



Persian Heritage

www.persian-heritage.com

Persian Heritage, Inc.

110 Passaic Avenue
Passaic, NJ 07055

E-mail: Mirassiran@aol.com

Telephone: (973) 471-4283

Fax: 973 471 8534

EDITOR

SHAHROKH AHKAMI

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Mehdi Abusaidi, Shirin Ahkami Raiszadeh, Dr. Mahvash Alavi Naini, Mohammad Bagher Alavi, Dr. Talat Bassari, Mohammad H. Hakami, Ardeshir Lotfalian, K. B. Navi, Dr. Kamshad Raiszadeh, Farhang A. Sadeghpour, Mohammad K. Sadigh, M. A. Dowlatshahi.

MANAGING EDITOR

HALLEH NIA

ADVERTISING

HALLEH NIA

* The contents of the articles and advertisements in this journal, with the exception of the editorial, are the sole works of each individual writers and contributors. This magazine does not have any confirmed knowledge as to the truth and veracity of these articles. All contributors agree to hold harmless and indemnify *Persian Heritage (Mirass-e Iran)*, Persian Heritage Inc., its editors, staff, board of directors, and all those individuals directly associated with the publishing of this magazine. The opinions expressed in these articles are the sole opinions of the writers and not the journal. No article or picture submitted will be returned to the writer or contributor. All articles submitted in English must be typed.

* The appearance of advertising in this magazine does not constitute a guarantee or endorsement of the products by *Persian Heritage*. In addition, articles and letters published do not reflect the views of this publication.

* Letters to the Editor should be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the above addresses and numbers. The journal reserves the right to edit same for space and clarity or as deemed appropriate.

* All requests for permissions and reprints must be made in writing to the managing editor.

PUBLISHED BY

PERSIAN HERITAGE, INC.

A corporation organized for cultural and literary purposes

Cover Price: \$6.00

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

Typesetting & Layout
TALIEH PUBLICATIONS

Persian Heritage

Vol. 24, No. 93

Spring 2019

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK	6
The First Annual Iranian Film Festival New York	7
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	8
NEWS	
Gold for Iran's Para Shooter, Sareh Javanmardi	10
Resket Tower in Sari, Iran	11
COMMENTARY	
Who Owns Iran's Oil?	12
<i>(Khosrow B. Semnani)</i>	
THE ARTS & CULTURE	
REVIEWS	15
Professor Dariush Borbor's Works	16
<i>(Kaveh Farrokhi)</i>	
Uncle's Complaint: Tale of Rejuvenation	17
<i>(Iraq Bashiri)</i>	
The Sakas <i>(Michael McClain)</i>	20
The Patriots Who Triggered Demise of the Empire	23
<i>(M. Reza Vaghefi)</i>	
An Interview with J. Golestan-Parast and R. Blake	25
<i>(Brian Appleton)</i>	
Reza Abdoh	29
<i>(Pantea Bahrami)</i>	
Timeless Leadership Lessons	32
<i>(Ryan Holiday)</i>	

Important Notice

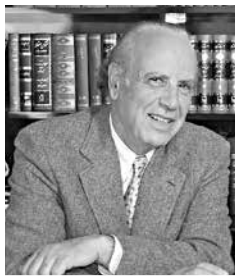
All written submissions to Persian Heritage with the expectation of publication in the magazine must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. When an article is submitted we assume the author has complete ownership of the article and the right to grant permission for publication.

Persian  Heritage

**Special
announcement:**

Contact our
California based Advertising
Agent for your ads.

(973) 471-4283



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Once again spring has arrived and so has the 24th year of Persian Heritage. As always, I extend my best Norooz wishes to all our readers and supporters. I always wait to write my editorial to the last minute before publication. This is to the annoyance of the other staff members. I do this because I hold out hope that the editorial will report good news about Iran and its position in the international world. I waited to the last minute again. Sadly, I will not be writing about hopeful good news. Sadly, I will write again about the desperation, trial and tribulations the citizens of Iran continue to face.

A few days ago, after no calls or emails, I finally heard from an old friend from Iran. This gentleman, his entire life, had positive dreams for Iran. He sacrificed so much to help rebuild the most deprived areas in Iran and educate the people who lived there. He is now in the final season of his life. At a time when he should be free of all anxiety, he remains anxious for the future of his fellow citizens.

I complained to him about not hearing from him. In his response to me I could hear his wonderful smile. I also heard in his voice, despite his hardships he was about to share with me, his optimism and continued compassion for the Iranian people. "Dear Shahrokh, you live in a part of the world who doesn't understand that here, the smallest of our needs, regardless of the emergency, can take two weeks to two months to be met. For some time my house phone, cell phone and computer did not function. Unless you know someone influential in the phone company it will take weeks to fix. My computer which is my access to the world, despite censorship and its slowness, ceased to function. I, at my age did not have the skill to repair it. Because it was a small job for an expert to repair, they would not fix it. I was at the mercy of the savvy youth to fix it. Finally, I was back online. And my cell which could not connect eventually came back on. You, my dear friend, are the first person I spoke with since these mechanical failures." I extended my sympathies to him for his trouble to which he replied, "My dear friend the computer and phone problems I faced did not compare to what my fellow citizens are facing every day, STARVATION, HOMELESSNESS, ADDICTION, INCARCERATION.... These things and not my personal trials are what cause my anxiousness and worries." In response I asked what would happen if at his age he needed medical care. With sarcasm in his voice he answered, "Oh my dear friend you are so out of the loop. You are sitting across the world and are clueless. On this side of the world, human life has no value. The death of a 70-year-old and older person is not an issue. They are considered by death to be saved from future pain and misery." With more sarcasm he continued, "Since you have your nose in everyone's business you know more than anyone else, what is happening in this country! Because of censorship, we do not get complete access to all the news. Didn't you see what happened to a local paper as a result of referring to the arrival of Syria's President Assad in Tehran as the "Uninvited Guest"? So,

remember please do not worry about my health, worry more for those who are younger who lose their lives to addiction, financial hardships, oppression and lack of health care. If I am cut off from the world, as an old man, should be of no concern in comparison to what others are going through."

I then recalled a story about the Former Minister of Health. This individual, a physician who studied medicine in Mashhad, upon graduating became the administrator of one of the most modern retina hospitals in the Middle East. He became one of the richest ministers of President Rohani's cabinet (like the tremendous wealth of the cabinet members of president Trump.) This minister put up bail in the amount of one billion Tumans to bail out Rohani's brother from jail. It was amazing that he posted this much cash for that, yet when asked for funding for treatment of children with cancer the response was that no one wanted to spend too much money extending a child's life by only three years. And, when asked if funding could be given for physical therapy the response was go to the bathhouses and get a massage, the results will be the same.

The conversation with my friend was lengthy and covered many issues. We continued to discuss the Tehran newspaper that was immediately shut down after headlining the visit of Assad as the "Uninvited Guest." In an effort to deflect news of the visit, the news was replaced by Mr. Zarif's resignation, (the foreign minister) and his possible replacement by General Soleimani, who was a principal in the Middle East wars. (Mr. Zarif has spent the greater part of his last forty years outside of Iran and his children like other elites are real estate moguls, building high rise buildings in Iran and living very comfortably). Anyway, it appeared that Mr. Zarif was insulted over not being invited to a meeting between Assad and other Iranian officials. Because of this in an Instagram and using a diplomatic gesture, he said goodbye to the people. It is rumored that he resigned thirteen times within the past five- and one-half years. These events successfully deflected the people from the story of the "Uninvited Guest", the reasons for his visit and the closing of paper. It is well reported that Iran promised Assad to build 20 to 30 thousand high rises in Syria. What remains a mystery is what else Assad was promised and received from Iran. It is a certainty, however, that Assad, whose pockets were empty when he entered Iran were filled when he left with his famous smile. Even more interesting is that once the Supreme leader and Rohani were certain Assad left Iran's border (Rohani's border) and following a media blitz on Facebook and other communication sources, Mr. Zarif returned to his desk as foreign minister and was invited by Assad to visit Damascus.

Our topics of discussion reminded me of the days when the big powers of the world were signing major oil and other deals with Iran. To diffuse the public attention, the front page of the newspapers showed the execution of individuals who committed petty crimes. The major news was hidden in small lines inside the paper. Iran continues on a path where the citizens come second.

A prime example of this is the lack of funds and interest by the government to rebuild housing units for the homeless victims of the Kermanshah earthquake. People remain housed in tents that are rotting from the elements, while Iranian funds are being afforded to build modern schools, high rise apartments, buildings and hospitals in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Africa. This is CARELESS and SHAMELESS behavior by the government.

Iran's culture and history are being attacked. At the time of Assad's visit there was a news conference. An Iranian reporter mentioned the Persian Gulf. He was immediately corrected by his Arab colleagues that the name is the Arabian Gulf. Why does Iran support the Arabs who ignore and do not respect the proper water borders of Iran? For over 1400 years the Arabs, who received financial and spiritual benefits from Iran, in return have done nothing but damage and destroy Iran's cultural integrity. It is beyond my comprehension why the government, who stands strong in support of other countries, does not put up a stronger fight to right these wrongs and preserve all that was and is the GREATNESS of Iran.

It is crazy that a simple phone call to a friend directed me to these topics. I proceed to yet another one. Because there isn't anything politically good to write about Iran I will continue this editorial with a discussion on the person in charge of human rights at the United Nations. He stated, "I condemn the continuation of child executions, torture, unfair trials of dual citizens, illegal arrests, false accusations, brutal interrogations and the denial of medical aid to prisoners. In 2018 at least 6 youths were indicted and executed.

Brian Hook, who is the Special Representative for Iran at the United States State Department stated that the Iranian regime in the last forty years has the worse United Nation's record for the violation of human rights, imprisonment and ethnic cleansing of those who practice minority religions. The German government stated that in 2018, 223 people were executed in Iran. They were happy to report that this number was down from 477 executions in 2016 and 429 executions in 2017. It seems odd that the execution of only 223 people instead of 477 is something to celebrate. Most of these individuals were petty thieves; not the execution and imprisonment of those stealing billions of dollars from its people and giving it to other countries! For what purpose I ask? The Iranian citizens know that friendships bought are superficial and such friendships turn on a dime. Hasn't the government learned the lesson that by not putting its citizens first they have caused them and their country tremendous damage?

In the free world, because of freedom and higher education capital punishment has been abolished. On the other hand, the present Iranian regime uses executions as examples on why one should not do something wrong. People cannot afford housing, medical care and food. They have difficulties in gathering enough money to buy only bread because the price of meat and chicken is too high. They are being forced into actions not in their nature, such as stealing. The government, instead of understanding them, severely prosecutes them. The Ayotallahs whose stomachs are not growing from hunger pains tell the people that they must be more tolerant and become vegetarians.

The government of Iran has tried to deflect the attention of its people away from their starvation, lack of shelter, medicine etc. to religion. They promised the people heaven and the infidels hell. But, the Iranian people, once vulnerable to the rhetoric, now believe that for all Muslims hell is here on earth. They now understand that except for those in power, they live in the hell

of oppression, starvation and have no shelter or freedoms. They come to believe that there is no heaven or eternity.

For years Iran has been chastised for building a nuclear power plant. With the excuse of Iran's potential to become a nuclear power (which they know is not possible) the powerful countries of the world placed tremendous economic sanctions on the country. But it is not the elite who suffer from the impact of such sanctions. It is rather the people who intensely suffer.

The fate of the Bushehr nuclear plant is interesting. The building of the plant, which placed billions of dollars in the hands of the United States, Germany and finally Russia. It took almost thirty years to become active and is now closed. The government states the reason is for repairs, but the rumors say it is because they cannot afford to run it. The question will always remain that in Iran where there are vast sources of natural energy from the oil and sun, whether there is a need for a nuclear plant at all.

What warms my heart every day is the Iranian people's integrity and grit. They continue to press on and achieve honors in educational, art, music, scientific, medical and literary achievements. They are the true future of Iran.

HAPPY NOROOZ.

Shahrokh Alavi

FIRST IRANIAN-AMERICAN WOMAN TO GET AN OSCAR

Rayka Zehtabchi took home an Oscar at the 91st Academy Awards for her 25 minute short film documentary "Period.End of Sentence." She is a film director based in Los Angeles, California. She started the movie in 2017, one year after graduating from Southern California's School of Cinematography.



Melissa Berton & Rayka Zehtabchi

Rayka's short documentary, "Period. End of Sentence," is about a group of village women in Northern India who start a sanitary pad business in an effort to improve feminine hygiene and de-stigmatize menstruation. Along with the film's release, the Period team co-founded the non-profit "The Pad Project" to fight the stigma of menstruation and improve feminine hygiene worldwide. Period double-qualified for the academy awards in 2018, winning Jury and audience awards at Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival and Cleveland International.

Rayka's passion is telling human stories that bring awareness and action to little-known social causes. She brings a naturalistic approach to her storytelling, striving for honesty and intimacy on screen. About her goal to make the movie, she said that it was necessary that the problems and deprivations of women throughout the world be put on the spotlight.

GOOD JOB

Dear Editor.

I liked your recent editorial even better than the last one. You very diligently enumerated some of the atrocities of the evil regime in our mother land. There are a few issues, however, that needs further comments.

One is the J. Khashoggi's murder. Let us go back a few decades and see how many distinguished Correspondents were killed or beheaded, only a few got the publicity that this Arab got both in here and abroad. He had also a very murky history, and what he was doing was an embarrassment not only to Saudis but also here in Trump's administration.

Aside from the fact that Saudis buy many billions of US armaments, they are also a very important ally of US Foreign policy in Middle East. It is the rockets that Islamic repulsive supplies to Houthis that wound up in their back yard, obviously, they react with bombardment of Yemen. Yes, Saudis run a despicable regime only second to the evil regime in our mother land, why do I say that? Saudis run a welfare government, where people needs are completely covered by the state. Nobody goes hungry, nobody has to sell their kidneys to put the bread on the table. Besides, they are US allies, very important for the middle east.

Next is the Trump administration that for the first time has stood up for our people. No other administration has done that in the past several decades. The worst one was Obama's terrible mistake that not only went to bed with them, and stabbed our friends in the back, sent several billion cash to those evil mullahs. Guess where that money went, to Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis, Islamic jihadi and murderous regime of Assad in Syria. Not a single penny went to our people. The other issue that we always tend to forget is the fact that, it was the horrible plot by Margaret Thatcher that led to topple the Shah and put Khomeini in our mother land that has made it a living hell for our people.

Yes, at least Trump has punished them, by calling them for what they are, and preventing them to do more damage in Middle East. Also dear editor it is always during a Democratic administration that our country suffers, remember Jimmy Carter, who was in cahoots with Thatcher. It was Reagan who criticized them as soon as he got into office.

Next, the problem with Iranian Dias-

pora; it is a laughable issue. I have never seen any other minority in this country, that is more educated but more disunited than our country men here. It is a terrible situation that they all agree how bad our mother land is, but they cannot unite. I have tried so hard to bring even a small group together, it is impossible, No wonder we have that evil regime, they love it. We are losing, they are winning.

David Yazdan

**REBUTTAL TO LETTER
Immigration and Visas**

Ba Dorud Dooste Hamvatan,

First, I humbly appreciate your having taken your precious time to read through my most recent oped.

