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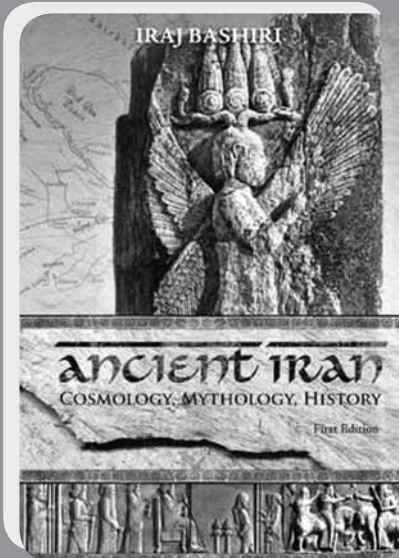
# ANCIENT IRAN: COSMOLOGY, MYTHOLOGY, HISTORY

By: Dr. Iraj Bashiri

COGNELLA PUBLISHERS, INC.

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*Ancient Iran: Cosmology, Mythology, History* presents Iran's pre-Islamic history within the context of both its complex cosmology and rich mythology. The book uses the concept of *farr* to show how authority, finding guidance in the cosmic realm, organized the lives of Iran's hero-saints in the mythic realm. It also discusses how historical monarchs organized their hierarchical societies according to the dictates of *Ahura Mazda*.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part examines cosmology, concentrating on *Ahura Mazda* and the *Ahuric* order that emanates from him. The next section addresses mythology and describes how the rulership of hero-saints promoted the *farr*, culminating in the unique creed of Zoroaster. The final section tells the history of pre-Islamic Iran. It begins with a study of life on the plateau, moves on to the stages of empire and concludes with the rule of the Parthians and Sassanids.

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**Iraj Bashiri** received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He is a Professor of History at the University of Minnesota, where he teaches Ancient Iran among other courses. His published works include:

*The Ishraqi Philosophy of Jalal al-Din Rumi*

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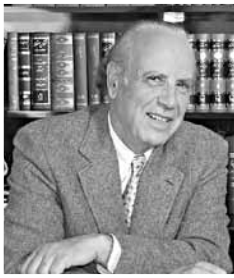
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## IMPORTANT NOTICE

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.



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I don't know if it is because I am getting older, but lately I have been unable to find idle time to stop and smell the roses. My days and nights are filled with my medical practice, publishing the magazine, editing articles, reviewing books, responding to emails and spending glorious moments with my family. In between I am constantly reading, listening and watching the news, keeping up with current events and world politics.

Of course, at the beginning of the summer I was focused, like my other Iranian friends, and the world, on the election in Iran. We were worried that the events of the June 2009 election would be repeated; innocent people would be killed or jailed simply for exercising their right to vote. Relief took over us as the election passed in a peaceful fashion. No one was jailed or killed. Mr. Rohani, has spent much of his life in National Security and Defense Ministry positions. His selection as president, out of all the candidates, was the best of the worse for the Iranian people.

It warmed my heart to see the people in Iran on the streets of Iran, celebrating the outcome and enjoying each other's friendship. I wondered if the happiness they displayed was truly because of the election results or because they used the opportunity just to share time with friends.

The economic situation and crisis in Iran, according to the Iranian Treasury and Central Bank, is grim, the inflation rate is thirty to forty percent and the bank reserves are empty. Their oil revenue in the last eight years far exceeds the total amount collected since the inception of their oil exploration. Is their financial position a result of the incapable leadership or as a result of their leader's greed and pilfering of the country's fortune for their own benefit? Whatever the answer, this is shameful, terribly shameful. I often wonder if the economic pressure placed on the people of Iran, by its government, is not a ploy to keep them occupied about food and shelter, leaving them little time to dwell on what they are missing, for example equal rights, religious, political and personal freedom, we in the west take for granted.

It seems, in Iran, that the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer, is this the way of the world? For Iran, it is a known fact that a big chunk of the country's fortune goes to foreign aid. Certainly no one would, question helping a neighbor in distress, but to arm those who wished or wish for the division of Iran seems unconscionable. Life, for Iranians in Iran, is spinning out of control and no one knows what to do. This weighs heavily on my mind, more and more with each passing day.

Besides the problems in Iran, I was saddened by the events in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. These sectarian divisions are worsening. Often as the news media suggested, I turned

away from the television to avoid seeing the brutality of these divisions. My eyes and heart could not take much more of seeing innocent children and people wrapped in white cloths ready for burial because of chemical warfare. I could not take much more of watching parents reach out to touch or kiss their children one last time before they said goodbye forever. You could tell by their faces that they were stunned by what happened and incapable to comprehend the aftermath of these atrocities. These images brought me back to Iran, when so many Iranians, during the Saddam Hussein regime. He with the help of the west, used chemical weapons on Iranians, leaving many dead or maimed for life.

Is this the destiny of the people in the Middle East? How could this happen to them when they have so much wealth and natural resource? How could this happen when they are educated? Do they deserve the misery that a war over religion has caused? Is it a result of the guilt and problems of the people or a result of the criminal minds of the rulers? I pray that the government and the people of Iran do not reduce themselves to the same end. I pray that despite differences with this new administration that they will remain a gentle and tolerable people.

I thought to myself, "is it not true that the leaders of these countries are born into the same nation and hold the same citizenship? Yet, once in power, however, they become so ruthless. Many people believe that the present leaders in Iran are not Iranians and this is the reason they are so brutal. I argue that this cannot be true! How could over hundreds of thousands of army, sepahi group and other officials not be from the same Iranian families?"

I pray the Iranian people do not become like those of the hostile nations that surround them. I pray that Iran's new leadership will recognize, that the people who elected them, do not expect them to now take advantage of them through their new positions. I pray this new leadership will gracefully leave, if the majority desires, without bloodshed and destruction. I pray that the new leadership in Iran does not become criminal.

And I pray that they will not be willing to kill and torture their fellow citizens simply because they disagree with the political views of the ruling class? We are in the 21st Century!!!

These events plagued me night and day. I finally told my wife that I needed a break from these gruesome events and decided to take a trip to New York. While walking down Fifth Avenue we decided to stop for coffee at this delightful coffee shop in Rockefeller Center. Sitting next to us was another couple very well groomed and dressed. After engaging in smiles and hearing my accent, when I ordered, the gentleman asked me where I was from. As always, loudly and proudly, I

stated I am Iranian American and where are you from I asked? He told me they were from Saudi Arabia. I was intrigued because I believe this was the first time, I was actually going to have a conversation with someone from Saudi Arabia.

We began to converse about the Middle East. He was an engineer who obtained his degree from the University of Oregon. In the 70's, as a student in the US, he remembered the excellent financial status Iranians experienced in Iran and abroad. In fact he knew a Saudi girl who had an Iranian roommate who drove a Mercedes. Unfortunately, once the Revolution started finances and life for Iranians in the states changed. This young Iranian student's life changed so drastically she did not think she could continue her studies. The Saudi roommate, however assured her not to worry about anything that she would help. But, the revolution, as I mentioned changed everything for Iranians in and out of Iran. The gentleman told me he also witnessed this change for the students in London and other parts of the west.

We were deep in conversation, when my wife brought up historical facts of the Middle East. She asked if he knew that parts of Iraq and Baghdad were part of the Persian Empire and that the Persian Gulf Emirates were also part of Persian soil. She also explained that the word Baghdad was a Persian word, "Bagh" meaning "God" and "dad" meaning "give." He then said that this was a problem he found indigenous of the Middle Eastern community. That we have a habit of living and concerning ourselves with the past, rather than living in the present and it is the present where we should live. He continued by stating, "When the Ottoman Empire disappeared it was the English that divided the Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Syria Iraq and Khordestan. No one had an interest in Saudi Arabia because it was just a desert, for example we Arabs claim Khuzestan, in the southern part of Iran, is an Arab section."

I think that we all decided to change the subject to avoid making this delightful conversation turn into an argument. He did tell us that to him Iran is the most beautiful and unique country of the Middle East. He had a friend who visited Tehran during the Shah and told him that it was just like London, Paris and NY. He ventured to say that if it were not for the turmoil in Iran, Iran would be the main tourist attraction in the Middle East. There would be no reason for the people of the Middle East to venture to the west for culture and enjoyment. Tehran had everything.

