenth century, the multicultural, humanistic Muslim societies gradually gave way to more rigid, orthodox and less tolerant societies, and the Islamic world declined in its intellectual productivity and fronting, as did the Jewish communities within these territories. The Jewish cultural and intellectual creativity gradually shifted toward the Jewish communities in Europe. However, the Jews who stayed in the Muslim territories still had some protections, albeit as second-class citizens, in accordance with the pact of Umar.

The fate of the Jews in Spain turned around once again in 1492 CE when the Spanish Catholic royal couple Isabel I and

Ferdinand II issued an edict that all the remaining Jews (hundreds of thousands) who had lived in Spain for generations should either convert to Christianity or be expelled from Spain. The Turkish Ottoman Sultan Bayazid II sent ships to Spain and rescued the Jews who were not only permitted, but were even encouraged to settle in the Ottoman territories. The Jews lived under relative calm under the Muslim Ottoman rulers. The relatively tolerant atmosphere of the Ottoman Empire encouraged large numbers of European Jews to migrate to Ottoman controlled territories. The newly arrived Jews contributed to the technological and scientific progress of the Ottoman Empire. One of their great contributions was development of the printing press in Turkey in 1493 CE, and within one year of their expulsion from Spain they established the first Hebrew press in Istanbul.

During the early Turkish conquest and expansion of the Muslim Ottoman Empire in the early 14th century, the Jews who were oppressed under the Christian Byzantine rule welcomed Muslims as their saviors. Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries the Jews who were expelled from many European lands, e.g., Hungary (1376 CE), France (1394 CE), Sicily (early 1400s),

Bavaria (1470 CE), Spain (1492 CE), Italy (1537 CE), Bohemia (1542 CE), fled to and were welcomed in the Ottoman territories.

During the three centuries following their expulsion, the Jews in the Turkish Muslim Ottoman Empire ascended to high positions as court physicians (Hakim Yacoub, Moshe Hamon, Joseph Hamon, Gabriel Buenaventura, and Daniel Fonseca), and as foreign diplomats.

In the 19th century, with the decline of Turkish Ottoman power, and as a reaction to the growing European colonial powers, there was a rise in nationalistic fervor and religious radicalism that led to deterioration of the living conditions of the Jews in some Muslim countries.

Today, territorial and political disputes in the middle east have been increasingly characterized in religious terms, feeding the radicalized elements of all sides, to demonize “the others,” and have created the false notion that the Muslims and the Jews have been mortal enemies of each other throughout their histories, while, as shown in this communication, the rise and fall of civilization in both communities was interdependent upon one another and the Jews were historically better off in the Muslim lands than in the Christian lands.

THE TAKING



Negar Ahkami, *The Taking*, twenty nine ceramic fragments

Marymount University's Cody Gallery

November 1, 2018 - December 15, 2018

The Taking is named after an installation of 29 painted fragments and accompanying wall text that recalls a museum display of ceramic fragments. Each painted fragment depicts a detail of actual source material, such as an Italian altarpiece, Ancient Greek pottery, a Vermeer painting, and Majolica tiles.

At first glance, they may be identified as primarily Western. However, the wall captions focus on the fragments' connections to the visual legacy of Iran and its neighbors, treating any connection—however tenuous—as central instead of footnoted. The Taking reflects on cultural appropriation, the politics of attribution, as well as the emotional need to take liberties, and build a new narrative from scraps.

Also, included in the exhibition is a range of fantastical paintings that both inspire and are inspired by The Taking. The paintings mine the ambiguous state of fear and adoration often realized when encountering different cultures stereotyped as “Other.” In the *Caftan*, Ahkami offers a dizzying send-up of enthrallment with the exotic. In this painting, as is typical of Ahkami's practice, Ahkami builds bas-reliefs of gesso, and paints in visceral, repeated glazes of acrylic paint. The effect resembles Iranian ceramic traditions, at the same time as it conjures global iterations of blue and white ceramics and Majolica. In Iranian ceramics, Ahkami finds real global connections as well as a freeing, unrestrictive sense of the hand that serves her expressionistic impulses.

THE CAFTAN



Negar Ahkami, *The Caftan*, Gesso, acrylic and glitter on canvas stretched on panel, 66" x 48", 2018., Photo: Adam Reich

Please follow Negar Ahkami at: www.negarahkami.com, for future exhibitions and lectures

IRAN: Your Next Summer Destination

Ava Sarram

Lush beaches and pure waters, jaw-dropping views from the tallest volcano in Asia, ancient ruins steeped in Persian culture: Iran has it all. From lavish beach vacations on the sandy fringes of the breathtaking, turquoise-watered Persian Gulf, to soaking in the country's history at one of the greatest wonders of the ancient world, Persepolis, Iran sways from serene to modern to historic and back again.

Iran is submerged in history and culture; Ancient Persian mosques are mazes of the most magnificent tilework and stained glass, strategically placed over decades, creating maelstroms of mesmerizing colors.

Palaces are dotted throughout the country, marking the presences of Kings and Queens throughout the millennia; Pools of crystal-clear water snake through the vibrant plant-life of the vast gardens, and the meticulously tiled grand arches in the halls are illuminated by glistening golden chandeliers. Furthermore, Iran is the home to one of the most renowned wonders of the ancient world, the capital of the renowned ancient Persian empire, a piece of history carved in stone. Persepolis. Step where royalty stepped centuries before, climb the tombs of Kings, or take a glimpse into the past, and see what Persepolis was truly like. No matter where you go, Iran's spirited culture will always make your experience feel like a travel through time.

However, though Iran is drenched in rich history, it still sustains an infectiously invigorating atmosphere. Tower over the buzzing city at the 1,427-foot peak of the majestic Milad Tower; Leap over raging fires 'to take their blazing passion' at "Charshambe Soori", (the festival of fire.); Wander around the ten-kilometer labyrinth of the Grand-Bazaar, where you can find anything from Iran's famed silk carpets to turquoise jewelry.

Although it may not be the first place that comes to mind, Iran is one of the most exhilarating places to be.

As well as all these characteristics of this captivating country, not many others can boast that they have almost four different seasons at the same time. Dizin, a city in the north of Iran, has one of the biggest ski resorts in the Middle East, and is ranked among the top forty ski resorts in the world. On the other hand, in the south of Iran, the Great Salt Desert beckons to be explored. This desert is the epitome of endless: the pure plains go as far as the eye can see, and hide natural treasures such as serene salt lakes, giant sand dunes and cliffs, camels, sunsets over the pure golden sand, and much more. In Iran, adventure awaits at every corner. Literally.

Despite all of this, Iran is far from being purely a platform for spectacular sites and astonishing adventures. It also holds a hidden gem, which are the people themselves. Known to be some of the kindest and most hospitable people in the world, Iranians are bundles of joy, are endlessly hospitable, and could just be the attraction themselves. But, most of all, they can have fun. Dazzling flames light up the night at the festival of fire until the sun rises; Colossal celebrations after world cup games show their passion for their country, and many other holidays such as "The Night of the Fortieth", known as Yalda, or the largest celebration in Iran, Nowruz (New year). Whether it is to celebrate a special occasion, enjoy their friends and family, or cheer on their country, Iran is ready to party.

Iran will never cease to surprise; with overflowing culture, architecture, and adventure, there will never be a dull day. No amount of time will ever be enough to explore this world treasure. But there are still many more mysteries waiting to be unfolded.