If certain segments in my oped on immigrations and visas for Iranians, implied I was seeking [US] "constitutional rights" for non-American citizens from Iran who are applying for F-1 or B-2 temporary visas or even adjustment of their permanent resident status as petitioned for, I apologize for my inadvertent and careless oversight.

What I had meant instead, was to impress upon avid readers was how most crucial on moral and ethical grounds are, to safeguard the human and natural rights of naturalized American citizens for their family visitations from overseas or Iran, so long as they do pass the ever-rigorous screening process.

Moreover, I also wanted to alarm the readers of the adverse ramifications the current politically charged and trumpeting

sloganeering rhetoric have and continue to bear, undermining the constitutional and civil rights of naturalized Americans' aspirations for career and equal opportunities especially for mid to upper corporate or government leadership roles for which they are most manifestly qualified for.

Take for instance, the current process of applying for, and receiving various levels of security clearances for GS and executive government positions; it indeed has become quite a most daunting Achilles heel, highly improbable to achieve, for most if not all Americans of Iranian ancestry, let alone those born in Iran.

Respectfully submitted with *Sepas*,
Davood N Rahni

**PERSISTENCE AND
CONSISTENCY**

Dear Editor:

I write on behalf of my wife Yekta and myself, to wish you a healthy and successful New Year. Even though the auguries for 2019, particularly for our dear country, do not look promising, yet let us hope for less violence in this turbulent world, and greater harmony.

Of course, if the 'farangi' year does not appear to be unfolding satisfactorily, we always have a second chance at Norooz!

We must both praise you in the highest terms for your remarkable perseverance and consistency in continuing to produce this attractive, deeply interesting journal throughout so many years.

With our kindest regards,
Yekta & Fereydoun Ala



THE FIRST ANNUAL IRANIAN FILM FESTIVAL NEW YORK



The first Iranian Film Festival New York, (IrFFNY) presented by Daricheh, showed a selection of acclaimed and award-winning films from one of the world's most vital and distinguished national cinemas. The festival's aim is to unite two strands of Iranian moviemaking - the classic art-house Iranian cinema beloved by cinephiles around the world, and new cutting-edge works that showcase the adventurousness and daring nature of younger Iranian directors.

The festival's Opening Night selection was the New York premiere of Bahman Farmanara's *TALE OF THE SEA* (Hekayat-e Darya, 97 min) on, January 10.

The festival also presented the New York premiere of Farmanara's controversial comedy-drama *I WANT TO DANCE* (Delam Mikhad, 95 min), which was just released from a four-year ban in Iran.

The program boasts 10 features, including Jafar Panahi's Cannes sensation *3 FACES*, the Berlinale hits *PIG* and *HENDI & HORMOZ*.

IRANIAN SCIENTIST BAHARVAND AMONG WINNERS OF 2019 TWAS PRIZE

Source: Tehran Times

Hossein Baharvand, an eminent Iranian scientist, won The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) 2019 prize in biology, ISNA news agency reported. Baharvand is a professor at Royan Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Technology. In 2004, he received a Ph.D. in Cell and Developmental Biology from Khwarizmi University. For the first time, he generated the mouse and human embryonic stem cells (2003) and induced pluripotent stem cells (2008) in Iran. According to TWAS website, Baharvand received the prize for his fundamental contribution to the understanding of how pluripotency and differentiation establish and maintain in stem cells. TWAS for the advancement of science in developing countries - works to support sustainable prosperity through research, education, policy and diplomacy. TWAS is a global science academy based in Trieste, Italy.



OPIUM MOON TAKES A GRAMMY CROWN

This accomplished ensemble of musicians added another accomplishment to their biographies. At the 61st Grammy's they received the award for BEST NEW AGE, album. This was a well-deserved accomplishment. The band consists of Canadian-American Lili Haydan on violin, Hamid Saeidi an Iranian santoor master, Israeli bassist Itai Disraeli and percussionist M.B. Gordy. Their music is described as sensuous, hypnotic and deeply emotional and while it is contemporary in nature one can certainly hear music from the ancient world.





BEST FRIENDS!

This past January, Tehran, Iran decided to ban dog walking in public spaces and ban dogs driving in cars. Per the Chief of police of Tehran, “dogs cause fear and anxiety for the public.” Tehran’s view on dogs isn’t something new, but it has become significantly stronger since the 1979 Revolution. The Islamic Republic believes that dogs are “unclean” and therefore wherever a dog walks or goes voids that space as being available for prayer.

In 2010 there was a ban on advertising dog products and five years ago Parliament tried to pass the imposition on fines against dog walkers and flogging!

The weakest government argument against dogs is the amount of money people spend on dogs during these economic times, when people are suffering, maybe this is a bit hypocritical.

Despite the bans and fines, dog and cat owning is on the rise. This can be seen by the increase of vet clinics being built. Two years ago the only place to take a dog for treatment was to the university. Most vets believe that dog owners have rights but they also must be educated on the responsibility of pet ownership, especially dogs in public.

They need to train them, make sure they are vaccinated, keep them on a leash and pick up their “Poop.” (These are not unfair expectations considering those are the laws in most countries) Note, that guard dogs are acceptable.

EVIDENCE MAY PUSH BACK HISTORY OF TEHRAN BY 6,600 YEARS

Tehran Times: Recent archeological studies have shed new light on the history of Tehran that may go down in time some 6,600 years more than previously thought, ISNA reported on Saturday.

The first finding came in 2014 when a mysterious skeleton of a woman was unearthed in Molavi Street, south of the Iranian capital.

Initial surveys on the skeleton, which dates back to the 5th millennium BC, suggested that Tehran may date back to 7000 years ago but the assumption was later ruled out by saying that she was only a passenger not a resident. The second finding, according to archaeologist Qadir Afrovand, comes from pieces of pottery which in 2014 were excavated beneath a shop in Tehran grand bazaar. As noted in the report:

“A few days ago, Afrovand stated that the history of residence in Tehran dates back to 7,000 years ago rather than previously thought of 400 years”

Majority of native archaeologists were used to associate earliest settlements in Tehran with the time of Safavids who ruled the country from 1501–1736.

In 2015, experts reconstructed the face of the 7,000-year-old remains to reveal Tehran’s oldest known resident for the first time. Researchers scanned specific points on the woman’s skull as well as using data from modern faces to generate the likeness, which one expert believes is 95 percent accurate. According to their reconstruction, she had a strong rounded chin, large lips and black hair. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the enigmatic evidence of human presence on the Iranian plateau as early as Lower Paleolithic times comes from a surface found in the Bakhtaran valley.

The first well-documented evidence of human habitation is in deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites, located mainly in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran and dated to Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian times (c. 100,000 BC). There is every reason to assume, however, that future excavations will reveal Lower Paleolithic habitation in Iran.



Archaeological activities in the underground sections of Tehran have revealed further evidence that this metropolis is a thousands-year old urban settlement (Source: Tehran Times).

IRAN’S PARA SHOOTER JAVANMARDI WINS GOLD AT AL AIN 2019



TEHRAN – Sareh Javanmardi from Iran picked up a gold medal at the Al Ain 2019 World Shooting Para Sport World Cup.

Javanmardi, who is the first ever female gold medalist from Iran to win in the shooting category of the Paralympics Games, finished on 232.6 points at the P2 - Women’s 10m Air Pistol SH1 for the gold medal. The silver medal went to Ukrainian Iryna Liakhu (229.4) and Nadia Fario claimed the bronze with 209.7 points.

Earlier on the day, Roghayeh Shojaei had snatched a bronze medal at the R2 - Women’s 10m Air Rifle Standing SH1 after accumulating 225.6 points.

Turkey’s Cagla Atakal won the gold medal with 247.6 points and the silver medal went to Chinese para shooter Cuiping Zhang who scored 247.4. (Payvand)



THE INAUGURATION OF DR. MANDANA NAKHAI

On January 17, 2019, Dr. Mandana Nakhai, who came to the United States at the age of eighteen, was inaugurated into the Rev. Dr. Thomas Nelson Green Endowed Chair for the School of Humanities of Concordia College, New York. This is the first endowed chair for the college.

Dr. Nakhai graduated with a B.A., M.A. and PhD. from the University of Tennessee. She has been associated with the Concordia College for over three decades. Presently she is the Dean of the College's School of Humanities and has the titles of Dean of the College's Honor Program, Dean of Fellows Honors Program and Distinguished Professor of English. Rev. Dr. Thomas was a former dean at the college and is considered to have had a huge impact on so many of the college's alumni. Following the inauguration, a reception was held at CIAO restaurant.

Following the inauguration, a reception was held at CIAO restaurant.

THE BEYOND: GEORGIA O'KEEFFE AND CONTEMPORARY ART

This one-of-a-kind exhibition, developed by and debuted at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville Arkansas, features paintings, sculptures, works on paper, photographs, site-specific installations and more by O'Keeffe and a new generation of American artists working today. Among the artists is Negar Ahkami who is currently a long term artist resident at Arlington Arts Center. The exhibit examines the lasting impact and legacy of Georgia O'Keeffe's works as a touchstone for artists working today. The works of these artists do not make one-to-one comparisons between the other contemporary artists included in the exhibition. Rather, the works of these artists is intended to expand on conversations and theme's O'Keeffe presented in her work and life, creating new ways of seeing and understanding the mother of American Modernism.

Prior to the last scheduled exhibit dates of February 22, 2019 to June 2, 2019 at The New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT., the exhibition was at the North Carolina Museum of Painting.

THE KITCHEN

The Kitchen is one of New York City's leading non-profit galleries. On December 14, 2018 the Columbia College Women hosted an evening at The Kitchen. The subject was exploring women's voices in the art industry and the ways in which they can be a catalyst for social change in today's political climate. Alumnae discussed how art challenges our understanding gender roles and the female experience. An expert panel was composed of Negar Ahkami, Class of 1992 (Long-Term Artist-in-Residence, Arlington Arts Center, Vanessa Buia, Class of 2001 (Founder of Vanessa Buia, LLC, Tze Chun, Class of 2006 (Founder of Uprise Art) and Rujeko Hockley, Class of 2005 (Assistant Curator at the Whitney Museum and co-curator of the 2019 Whitney Biennial.

FIVE IRANIANS NAMED AMONG 50 INFLUENTIAL ARCHITECTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST IN 2019

Five Iranians have been named among the 50 most influential architects of the Middle East in 2019, according to a list published by the Middle East Architect (MEA) magazine. The magazine named Mohammad Khavarian, Kourosh Hajizadeh, Amir-Hossein Hajizadeh, Farshad Mehdizadeh and Arash G. Tehrani as Iran's influential architects in the Middle East region. Working across architecture, urbanism, interior design and research, Khavarian, MEA's Architect of the Year 2018, imbues his practice with an ethos centered on critical thinking, extending beyond the boundaries of architectural production to realize specific and unexpected solutions.

Founder of the award-winning Tehran-based architecture firm Hajizadeh & Associates, Kourosh Hajizadeh published a book titled "Dooman" in 2001 which explores the lost culture and historical values of the Iranian city of Tabriz and included many of his personal sketches.

Amir-Hossein Hajizadeh has served as lead architect since 2013. Through design, he aims to create events or interactions within communities and dialog between people and place.

Director and co-founder of the FMZD, Mehdizadeh was the MEA's Architect of the Year 2017. Through its projects and research, the 13-person team at FMZD hopes to define a new dynamic between architecture and metropolises, increasing the interaction between context and architecture. Since founding his namesake design studio in 2013 in Iran, Tehrani has worked to establish a humanitarian, research and design-driven practice. The firm's achievements include the creation of cheap and easily-assembled shelter for victims of war or natural disasters, as well as the homeless. The Middle East Architect is a monthly magazine that delivers news, data, analysis and strategic insights for architects.

Sources: Press TV & Middle East Architect (MEA) magazine

**Advertise
Your
Business
or
Services in**

Persian
Heritage

**Call
(973)
471 4283
persian-heritage.com**

WHO OWNS IRAN'S OIL?

Corruption in Iran's Oil and Gas Sector

first part

President's Letter, Khosrow B. Semnani

(taken from "Where Is My Oil?")

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

Ruhollah Khomeini

In Iran's epic tradition, the establishment and administration of justice was the duty of the king and the purpose of government. As the guardian of this divine order, the king was obliged to grant every creature its due. Even the ant was entitled to protection, with rights to the fruit of its labor, even if only a crumb. Life had sanctity. Labor, dignity. An injury inflicted on any subject was an injury against the king and, thus, an offense against the divine order.

Corruption and predation were the qualities of demons, not kings. The appropriation of divine authority paved the way for the collapse of the state, for conquest, subjugation, rebellion and chaos. Quite naturally, in a moral order governed by such ancient codes, corruption and cruelty in the heart of a king spread like contagion. The government itself would become a source of injustice, contaminate the fabric of language and law and condemn the body of life to sickness, suffering, darkness and death.

Iran's epic tradition is as relevant today as it was in ancient times.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979 was premised on the notion that secular Western models of government were base, materialistic and corrupt-incapable of establishing justice and meeting the spiritual needs of man. The presence and persistence of poverty in Iran was viewed as a symptom of tyranny—an expression of the Shah's contempt for the Iranian people and a proof of his enmity against God. By replacing kings with clerics as the custodians of the divine order, Ayatollah Sayyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini offered an alternative. As a revolutionary cleric, he would end the usurpation of the public trust and treasure (the *beyt ol-maal*) by waging a war against corruption on earth.

Khomeini derived much of his prestige from his standing as a cleric. After all, unlike merchants and soldiers, the clergy's hands and hearts were devoted to prayer. They had no

claim and no care for worldly gain or national glory.

The implicit promise of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution—one that millions of Iranians, though not all, believed—was that a return to the fundamentals of religion would solve the social and economic ills afflicting Iranian society. In this reading, the source of corruption in Iran was not only the Shah and his demonic regime, but also the exposure of the Iranian people to Westitis—a cultural sickness that had its roots in the West. By placing power in the hands of the clergy—substituting the turban for the crown—Iranians would entrust their constitution and state to an incorruptible class of militant clerics—a religious vanguard that would liberate the oppressed on earth: Fundamentalists would solve all of Iran's problems by enacting divine laws and establishing institutions that would transcend rather than descend into the human mire and muck: the corrupt and cheap calculus animating politics and commerce.

In 1979, on the anniversary of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh's birthday, Ayatollah Khomeini put forth his vision of the new Islamic order:

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

Today, almost 40 years after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Iranian people are reaping the bitter fruit of the Ayatollah's vision in the form of a failing state and economy.

Far from rooting out corruption, after four decades of Islamic rule, the tables have turned. The gap between the teachings and practice of the Prophet (pbuh), whose title was "Amin," the trusted one, and the conduct of the Islamic Republic's leaders (many of whom have accumulated vast and illicit fortunes) has become impossible to bridge. Iran's leaders act as a class• above and apart, as if their religious

credentials and status exempts them from accountability in this world and the next.