We all agreed that it is hard to understand what went wrong in the Middle East? For so many years all religions and its people, the Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, Sunni, Shiite and Bahia's peacefully lived and practiced their faith together. They even married each other. Now there is zero toleration, brutal killing and destruction without any remorse. I felt myself drifting back to the sadness of the summer events. Since the point of this trip was to try and forget reality I made a decision that it was time for us to continue our walk. We said our goodbyes and continued our journey to Madison Ave. At one of the corners we saw a crowd of young girls. All were on phones calling and texting one another. Suddenly they started running. My wife and I followed and they stopped on 57th street in front of the Saint Laurent store. We asked someone

what was going on and we were told that Harry Styles, from the band, One Direction, was in the store and everyone was waiting to get a glimpse of him when he left. Of course I heard of One Direction, I am a grandfather to many youngsters, but I had no idea who Harry Styles was. We were, however, fascinated by the kid's reaction so decided to wait and see what happened. The door of the store opened and out he walked to a screaming crowd. It took him a few seconds to enter his car which, was surrounded by 6 police cars. As he drove off the crowd ran after the car hoping to get one more glimpse.

There is nothing more uplifting than seeing young people experience the carefree fun of youth. I wondered if they were aware of the devastation that was happening in the rest of the world. How did they feel about it? Did they care? Did they think about what they could do to help? Were they grateful for what they had? Were they, like me, needing a break from horrific reality? I then remembered those young people in their shrouds for burial, who would never get to experience the joy of life. I thought of those still alive, who will continue to fall victim to the hands of criminal rulers simply because they have other ideas that conflict with the ruling class.

Why, I asked, does such a disparity exist? The gap of life experience between the youth in New York and in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt etc., is enormous and it is such a sad state of affairs. I could write hundreds of pages on this subject matter. At the moment the pages I am allowed me for this editorial are filled. I am left again to hope and pray that Iranians and the youth living in states in turmoil will once again be able to enjoy the true joy of life. I pray that this medieval lifestyle they are forced to live under changes.

This must happen soon! We live in a world where, google, Facebook, twitter etcetera allows one to instantaneously know what is happening thousands miles away. I pray that this will assist the entire world to soon live in a peaceful and fair twenty first century.

*Shahrokh Alavi*

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**TOUCHE**

*Hankare gerami va mehraban,*

I am lost in admiration for the very hard work you and your associates put into producing this publication, and especially for producing it consistently over the course of so many years. Lack of continuity is a particular feature of our history, our society and our psyche, and it has always been difficult to institutionalize any endeavor in Iran. Perhaps this is a feature of our tribal and nomadic past.

However, you have successfully overcome this detrimental trait through your remarkable perseverance.

Yekta and I do thank you very warmly for so kindly sending of your admirable publication, that also comprised the interview you carried out with me. You really have been extremely kind and endlessly helpful, for which we are both most grateful.

With my kindest personal regards,  
*Fereydoun Ala*

**ANOTHER PROUD MOMENT**

Dear Editor

Your work is highly focused on the significance of Persian culture and history and this is the only way to gain recognition from the folks who have not been familiar with our place in the history. Therefore, there are always some majority of the Iranians who appreciate your motivation and the result keeping the *Persian Heritage* on the move.

*Firouz*

**IT IS NOT EASY TO DO SUCH A GREAT JOB**

Dear Dr. Ahkami, ... it was so good to see you, and to hear all the stories of my childhood.

What a small world! I want to thank you for sending us the journals with Fereydoun's picture and interview. It looks great.

You are doing a great job, the articles are so interesting, BRAVO, it is not easy to do such a great job.

Thanks again, Wish you all the best  
*Yekta Ala*

**MAGNIFICENT**

Dear Editor:

Each edition of this magazine amazes me. It is so enlightening to read interviews of people who have contributed so much to the Persian/Iranian community.

While I enjoy it, my children think it's good but would be interested in reading more about the younger generation.

Is it possible for you to do interviews with the younger set who are also making contributions?

Thank you again for your hard work in making this magazine something to be proud of.

*Elan*

**KEVIN HOSSEINI**

Dear Editor:

I have never been more touched by the story of Kevin. It is something I will show to my class when they think that life is difficult.

So often we who have everything take things for granted. It is nice that you include stories about such young individuals who have overcome so many difficulties.

*AI*

**PLEASANTLY SURPRISED**

Dear Editor:

I was so pleasantly surprised when I opened up your magazine, for the first time, to see one of my favorite artists, Negar Ahkami.

I have been following her work for sometime. After reading the editorial page, I am assuming and hope assuming correctly that Negar is your daughter. You should be so proud to have this talent in your family.

*RMS*

**PROUD**

Dear Editor:

I thank you so much for forwarding this impressive accomplishment of Negar Ahkami. I hope to meet her one day in New York or New Jersey.

I hope *Payvand's* article about her artistic accomplishments brought more recognition to her. I wish her all the best.

*Esmail Ghorbani*

**UNDERSTANDING WORDS**

Dear Editor:

I enjoy reading *Persian Heritage* and am glad that over the years I have contributed essays to your journal.

As you know I am publishing the *Hafez* monthly in Iran and know well how difficult and costly it is to succeed in journal publishing.

I congratulate you again and hope to be able to send you a new note for publishing in the near future.

*Hassan Amin*

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**PERSIAN RUG RECORD  
\$33.7M AT AUCTION**



A Persian rug from the early 17th century has sold for \$33.7 million in New York City.

Sotheby's auction house says Wednesday's price for the Clark Sickle-Leaf Carpet was more than three times the previous auction record for a carpet.

The Sickle-Leaf Carpet sold to an anonymous telephone bidder. The seller was the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The carpet was part of a collection bequeathed to Corcoran in 1926 by William A. Clark, an industrialist and U.S. senator from Montana.

The previous record price for a carpet was \$9.6 million for a Persian carpet sold by Christie's in London in April 2010.

The Sickle-Leaf carpet measures 8 feet 9 inches by 6 feet 5 inches.

The price includes the auction house's premium.

**IRANIAN MATHEMATICIAN  
WINS SIMONS  
INVESTIGATORS AWARD**

TEHRAN (ISNA)- An Iranian physicist Maryam Mirzakhani won the 2013 Simons Investigators Award.

Mirzakhani is an Iranian professor at Stanford University, a theoretical physicist and computer sciences researcher.

Simons Investigator was established in 1994 by James and Marlin Simons with the aim of supporting scientific projects.

The prize seeks advancing research and studies in mathematics and fundamental sciences. It is also granted to a number of mathematicians, physicists and computer researchers who managed to gain remarkable achievements over recent years.

The prize includes \$100,000 cash

**Hand-woven Persian**

Carpets are one of the greatest manifestations of the Persian culture and art. Iran exports carpets to at least 70 countries in the world.

There is an estimated population of 1.2 million carpet weavers in Iran, producing carpets for domestic and international markets."

The chairman of Iran's National Carpet Center says hand-woven Iranian carpets constitute 35 percent of the global market for the commodity.

Mohammad Baqer Aqa-Alikhani said on Saturday that the value of exported hand-woven carpets across the world reached USD 1.35 billion last year, out of which the value of Iranian carpets amounted to USD 427 million.

Aqa-Alikhani noted that Iran's major rivals in the hand-woven carpet global market are India, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan and pointed out that the Islamic Republic can further boost its international market by advertising the Iranian carpet and sending commercial delegations overseas in an attempt to identify new markets.

Carpets are one of the greatest manifestations of the Persian culture and art.

Iran exports carpets to at least 70 countries in the world. Experts attribute the increasingly lucrative market for Persian carpets worldwide to its quality, color and design.

There is an estimated population of 1.2 million carpet weavers in Iran, producing carpets for domestic and international markets.



for five years. The Iranian researcher has worked on Teichmüller theory and dynamics of flow geometry on module space of Riemann surfaces.

**INTERNET IN IRAN**

By Mathew Hilburn

VOA, July 11, 2013: Iran has taken another step toward creating its own intranet by opening a national email service, according to state television.

Mohammad Hasan Nami, the Information and Communication Technology minister, said Iranians created the software for the email system and that each Iranian citizen will be assigned an email address.

Iran's postal service will manage the email program. Alex Vatanka, a scholar at the Washington-based Middle East Institute,

said Iran has looked to the Chinese Internet censorship model, but was unsure to what extent China assisted with the national email system. He called the email service a gimmick and said that he doubted any activist would use the state-run email system.