In theory and practice, the principle of Velayat-i Faqih (rule of the supreme jurisprudent), is designed to facilitate corruption on a grand scale. The Islamic Republic is founded on constitutional principles premised on the negation of the Iranian nation as a sovereign entity endowed with a title to their oil, gas, and natural resources. The institutions operating in the leader's name, claim to derive their authority from a divine source-not from human realities, let alone economic necessities. The operative principle is impunity, not accountability.

The results of this system of governance speak for themselves. Instead of enjoying the fruits of prosperity, today Iran is facing a humanitarian catastrophe.

- More than 10 million people live under the absolute poverty line, with another 30 million under the relative poverty line.
- Eleven million live in slums.
- The number of unemployed is at 3.5 million-add the underemployed and the figure stands at a staggering 6.5 million.
- Youth unemployment is at more than 20%, with 60% unemployment in underprivileged areas.
- In 2012, Iran had more than 2.2 million addicts. It also had 1.2 million heroin addicts and 800,000 recreational users-the highest per capita rate of heroin users in the world. In 2017, the number of addicts is officially estimated at 2.8 million, with some putting the figure as high as 10 million.
- From 2006-2016, HIV rates of infection through sexual transmission have doubled from 15% to 30%.
- More than 600,000 people are imprisoned every year, with more than 60% identified as drug users.

- From 2006 to 2013 when the average price of oil had climbed over \$100 barrel, Iran's economic growth was 2.2%, with inflation rate climbing from 20.3% to above 40% in 2013.
- The middle class has seen its purchasing power decline year after year. According to a BBC review of Central Bank data, Iranians have become "15% poorer." From 2008-2018, the average household income of an urban family has declined by 15%.

The societal damage is such that Ayatollah Ali Khomeini was belatedly forced to admit that the Islamic Republic is "20 years behind" in responding to this unfolding tragedy. According to Reza Faraji Dana, Iran's Minister of Science, Research and Technology until 2014, every year more than 150,000 highly educated Iranians emigrate from Iran at a total cost of \$50 billion. Fully 25% of all Iranians with tertiary education-a vast professional class now work in the OECD member countries. Indeed, one need only look to the squandering of Venezuela's wealth, the plunder of its oil sector, the collapse of its economy and the plight of its poor and middle class to understand the gravity of the threat of looming over Iran.

Although many Iranians thought the revolution would usher in a new era-ending the dismissal of their rights and the abuse of power by a monarchical order-in practice, by voting for the principle of Velayat-i Faqih, they were lured into a constitutional trap, essentially surrendering their civil, economic and social rights to a new monarch, a religious leader who claimed to derive his universal right to rule the Iranian people from a divine source.

Today, Iranians are not turning their backs on the West, but on Velayat-i Faqih, the brand of Islamic govern-

ment advocated by Khomeini and his followers.

Because of corruption, many no longer see religion as a solution to their problems but as the cause of their suffering.

In a country endowed with Iran's human and natural resources, the social costs of this unfolding tragedy can no longer be blamed on corrupt individuals or the West, but on the failure of a political and economic system to deliver on its promises to the Iranian people.

With corruption on a scale unimaginable under the Pahlavi dynasty, it is not Iran's kings, but Iran's ruling clerics who are viewed as the source and beneficiaries of corruption.

And sadly, instead of fighting corruption by making transparency, accountability, and service the pillars of government, powerful factions in Iran's Parliament and judiciary serve as a cloak for covering up the plunder of Iran's resources rather than exposing corruption. As in the feudal and colonial era, the people are once again treated as subjects, not citizens.

The story of Iran's oil is at the heart of this historic betrayal. It can no longer be overlooked. What is at stake is the Iranian people's sovereignty and prosperity. Corruption is not only an economic and a political threat. It is an existential threat: a violation of the Iranian people's title and claims to their natural resources, a negation of their control over the institutions that govern these resources, and the denial of their claims to every drop of their oil and the benefits that flow from it.

In 2009, the Iranian people and media asked a question that shook the world: "Where is my vote?" Today, we join them in asking a related question, one makes the difference between poverty and prosperity for millions: "Where is my oil?"

Omid for Iran, a nonprofit established to protect the inter-

ests of the Iranian people, seeks to raise this question to set the stage for a systematic review of Iran's oil and gas industry. More importantly, to reclaim their oil and gas, and put Iran back on the path to prosperity. In fact, given the epidemic of corruption and poverty in Iran, we seek to make anti-corruption a national priority. It is vital to quantify the cost of corruption in Iran's oil and gas industry if we are to address and reverse the consequences of corruption in a systemic manner.

Where Is My Oil? will demonstrate that the damage to the Iranian people from corruption by design is more than \$1 trillion. It bears repeating-more than \$1 trillion.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the gravity of the question "Where is my oil?" more succinctly than its physical manifestation - the challenges of locating and tracking the movement of Iran's oil. As late as the second half of 2016-well after the lifting of sanctions on Iran's nuclear program-ships carrying a fifth of Iran's oil exports had gone "dark with many indicating that their Iranian cargo" began the journey in a different country, though satellite imagery showed them to have been loaded in Iran:

The theft of Iran's oil amounts to grand corruption theft in the tens and hundreds of billions of dollars. The cost of this strategic mismanagement to Iran's economy over the past decade exceeds the trillion-dollar mark. Left unchecked, this corruption will plunge Iran into the category of failed states, with all the insecurity, poverty, crime and chaos that can follow.

The Iranian corruption cases leave no doubt about the facts: there is an arc of corruption that extends from the Islamic Republic's ties to commodities trader Marc Rich in 1979 to its ties with Babak Zanjani in 2015 to the 2017 confessions of Reza Zar-

rab and the cloak-and-dagger presidential disputes over the Crescent Petroleum corruption case. To be sure, corruption existed in Iran before 1979, but it has mushroomed after. While before 1979, cultural and religious norms made theft and corruption taboo, today theft and corruption are so brazen that the fundamental ethical, cultural and religious norms are being swept away.

The change has been decades in the making. Corruption was institutionalized in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war, in the so-called era of construction and privatization, only to metastasize in the era of the so-called "resistance economy: Iran's revolutionary establishment has either actively engaged or deliberately concealed corruption on a grand scale for decades.

In a country in which millions of laborers, teachers, nurses and government workers can barely secure a living wage, corruption is a killer - a pandemic 12 million Iranians are under the absolute poverty line, with 8.2 million living on less than \$5.50/day. Another 40% of the population - more than 30 million people-are pushed beneath the poverty line. Transparency and accountability in Iran's oil and gas sector cannot remain a public relations exercise. It is an urgent national imperative-dollars and cents that mean the difference between nutrition and malnutrition among the most vulnerable people.

The waves of anti-government protest erupting across Iran in early 2018 should not have come as a surprise to anyone tracking teacher's strikes and labor unrest in Iran.

A powerful statement by six Iranian worker's organizations - three years earlier-should have made the plight of Iranians apparent:

Today every decent human being is aware of the undeniable fact that millions

of working people in large and small industries, teachers, nurses and retirees are living in the worst possible situation in the country's recent 50-year history. This means that, according to the experts and government officials, currently the lives of millions of families have fallen under the poverty line and fruit, meat and dairy products have been removed from their tables ...

Such horrendous conditions did not occur in a country ravaged by famine; this condition is imposed on workers in a country which has a young, educated and skillful workforce and the highest combined oil and gas reserves in the world. Is it not shameful that teachers are forced to cover their living expenses by working as taxi or bus drivers? Do pensioners in this country deserve to feel huge pressure in their lives and tremendous concern about their livelihoods because of their meagre pensions? Do you know a country with millions of workers who are working 12 to 18 hours per day, yet are incapable of providing the basic needs of their families and stand ashamed in front of their children? Do you agree that in such a country thousands of people can reach to the point of selling their kidneys, prostituting themselves while we see addiction, misery, desperation and frustration of millions of its people, from teenagers to elderly?

As stated in the letter: The continuation of this unstoppable cycle of oppression imposed on the workers' standards of living over the years and decades to the extent that even today, while the minimum wage of 608,000 tomans/month (about \$180/month), many of them even do not receive the minimum

wages. According to the expert and the formal institutions of the government, an expenditure basket for a family of four, is more than three

million tomans [fair wage] (about \$900/month), and thus the survival of our workers is impossible.

Teachers have not fallen silent either. On the 40th Nowruz (Iranian New Years Day, March 20, 2018), the former Secretary General of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association, Esmail Abdi, wrote a letter from Evin Prison addressed to the International Labor Organization. He declared that he would begin a hunger strike on April 18, 2018 to protest the widespread violations of teachers and workers in Iran:

The blessings of the revolution benefitted not the poor, but rather the rich, the powerful, and tricksters ... They took advantage of the people's beliefs and values to attract votes, while amassing wealth from the nation's treasury... (See the complete letter in Appendix 5)

Sadly, the Islamic Republic, according to its own admission, was not listening,

let alone alleviating abject economic 'conditions of "the oppressed" classes it claimed to champion.

The margins matter. As does oil. To millions. The "paystub scandal" involving Ali Sedghi, chairman of Bank Refah Kargaran (Worker's Welfare Bank) is yet another illustration of the scourge of corruption and inequality.

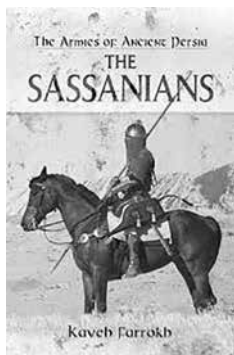
The collapse in the purchasing power of the salaries of the poor and middle class has not stopped senior government officials and executives from gorging at the expense of the state. Iran's Civil Service Management Law, ratified in 2013, restricts the maximum wage of civil servant to seven times the minimum wage. Ali Sedghi of the Worker's Welfare Bank, however, earned 2.34 billion rials per month (\$76,500) in compensation for his labor-"roughly 300 times" more than the wages of a common worker.

to be continued

REVIEWS

**THE ARMIES OF ANCIENT PERSIA:
THE SASSANIANS****Farrokh, Kaveh**

(Pen & Sword Publishing, Barnsley 2017)

Review by: Dr. Ilkka Syvanne

The Armies of Ancient Persia: The Sassanians (Pen & Sword, Barnsley 2017) by Kaveh Farrokh is a very welcome addition to the books dealing with Sasanian Persia. Dr. Farrokh has divided his monograph into thematically organized chapters which deal with all of the issues relating to the Sassanian armed forces so that he analyses for example the organization, equipment, culture, training, personal combat skills, combat tactics, siege tactics, naval matters, and military history to provide a complete overview of the

Sasanian armed forces throughout its history. In addition to this, it includes useful illustrative examples of battles, sieges, equipment (e.g. in the Plates which also includes re-enactor photos) and maps. Farrokh's monograph is particularly valuable for its analysis of the military terms, changes in tactics and organization and because it corrects many earlier misunderstandings. Therefore the book also serves as a very good reference book all of the topics mentioned. The book relates all of the changes in organization, equipment and tactics throughout the existence of the Empire and provides an overview of the influence of Persian military and its military culture on other peoples and on the posterity. The actual narrative contents are as follows:

1. Martial Ardour, Origins and Missions of the Spah;
2. Organization: Military Titles and Recruitment;
3. Military Reforms of the Sixth Century CE.;
4. Military Training, Polo, the Hun, and Military Music;
5. Archery;
6. The Savaran;
7. Infantry, Auxiliary Contingents and Naval Forces;
8. Preparations for War;
9. Tactics and Strategies along the Roman and Caucasian Frontiers;
10. Logistics and Support;
11. Post-Battle Scenarios and Diplomacy;
12. The Spah in Central Asia: Warfare, Military Developments and Tactics;
13. Military Architecture;
14. Siege Operations;
15. Sasanian Military Culture;
16. Military Weaknesses of the Spah;
17. The Fall of the Spah and the Empire;
18. Post-Sasanian Resistance and Rebellion against the Caliphate;
19. Legacy.

As a military historian whose areas of specialization include Greek, Roman, late-Roman, East Roman (Byzantine) and Iranian military history, I do obviously have disagreements with some of the interpretations and conclusions adopted by Kaveh Farrokh (obviously we do still agree on most issues). For example I date the four-fold strategic division of the Iranian Empire to an earlier period on the basis of Ammianus (e.g. Syvanne, *Military History of Late Rome* vol.1, p.113), interpret the developments in tactics, equipment and archery differently (e.g. MHLR Vol.1 p.113ff.; *The Age of Hippopotamoi* esp. chapter 10.1, *Bahram V Gur in Historia i Swiat*, two forthcoming books dealing with Iran) and many of the battles and sieges too (e.g. Farrokh p.155ff. vs. Syvanne, MHLR vol. 1 p.211ff., *Desperta Ferro/Julian*, forthcoming *Gallienus*, together with the forthcoming vols. of MHLR), but this should only be expected. There are no two

historians who would agree on everything especially when the evidence is such as we have for this period. It should still be noted that despite these minor differences, I naturally still agree with most of Farrokh's excellent analysis. There are many different ways to interpret the evidence and this should always be kept in mind. It is also for this reason that Kaveh Farrokh's book is so valuable. He provides a different perspective and interpretation of many events that give the readers the possibility and also the reason to ponder which of the different interpretations might be the correct one or if there even exist such a possibility. Despite our best efforts to be impartial and to seek honestly the truth, we historians are still humans with our subjective views and therefore we are all liable to make mistakes and/or interpret the evidence differently.

In sum, Dr. Kaveh Farrokh is an acknowledged expert of Iranian history and for a very good reason. This book proves this once again. He has been among those historians who have done the most to increase our understanding of Iranian history and culture. Indeed, the previous two to three decades has witnessed ever increasing interest in all things related to Middle East and this fortunately includes also the ancient pre-Islamic Iran, the study of which is absolutely necessary if we want to understand today's phenomena in the Middle East, but a lot of work still needs to be done and I am not saying this because I am among those who have contributed to this discussion and have also written a number of books for the Pen & Sword Publishing. I am saying this because there really is still a lot to be researched and analysed in ancient Iranian history that is absolutely necessary for the understanding of how this great Empire has affected our history and our very existence today. Kaveh Farrokh's book is not only a very good addition to this literature and discussion, but it is also a book which demonstrates also to the doubting Thomas's that it is worthwhile to study Iranian history. His conclusions demonstrate the importance of understanding the Iranian history. I wholeheartedly recommend the buying of this book.

**THE POLITICS OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS
IN IRAN PAPERBACK, by Arzoo Osanloo**

In *The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran*, Arzoo Osanloo explores how Iranian women understand their rights. After the 1979 revolution, Iranian leaders transformed the state into an Islamic republic. At that time, the country's leaders used a renewed discourse of women's rights to symbolize a shift away from the excesses of Western liberalism. Osanloo reveals that the postrevolutionary republic blended practices of a liberal republic with Islamic principles of equality. Her ethnographic study illustrates how women's claims of rights emerge from a hybrid discourse that draws on both liberal individualism and Islamic ideals.

Osanloo takes the reader on a journey through numerous sites where rights are being produced--including Qur'anic reading groups, Tehran's family court, and law offices--as she sheds light on the fluid and constructed nature of women's perceptions of rights. In doing so, Osanloo unravels simplistic dichotomies between so-called liberal, universal rights and insular, local culture. *The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran* casts light on a contemporary non-Western understanding of the meaning behind liberal rights, and raises questions about the misunderstood relationship between modernity and Islam.