Iranians are regularly subjected to blockages of foreign email providers like Gmail or Yahoo and the government restricts access to websites it finds objectionable, such as those run by opposition groups.

Many tech savvy Iranians use virtual private networks to skirt these restrictions, a practice the government has declared illegal.

Iran has long said it wants to create its own national intranet, which officials say will be free of un-Islamic content and will be easier to monitor. An estimated 32 million of Iran's 75 million people are Internet users.

## IRANIAN SCIENTIST FINDS OUT NEW METHOD TO SUFFOCATE CANCER CELLS



TEHRAN (ISNA)- An Iranian researcher Ali Tavassoli along with his colleagues at the University of Southampton has discovered a method which suffocates cancer cells, taking a wide stride towards cancer treatment.

A new discovery could help in developing new treatments for cancer. They have discovered a new molecule that stops cancer cells from reacting and surviving in low-oxygen conditions.

The molecule attacks HIF1 that tumors use to adapt to low oxygen levels. The team used a method called synthetic biology to find the molecule.

Dr. Ali Tavassoli, a Cancer Research UK scientist whose team discovered and developed the compound at the University of Southampton, said: "We've found a way to target the steps that cancer cells take to survive and we hope that our research will one day lead to effective drugs that can stop cancers adapting to a low oxygen environment, stopping their growth. The next step is to further develop this molecule to create an effective treatment."

Dr. Julie Sharp, senior science information manager at Cancer Research UK, said, "Finding ways to disrupt the

tools that cancer cells use to adapt and grow when starved of oxygen has been a hot topic in cancer research, but finding drugs that do this effectively has proved elusive. For the first time our scientists have found a way to block a master switch controlling cells response to low levels of oxygen - an important step towards creating drugs that could halt cancer in its tracks."

The cancer cells require blood supply that gives them enough oxygen to survive. They grow quickly and as they grow, they surpass the oxygen and the nutrient supply. HIF-1 helps cancer cells cope in low oxygen condition; it acts as a master switch that turns on several genes, helping tumors survive, Science World Report wrote.

HIF-1 also leads to the formation of new blood vessels around tumors, which in turn increase the oxygen and nutrient levels around the tumor. The presence of oxygen and nutrients accelerates tumor growth. The researchers found the molecule that stopped HIF-1 from working by testing 3.2 million potential compounds, made by specially engineered bacteria. The study was published in the Journal of the American Chemical Society.

## THE BLIND CAN NOW SEE



Dr. Mark Humayun is a doctor of ophthalmology and holds a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering. He is also a professor of ophthalmology at the Keck School of Medicine and associate director of research at the Doheny Eye Institute at the University of Southern California. Over the past seventeen years he has been involved in a project which he hopes will allow the blind to see. The method coordinates high-tech materials, technology and advanced surgical methods to implant an intraocular retinal prosthesis, which essentially fills the role of the cells in the retina that have been ravaged by disease.

Humayun has implanted Model 1 versions of the device in six blind patients, sufferers of retinitis pigmentosa (RP), restoring some limited sight to them. The first implant was done over three years ago and it is still working.

While overcoming many technical and scientific challenges with his devices he continues to be driven by the possibility of giving sight to the blind. "The first time a patient saw something in the operating room was the happiest moment in my life," Humayun says. "There is nothing more satisfying to me in my professional career. "You can hear it from them even to this day," he adds, "when they come in for testing because they are laughing and giggling and really having fun with the device."

## Palaces of the Achaemenid Empire Found in Azarbaijan



Discovery of the great palace of the Achaemenid Empire – the largest outside Iran, said Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan with reference to the Russian magazine “Science and Life.” In the large hall, opposite the entrance to the palace, is the place throne – it was first discovered in 2006 by the rising in the central part of the building (the first Achaemenid throne was found in Pasargadae in the 1960s, by the British team of archaeologists led by D. Stronach). From the main entrance to the palace in the village “Garadzhamerli”, porticoes and columns (propylene) were found extending to the north and south exterior wall. During the excavations of the palace ceramic vessels, glass bowls and some ceramic sink for water (drainage) were found with portions of plumbing. Two inscriptions probably written in Aramaic one of

the Empire’s languages for communication at the time were also found. Archaeologists are now waiting for the finds of written sources – the cuneiform inscriptions on the pillars. Perhaps the signs are in three languages: Old Persian, Akkadian, Elamite. It is also possible that there may be archives of clay tablets.

Based on archaeological findings, the palace lasted about 200 years, and then was abandoned and stood empty for a long time. All the valuables were collected and removed from the palace in advance. (Power of the Achaemenid ceased to exist after the Battle of Gaugamela, which took place October 331 BC). After the departure of the Persians, some residents still resided in the halls of the palace, as evidenced by the findings of local production of table ware. Starting from the II century BC people broke away stones from the remains of the palace for the construction of their buildings.

Today, archaeologists know about the 6 Achaemenid palaces in the South Caucasus: 1. “Benjamin” is known for the palace in Armenia, 2. “TsaritepeGaradzhamerli” in Azerbaijan, 3. Another unnamed palace is located on the border of Azerbaijan and Georgia. 4. The most northern point of this path of plaaces in Georgia, 5. A palace near the village of “Samadlo” and 6. The other one in the village of “Humbatov”. The distance between the palaces is about 30 km. After the discovery of half of these findings, the archaeologist Ideal Narimanov Azerbaijani suggested that the chain relates to the palaces of Derbent, perhaps these were palaces of Darius I (the great) built to establish bases close to the Scythians and confront possible threats from the north.

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# Four Days in Iran in August: Heat, Hijab and Hope

What is it about Iran and Western women journalists?

Barbara Slavin

Voice of America, August 15, 2013



Foreign reporters who got visas to cover last week's inauguration of Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, were overwhelmingly female and included me as well as correspondents for NBC and CBS. Historically, women such as Christine Amanpour, Robin Wright and Elaine Sciolino have also reported extensively from Iran. Why did we choose Iran and why does Iran choose us?

For an American reporter of any gender, Iran is a terrific story because of its byzantine politics, regional importance, deep culture and 34-year-old estrangement from the United States. While the U.S. has been stingy in granting Iranian reporters permission to cover our country, Iran has always allowed some American journalists to come to Iran, in part to maintain communication with the United States in the absence of diplomatic ties.

Male chauvinism undoubtedly plays a part in the preference for women over visiting male reporters (with the exception

of a handful such as Scott Peterson of the Christian Science Monitor and, more recently, Steve Inskeep of National Public Radio. Thomas Erdbrink, a Dutch citizen, is based in Tehran for the New York Times, and Jason Rezaian, an Iranian-American, works in Iran for The Washington Post.)

Male officials may assume that women will not ask tough questions, even though that assumption has repeatedly been proven wrong by Iranian as well as foreign journalists. On the other hand, Iranian officials recognize that a handful of American women are truly committed to the story. Plus giving them visas means that officials get to see them struggle to comply with the requirements of Islamic dress.

Last week's visit was particularly trying in that regard. With temperatures soaring above 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.5 C), Iran's law that all women – foreign as well as local – have to cover their hair and most of their bodies was pure

torture. Iranian women security guards – who endure summers wearing full black veils known as chadors – kept a group of about a dozen foreign women journalists in a sweltering anteroom for half an hour before allowing entrance to parliament where Rouhani was about to take the oath of office on August 4. Sweat poured down our faces as the guards dallied about matching names with those on a printed roster. Since purses had to be checked, no one could re-apply makeup. Even NBC correspondent Ann Curry's lipstick was deemed too dangerous to take inside the parliament chamber!

## DRESS REQUIREMENTS EASED, SLIGHTLY

That said, Islamic dress requirements were the most lax I have experienced in nine trips to Iran since 1996. Instead of the once predominant colors – dark grey, dark brown, navy blue and of course, basic black – Islamic cover or hijab now comes in a profusion of bright shades and provocative styles. In addition, the dreaded morals police, who used to harass women whose scarves were too far down on the back of their heads or who showed too much ankle, have been off the streets since Rouhani's June 14 election.

The relaxation of the dress code contributed to a somewhat lighter atmosphere in Tehran. Indeed, the security presence that was so oppressive a year ago – when I attended a summit of the Non-aligned Movement in Tehran – was less obvious on both the streets and in the Evin hotel (the same name as Iran's notorious political prison) where foreign reporters were obliged to stay. Happily, we checked in and all of us were able to check out!

Average Iranians also were more willing to talk to a foreign reporter and less hesitant about expressing admiration for the United States. While several blamed the U.S. for sanctions -- which have halved Iranian oil revenues and reduced the value of the currency by two-thirds, driving up inflation -- others were nearly as friendly and welcoming as Iranians used to be toward Americans before the disputed presidential elections of 2009 and the Iranian government crackdown on the so-called Green Movement. One vegetable seller in the poor south Tehran neighborhood of Javadieh, Araz Habibzadeh Ardebil, was particularly effusive, insisting that he be quoted by name and saying "Send my regards to Americans" and "I love Americans."

**REFORMISTS RE-EMERGE**

Some Iranian academics and columnists affiliated with prior reformist presidents and movements also re-emerged like bears waking up from four, and in some cases, eight years of hibernation. Members of the pre-2005 political elite, they appeared to be relishing their return to the public sphere and said they were hopeful that Rouhani and a largely technocratic new cabinet he has appointed can ease Iran’s international isolation and economic downturn.

At the same time, few ordinary Iranians encountered during brief stops in north, central, south and east Tehran spoke enthusiastically about their new president. Many Tehranis said they had not bothered to vote. Those who did vote for Rouhani said they chose him only because he was the least bad of the six available candidates. As one young saleswoman in the central Tehran neighborhood of Haft-e Tir put it: “The last one [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] didn’t do anything for us and this one won’t either.”

This prevailing cynicism reflects the fact that ultimate power in the Islamic Republic of Iran lies with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and that Rouhani’s leash will be only as long as Khamenei allows. The man and woman-on-the-street comments also demonstrate the lack of popular support for the system as a whole and a sense of frustration that there is little ordinary Iranians can do to change it.

Rouhani, a veteran regime insider partly educated in Scotland, appears to

understand the depth of the challenges he faces and how difficult it will be to overcome both domestic and foreign skepticism about his ability to alleviate the multiple crises facing Iran. He has promised repeatedly since his election to be honest with the Iranian people and stressed that to succeed, he needs the support of all factions and groups – including those who boycotted the elections. For now, Khamenei is urging the political elite to cooperate with Rouhani. The new president must retain the Supreme Leader’s backing while simultaneously reaching out to the international community -- no easy feat.

**U.S.-IRAN SIDE-STEPPED**

During his first press conference as president on August 6, Rouhani side-stepped questions about whether he would authorize direct talks with the United States, promising only to respond “appropriately and constructively” to “meaningful, rational measures” by the Barack Obama administration. It was a mirror image of the White House’s own cautious outreach to Rouhani. Each side keeps saying that the ball is in the other’s court.

Still, it felt good to see the back of Ahmadinejad with his insatiable need for attention. Iranian reporters at the press conference seemed liberated by the change and drilled into Rouhani with pointed questions about the economy and human rights. An Iranian academic said he felt a huge burden off his shoulders with Ahmadinejad gone. At the same time, he gave grudging credit to Iran’s much maligned

former president for reducing the influence of the clergy over Iranian society, and trying – however ham-handedly – to promote the interests of ordinary people.

Overall, this trip to Iran confirmed that Iranian society is evolving beyond the ability of any one politician to control. One has only to experience Tehran’s manic traffic to know that Iranians do not like to be told what to do by anyone.

*Barbara Slavin is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s South Asia Center and a correspondent for Al-Monitor specializing in the Middle East. She is the author of a 2007 book, Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies: Iran, the US and the Twisted Path to Confrontation, and is a regular commentator on U.S. foreign policy and Iran on NPR, PBS, C-SPAN and the Voice of America.*

**Obama Can’t Miss This Chance to Engage New Iranian Leader**

This editorial was found in the Boston Globe

RE “ROWHANI’S Iran,” (Op-ed, June 21): Isn’t it curious that the word most used to describe the presidential election just held in Iran is “surprise”? The surprise is that all these so-called experts in the media, think tanks, and Congress, were surprised.

The problem is they do not know what they do not know. The experts, and even some in the US administration, for months tried to create doubts about the legitimacy of the election. The Iranian people, by turning out in large numbers to vote, proved them wrong. This shows an astounding lack of knowledge about what goes on in Iran because of the lack of relations.

President Obama, much to his credit, has tried to open a dialogue, but he has been blocked by intransigence from Iran and in the US by the neo-conservatives and the Israel-can-do-no-wrong crowd in the media, think tanks, and Congress.

Like President Nixon, who overcame a powerful pro-Taiwan lobby to create an opening to China, the president must redouble his efforts to overcome the same type of obstruction. This important moment must not be squandered by both sides, like others before it.

Sender: Fariborz S. Fatemi, (McLean, Va)



photo :Mahmood Hosseini

## Qajar Era Monument Converted Into Museum for Works of Kamalolmolk and Students

Report by Tehran Times; photo by Organization of Tehran Beautification

The Negarestan Garden, a Qajar era monument in Tehran, has been converted into a museum to display works of Qajar era painter Mohammad Qaffari (1847-1940), known as Kamalolmolk, and his students. All adaptations to the monument have been made by the Tehran Municipality, the Persian service of ISNA reported on Tuesday. Tehran Mayor Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf and a group of veteran painters and graphic designers including Aidin Aghdashlu, Parviz Kalantari, and Qobad Shiva attended the opening ceremony of the Museum of the Kamalolmolk School on Monday.

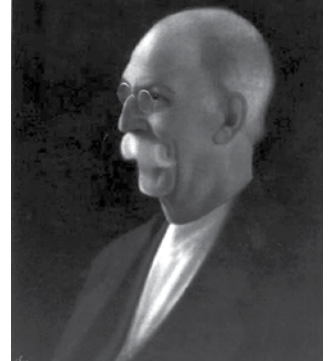
Tehran City Council member Ahmad Masjed-Jamei also among the participating guests made a short speech.

“Kamalolmolk has been inspired by Tehran in most of his works,” he said. “His paintings of Tehran’s foothills or Golestan Palace reflect the atmosphere and culture of Tehran in those years,” he added.

In his brief speech Kalantari said he regarded the master as one of the highlights of visual arts in the development of modernism in Iran. Aghdashlu said that Kamalolmolk is one of the major painters in the history of Iran’s visual arts.

“He is precious because of his works and the position he had.

We can hardly find a painter who possessed fame and good position while he was still alive, since most artists became famous years after their death,” he stated.



### ABOUT KAMALOLMOLK

Mohammad Ghaffari, better known as Kamal-ol-Molk, born in Kashan in 1847, to a family greatly attached to art, was undoubtedly one of the most eminent artists in Iran. Dubbed as the Michelangelo of Persia, his uncle, Mirza Abol Hassan Khan Ghaffari, known as Sanee-ol-Molk, a 19th century celebrated painter, was unrivalled in watercolor portraits. His father, Mirza Bozorg Ghaffari Kashani, was the founder of Iran’s painting school and a famous artist as well. His brother, Abu Torab Ghaffari, was also a distinguished painter of his time. Mohammad developed an interest in calligraphy and painting at a young age. In his childhood eagerness, he drew charcoal sketches on the walls of his room. Some of the sketches he drew in that very house may amazingly, still be visible.

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On June 22nd, 1941, Hitler attacked and invaded the Soviet Union. Resistance was poor and the blitzkrieg was devastatingly effective.

Although Anthony Eden had already twice warned Ivan Maisky the Soviet Ambassador in London, of Axis intentions, and even proposed a delegation to Moscow in order to estimate Russian needs at least 20 days before Hitler's invasion, this was dismissed as rumour. Pathological suspicion of Britain was paramount in Stalin's mind, and remained so until Roosevelt's death in 1945.

Churchill and Eden, witnessing the rapid advance of German forces, feared for their interests in Persian oil and India. They reasoned that support for Russia would diminish pressure on Europe; would save Britain, and would be the likeliest cause for a German defeat. The Murmansk 'run' was too hazardous due to submarines and the forbidding ice-packs for 6 months of the year. The best conduit for conveying war materiel to the beleaguered Russians was therefore via the Persian Gulf, using Reza Shah's railway and new roads to the Caspian, where armament could be shipped to Volga ports and Stalingrad.