PROFESSOR DARIUSH BORBOR'S WORKS IN 1954-2018

by Kaveh Farrokh



Dariush Borbor *Compendium of Articles, Presentations and Interviews 1954-2018*, Sahab Geographic and Drafting Institute, Tehran, 2018, 728 pp. has just been published in hard cover. The articles are written in several languages, and the subject matter, deals with architecture, Urban Planning and Iranian Studies, including a complete bibliographical reference. Foreword by Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Distinguished Professor of Persian Language, Literature and Culture, University of Maryland MD

“Everybody knows that culture is a complex, multifarious concept, but few people contemplate all the diverse dimensions of a culture and still fewer produce works – informed opinions, in fact – in almost all the dimensions of a given culture. Dariush Borbor’s *Compendium of Articles, Presentations and Interviews* makes us aware of the many sides, not only of modern and contemporary Iranian culture, but of the world as he has experienced it. That multidimensionality is precisely what makes Dariush Borbor’s observations on making cultures, on cultures of making, and on culture in-the-making – all written with a sojourner’s mental agility and clarity, so compelling for us as to think of culture as a whole. Dariush Borbor’s *Compendium of Writings* encapsulates a life well and fruitfully lived. In that sense, it stands as a monument to one self-made man’s professional accomplishments as well as to the human capacity for inner and outer growth” (Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Los Angeles, October, 2017).

Dariush Borbor is a multi-faceted Iranian architect, urban planner, designer, sculptor, painter, researcher, author and Iranologist. At the age of thirteen he went to the United Kingdom for his secondary schooling, after which he obtained his General Certificate of Education from University of Cambridge (1952), a Bachelor of Architecture (1958) and a Master of Civic Design (1959) both from the University of Liverpool. He then went to specialize on architecture of hot dry regions at the University of Geneva (1959).

He has an outstanding record as an entrepreneur: in 1963, he created his own office under the name of Borbor Consulting Architects, Engineers, City Planners; in 1976, he set up Sphere Consultants and proposed a comprehensive National Environmental Master plan for Iran; a few months prior to the 1978 Iranian Revolution, he moved to Paris where he founded the Borbor International Management Consultants (BIMC) that offered consultancy services in design, management and documentation to architects and urban planners; six years later, in 1984, he moved to Los Angeles where he was involved in architectural consultancy and research on Iranian and Persianate subjects; in 1992, he created the Research Institute and Library of Iranian Studies (RILIS) as a private, independent and non-profit institution dedicated to the promotion of research in the field of Iranian and Persianate studies with special emphasis on novel and creative subjects; in 2009, he initiated the Dariush Borbor Series of Seminars on Iranian Studies, for which distinguished scholars and specialists from outside of Iran have been invited.

“That’s what brought us to the realization that we were in a life and death struggle with them. Struggle not just for the people, mind you, but for the valley,” said Mashiyaneh. “We fought back, without weapons, of course. We had no choice.”

“If you did not fight with weapons, what did you fight with?” Asked Uncle.

Mashiya said, “With the wisdom of the ancients, mutual understanding, and respect instead of show of force and self-gratification. More importantly, with respect for all sentient beings including human beings, animals and plants.”

“What do you mean by ‘the wisdom of the ancients’? I thought you are the ancients.”

“No, son,” said Mashiya. “We are not the ancients. A thought world preceded us. In it, the forces of good fought against the legions of evil. We fled from that world in a curious way and took refuge in this valley. For a long time, we were safe and the valley was tranquil. Then that viper demon appeared. Unfortunately, we did not recognize her on time. Then it turned out that she is immortal. There is no way of getting rid of her permanently.”

“What did you do then?” asked Uncle.

“We undermined her power.”

“How?” asked Uncle.

“By keeping water clean and by keeping truth paramount in our thoughts.”

“What is the relationship?” asked Uncle.

Here Mashiyaneh joined the conversation. She said, “Water and thought are the initial elements of the two vital chains that constitute our being. Clean water that gushes out of the heart of the rock is pure. Its purity impacts the plant world, the animal world, and the world of the humans. It also keeps the air clean and allows the life-giving rays of the sun to do their magic. Evil cannot find a niche in that world to begin its destruction. It remains dormant. Similarly, thought that is conceptualized with good intention forms thought structures that are constructive. As a result, actions that are realized from the implementation of those thought structures will necessarily be good and benevolent. Here, too,

the hands of evil are tied. That is when evil mounts demonic countermeasures in order to destroy the tranquility of valleys like ours. In short, son,” Mashiyaneh concluded, “two distinct elements, thought that rises from truth and pure water, especially their interaction with the material and spiritual life of the valley, returned our tranquil lives to us.”

Uncle amazed at Mashiyaneh’s eloquence in explaining everything praised her effusively.

Mashiya continued, “We considered our material and moral needs paramount and we left religious affairs in



Uncle's Complaint: Tale of a Rejuvenation

2nd and final part
Dr. Iraj Bashiri

the hands of the people themselves. Our material problems included air and water pollution, environmental disarray, animal habitat recovery, jobs, and the like. We placed those concerns at the top of our rejuvenation agenda. To remedy the water situation, we dug large reservoirs and directed rain runoff into them. We also dug qanats at the side of the other mountain across from where they lived and used that water to run the mill and keep the trees around the river alive. That approach bought us some time to think our options through and find a permanent solution for our problems.”

“Did you say permanent?” Asked Uncle.

“Yes, permanent within the limits of human ability” continued Mashiyaneh, “After much soul searching we concluded that to defeat them, we had to use the reverse of their strategy. We confronted them with Truth in all its shades. Why we

didn’t think about that basic principle at the beginning, it’s hard to tell. They say history repeats itself because we take it for granted.”

Uncle felt uneasy to have addressed Mashiyaneh the way he had. “I think,” he said, “the ones creating havoc in and around Hamadan today belong to the same stock as your viper demon. But, how did you confront their culture of lies?”

“You see, son” said Mashiyaneh. “They were calculating but not experienced and wise. On the contrary, they were undisciplined and not averse to

telling lies. In fact, it was their lies and pretensions that opened the way to our institutions to them and it was their unethical behavior that gained them positions and authority. We undermined their authority by simply following the well-trodden path of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. That golden principle isolated them and made them a community unto themselves. No one in the valley interacted with them, and no one respected them. In other words, we shunned them.”

“What was their reaction?” asked Uncle.

“They mounted a campaign of hatred. The more we emphasized our ancient heritage and denied their false gods, and the more we refused to frequent their temples and participate in their religious celebrations and wakes, the more they hated us and made us suffer. Fortunately, the people of the valley had been awakened and the intruders’ old lies had lost their effect on the ordinary people’s thoughts and actions. As a result, after some time, some of them picked up their effects and left the valley the same way that they had come.”

“But one point is unclear for me,” said Uncle. “Shunning by itself could not have been the solution to the type of problems that you faced.”

“But of course it could not,” said Mashiya. “I did not mean that things happened overnight and that shunning worked a miracle. In reality, shunning was a general response to your query. The first step was to familiarize our people with the valuable heritage that our forefathers had bequeathed to us. But we had to do that in a way that the intruders could

not dilute our truth with their lies and feed the concoction to the unwary populace. Actually, what intensified their hatred towards us was the fact that their lies were no longer effective on their common followers. Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds had betrayed their tissues of lies.”

At this point, Mashiya lifted the quilt and put more ashes on the fire to bring the temperature under the korsu down. Then he continued, “Returning to your main question. In order to realize our social and political aims, we used their own strategy—secrecy—against them. This was not difficult because the number of their leaders was small. To begin with, we formed several small secret meetings and ascertained which of our essential rules had been drastically compromised. Those meetings ended in a secret assembly that abrogated all the undesired rules that they had introduced. In their place, we legislated new rules. Then, in an open assembly, consisting of valley people only, we accepted the new rules and created a board of elders that, in turn, with the assistance of the assembly, chose a charismatic leader to guide us out of our predicament...”

“Who was this charismatic leader? Someone I know?” asked Uncle.

“He was a simple blacksmith, but one knowledgeable about both the valley culture and the culture of the viper. He guided us out of the swamp that was threatening our very existence.”

“And that’s how you got rid of them permanently,” said Uncle.

“No son. It wasn’t as easy as it sounds,” continued Mashiya. “Over the years they had made us think like them. That means we lied just like they did and were not bothered when committing evil acts. Our children were brought up in the same manner and acted accordingly. The unseemly seemed appropriate. Unwittingly, we had become enemies of each other. What we did was that we gradually, and steadily, reversed those trends. More importantly, we made an effort to change the direction of their lives as well. It took a while before indications of a change of attitude appeared in some of them. They started to scrutinize their thoughts, weigh their words, and think about the consequences of their actions. At the end, we allowed those who accepted to follow the new rules and contribute to the rejuvenation of the community to stay.”

Uncle expressed his delight at the

manner in which the people of the valley had dealt with their predicament. He said, “I am glad that weapons did not play a role in your plans.”

“We thought that that was the most humane solution,” said Mashiya. “After all, as human beings, they were not different from us, neither were we different from them. As exploiters, as unethical beings, and as chauvinists, they differed from us. We made them understand that their lie was exposed and that as intruders they no longer belonged.”

Uncle was unhappy at his own lack of knowledge about the history of a valley in which he had spent his childhood and had visited frequently thereafter. He asked, “Then, how did you return the prosperity that the valley had lost?”

Mashiya said, “The problems that they had created, like links in a chain, were related to each other. Obviously, the lives of the people depended on the well being of animals and plants, and the lives of the animals and plants depended on pure water. How is it that they did not realize this simple fact is beyond me! For this reason, management of water and restoration of fresh air formed the first steps of our endeavor. In other words, to remedy uncleanliness, we dealt with the root of the problem: water pollution. Clean air and pure water stopped the plants and the trees from being poisoned. Instead of cutting trees and burning them for charcoal, we planted new saplings. We saved the animals’ habitat and stopped their senseless slaughter. We also banned the maiming, hanging, and beheading of our people. We assigned people to jobs that suited them and stopped them from robbing and killing each other. Those who aspired to higher positions were given every opportunity to prove themselves in fair competition against their peers. Some of the old guards are still around, here and there. But they can do no harm.”

“The last word,” said Uncle. “The things that you outlined had to be paid for. You didn’t have a treasure trove. So, how did that work?”

Mashiya said, “The money was paid by the labor of our people who were determined to take back their valley from the thieves that had taken charge of it. Actually, the money was always there, but the thieves by ruining our source of income from farming, had put us at a disadvantage. In any event, the intruders abused both the fruit of our labor and the funds that they collected for their bounti-

ful harvest upstream. They squandered all that simply because they were not thrifty and because they were poor money managers. Once they were deprived of using the treasury, everything fell in place.”

“Then you destroyed the dams after they left?” Asked Uncle.

“No. We didn’t destroy the dams. We decreased the amount of water used upstream then supplemented our water with what was left. We modified the dams to beautify the valley.”

Uncle took his eyes off the holy Avesta in the corner of the display and said, “Then there is hope!”

Mashiya said, “There is always hope. What is needed is implementation of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds and patience so that those concepts can, in their true sense, work their magic and reconstruct the culture and the society.”

Mashiyaneh, who had been silent all that time, joined the conversation. She said, “There is one major point that needs discussing: leadership. The leader that we chose was charismatic. Right from the start, he challenged the leader of the intruders. Supported by the assembly and the board of elders, he went to the lion’s den, as it were, and made the leader understand that his followers had two options. They could remain in the valley, participate in its affairs and, if they desired, stand for election for positions, or seek distance from the valley, the farther the better for them and the valley.”

It was late and Mashiya knew that Uncle had a long way ahead of him. He said, “Son, we sympathize with you and the rest of our children. I fear that you may be right that you are in the grips of the descendants of the same ancient Yemeni viper demon. From what you tell us, I cannot think otherwise. Just like the bullfish who, for a whole year, patiently carries the world on one horn, you must patiently sow the seed and wait for an opportunity.”

Uncle looked at the mirror on the display. A white egg rested in the middle of it—an egg waiting the changing of the year, waiting for the tremor to be caused by the shifting of the world from one horn of the bullfish to the other horn. He heard Mashiya saying, “Learn patience from the bullfish and use the method we talked about. It worked for us. Why should it not work for you?”

Thanking his hosts, Uncle said, “Unfortunately, as usual, I shall not be able to

stay for the Nowruz. I have to help children make Nowruz displays; I must be sure that they celebrate the Charshanbe Suri and that they are joyous at the moment of the change of the year. Most importantly, I must take some of the joy of this valley to the other side. I should warm their hearts by telling them about your life and experiences.

A hush overtook the trio. Each one thought of his or her own Nowruz. Then Mashiya, breaking the profound silence, said, "I can't fathom why our children should ignore Nowruz, a celebration that I have always felt is in our blood! How can it be ignored!"

Uncle explained, "Maybe I did not make my point clear. Some children are being brought up as if Nowruz does not exist. Their parents redirect their attention elsewhere and prevent them from thinking about Nowruz and all that is related to it. The problem is that year after year the number of those children increases. As I said at the start, my fear is that the direction that the parents of those children have chosen will distance us from developments in the world—we who were among the most progressive people in the world."

Then with a sad face, he looked at the fish in the pool, the colored eggs, and the bowls of flour and cheese and said, "Something is missing. Perhaps, in the past, life was more simple. People lived as you do. They tilled the land, sowed the seed, tended their cattle and, when idle, celebrated their good fortune. A special warmth bonded them. We are losing that warmth..."

Mashiyaneh said, "Son, it's not like that at all. Life as life is unchangeable one way or the other. Attitudes can change, beliefs not firmly set in reality and truth can change, and behaviors can change. We discussed this same issue last year. You predicted that there would be no celebration..."

"No, I didn't," interrupted Uncle. "I predicted that they would not allow..."

"In any event, was there one?"

"There was," Uncle conceded, "But only after a fashion. On Nowruz day, early in the morning, when the kids were going on their rounds, they hanged two young men in the center of the village..."

"My word," Mashiyaneh gasped.

She then asked, "But the children. What was their reaction?"

"What could it be? I have said it so many times. The children have become impervious to the atrocity. Cruelty has become a part of their culture. Villagers are mostly relatives of each other. Nevertheless, they watch the hangings. It seems it doesn't matter whether the victim is the brother of one, or the father of the other, or the uncle..."

Mashiya sympathized with Uncle. He said, "Son! It is clear that your job is not getting any easier. Yet it is a responsibility that you accomplish very well. Nowruz is not only a national tradition, but also the cornerstone of our heritage. We are its guardian and you are our representative. It is your duty to pass it on to the children, all children. After all, you are the messenger of happiness that brings joy! The only place that you can feel gloomy is within the four walls of this mill! This year, when you see our children, when they sit around the Nowruz display, remind them that laughter is the gift of Yazdan, that music is the joy of life, and that darkness and gloom are the handicraft of Ahriman. Remind them that, in the cosmic battle between good and evil, they carry a great responsibility on their small shoulders. They should not shirk that responsibility and definitely should not allow their peers to destroy the mainstay of their lives, their happiness."

As Mashiya spoke, Uncle felt a surge of devotion come over him. He recalled the days when, in ancient times, he had been at the court of Cyrus, the time when he had accompanied Xerxes into Athens, and when he had attended Nowruz celebrations at Persepolis, the incomparable palace of Darius the Great. He felt as if he was again living with Mashiya and Mashiyaneh—a feeling that in the past few years had become less and less tangible. He was ready, once again, to abandon his troubles in the old mill and return to his village near Hamadan, a changed man. Nodding with understanding and appreciation, he turned to his parents and said, "I should be ashamed of myself. Every year all I bring you is a lot of complaints."

Then he fell silent. His parents, too, did not speak. After a short while, Uncle continued, "then again, what can I do?"

Who else is there to listen to me and cheer me up?" And as an afterthought he added, "You know, you look young, but you are endowed with the wisdom and the holiness of the..."

Mashiya interrupted him saying, "Don't forget that seeing you each year rejuvenates us as well; and also don't forget the days that you lived here with us. This is your home, too. You are our son as are the rest of the children of the world. We work a whole year for the sweet smile of one of our children. And we wait a year to see your face. I hope this year will be a happier year for you all."

Uncle pulled his pipe out of the fold of his shawl, poured some tobacco into it, lit it, and said, "Well, time for me to go. I have inconvenienced you enough!"

Mashiyaneh, putting the hooka away, said, "We are always pleased to see our children. I had hoped that you could stay at least until Sizdabedar. It's a pity you always must hurry."

Uncle got up and said, "Please give everyone in the valley my warmest wishes for a happy Nowruz. Don't let them feel unhappy."

Then he threw the sack that was now full of toys over his shoulder, took his cane firmly in hand, said goodbye, and left the mill. Mashiya and Mashiyaneh watched his silhouette as it disappeared behind the trees.

* * *

Uncle walked briskly along the river, and, as he went by the ruins of the dams, houses, and fortresses, he thought about the blacksmith of his own era. Would he emerge and guarantee the unity between his people and his country? Then he thought about the moment when he will reach the summit. He hoped that by then bonfires will be lit on that side of the mountain as they were on this side. He imagined children jumping over them yelling, "Take my sallow color and give me your red." Then he thought of how he would tell the children the incredible story of his visit with Mashiya and Mashiyaneh. He would tell them, "Once upon a time, there was a man called Mashiya and he had a wife called Mashiyaneh. They were brother and sister, born of single stock of a rhubarb plant. They lived in an abandoned mill, just on the other side of the mountain..."

Subscribe Persian Heritage Today!

The Sakas

Part eight

Michael McClain

Firstly, a few observations.

It has been commented that I am “medieval and not modern, rural and not urban”, and that I am “an incurable idealist and romantic”. Just to put things in clear.

In spite of the years since his death, it is still practically impossible to speak of Ayatollah Khomeini in a cool, factual way. We have all heard Khomeini praised in an almost idolatrous way; on the other hand, I have heard him maligned and slandered in totally incredible ways, referred to as a communist, a homosexual, an opium addict, a pimp, and other totally incredible insults and slanders.

The great baseball pitcher Dizzy Dean once said:

“If it’s true it ain’t bragging.”
To Paraphrase Dizzy Dean,
“If it’s true, it is not slander.”

I do not intend to either defend nor to slander Ayatollah Khomeini, but only to tell the truth. Some may think that what I say below is meant as a defense of Khomeini, while others (I trust in small number) will accuse me of slandering him. I have no intention of doing either, but only to tell the truth. Ayatollah Khomeini was a Sufi master, sheikh or pir, obviously, a follower of Haidar Amoli, who said: “Shi’ism is Sufism, Sufism is Shi’ism.”

Below Ayatollah Khomeini expresses his Sufi or mystical orientation clearly and concisely:

“The invocations of Sha’ban is a litany is a litany recited by the Shi’a Imams during the Islamic month of Sha’ban. The mystical quality or character of said litany is obvious to all students of mysticism. In the selection given below, Ayatollah Khomeini affirms that the Invocations of Sha’ban are indeed a mystical statement or document, thus affirming the words of Haidar Amoli: “Shi’ism is Sufism, and Sufism is Shi’ism.”

“Some people who have failed to understand the true meaning of certain terms and expressions used by the mystics, have gone so far as to declare them unbelievers. But let us see whether these concepts and turns do not also occur in the prayers of the (Shi’a) Imams (upon whom be peace). In the invocation of Sha’ban, which were by all recited by all the (Shi’a) Imams (something true od NO other prayer or invocation), we read as follows:

“O God, grant me total separation from other-than-Thou and attachment to You and brighten the vision of our hearts with the light of looking upon You, so that they may pierce the veils of light and attain the fountainhead of magnificence, and our spirits may be suspended from the splendor of Your sanctity. O God, make me one of those who answer You when You call, and who cry out at your splendor.

What is meant by these pleas? What did the (Shi’a) Imam mean by “total separation from the other-than-Thou and attachment to You”? Why did he (the Shi’a Imam) petition God for this form of spiritual advancement? He (the Shi’a Imam) pleads: “Brighten the vision of our hearts.”

What could this mean if not a form of vision enabling man

to look upon God Almighty? As for “pierce(ing) the veils of light and attain(ing) the fountainhead of magnificence” and “our spirits may be suspended from the splendor of God’s sanctity?”

This is none other than the state that the Qur’an describes Moses as having attained, and none other than the effacement and vanishing of which the mystics speak. Similarly, the process of “attaining” the fountainhead of magnificence is precisely the same as the “attaining” to which the mystics refer. As for “the fountainhead of magnificence”, it is, of course, God Almighty, since all magnificence derives from Him, He is the fountainhead.

The terminology used by the mystics, then, is consistent with the Qur’an and the Sunna, and, for this reason, the concept of manifestation which they (the mystics) employ is to be preferred to the constructing notions of causality used by the philosophers.

... We must first understand what is being said, and in the case of the mystic, we must comprehend the inner state that prompts him to express himself in a certain way. Light may sometimes enter his heart in such a manner that he finds himself saying “Everything is God,”

“Remember that in the prayers you recite, expressions occur like “the eye of God”, “the hand of God”, “the ear of God”, and all these are all in the same vein as the terminology of the mystics.

There is also the tradition to the effect that when you place alms in the hands of a pauper, you are placing them in the hands of God. Then, too, there is the Qur’anic verse “When you cast the dust, you did not cast it, but God cast it” (VIII:17) What does it mean? That God cast the dust instead of the prophet?

That is the literal meaning, which you all accept, but those who experience the reality that is indicated in this verse cannot see max matters in the same way, and are bound to express themselves differently. Nonetheless, you will find the expressions they (the mystics) use throughout the Qur’an and especially in the prayers of the (Shi’a) Imams. There is no reason to regard them with suspicion. We must understand why they (the mystics) express themselves in their particular distinct way, and why they have deliberately abandoned the common usage of which they are certainly aware.

They (the mystics) have insisted on doing this out of a refusal to sacrifice reality to themselves, and, instead, they have sacrificed themselves to reality. If we understand what such persons are attempting to say, we will also understand the terms which they use, which are, after all, expressions derived from the Qur’an and the traditions of the (Shi’a) Imams.

None of us has the right to say of a certain person or thing “This is God.” and no rational person would accept such a claim. However, one may perceive a manifestation of God that is completely impossible to express other than by formulations such as this, which occur in a prayer concerning the “awliya” (great mystics).

“There is no difference between You and them, except they are Your servants, whose creation and dissolution lies in Your hands.”

The devotion of Ayatollah Khomeini to mysticism had consequences which are most interesting and require research, thought and meditation.

I January, 1989 Khomeini sent to Mikhail Gorbachev. To demonstrate the importance of said letter, Khomeini three important people, all Tahereh Hadidchi Dabbagh family friend who had accompanied Khomeini to Paris Ayatollah Javad Amoli and Javad Larijani, a deputy foreign minister: all three were well versed in Islamic mysticism.

In a letter to Gorbachev, Khomeini expressed his hatred and loathing of Communism, saying, accurately, that that it was something which belonged in the museum of history. Khomeini also warned Gorbachev not to fall into the trap of materialistic capitalism, but to study Islam as a way of life. However, what Khomeini recommended to Gorbachev was not the Qur'an nor other more usual works, but rather the writing of the great mystics Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Ibn Arabi and Suhrawardi.

The above puzzled and surprised many people. However, there is one thing said people should not forget: Gorbachev, in spite of everything.

As Ellis Sandoz has noted:

"Mysticism does not stand apart either from theology or from liturgical worship in Eastern Orthodoxy. Both theology and liturgy are suffused by the experience of persons and the common experience of the Church. There is no notion of a cleavage between individual experience and the common faith as in Western mysticism. Dogmas are defined in the light of experience and serve, in turn, to guide persons toward the attainment of an increasingly profound life in the Spirit. Neither faith nor theology is conceivable without mysticism."

Leonid Duspensky cites the German Bishop Dr. K. Gamber: "The Roman Catholic Church will eradicate its present errors and will arrive at a new renaissance (bad choice of words, at least in translation) only when it is able to incorporate the fundamental strengths of the Eastern (Orthodox) Church: its mystical theology based on the great fathers of the Church, and its liturgical piety. One thing seems beyond doubt: the future does not lie in a reconciliation with Protestantism (Amen to that!!!), but in an inward union with the Eastern (Orthodox) Church. that is, in a steadfast spiritual constancy with it, with its theology and piety," Kievan Rus; received Eastern Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium, both directly and by way of Bulgaria. Russia, along with Ukraine, are the terrain of the Russian Orthodox Church. heir to the Church of Kievan Rus', and which, along with the Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox Churches, uses Church Slavonic, a Slavic language derived from Old Bulgarian, as its liturgical language. Of course, the Russian Orthodox Church has its own particular characteristics. Note that Leonid Ouspensky, Ellia Sandoz, and Archimandrite Sophrony (about whom we shall have much to say) though they speak in the name of Eastern Orthodoxy in general, in reality very much speak from a Russian Orthodox viewpoint.

As is well known, Muslim Spain or "al-Andalus" was a very great center of Sufism. Ibn Batuta (14th century (14th century) speaks of Persian dervishes (or Sufis) who chose the Hispano-Muslim Kingdom of Granada as their home because of its resemblance to their native land. Ibn Batuta mentions knowing in Granada a dervish from Tabriz, another from Samarkand, yet another from Kuniah (Konya in Asia Minor?) and two from India. Perhaps the greatest figures among the many Sufies of Granada under the Nazrid Dynasty were Ibn Abbad of Ronda and Yusuf Qalandar al-Andalusi, mentor of the "Wandering Dervishes". The very use of the Persian name "Qalandae" and the existence of dervish orders points a Persian influence, very much an Andalusi or Spaniard was Ibn Arabi, known to Sufies as (the Greatist Sheikh) or "The Greatest Pir~, he was born in Murcia, and thus is known as "Ibn Arabi el Murciano" or "Ibn Arabi de Murcia" note that Ibn Arabi of Murcia traveled widely, he received his Sufi training and

initiation in Spain, wrote an account of the Sufies in the Spain or al-Andalus of his day, and always identified himself

as "Andalusi."

Also note that Ibn Arabi of Murcia was one of the strongest influences on the great thinkers of Safavi Spain in the 17th century, also greatly influenced the mystical thought of Ayatollah Khomeini, and was prominently mentioned by Khomeini in his letter to Gorbachev.

From the words of Ellis Sandoz cited above, the reader may get the impression that the Catholic Church has no mystical tradition; however, this is completely false, in fact, the Catholic Church has a very rich mystical tradition.

Spain has a very rich mystical tradition, both Catholic and Muslim; Spain is unique in being the only country with both a very rich Muslim_ mystical tradition and a very rich Christian mystical tradition. In Spain, copies of the works of St. John of the Cross and Ste. Teresa of Avila are sold in church foyers, and mysticism is part of all Spanish literature courses in effect, Spain has produced more mystics than any country west of Persia (though some Spaniards would say: "west of India". Also. Many Russians and Ukrainians would say that it is Russia and Ukraine which have produced more mystics than any other country west of Persia or India. However,

only Spain has produced both a very great Muslim mystical traditions very great Christian mystical tradition; Spain, whether Catholic or Muslim, is a land of mysticism.

No doubt the most famous and talented of the multitude of Spanish Catholic mystics was St. John of the Cross, of the 16th century.

While some Spanish mystics of the 16th century were indeed of Jewish Ancestry, including Ste. Teresa of Avila (often known in Spain as "Santa Teresa de Jesus") and Fray Luis de Leon, this not true of St. John of the Cross. Some say that St. John of the Cross also came from a Jewish family, but this is pure invention, with no basis in fact. Gonzalo de Yepes, father of St. John of the Cross was, as the Spanish say, "Old Christian on all four sides", while his mother, Catalina Alvarez, was a Morisca, i.e., of Hispano-Muslim ancestry.

St. John of the Cross belonged to the Carmelite Order, the most mystical of all Catholic orders, and also the most Spanish of all Catholic orders, though, unlike the Dominicans and the Jesuits, it is not Spanish by origin. but, as the name indicates, was originally an eastern order ("Carmelite" refers to Mount Carmel in the Holy Land) which came to Europe with retreating crusaders. The Spanish word "carmen" used mainly in Andalusia, derived from the Arabic "al-qarm", meaning "vine yard", means, roughly, "flower garden, or "enclosed flower garden". In Spain, the Carmelite monasteries or convents came to be known as "carmen" because of the similarity to the name "Carmel". Thus, the Carmelite Order is often called "del Carmen" i.e. Of the Carmen" in Spain. Our Lady of Mount Carmel, patroness of the Carmelite order, in Spain is almost always called "Nuestra Senora del Carmen" i.e., "our Lady of the Carmen", or, more frequently, "Virgen del Carmen", i.e., "Virgin of the Carmen". This is why so many Spanish girls are named "Maria del Carmen", generally shortened to "Mari Carmen" or simply, "Carmen".

The peculiar Spanishness of this is recognized in this Carl-ist quatrain:

*Where are you going, Virgin of the Carmen
With the lighted candle?
In search of King don Carlos
Because the patria is lost.*

It was the works of St. John of the Cross which inspired

the priestly vocation of Karol Wojtiwa, later Pope St. John Paul II, and St. John of the Cross is the subject of his doctoral thesis. Pope St. John Paul II frequently referred to himself as “this Slav”.

In the works of Feodor Dostoyevsky mentions that “the Spanish mystics” were taught in the Russian Orthodox Church of his day, most notably in the novel Demons, which for some reason is generally translated as The Possessed; this is strange because the word “demon” is the same in Russian and English.