Although Iran had already twice declared her neutrality (Sept. 4th, 1939, and June 6th, 1941), a convenient 'Casus Belli' was constituted by the much-exaggerated 'Fifth Column' in Iran, and Reza Shah's German proclivities, which were by the way, shared by most of the Iranian ruling class. After all, Iran had suffered decades of bullying by both the bear and the bull-dog (the 1907 Russo-British division of the country into zones of influence, as well as the more recent Curzon inspired 1919 proposals which would have turned Iran into a British protectorate), and now an alternative, highly successful potential saviour was looming from the West. In fact, while the Russians claimed there were 7,000 Germans working in Iran at the time, a more realistic, unbiased estimate by a US observer put the figure at no more than 7 to 900.

Incidentally, while in 1932, only 8% of trade was from Germany, by 1939, this portion had grown to 45%. Indeed, the north-south railway created by Reza Shah (paid for from taxes on sugar and tea), and built by Kampsax, was largely German – the rolling stock, training bursaries, cadre of engineers were all German.

Churchill accordingly put his proposals to Franklin Roosevelt who, as a devoted Wilsonian, shrank from the invasion of a neutral country. The more pragmatic Churchill (Inter arma silent leges) arguing that only the USA could aid Russia and relieve Europe, effectively persuaded FDR to participate, and the two leaders met in August 1941, on a naval ship in mid-Atlantic to discuss future strategy.

At this historic meeting, the Atlantic Treaty was agreed, and became the main pillar of new international relations; condemning the use of force and supporting the independence and security of all nations, effectively becoming the basis for the future UN Charter.

Joint notes from the British and Russians were delivered to the Iranian Prime Minister Ali Mansour in both July and August, demanding the internment and expulsion of all German citizens. Mansour's vague and dismissive responses were not deemed to

be satisfactory.

On August 25th, the Allies invaded Iran: 40,000 Soviet troops from the north (which grew to 60,000 by 1946), and 19,000 British troops from the south. Tehran was occupied on September 17th, 1941, and Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in favour of the Crown Prince, Mohammad Reza.

Lend-Lease supplies to the hard-pressed Soviets by road and through Reza Shah's beloved railway line began immediately, and this 'Bridge of Victory', as it came to be known, delivered altogether 7,000,000 tonnes of armaments, comprising 750 tanks; 4,800 planes; and 80,000 trucks to the USSR over the ensuing 4.5 years.

It was through the insistence of Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, his Secretary of State, that a Tripartite Agreement was drawn up and signed on January 29th, 1942 – a legal 'fig-leaf' upon which to base the occupation of a neutral country, which guaranteed preservation of the territorial integrity and independence, as well as the post-war evacuation of Iran. Stalin was reluctant to subscribe to this agreement, but in his hour of need, he had little choice but to comply.

The Iranian government at this point, was in total disarray: impotent both economically and politically; unable to relieve the inflation and famine which prevailed, or to maintain order among its rebellious tribes. My class at the Community School was flooded with war refugees, many of them gifted musicians and artists, from Eastern European stettls, mostly Jews of Polish or Czechoslovakian origin, bringing with them the usual afflictions of war: crowding, malnutrition and misery, together with louse-borne typhus, which reached epidemic proportions, and killed 3 of my school-mates. There was an acute shortage of wheat as the Russians were requisitioning grain, and supplies were being diverted to refugees; hoarding and black marketeering were

rife. US humanitarian efforts to alleviate these shortages were effectively blocked, when Britain insisted that all materiel must be channelled through the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation (UKCC), and that Iranians were much given to exaggeration. I clearly remember seeing an example of the coarse, grey bread on sale in bakeries, which contained bits of tarred sacking, and even the remains of a cockroach!

The Communist Party had been outlawed by the Majles in 1937, but on January 30, 1942, immediately after the Tripartite Agreement was signed, the former communist leaders, who had been languishing in prison for 4 years, were released, and formed the Tudeh Party, headed by Mir Jaafar Pishevari (a Soviet-trained operative, known by a variety of pseudonyms – Seyed Jaafar, Javadzadeh or Soltanzadeh), which was soon to become the most disciplined and effective political force in the country, and the agent for the acquisitive post-war policies of the USSR.

The mortal Russian winter, over-extended German supply lines, and the heroic Soviet defence of Stalingrad, broke the Wehrmacht, and with the end of Nazi aggression in sight, the Tehran Conference was organised on November 28th, 1943, bringing Marshal Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt together to discuss the future.

I recall my father telling us upon returning home one evening

**THE AZARBAIJAN CRISIS  
OF 1945 – 1946**  
**Part One**  
**FEREYDOUN ALA**

at the time, that he had been summoned to see Mr. Churchill at the British Embassy that morning, where the great man had received him in his bath without a trace of embarrassment – round and pink like a baby, smoking his cigar, with a glass of brandy at his elbow!

It was Patrick Hurley, among FDR's most trusted if eccentric aides (who came to Tehran wearing a cowboy 'ten-gallon' hat), who proposed that Iran declared war upon the Axis Powers on December 9th, 1943, and signed on as a member of the new-found United Nations Organisation. The President overtly disparaged traditional Russian and British behaviour towards Iran in the past, and urged the implementation of the principles of the Atlantic Charter with support for Iran after the war.

The Tehran Conference Declaration (most reluctantly signed by Stalin, who was promised a free hand in the Baltic States and Eastern Poland in exchange), recognised Iran's contribution to the war effort, guaranteed her independence and territorial integrity, and made firm commitments to the evacuation of foreign troops, together with financial assistance at the end of hostilities.

By May, 1944, the Normandy landings had been successful; the Soviets were advancing west, and the war's end was in sight, stimulating the aspirations of Shell, Standard Oil and Sinclair who sent their emissaries to bid for concessions in the autumn. Not unexpectedly, the Tudeh Party protested vociferously.

The USSR Central Asian Military Engineering Corps had already covertly investigated potential oil reserves in northern and eastern Iran in 1942, and their report went to Commissar Vladimir Dekanozov and Lavrenti Beria (Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars). It was he who passed the survey to Joseph Stalin in 1944, urgently proposing that as a great power, the USSR had every right to assert its economic interest in possessing oil fields in the Middle East, particularly since Britain and the USA were secretly seeking to further their own interests. Accordingly, a high-level delegation headed by Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs Sergei Kavtaradze, arrived in Tehran in October '44, demanding oil concessions in five northern provinces of Iran. Despite much bluster and bullying by Kavtaradze, Prime Minister Sa'ed, refused, deferring all such discussions to the war's end.

Soon after, in December, 1944, Parliamentary Deputy Dr. Mossadegh proposed a law forbidding Prime Ministers and members of their cabinet from negotiating commercial concessions of any kind, without express Majles approval. The law was almost unanimously adopted by Deputies, and proved to be highly significant in the months to come, as we shall see.

After several weeks of fruitless discussions, Kavtaradze left Iran in disgust, and empty-handed, and storms of anti-Iranian propaganda from the Soviet press and the Tudeh Party followed.

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Iran was desperate for some discussion of the evacuation of occupying forces to be on the agenda, and most particularly, the cessation of Soviet

interference and aggression in her north-western provinces, but Molotov succeeded in preventing any mention of Iran. Roosevelt was very sick by this time, and he was reluctant to initiate any discussions which might undermine his efforts to persuade Stalin to support the Dumbarton Oaks Conference resolutions for establishing the United Nations' Charter; the right of veto, the voting system, free elections in Eastern Europe, etc...Indeed, he died not long after on April 12th, and was succeeded by Vice-President Harry Truman.

Only a few months after Germany's unconditional surrender in May, at the Potsdam Conference (July 17th), the hopes of Iran were frustrated yet again. Harry Truman and 'Jimmy' Byrnes his Secretary of State were new and inexperienced, as were Atlee and Bevin, who replaced Churchill and Eden – they were certainly no match for the Soviet leader. Consequently, Stalin got his way in dividing the world as he desired at both these meetings, and their only success was in obtaining Soviet agreement to the meeting of Foreign Ministers in April after much insistence, to finalize the UN Charter and define the powers of the Security Council in San Francisco.

The USSR was a great power now, and Joseph Stalin was flushed with his outstanding success in breaking the back of German aggression, and obtaining most of the post-war concessions he wanted from the United States and Britain at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, which even the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki early in August, 1945, could not dampen.