Among the various Eastern Orthodox Churches (Greek, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Georgian, et cetera) only the Russian Orthodox Church finds St. John of the Cross and other Spanish mystics so interesting. Sergei Symeonovich Sakharov, known in the Russian Orthodox Church as “Archimandrite Sophrony” was one of the great thinkers of the Russian Orthodox Church of the 20th century, though he lived most of his life in exile. A theologian of mystical orientation, very much in the Russian Orthodox tradition, Archimandrite Sophrony thought very highly of St. John of the Cross, as Hieromonk Nikolai v. Sakharov, great nephew of Archimandrite Sophrony, notes:

“Fr. Sophrony works out a distinction between two types of God forsakenness. The first one is “man deserts God”. ‘To the extent that we live in this world, to that same extent we are dead in God.; The second one is when God hides from man - a dreadful state of God forsakenness When man has no more life in this world, that is, cannot live by this world, the memory of the divine world, that is draws him “there”, yet despite all this, darkness encompasses his soul/ He (Fr. Sophrony)” explains: ‘these fluctuations of the presence and ascetic of grace are our destiny until the ring of our earthly life. Fr. Sophrony saw suffering as a necessary stage in ascetic development. Divine grace comes only in the soul that has undergone suffering; Fr. Sophrony thus parallels his own experiences with that of the Dark Night of the Soul in St. John of the Cross, whose writings assisted his comprehension of ascetic suffering.’ Fr. Sophrony calls St. John of the Cross a “genius” and admits that his description of states, while being different in terminology from) “not identical to” would perhaps be more accurate) to the eastern fathers, in its main dogmatic statements it is in accord with the greatest writers of eastern asceticism.

Fr. Sophrony highlights other important points in St. John of the Cross, such as the determination to follow the hard path against utmost resistance; the concern to preserve them mind pure of any image in his striving toward the divine; and the understanding of the spiritually perfect life as the unity of love.

He points out that St. John of the Cross’ book does indeed excite the soul toward determination to follow patiently through the dark and dry wilderness toward the “promised land” ...

... It is tempting to see in Fr. Sophrony a borrowing from Carmelite spirituality, largely because of the emphasis he places on God forsakenness (very much in the Russian Orthodox tradition? Fr. Sophrony, as we mentioned in chapter one. was acquainted with the writings of St. John of the Cross and, to contrast to (Vladimir) Lossky, estimated them rather positively, some commentators have drawn parallels between St. Silouan, (a 19th century and early 20th century Russian Orthodox “stare” or mystic who also died in exile) and St. John of the Cross. As we mentioned earlier, Fr. Sophrony himself admits a certain affinity between St. John of the Cross’ experience and his own. For example, St. John of the Cross sees the dark night (of the soul) as a “mark of God’s intimacy” and “a part of the relationship”; for Fr, Sophrony, God forsakenness is a gift of God’s love. The question

of the potential dependence of Fr. Sophrony on St. John of the Cross fits well within the context of the debates about the place of the “dark night of the soul spirituality in the East. (Vladimir) Lossky’s opinion, outlined above, has been contested by (Irenee) Hausherr, (Heinrich von) Baltisar and (Cardinal Jean) Danielou, who highlight the similarities concerning God forsakenness in the East and the West. (Fr. Irenee) Hausherr concludes that the (Christian) East possesses all the elements that constitute these purifying nights. Others however, are more careful in drawing such parallels.”

In a personal communication, my good friend Seyyed Hossein Nasr told me: “You are completely right in emphasizing the unique rapport between Shi’ism and Sufism on the one hand and certain elements of Spanish Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy on the other.”

St. John was inspired by the New Testament) Injil as well as by early Christian mystics, notably Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Ephrem the Syrian, and Martirium (“or “Sahdona” in the original Syriac) by the later Byzantine mystics, especially St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory Palamas, and by medieval western mystics, especially John Scotus Erugena, Hugh of St. Victor and Richard of St. Victor.

St. John of the Cross was also inspired by the Shi’a Imam~ notably Imam Hussein the 3rd Imam, Imam Jaafar the 6th Imam, and Imam Ali Reza, the 8th Imam. Note that the mother of Imam Ali Reza, the eighth Imam was Hispano-Muslim, and of Spanish rather than Arab or Berber ancestry.

to be continued

The Patriots Who Triggered Demise of the Empire: GANDHI, MOSSADEGH AND NASSER

M. Reza Vaghefi

Indian Independence

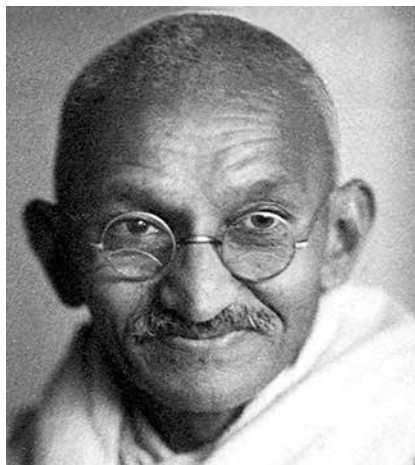
The British Empire was probably the only empire in history of mankind that at one time covered one-fourth of the world (Grand Improvisation, by Derek Lee-baert). It included colonies, protectorates and proxies that were run by Anglophiles like in Iran or directly administered by the British civil servants. These territories from Far East, Middle East to Southeast Asia and North Africa were managed by a massive number of British citizens in the Colonial Services which numbered 18,000 people by 1957, at which time Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary of the British government announced the British withdrawal from the Eastern Mediterranean by 1962. How this vast empire and the British influence began to shrink is what this piece is to explore.

From the ashes of WW 11, two new superpowers emerged that overshadowed the empire. The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). The British Empire, the most active warrior against the Axis (Germany, Japan and Italy) had inherited much of the Ottoman's holdings, was beginning to feel the pinch and totally unprepared for diminishing its influence. However, the ingredients of the forces that were emboldened by the major changes in the global architecture did their bit-by-bit work.

India:

World War 11 depleted the financial and gold resources of the British government and provided an opportunity for the people and nations that had been subjected to or exploited by British, for a long time, to rise and let their voices be heard.

The first move came from India, a vast land which was conveniently called: The Indian-subcontinent. The movement was led by Mohandes Mehatma Gandhi. Gandhi embodied the most precious elements of Indian culture and that is precisely why his leadership, trusted and admired by millions of Indians, bore the intended fruit, independence of India from the British Empire. Unlike other territories or countries where Britain still maintains some formal relationship, like Canada where the head of states is a Governor installed by the Queen



of England, India's separation was full and complete.

The complete separation took a long time beginning with the end of WW 11, during which many Indians were recruited or voluntarily served in the British army facing the Axis. They all had a first-hand knowledge of British officers' treatment which was not comparable to how the British officers and soldiers were treated. Gandhi's non-violent resistance and civil disobedience did not always go well. At times, there were some bloodshed but was not so massive that may have tarnished the movement's noble objectives. Finally, in 1947 the British government granted India the independence they were seeking. It must be stated that up to this moment the British had done everything to protect their Indian colony for 150 years. This strategy included, but not limited to, establishing their presence in peripheral part of India that is Afghanistan, in which they had deep interest. While trying to rule from distance by installing surrogates in countries like Afghanistan, they seemed to be totally unaware of the cultural elements which cemented those nations. So, they installed Shahshoja, a potentate for Afghanistan, and left the country leaving behind an army of slightly over 16000 soldiers "that were forced to flee Kabul in 1884 and were reduced to a single man by the time it reached the British garrison at Jalalabad, ninety miles away" (Overthrow,

by S. Kinzer, p.263). Shahshoja was also eliminated and the soldiers who were designed to protect the western part of the Indian sub-continent did not last long. This may provide a historical perspective for the United States which continues to lose ground after 18 years of war with billions of dollars of money spent with no evidence that the money was used productively, and precious loss of Afghan security forces, (over 28000 since 2015) and the coalition's, mostly American security personnel (at times by local people) in thousands with no end in sight.

Iranian Experience

The British government never admitted that they had direct influence in Iran knowing full well that their surrogates were doing what they were cultivated to do: to protect the British interests. The British influence was ubiquitous and these elements worked surreptitiously to let their presence work for Britain. Some were known openly as Anglophiles. Others worked in various positions in the government or commerce and industry and were led by invisible forces that were designed to remain hidden from the public eye. They were members of Free Masons Society which in Western countries exist to perform charity work and many people take pride in being Masons. The existence of Free Masons in Iran was secret and of course was led by distinct personalities in Britain. It had been determined that public knowledge of such people was harmful to interest of the Empire. In 1960s Ismail Raeen, an Iranian journalist, published two volumes in which for the first time the names and positions, political or economic, of these Free Masons (over 280 of them) were disclosed. Publication of these two volumes was itself a feast in spite of stiff resistance that was applied by many top officials in the government and oil industry including, but not limited to, late Jaafar Sharif-Emami, one of the last prime ministers before Islamic Revolution of February 1979. His incompetence in leading the nation was a major factor in flaming the revolution, which means that at those most critical moments the only criterion for selecting a leader to form a

government was loyalty to Shah who had a deep misunderstanding of structural and societal as well as political forces at work which made the uprising possible.

But going back to the man who contributed to the demise of the British empire, Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, the supreme patriot, he grasped the changes in the global arena and devised policies and legal actions that could help Iran confront the interests of the British government the institutional vehicle of which was known to be Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. There had been attempts, in the past, to confront the Company in order to extract some benefits, a phenomenon that had been denied stupidly and various governments had failed to penetrate the thinking of this bizarre institution. But beginning late 1940s Dr. Mossadegh launched his strategy through parliamentary elections, the first one of which was held in Tehran (1949) which had 12 electoral deputies and then pursued free election throughout the nation. The elections in Tehran awarded Dr. Mossadegh to be at the top of 12 deputies. Other towns and cities went through the election and Parliament was ready for business. Through Dr. Mossadegh's leadership the Parliament approved a bill to nationalize the oil resources of Iran a great feat, and by almost unanimous vote he was elected to be the Prime Minister and with approval of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, he formed a cabinet and implemented the Oil Nationalization Law began in earnest.

The British government announced from the outset that they would oppose this law and will use every level of power, world-wide, to deny Dr. Mossadegh the opportunity to actualize the law. Ultimately, after 28 months, with C.I.A. leading a plot and British M16, the British military intelligence, in tandem, and their Iranian agents following ferociously, set up the Coup of August 1953 which brought in a pro-American government to power.

The British damage to political and economic development of Iran has been immense. They did their best to prevent any major economic plan. This statement by Abol Hassan Ebtehaj who at certain critical time managed the Plan Organization, the institution that was responsible for planning and implementation of some lasting economic projects done with missionary zeal, was made to the author during an interview which was published in the: "Entrepreneurs of Iran" (Altoan

Press, Palo Alto, California, 1974). The American spy agency, CIA, damaged Iran immensely though in different ways. By not comprehending the unintended consequences of their infamous plot, they did a lot by inflicting pain to the country, the least of which was that they denied a nascent democratic process initiated by Dr. Mossadegh to solidify. It is interesting that in many of the cases that CIA was involved (world-wide) in Latin America or Middle East, the pronounced objective was to introduce or enhance democratic process? Instead the results have been quite contrary with outcomes being absolutely undemocratic and mostly becoming authoritarian with massive human cost which is contrary to American values.

Much has been written about the oil issue by the author and many other scholars. But by stubbornly refusing the lawful demand of the Iranians to a fair share of the country's basic resource, the British oil company damaged its own interest. Dr. Mossadegh was prepared to compensate the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company the full price of the assets, but the imperialistic mindset under-mind economic logic and the outcome was not something the M16 had been pursuing. They also laid the foundation of what emerged 25 years late.

There was no more inexpensive oil to lubricate the Royal Navy roaming around the world and the British elite to enjoy high life at the expense of the people who owned Iran's single most precious resource.

The moral of the story is that Dr. Mossadegh showed the world and the nations that had been exploited by the British, for a long time, that they could rise and demand their rights. They may not completely succeed but they have to fight for their inherent rights.

Jemal Abdul Nasser of Egypt

In 1954, there was a major upheaval in Egypt. A group of young military officers,

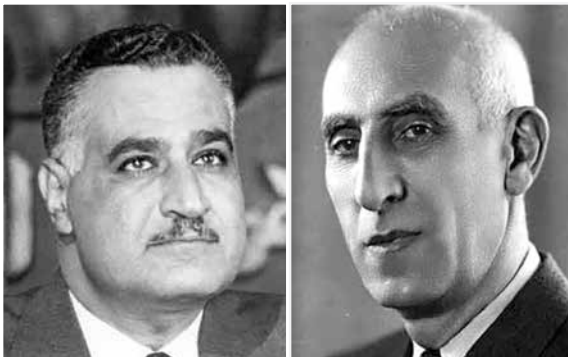
under the leadership of General Najeib, who was soon put under house arrest, took control of the government. Their first act was to remove corrupt King Farouq and send him to exile. Very soon and emboldened by what had taken place in Iran, Nasser regime nationalized Suez Canal which had been a major source of income for Britain and France that owned the Canal. The nationalization of the Canal took the two government by surprise but soon they decided act and reclaim the ownership of it. In 1956 they launched a joint attack at the Canal. They also solicited help from the newly established state of Israel which attacked from Sinai Peninsula. This operation was initiated without informing or consulting the United State a brand-new superpower.

Very soon President Eisenhower, alarmed by what he saw, ordered the warring parties to stop. At the same time Soviet Union, the other Superpower, intervened and warned that if the British and French do not stop, the Soviets would deploy military resources. This was another alarming factor in Eisenhower's demanding an end to the conflict. All sides stopped and the Israelis withdrew their forces from the war zone and left the Sinai Peninsula. Nasser was further encouraged to exploit the rivalries and invited the Soviets to help the Egyptian army and laid the foundation of what came in June 1967 the Six Day war.

The Outcome

Britain's success during WW1 and the collapse of Ottoman empire, the sick man of Europe, as British were propagating, had emboldened British to scheming new map of the Middle East. They had in mind to convert a WW1 relic like the Middle East Supply Center to a realignment of the countries in the region where they had had good influence not realizing that there were new forces, the product of he WW11, United States and the Soviet Union, that were going to influence any new map of the area. It seemed for a while that the old mindset

had not yet realized that there was no space for the good old colonial minds and they had to adopt a new set of strategies. Further, the British leaders were slow in realizing that shrinking of the empire had started and even today by using treacherous techniques, like the Turks are coming (Farrange), they led people to vote for the Brexit, a process which most likely would further shrink the leftovers of the Empire on which at certain time, Sun Never Set.



An Interview with:

JAHANGIR GOLESTAN-PARAST and RYAN BLAKE

CO-DIRECTORS AND PRODUCERS OF THE FILM:
“JOHN AND THE PAHLAVAN”

By Brian H Appleton

Perhaps the place to start is to define the word *Pahlavan*. It goes back to Persian antiquity and meant warrior hero; not just victorious in battle and in wrestling but also a moral exemplar, a leader known for generosity, self-abrogation, humility, fairness and for standing up to unjust rulers. Today in common parlance it means champion athlete but is still carries with it all these other connotations.

The following is a synopsis of the film by their script writer Steven Fischer:

“John & The Pahlavan”, written by Steven Fischer, Co- Produced and Directed by Jahangir (John) Golestan and Ryan Blake.

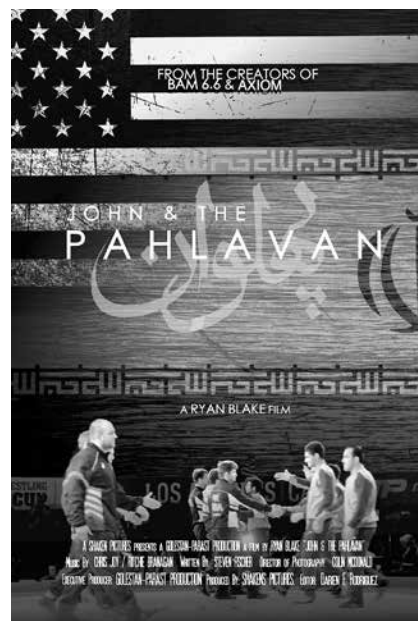
When Jahangir Golestan-Parast was 17-years-old he left his family, his friends, and childhood memories of his father’s Zurkhaneh. Like most teenagers, the naive Jahangir was looking ahead and eager to shake off the dust of ancient Persia and embrace the West. He immigrated from Esfahan to London and started identifying as “John” (to fit in and, he’d hoped, avoid prejudice). Following his lifelong plan, John leap frogged to Los Angeles where he studied filmmaking at UCLA to follow in the tradition of the Hollywood idols that inspired his odyssey. It seemed he’d won his dream, but it didn’t fulfill the way he imagined. After 18 years away from Iran, John found his attention more focused on what he had lost: his Persian roots.

In 2016, United World Wrestling brought an international world cup tournament to Los Angeles. Curious, Jahangir went looking to reconnect with his past and was immediately filled with a sense of pride and longed for a better understanding of his heritage. Recounting Iran’s history through the success of Iran’s national wrestling team, Jahangir started a personal cinematic crusade to reconnect with his home at a time when the United States stepped up its long- running suspicion of anything Middle Eastern. Jahangir’s personal interest to simply celebrate his native culture turned into a social effort to help audiences find understanding about Iran, dispel stereotype, and see the cultural beauty he almost forgot.

Forget what you know about Iran in the media and learn about its past and people through the eyes of the Pahlavan. Did you know Persian politeness is seen as an art form? Do you know Iranian-Americans held a vigil after 9/11? Have you ever heard of Gholamreza Takhti?

In his father’s zurkhaneh, a strength house where pahlavani wrestlers exercise, Jahangir recalls how the wrestlers would greet him by bowing reverently. That simple act of respect made a spiritual imprint that still influences him and motivates this production. “John & The Pahlavan” follows Jahangir, now aged 66, as he plans a return to Esfahan to re-unite with family, explore the path of the Pahlavan wrestler, and find truth in a home he has almost forgotten. Through film, Jahangir discovered a chance to thank his parents for the love he was just now realizing they had given him all those years ago. Jahangir explores the nature of the pahlavan and asks: What can we learn from the pahlavan and how might we apply it to the conflict in our daily life?

Our story follows a 3-year journey in which Jahangir studies wrestlers in the U.S. and in Iran sharing with audiences inspiring pahlavan-like stories of the legendary Gholamreza Takhti and testimonies from American wrestlers like World Champions Jordan Burroughs and Kyle Syndser. Our goal is to create a documentary that influences a new way Western audiences: see the sport of wrestling; understand Persian culture and share in one man’s heartfelt journey to reconnect with his heritage.



Interview with JAHANGIR GOLESTAN-PARAST

*Tell us about yourself?
What is your background?*

I was fortunate that I was raised in a very, very loving family. They were not millionaires but having travelled the world and seen so many different aspects of life, I feel that love is most important, and I grew up surrounded by love. Even today my passwords were always my parent’s names. My sister Shahine inspires me so much. She inspired me to make documentaries. People who have not lived or visited Iran do not have a real understanding of Iranian culture. A retired US wrestling coach I spoke to who had been in 48 countries said no one has ever shown him the hospitality that he experienced in Iran. Also Medea Benjamin from KCET Radio, who travelled the world, said to me she had never been anywhere that people were as generous as they are in Iran. Complete strangers would not let her pay her restaurant bills and would pay them on her behalf. After seeing my earlier film “BAM 6.6” she stated that it truly represents the Iranian people and their culture as she experienced them.

Remember Anthony Bourdain said the same thing. I myself went to Iran for the first time alone in 1966 at the age of 16 and people were so generous and hospitable that I left with more money than when I arrived. They kept giving me money and saying I was a kid and I would need it for my travels.

Did you study film making or are you self-taught?

I wanted to make documentaries ever since I was a little kid. I went to film school at UCLA but it's passion that has been driving me. All my films have a very humanitarian theme. I wish there were a film festival just for humanitarian themes. Especially one that shows humanitarian Iranian films so that people's perceptions of Iran will be more realistic.

What is your philosophy on film making and what compels you to make films and even to mortgage your house to finance them? Why is it so important to you?

I do not compare myself to the brilliant film makers in Iran and I could learn from them. I ask you to name one documentary film since Mossadegh that has had the impact of Bam 6.6 and it's message to the Iranian diaspora? It only takes one person to send a message of humanity and to make change, to make a difference. My films are not about me. I am making these films for our legacy. Films that make money are ac-



tion films that show killing, killing, killing. Michael Moore said a film should "tell me something that I don't know." People don't know about Persian heritage and culture. I believe a movie can inspire you to be a better person.

How many films have you made?

My first one was about Esfahan, my hometown and then there was "Bam 6.6" about the humanitarian effort of Iranians and the international community in helping after the 6.6 earthquake there in 2003 and the sole American couple who were caught in it. Then I made "Homeless to Homeowner" about Mo Mohanna's humanitarian efforts to help the homeless in Sacramento and lastly "Ashes to Eden" the story of Amir Dailemeh, who voluntarily built a garden where a fire had devastated Griffith Park in L.A.

What inspired you to make this latest film "John and the Pahlavan?"

I was inspired by the life of Takhti and that he was such a good person. The most important thing in your life is what you do for others not for yourself and Takhti put other people's needs ahead of his own and that is what made him so popular and a legend. After the earthquake that was close to Tehran, he went around in his car with open windows and collected money donations for the victims.

When I interviewed Babak Takhti, son of Golanreza in Las Vegas, he was amazing and inspiring. Even in Iran, 6 months ago when I was there, teenagers knew about Golanreza. He was a philanthropist and saintly and we could all learn from him, especially world leaders.

I went to his grave in Tehran. This world-famous Olympic wrestling champion had a modest grave and he did not spend his time with celebrities and the rich and powerful but rather with his common men. As a child I had heard about him but not about his humanitarianism and his humility. His death remains a mystery.

We need good people on earth in society. My main motive for this film after seeing "Not Without My Daughter" was to make movies that showed Iran realistically.

One of my viewers an Iranian American woman, Ronak Jalali said: "for once I see someone who makes films showing the positive side of the Iranian culture and



people. Thank you for portraying the kindness and humanity of the Iranian people."

How did you meet Babak Takhti?

Ryan Blake, my co-producer was introduced to him by a writer.

How did you meet Ryan Blake?

Blake approached me. That fact that he was not of Iranian ethnicity and that he was very young caught my attention. He approached me at a wrestling tournament in Englewood, L.A. and said: "I know you are making a film about Iranian American wrestling and I would like to collaborate with you." We realized we had a lot in common. 65 years ago my dad had a Zurkhaneh and I really didn't understand then what it was about. Zurkhaneh was considered popular culture and not sophisticated. But it is all about respect.

It turned out that Ryan wanted to make a documentary about Iranian wrestling and Takhti. He said there are good people everywhere and he wanted to show Americans, Iranian culture, so we decided to collaborate.

What can you tell us about filming the US wrestling team in Iran?

Iranian wrestlers were very attached to Jason Burroughs who gave condolences for the last earth quake. One of the Iranian wrestlers was saying Burroughs was not just a wrestler but a hero. Burroughs said if Trump went to Iran it would change his opinion.

Masih Shariff videotaped with his crew and did the sound recording. We had a crew of four in Tehran and they came with us to Tabriz where they were celebrating the 50th anniversary of Takhti in Feb. 2018. My niece, Rehian Safavi and her husband came with us. They had been to the USA a few times. She said she would be honored if she could accompany us to Tabriz. She picked us up at the airport and hosted us in their home in Tehran. We flew together to Tabriz. She is only 30 years old. She knew under this regime she would not be allowed to watch the wrestling, but she wanted to be a part of our film making project anyway. She said: "I want to leave a legacy behind and I want to be part of this film and I am proud of you for doing this for our culture." We also went all together to Esfahan which was one of the most touching and unbelievable journeys in my life even though my parents were no longer there and alive. At age 67 I had a different perspective. I only have a decade or two left of life. Talking to strangers in Esfahan and Tabriz was amazing. One guy in Tabriz when we asked him for a good restaurant, not only recommended one but accompanied us there and spent 45 minutes talking with us.

What did the US wrestlers think of Iran and Iranians?

One of the American wrestlers had been to 45 countries and said he had never experienced anywhere else, the level of kindness and generosity he had received in Iran.

What is your objective in making this film and what message are you trying to impart? What audience are you trying to reach?

My objective is to show the world Iranian humanity. I have lived 9 years in London, 8 years in France in addition to many years in California and I have trav-

eled to many countries and what I can tell you is that we can all learn from Iranian culture. A culture that is many thousands of years old has much to teach us. This film is about me and my relationship to the life of Golamreza Takhti. I have been asked if I were to be reborn, what I would choose...I would pick my same family and my same country of origin. I would have gone back to live in Iran if my American family had agreed to come. Even the former diplomats, Bruce Laingen and John Limbert, who were among the embassy hostages for 444 days bear no animosity towards Iran and admire the Iranian people and culture.

Since I have stayed in the USA I have made it my mission to educate people about Iran...my conscience is telling me to educate people about Iran. When I am with my relatives in Iran, we don't talk a lot but we exchange so much love.

When we screened my film Bam 6.6 at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC which not only showcased the compassion of the Iranian people in the face of natural disaster but also the compassion of people who came to help from all over the world, a gentleman asked me if copies of the film were for sale and if so how much were they? I said \$20 and he bought 200 copies with a check for \$4000.00. I said I was honored and that this was my first screening of the film. I asked him why he wanted 200 copies. He said "young man, I am not going to answer that question, you will need to figure it out for yourself." That was 12 years ago and I have never forgotten it.

Another time a near homeless man heard me on the radio in the valley and wanted a copy. Then he called back and asked for 25 copies. I asked him what he did for a living and why 25 copies. He said he took care of his mom in his room because they couldn't afford a senior assisted living arrangement. I asked him what he was

going to do with 25 copies and he said that he was going to give them to strangers on Ventura Blvd because he wanted people to hear my message.

While we were filming in Tabriz we ran into so many young students, mostly girls who were singing and wanted to talk to us but not in front of the camera but they wanted us to please bring this message to America: "people were celebrating in Iran when JCPOA was signed...we were so happy that Obama signed the peace treaty with Iran...why is Trump banning Moslems and why not banning Saudi Arabia?"

INTERVIEW OF CO-DIRECTOR/PRODUCER RYAN BLAKE

What is your connection with wrestling?

I wrestled in college and still coach wrestling at high schools by viography for small clients.

What is it about wrestling that you like? For me I always preferred individual rather than team sports and with wrestling and martial arts, I like the fact that during bouts you have to stay focused or you lose.

I agree. Wrestling is intimate and personal, worldwide and historic for 1000's of years. It occurs in Africa, Asia, Japan, Europe, Turkey...why? Wrestlers are a small group of athletes in the USA. It is biggest at the collegiate level and is a niche sport at the high school level. I grew up in Chicago. The Mid West is the center of wrestling in the US. It is a smaller sport here which takes so much dedication and gets no publicity. It is distinct from what they call professional wrestling like the WWF, which is popular entertainment.

As I got older I saw different fan bases. I went to the Olympic 2012 and 2014 worldwide championships which have junior and senior levels by weight. There are 8 weight classes at the Olympic level.

At the World Cup the top ten teams globally compete. Each wrestler represents his country for that weight class. It is country versus country.

How did you meet Jahangir?

I met Jahangir at the 2015 World Cup in L.A. We were both excited by the Ira-



nian wrestling teams fan base. L.A. has the largest Iranian American population in the US. We exchanged business cards and promised to think about a project we could collaborate on. I suggested we make a film about Jahangir's life. I was the cameraman, Jahangir was the host. We interviewed him and then the wrestlers. He had done Bam 6.6 and Homeless to Homeowner to try to change perceptions about Iranians and Iranian Americans. Our main motivation for making this film is to change perceptions especially with the election of Trump, his immigration ban and dropping from the JCPOA. So we felt it was timely and we have been working on this film from 2015 to 2018. Jahangir went to Iran to film in Feb 2018. It was touch and go as to whether it was safe for him to go from a political standpoint.

Describe the special dynamic between the US and the Iranian national wrestling teams.

Iran, the US and Russia are the top three teams worldwide. I went to tournaments in Russia and there were fist fights and hostility in the fan base. But Iran and US teams get along. They have mutual respect and they know each other and their coaches. When the US wrestlers went to Iran, they were treated like celebrities where as in the US they are relatively unknown. In fact the US wrestlers are better known in Iran than in the US because wrestling has a much bigger fan base in Iran.

How did you discover that Golamreza Takhti's son, Babak was living in Las Vegas and how did you get an interview with him?

I discovered Babak after I interviewed Dr. Hushang Chehabi of Boston University where he is a professor of Iranian studies. Dr. Chehabi had written some articles about Golamreza Takhti and agreed to an interview. I thought Babak was still in Iran but he told me that he had heard he was somewhere out West. I found him on the internet and we did some phone interviews. Then I asked him if we could interview him in person. He was happy to be interviewed in person and Jahangir went. It was a wonderful interview of him in his home and he shared a lot of information, stories and photos about his father.

Who else did you and Jahangir

interview in this film?

We also interviewed: Dr. Alan Williams, professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester, UK; Dr. Arik Greenberg, professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University and Marcello Di Cintio, author of Poets and Pahlavans as well as many other Olympic wrestling medalists and coaches such as:

Henry Cejudo-US Gold Medalist/ UFC Champ Ali Bayat - Iranian freestyle coach Jordan Burroughs-US Gold Medalist Parviz Hadi-Iran Bronze Medalist.

Tell us about the script writers, cameramen and crew.

Colin McDonald is the main cinematographer and the main cameraman. Jahangir is the producer and I am the co-producer and director. Steven Fisher, a colleague out of Chicago who has done some documentary work is also one of the writers.

What was it that attracted you to the Iranian wrestlers and inspired you to want to make this film?

The Iranian fan base caught my interest at the tournaments...I saw the energy of the Iranian fan base...there were some language barriers.

At the 2015 World Cup, I couldn't speak Farsi but there were a lot of Iranian American fans and that got me into wanting to make this film...their energy, enthusiasm, intimacy and history attracted me and I grew to appreciate and respect that. Persian culture attracted me, particularly their respect for wrestling and for wrestlers...I admire that as a fan.

I feel that US and Iranian wrestlers have acted as citizen diplomats where our govern-

ments have failed.

Jordan Burroughs is loved in Iran... he is a fantastic wrestler...he helped his opponent up off the mat. And there was that famous photo of Gadarvi and Burroughs arm in arm. They were citizen diplomats for both countries.

Tell us about what you have learned about Golamreza Takhti?

Jahangir grew up watching Golamreza...he was a true pahlawan. His son Babak inspired us to interview other wrestlers. Golamreza was outspokenly for the people, he spoke out against the Shah on several occasions...he represented the people... his death was said to be suicide but there are rumors. It was said that he had marital problems. The public did not want to believe it was suicide.