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) was declared by Ja'afar Pishavari, and a month later Qazi-Mohammad, head of the Kurdish 'Kumeleh' Party also announced the formation of an autonomous Kurdish Republic.

All protests by the government in Tehran, and requests that troops be allowed to restore order, were ignored by the Soviets.

By January, 1946, Prime Minister Ebrahim Hakimi had resigned, but not before deciding that unilateral discussions with the Soviet authorities would lead nowhere, and that Iranian complaints had no hope of success unless they were internationalised. He had therefore instructed Iran's Ambassador in London, Hassan Taqizadeh to raise the government's protest at the forthcoming first session on January 10th, 1946, of the fledgling United Nations General Assembly, the "...arbitrator of complaints, equally accessible to all nations, large and small, powerful and weak...". This was the first complaint of one UN member against another, and of a weak nation against a victorious super-power, which was to be one of the permanent members of the Security Council, with the right of veto.

Taqizadeh's presentation was measured, and highly documented, referring to a 'situation', rather than a grievance, and putting the case that Soviet armed forces were fostering secessionist elements, disrupting life, brow-beating Iranian authorities,



Tehran Conference, 1943



and generally interfering with Iran's sovereignty, in contravention of the Tripartite Agreement and Article 14 of the UN Charter, and that this situation constituted a threat to world peace. Andrei Vyshinsky gave an indignant, bad-tempered and ill-considered rebuttal, suggesting the Azari crisis had nothing to do with their armed forces, and merely reflected popular dissatisfaction with the poor governance of a reactionary Iranian government and, of course 'foreign' influence. Indeed, he even invoked the 1921 Concordat, suggesting that admitting Iranian forces to Azarbaijan might not only pose a threat to Soviet interests in Baku, they might also cause further disorder and bloodshed in the province, necessitating the despatch of further Soviet troops. In the event, despite Vyshinsky's every effort to prevent Iran's complaint from being tabled, discussed or included in the Agenda, the Assembly voted to formally adopt the case – a highly significant achievement. It also encouraged both parties to resolve their differences through negotiation, and reserved the right to be informed of the state of these negotiations at any time. Vyshinsky's clumsy and often absurd claims alienated other member nations and exposed the acquisitive and less endearing aspects of 'Uncle Joe' to the world.

Stalin felt confident that Iran's grievance against the Soviet Union could be presented to the world as a minor disagreement between neighbours, which would easily be resolved through bilateral negotiation. He accordingly instructed Vyshinsky and Gromyko in the United States, that they must prevent Iran's complaint from being included in the UN Security Council Agenda at all costs. The Iranian delegate must under no circumstances be allowed to address the sessions of the Security Council, and the Soviet-supported secessionist movements in Azarbaijan and Kordestan were to be presented as an entirely internal Iranian matter, merely reflecting the legitimate aspirations of the 'down-trodden' peoples of these provinces, for freedom and autonomy. There was some justification for this point, which made the governing elite in Tehran particularly vulnerable to Soviet propaganda among its rural populations.

So soon after the end of war, the Kremlin had already succeeded in building a security buffer in Central Europe and the Far East- Poland had become a Soviet satellite state with hardly a murmur of protest from Harry Truman, and it was now intent upon changing its focus towards the Black Sea area, the Dardanelles and eastern Turkey. Hegemony in this region would turn the USSR into a Mediterranean power – one of the cherished dreams of Peter the Great.

*to be continued*

## THE PHOENIX

By Iraj Fatemi

Interpretive Translation by Cyrus S. Behroozi

*One day, as the Phoenix,  
We shall rise from our ashes;  
We shall rise with renewed hope,  
To be free from oppression.*


*As we rise, we salute the arriving chariot,  
Carried on our people's shoulder,  
Like a meteor brightening the night,  
Bringing the joy of spring,  
To our desolate homeland.*

*The chariot arrives!  
Symbolizing our liberation,  
And the liberation of our homeland,  
With all its past glory and grandeur,  
And its future promises.*

*We ride the chariot,  
Fearless of the night's darkness,  
Delivering the torch of liberty,  
To diminish the darkness.*

*We see the gate of the morning,  
Brightened by spears of sunlight,  
In the meadow of freedom,  
Dancing evergreens all around;  
We caress and smell every flower,  
And hear the song of liberty.*

*As the Phoenix, one day,  
We shall rise from our ashes,  
With the hope for liberty,  
If not today, someday for sure!*



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## Translation Discrepancy

Mahvash Amir-Mokri

Dear Editor:

This article is related to the translation of one of Sa'di Shirazi's poems by Mr. Davood Rahni, which appeared in *Persian Heritage Magazine*, Vol. 18, No. 69, spring 2013. With all due respect, I think translation as well as its transliteration needs a thorough revision for the following reasons:

Generally, for translation and transliteration, the first step is to keep in mind the following principles:

1. The translator must be well aware of the context and the meaning of the piece in question for translating, therefore he/she should read well and understand the meaning of the article thoroughly, especially if it is a literary work and belongs to famous literary figures, whether old or contemporary.

2. In case of using transliteration, the person must try to learn about the idea of transliteration and then transliterate words from the original language to the language in question for transliteration.

3. The translator must be aware of the culture, habits and the use of various things and means for different purposes in the lives of the people who created the work in question to be translated as well as the people who are the native readers of the work.

By considering these principles, let us examine the translated piece of Sa'di's poem by Mr. Davood Rahni.

It seems that Mr. Rahni has no idea what Sa'di was trying to say and what meaning he was conveying. In his translation, he thinks that Sa'di was offered some unidentified red flower, and not in his actual time, but in a time that is imaginary. His translation 'Once upon a time' is a phrase used in 'fairy tale' stories, because time in such stories is obscure, while Sa'di's 'roozi,' refers to one of the days in his own life. And '... crimson flower' sounds like an unidentified red flower, while it is meant to be some mud-like substance.

I would like to reiterate the whole poem, before analyzing the details of the translation.

In his poem, Sa'di tries to show the influence of association with people of higher qualities in terms of manner and morality. So he metaphorically reflects on things and chooses one of the most base but useful things so-called 'gaell-ae sar-shoor' which Iranian people, men and women used as cream-rinse after washing their hair with soap in bathhouses. It is special mud-like substance, which is treated with rose petals by leaving it with rose petals in a container to make it aromatic and pleasant.

So, the story that Sa'di composed in the form of one of his poems is that, one day in a bathhouse, (certainly they

were all men) a friend gives him some of that substance and its aroma enchanted him. Sa'di wrote, that he asked what the substance was made of, was it made from musk or 'Abear' (a combination of fragrances taken from musk, rose water, sandal, and saffron). The substance answered that, "I was some plain mud but was associated with roses and such is the influence of that association to give me this high quality. Otherwise I would have been the mud from the same mire that I originally came from."

This is all Sa'di said. Now for Mr. Rahni's translation:

It was not 'once upon a time' as Mr. Rahni said; it was 'Roozi.' It was not a trophy, grant or prize to be bestowed; it was only a regular substance for its customary use in a bathhouse for everybody. It was not a most fragrant crimson flower; it was only a mud-like substance or 'gaell-ae sar-shoor'; and it was not a Persian garden but a bathhouse.

By the way, in Persian literature **Gol** always refers to the rose flower and the word flower which was translated into the word 'gol' as a common name and comes before the special name of each flower is rather new and came about in modern education when classification of animals and plants became necessary and in horticulture science the family, gender and species of a plant were designated.

Mr. Rahni erroneously read 'gol' meaning rose flower in Persian, instead of reading 'gaell' which is mud, and in his transliteration also wrote 'Gol.' His misunderstanding caused him to make more mistakes to the point that he had to make up the rest of the poem. So he continues translating:

In Mr. Rahni's version, Bathhouse becomes Persian garden; A casual friend in the bathhouse, becomes a plutonic [platonic] companion, presumably a woman; 'Gaell-ae Sar-Shoor' becomes a woman that Mr. Rahni mentions with the pronouns her and she; the musk that we can touch and own, becomes paradise musk and **Abir** becomes jasmine, which is a shrub with little white fragrant flowers and totally different from Abir; Then the woman humbly whispers that once she was also a negligible mud-pie in the universe but hang out [hung out] with a divine flower for awhile... and the rest is as ridiculous as what was presented such as, "it's that flower's perfect state of being which has eternally elevated my stature."

Maybe Mr. Rahni has some thoughts about the creation of humans from mud that he wants to speak about. Certainly his readers will honor his thoughts but please, Mr. Rahni, do not incorporate your own thoughts in the literary works of the great poet and social thinker Sa'di Shirazi.

In general it is good to consider this word of wisdom, that if you are not sure of the accuracy of what you understand of a famous work, please keep it to yourself and do not try to publicize it, because a wrong understanding will be limited to only one person if it is kept private and damage to the literature of a nation can be easily prevented but once you publicize it among many people, they will learn a wrong thing which is quite offensive to the nation that owns that literary heritage.

In transliteration, the transliterated words should sound

exactly like the same words in the original language. Sa'di in Persian is not Sa'adi. There is one S with a vowel that sounds like the letter a in Ann. Then, another sound of a subtle a which is like an abrupt pause of the continuation of the first A. This letter does not exist in the English language and scholars chose to show it with an accent (´). Then there is the sound of the consonant 'd' and finally the vowel 'i'. I wonder why the other 'A' before 'd' came in Mr. Rahni's transliteration?

humblywhispers In the meantime it is good to remember that most of the time, an 'e' after the letter 'g' followed by a letter 'L' will make the letter 'g' sound like the letter 'j.'

I am disappointed to see the translation of the other poem by Sa'di, which apparently Mr. Rahni has seen and read on the arch of the entrance at the UN Headquarters in Geneva, as follows:

Humans are all integral members of one frame,  
 Since all, at first, from the same one eternal essence came.  
 When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,  
 The other members lose their desired rest.  
 If thou feel'st not for other's misery,  
 A human, therefore, is no name for thee.

Here is the transliteration of the poem in Persian to the English transcription:

*"Bani Adam a'zayeh yek paykarand,  
 'Keh dar.Aufarinesh zeh yek goharand,  
 'Cho ozvi bae-Dard Auvarad Roozegar,  
 'Degar ozv-ha ra namaunad Gharaur,  
 'Toe k'az mehnat-ae digaran bighammi  
 'Nashayad keh naumat nehand audami.*

I would like to point to the fact that it seems the translator misunderstood the poem in Persian, which is reflected in his/her translation of the poem. Examples are as follows:

It is not frame, it is body. As frame refers to the bone structure of the body, and Sa'di wrote Paykar, meaning the body. Member is not necessarily a limb, eyes, ears and any organ of the body are all included and pain from any of them will affect the well-being of the body. Since the word "ozv" in the Persian language encompasses all parts of the body and in English organs and members are used for different parts of the body, the translation becomes hard, incomplete and senseless. Maybe the best choice would be the use of parts of the body. Also, it looks awkward to write four lines in contemporary style and the last two lines in archaic type. Sa'di wrote all his lines in modern Persian style. The following translation of the poem is closer to the original in Persian that Sa'di had composed.

"Humans are integral parts of the same body,  
 As in creation all were made from the same gem'  
 'Whenever fate brings pain to any of the parts  
 The rest of the parts cannot remain calm,  
 'If you do not have feeling for others misery  
 You should not be called a human being."

## Iran Condemns Brutal Killing of Egyptian People in Cairo

Source: Press TV



Iranian Foreign Ministry has condemned the deadly crackdown on the Egyptian people, which has reportedly led to around 2,200 deaths in the capital, Cairo.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Iranian ministry decried brutal crackdown on Egyptian protesters and condemned "massacre of people" while expressing "deep concern over the dire consequences" of the ongoing unrest in Egypt.

It warned against the "grave and dangerous consequences of this trend [in Egypt] in the light of the crises prevailing in the region" and called for an "immediate end" to the ongoing violence.

"Undoubtedly, the ongoing trend of upheavals in Egypt strengthens the possibility of civil war in this large Islamic country," said the statement, adding that continuation of the turmoil would be to the detriment of the "civilized and history-making people" of Egypt.

According to the statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry also encouraged Egypt's political, scientific and religious elites as well as different parties in the country to adopt a peaceful approach such as "national dialogue and a democratic procedure" to deal with the deadly unrest.

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood says at least 2,200 people have been killed and 10,000 others injured during fierce clashes with police forces in the capital.

Egypt's riot police reportedly moved in on two large protest camps erected by supporters of the ousted president, Mohamed Morsi, in Cairo, launching a deadly operation. The camps are considered the main flashpoints in the confrontation between the Egyptian military and pro-Morsi protesters.

Tension has intensified in Egypt since July 3 when the Egyptian army removed Morsi from office. The army also suspended the constitution and dissolved the parliament.

Hundreds of protesters, mostly Morsi's supporters, have been killed or wounded during the unrelenting violence that erupted since the removal of Morsi.

## The Challenge of Racism

AMIL IMANI



Racism is one of a number of “isms” such as egotism, sexism, classism, ethnicism, tribalism, religionism, and so forth that reflect corruption of potentially good human dispositions. Environmental influences such as the person’s upbringing, education in the broadest sense of the term, and personal experiences combine to mold these potentialities within each one of us either as positive attributes or negative traits.

Egotism, for instance, is the flip side of reasonable and justifiable self-confidence. While the former is a negative quality, the latter is a virtue.

Right at the start, it is important to realize that both terms “race” and “racism” are social designations with no factual bases. Genetically, humanity is from one common gene pool. Science has established that genetic variation within even the most distinctly homogenous isolated “race” is greater than that found across different races.

Hence, there is only one race of humanity, irrespective of differences in certain physical features that may dominate in some populations while minimally present or absent in others.

Physical features associated with different “races,” such as skin color, the ratio of trunk to extremities, type of hair, and the shape of the nose are results of climatic adaptations.

Looking objectively at racism, involving attribution of some negative qualities to a population of humans solely on the basis of a selective physical feature, such as skin color, is simply another form of categorizing; albeit, a repugnant one.

When dealing with any subject, we first need to establish that it does exist. Racism indeed exists and it is pandemic.

Racism based on skin

color is most virulent and common because, in part, skin color provides an easy and quick way of classifying people. Classifying and attributing special characteristics to a population is a universal human practice. Young children, for instance, are classed and assigned certain common characteristics. Seniors, men in general, women as a whole, for instance, are assigned traits that characterize them as groups.

Psychologically, the practice of grouping people and ascribing its members with certain attributes is a form of generalization. Generalization, however, may have its flaws but it is also of great utilitarian value in numerous instances. By applying generalization, the person avoids the tedious and practically impossible task of treating each person individually.

Without the tool of generalization, humanity would be languishing in its pre stone-age state of development. It is the faculty of generalization, also present in other species that obviates the need for identifying everything on

a case-to-case basis. Hence, dogs are just dogs. In spite of their incredible variety of size and form, they are all grouped as dogs. One can approach them and tickle them behind the ears. No need to re-discover this information with every dog. Wolves are wolves. They are not dogs, although they may look like some dogs. One does well to avoid them and not attempt to tickle them behind the ears.

Racism is the misuse of generalization that some human groups employ to their advantage, even with the full knowledge of its unjust and evil nature.

Bi-directional racism is common among black and white people. Black and white people in the United States may feel antipathy toward one another, but may tend to express it in different ways.

This skin color based antipathy is seen among people who are greatly homogenous and vary only slightly in their skin color. Egyptians who have somewhat lighter skin colors, for instance, treat people of darker skin colors, although both are members

of the same faith, with cruel discrimination.

Respect for the inherent dignity and well-being of each member of the human family is the foundation of freedom, human justice and peace in the world. This important principle is enshrined in the United Nations Charter (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

What makes people different is not their biology, but the software that directs their behavior. There is ample proof to support the above assertion. A case in point is the present menace posed by the people whose life is programmed by the software of Islam: an ideology anathema to the universal declaration of human rights.

The results are self-evident. Hate, superstition, violence, and a raft of other inhuman beliefs drive these religious fascists. These captive followers of the primitive Islamic Charter are both the perpetrators and the victims of much suffering. The result is backward Islamic societies that are intent on dragging the rest of the world into the same sorry state.

It is most disconcerting that as non-Muslim world takes ever-hesitant small steps at stamping out racism, Islam has engraved institutionalized racism in its scripture with the full adherence to its racist and misogynistic teachings.

In short, the practice of generalization that takes the form of racism does a great deal more harm to mankind than the benefits that its heuristic use provides. Combating racism is critically important for creating a just human society where all people live as equal without prejudice of arbitrary stigmatization.