Golamreza was winning medals right up to a few years before his death in 1968. The main proponent of this documentary is Jahangir. Babak and Golamreza reminded him of his childhood and his cultural origins.

I want to thank you and Jahangir on behalf of the readers of Persian Heritage Magazine for your time and we wish you the greatest success with this film. When will it be released and are you going to enter it into film festivals?

Next year we will know which festivals. The trailer will be released by beginning of Dec on Jahangir's website at www.golestanparastproductions.com

Any last words Jahangir?

You go to school to learn something and this movie will teach you and is for you.

IRANIAN-AMERICAN MICHAEL ROSTAMPOUR INVITED TO IRAN'S NATIONAL BASKETBALL TEAM

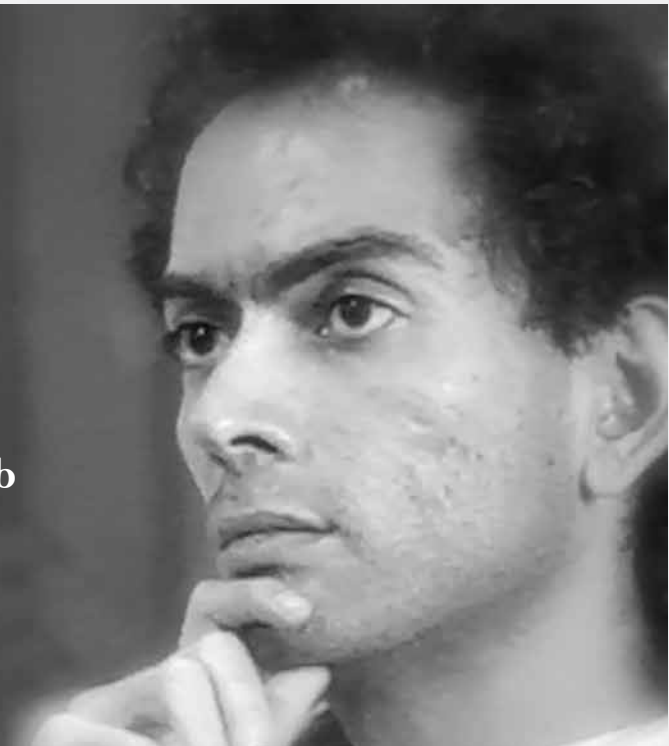
Tehran Times: Rising basketball player Mike Rostampour has been invited to Iran's national basketball team. The 6ft 8in (2.03m) Minnesota-born forward has never seen action for the Iran national squad before, but has significant international basketball experience. Rostampour is currently playing for Slovakian club.

"I feel extremely proud to be an Iranian-American. I understand Iran is a great country and the people are very proud. I see it when I watch the Iranian soccer team compete in the World Cup, the wrestling team in the Olympics and the basketball team in the FIBA World Cup. Win or lose, Iranian fans always show more love and support to their teams than any other country in the world," Rostampour said.

REZA ABDOH:

From the Son of the Founder of Persepolis Club to the Recognized Playwright in the American Theater

by Pantea Bahrami



The Berlin Institute of Contemporary Art is holding an exhibition of photos, manuscripts, screenings and videos of the 32-year-old Iranian-American director, Reza Abdoh who died of AIDS in 1995.

The exhibition will be held from February 9th to May 5th in Berlin in collaboration with the New York Museum of Contemporary Art. At the end of his life, he insisted that he did not want any of his works to ever be shown on stage. This request has been chronicled in the archived video recordings.

The legacy of Abdoh as a theater director, although short lived, places emphasis not only on the unique forms he uses in various layers, including light, dance, video, speech, music, photos, and unexpected movements, but also the relationship of poetry and language. His works also refer to current issues such as environmental, Reaganism, gender orientation, racial inequality, class and finally violence. His works display a mirrored expression of how social inequality is significant in the social order which he refers to as society.

ABDOH'S WORKS

Reza was not only a theater playwright but also a filmmaker. He in collaboration with a colleague filmmaker Adam Sachs, and Brandon Doyle, his partner in life made the long film "The Blind Owl." But, Abdoh is best known for his theatrical works in Los Angeles and New York as part of the Darwin Alves Group. These works included "Father Was a Scarce Character", "Hip Hop-Waltz", "Lulu", "The Act of Survival", "Tang", "Right", "White", "Quotes From a Ruined City" and

"Minamata."

In 1996, one year after being silent, he won the Bessie Award for a lifetime of creative activity in theater and dance.

WHO IS REZA ABDOH?

Abdoh's mother, Homa Migraine, is an Iranian born in Italy. Homa's father was an Iranian diplomat assigned to Geneva. Homa was 16 when her first child, Reza, was born in Iran. Reza's father, Ali Abdoh was a wealthy man who was a friend of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and his sister, Princess Fatima, and her husband, Airforce Commander Mohammad Khatam. Ali Abdoh was a boxer and owner of the Abdoh Bowling Club and founder of the Persepolis Club. Homa and Ali met in Iran at the Club. Ali was 24 years older than Homa.

Ali Abdoh traveled to the United States in 1949 at the age of 16. He joined the US Army and fought in the Korean War. He was a dual national. His first marriage was at age twenty. During this marriage he had a daughter, Regina. Ali, being a boxer himself, dreamt of his son Reza also joining in the ranks of a professional sport. According to Homa, Reza wanted to learn the violin, but his father was opposed to such activities.

One of the things that made the relationship between father and son very volatile was their position on different values. The family spent their summers in England. Reza was introduced to the works of Bergman and Kurosawa at the age of 9 and at 13 he left home for England. There he developed a love for theater and made it his life's ambition.

According to Salar, Reza Abdoh's brother, Reza published

The show, "Father was a Scarce Character," written and executed in the nineties, pointed to the narcissism of Donald Trump, at the time a well-known figure in the world of commerce and entertainment and very interested in the dialogue, this theme heard: "Every man has a period of his life, such as Donald Trump, for some it takes longer than the rest."

his first book of poetry at the age of 14. Copies of this book are not available. After the 1979 Revolution, all their property, including the books, were confiscated. Homa stated, “They took all of our belongings including all of our books that were stored in our library, they took all our family photos, I do not have any childhood photos of my children, I don’t even have a copy of Reza’s book of poetry, everything was taken from us.”

THE FIRST THEATER EXPERIENCE

When Reza was sent to England, he originally lived with his grandmother in London. He began exploring London and its attractions, to the extent that he started to neglect his school work. His father’s anger resulted in his being sent to the Wellington Boarding School. According to Salar Abdoh, the number of foreign students enrolled in British schools was very low at that time. This led to an atmosphere of racism and discrimination, especially against those who came from Middle Eastern countries.

Tony Charles, Reza’s teacher, discussed a black raincoat with long sleeves, Reza wore as a protest against the school uniform. At the same school, despite English not being his primary language, Reza won the school’s literary prize. During these years, Reza Abdoh’s book of poetry, “The Blindness of the Blind in the Closed Space,” was released. According to Tony Charles, Reza believed that the artist is doomed to live in isolation even as part of a member of humanity.

Charles worked on putting together several shows at the school and asked Reza to be his directorial collaborator. He described Reza as being extraordinarily talented and used great creativity in theater, this led to his work in experimental theater.

THE REVOLUTION AND ABDOH FAMILY

The 1979 revolution brought severe negative economic impact on Reza’s family. According to Homa, wife of Ali Abdoh, they separated before the revolution. Ali migrated to the United States with his children. Reza’s mother said in an interview, “Reza’s father was a good friend, but he was not the best husband or father to his children. Ali was a successful businessman but had no time for his family and was always away on business.”

After the 1979 revolution, almost all of Ali Abdoh’s assets were confiscated by the government. Ali Abdoh resettled in Los Angeles. Reza along with his sister Regina also lived there. It was at that time his father discovered his son’s sexual

preference of homosexuality.

According to Salar, Reza’s brother, who later collaborated in writing a few plays with him after his father’s death, Reza could not continue to study at the University of California because of financial and emotional burdens. In 1981 the university fee was only \$ 5,310 for tuition and a dormitory room. This was still not affordable because his brothers were also his financial responsibility, including the youngest Sardar. According to Salar, at that time he did not have enough money for food and worked for a while in a hotel.

This was a difficult time for Reza. He told people, in the early 80’s, that his mother was half Italian and half Iranian (in fact, his mother was an Iranian but was only born in Italy.) Due to discrimination at the time and the hostage crisis he used this story in order to survive the hostile environment surrounding him. This took place in 1983 and played a significant role in Reza’s professional development.

SHAKESPEARIAN PERFORMANCES

In 1983 Reza met Alan Mandel, a famous actor and director at the Los Angeles Theater Center. He invited Reza to work with him. The following year, Reza directed Shakespeare’s King Lear’s Courtyard. There are no recordings of this 4-hour performance but his other works are kept as part of the archives.

The *Los Angeles Times* wrote a critique of the presence of a young director at the center. The performance took place at a basketball hall in the heart of Los Angeles. The article compared this young man of 22, so called half Italian and half Iranian, to re-known directors such as Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman. This astonishing genius of a young artist was entering the highlight of his career.

In 1988, the *Times* nominated him as one of the leading directors of the year. With the release of his play Reza introduced a new physical performance to be implemented by his actors and expand on the art of the physical. This piece earned him the annual prize of the year. From that point on Reza was well recognized in the theater industry.

AVANT-GARDE THEATER

Almost all Abdoh’s work takes on the essence of his everyday life. The “Survival Act” was created based on the character of Jeffrey Dahmer, as a symbol of violence (Dahmer mutilated dozens of his victims and stored them in his home refrigerator.



His victims were mostly black and homosexuals. He was finally arrested in 1991.) There were fourteen actors in the cast who brought to the audiences a taste of the violence committed by a human being.

In an interview with Philip Well he stated, "I hate the word "avant-garde. I am a fan of common culture. I look at my work as entertaining, especially in a culture where progressive values are not appreciated, this is kind of paradox or dichotomy. I like the fact that my work is a combination of realistic images coming from the media with ideas that are specifically intellectual and progressive. But at the same time, I cannot tolerate pure intellectual works because it cannot arouse the creative and sensual side of you.

For example, in the show "The Survival Law, " a work of folk and or populist, you are immersed in sound and music. In ancient cultures, they do not apply theory to dance, they want to get to a degree of immersion, and I think this is a good approach to art, creating a drowning effect."

The show, "Father was a Scarce Character," written and executed in the nineties, pointed to the narcissism of Donald Trump, at the time a well-known figure in the world of commerce and entertainment and very interested in the dialogue, this theme is heard: "Every man has a period of his life, such as Donald Trump, for some it takes longer than the rest."

"The Minamata" is the most important works from both the artistic and his individualist approach. This was a turning point in his career. The New York Theater Center decided to give Abdoh the centerpiece of the center. Reza Abdoh was more capable and had a great opportunity at this time, more than any other time, to bring out the greatest performers in his career. The show lasted 2

hours and 20 minute and is the last extended work of his career. The rest of his work is about an hour and a half. This particular work is about an environmental disaster. It was at that time that Abdoh found out that he was carrying the HIV virus.

In "Minama," Abdoh used prerecorded images for the first time. This piece later became an integral part of his art. After this show based on video recordings, photos became part of his work.

The show also featured a combination of modern dance and traditional music from Hollywood and featured many great performers. The show included a narrator who spoke the true story behind this environmental catastrophe.

FIRST AND LAST MEETING WITH MOTHER

In 1992, while on an international tour, after fifteen years Reza was able to meet up with his mother in Paris. In the spring of 1995 Reza came to the show, to show the "Story of Disappointment" to the players. This was the beginning of the end. His health was deteriorating, and the disease was visible. Homa was trying hard to return to America before the death of her son Reza. She received eight rejection stamps from the consulate. Eventually she was successful and made it back New York. Homa stated, "During our separation all these years we spoke on the phone at least 3 to 4 times a week, he pushed back death until we met. He passed the day after I arrived in New York and forever closed his eyes."

Reza Abdoh's work has left an irrefutable impact on the American contemporary theater due to his unique features in form and technique. His critique of racial, gender and class inequalities has left a remarkable statement in the works of future artists.



Timeless Leadership Lessons from Cyrus the Great

Ryan Holiday

Forget 1-800-CEO Read. The greatest book on business and leadership was written in the 4th century BC by a Greek about a Persian King. Yeah, that's right.

Behold: Cyrus the Great, the man that historians call "*the most amiable of conquerors*," and the first king to found "*his empire on generosity*" instead of violence and tyranny. Consider Cyrus the antithesis to Machiavelli's ideal Prince. The author, himself the opposite of Machiavelli, was Xenophon, a student of Socrates.

The book is a veritable classic in the art of leadership, execution, and responsibility. Adapted from Larry Hendrick's excellent translation, here are nine lessons in leadership from Xenophon's Cyrus the Great:

BE SELF-RELIANT

"Never be slow in replenishing your supplies. You'll always be on better terms with your allies if you can secure your own provisions... Give them all they need and your troops will follow you to the end of the earth."

BE GENEROUS

"Success always calls for greater generosity—though most people, lost in the

darkness of their own egos, treat it as an occasion for greater greed. Collecting boot [is] not an end itself, but only a means for building [an] empire. Riches would be of little use to us now—except as a means of winning new friends."

BE BRIEF

"Brevity is the soul of command. Too much talking suggests desperation on the part of the leader. Speak shortly, decisively and to the point—and couch your desires in such natural logic that no one can raise objections. Then move on."

BE IN CONTROL

After punishing some renegade commanders: "Here again, I would demonstrate the truth that, in my army, discipline always brings rewards."

BE A FORCE FOR GOOD

"Whenever you can, act as a liberator. Freedom, dignity, wealth—these three together constitute the greatest happiness of humanity. If you bequeath all three to your people, their love for you will never die."

BE FUN

On being fun: "When I became rich, I

realized that no kindness between man and man comes more naturally than sharing food and drink, especially food and drink of the ambrosial excellence that I could now provide. Accordingly, I arranged that my table be spread every day for many invitees, all of whom would dine on the same excellent food as myself. After my guests and I were finished, I would send out any extra food to my absent friends, in token of my esteem."

BE LOYAL

When asked how he planned to dress for a celebration: "If I can only do well by my friends, I'll look glorious enough in whatever clothes I wear."

BE AN EXAMPLE

On setting an example: "In my experience, men who respond to good fortune with modesty and kindness are harder to find than those who face adversity with courage."

BE COURTEOUS AND KIND

"There is a deep—and usually frustrated—desire in the heart of everyone to act with benevolence rather than selfishness, and one fine instance of generosity can inspire dozens more. Thus, I established a stately court where all my friends showed respect to each other and cultivated courtesy until it bloomed into perfect harmony."

There's a reason Cyrus found students and admirers in his own time as well as the ages that followed. From Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin to Julius Caesar and Alexander (and yes, even Machiavelli) great men have read his inspiring example and put it to use in the pursuit of their own endeavors.

That isn't bad company.

Ryan Holiday is the author of Trust Me, I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator (Penguin/Portfolio).

A d v e r t i s e

H e r e:

(973) 471-4283

www.persian-heritage.com