During my decades of living in the United States, I have not personally experienced blatant racism. Perhaps I have been spared this abhorrent treatment because I do not

physically appear as a member of the populations generally subjected to this prejudice.

Racism, in all its forms, is evil and it is not confined to the color of people's skin. We do well not to forget the atrocities of the Nazis against the Jewish "race," and many more ethnic cleansings of various kinds in humanity's long ago and not too long ago history.

A major challenge in the United States is the perceived racism toward African Americans. There is, however, some evidence that racism is in decline in the United States. Nonetheless, the practice of racism is indeed a matter of shame in any nation. We need, all of us together, to exert extra effort to stamp it out for the good of all.

Realistically speaking, elimination of all the "isms" is a huge task before humanity. It seems as if, being an "ism" of one type or another is the default mode of our nature.

We need to realize that we humans are able to reflect on the past, learn from it and even predict the future, a gift other species do not have. We are minimally programmed by nature to behave rigidly as prescribed by our genetic endowment.

We humans enjoy a tremendous degree of freedom of choice. Misapplying our choices, both individually and collectively, put us in great peril. Humanity's good achievements and progress are the results of making sensible choices as well as abandoning our mal-adaptive modes of thinking and practices.

Racism remains an intractable vestige of old humanity that is inflicting great harm on all within the ever-shrinking global village that brings all its inhabitants into close daily contact.

Actively fighting the pre-potent disposition of racism is among the ongoing and unfinished business of mankind.

*"Of eternal secrets, neither you know nor I"*

Omar Khayyam

## The Secrets of Life

Nasser M Tejaratchi, M.D

In 1953, when James Watson and his associates discovered the structure of genes to be in the form of a "double helix," they announced that they "have discovered the secrets of Life". While this discovery was a great step in understanding the chemistry of life, we know that it did not unravel the mystery of life.

In recent decades, from time to time, some researchers report that they have created a "living organism". Accordingly, they usually attach some DNA molecules together which they have obtained from viruses, forming a gene or a few genes that temporarily may have shown traces of living functions but, so far, none of these "creatures" has shown sustainable functions. Some attempts have been made to revive the genes from dead tissues or remnants of dead animals, which have been completely unsuccessful.

In spite of some commercial films made on this basis – such as "Jurassic Park" – when a creature dies, by no means can it be revived. The living tissue is "a system of electron transfer" in a state of polarization that, when it dies, it no longer can be revived. In spite of remarkable advancement in biochemistry and physiology, the formation and functions of such sophisticated tissues and organs in the body remain unexplained. For example, scientists still don't know how heartbeats originate in a specific region in the heart called "sinus".

Since the 19th century, after the cells could be visualized with a microscope, scientists knew that the core of life is in the nucleus of the cells. Later on, it was discovered that before the cells divide, the nucleus undergoes a peculiar division. First it forms different segments called chromosomes, which are made of a large group of genes. The genes are chains of attached molecules of DNA. There are four DNA molecules referred to by the initial letter of their chemical name ACGT ("A" for Adenine, "T" for Thymine, "C" for

Cytosine, and "G" for Guanine). These four molecules – The Alphabet of Life – are similar, yet distinct from each other. They are large and complex. The long stretches of two parallel and attached RNA (ribonucleic acid) form DNA chains which are in the form of a "double helix". The whole mass of DNA or genes is called "genome," which form the nucleus of cells. The genes - or DNA chains - manufacture the protein and all vital elements, hormones, humoral factors, etc. They determine the formation of all tissues, organs, and the shape of the body itself. They also repair themselves. Therefore, in the world of existence, DNA is the original intelligence.

The result or purpose (if any) of this extremely complex phenomenon called "life" is that the matter develops intelligence and becomes aware of its existence and its surroundings.

The information gathered about life is very extensive and the above explanation was just a brief summary. Some scientists say that life is "a complex crystallization of matter".

The philosophical conclusion we can get from this is as follows: Of all the infinite universe, life has developed in a relatively small fraction, like in the planet earth; so we, the human beings, must appreciate that we have had a touch of this intelligence in the vast domain of a predominantly dead universe.

REVIEWS

**FIRE BENEATH THE ASHES  
THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN:  
A HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE 1829-1947**

**Dr. Hooshang Guilak**

Xlibris Corporation 2011

We can research, we can read, we can analyze but the results will never be changed. We can only hope that through the efforts of authors such as Dr. Guilak, that we can learn from our mistakes and our successes. Unfortunately this is rarely the outcome and history will repeat itself again and again.

Having said that, however, I, like most, like to go into a debate properly educated on the matter to be discussed. This book is an absolute non-bias and complete education on Iran/ US/ British relations. After reading it, as I surmised, democracy, as it is or was in the United States, is not the democracy the west or other Middle Eastern countries desired for Iran. It was interesting to read that the final word is not out on whether the Truman administration was in fact truly supportive of Iran, during a time when, Iran and new democracy type nation needed financial and military support. The lack thereof seems to have given the clergy a reason to access power and sadly the rest is history. Sadder was the success of the British administration to convince the United States under Eisenhower, that only a coup d'état would bring stability to Iran. Certainly after reading this book, while coup's can sometimes be beneficial, in the case of Iran, in fueled its downward spiral. Thus with the fall of Mossadegh, believed to be from a lack of support and broken promises by the US, Iran's history changed, and for some this change was a lifetime.

Dr. Guilak's description of the day of the coup, the return of Khomeini and the events that followed are from a different perspective. It is not filled with political bias but rather from an educated individual, who is not versed into what to say, but speaks with honesty, supported by facts he witnessed. The book is an education and a far better history book for our schools than what we now use for Western Civilization. The book begins in 1829 with the arrival of two American missionaries to Iran and ends in 1947, a period when Iran, through its support under the Truman administration, was capable of maintaining "territorial integrity." It is a book that while I kept reading it I wished the hands of time were reversed. It is with great hope that Dr. Guilak will continue with a new book on the period of US and Iranian relations from 1947 through the present.

**THE WIND  
KAYHAN KALHOR: KAMANCHEH  
ERDAL ERZINCAN: BAGLAMA**

The album title, from the folk song of the same name-by the great baglama player Muhlis Akarsu (1948-1993), translates as "How unseemly it is to follow anyone slavishly" – a motto of some pertinence to all the spheres of life, from the personal to the political to the spiritual. Interpreted artistically – as on this exciting album by two master-musicians from Iran and Anatolia – it could allude to the creative freedoms implied by traditional music. Important as it is to study them, traditions can't be extended by unreflective repetition: both due respect and an



adventurous spirit are needed.

Much of Kayhan Kalhor's music has explored the nexus of the traditional and the innovative. When the collaboration with Erdal Erzincan began, Kalhor sketched out his blueprint for the meeting: "I'm looking for something that departs from nothing and then goes into developing material, and then goes into something else really improvised ...." This was the ground plan for *The Wind*, the first of the Kalhor/Erzincan albums, recorded in 2004. A great deal of shared work since then has intensified the concept, and this live album, which Kalhor considers one of his strongest recorded statements, shows how the music has moved to the next level in terms of the improvised content and the nature of the relationship between the two instruments. The central theme of *The Wind* is revisited; there are five pure improvisations and music derived from both Persian and Turkish tradition. Kalhor and Erzincan come from different cultural backgrounds yet seem to be playing with one mind. The album concludes with the stunning "Intertwining Melodies" in which themes from both cultures are braided into a transcendent medley. Kalhor has said that for him the goal is to disappear into the music, to access a world of feeling not available in everyday life. In the cascading melodies here, Kalhor and Erzincan give the listener glimpses of that other world.

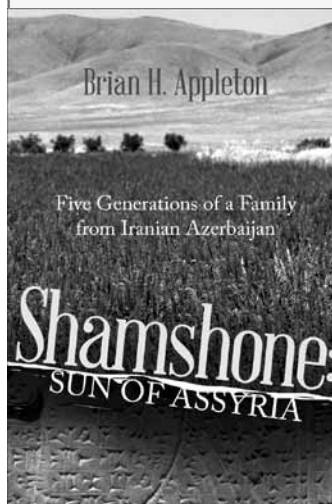
**Shamshone:  
SUN OF ASSYRIA**

Five Generations of a Family from Iranian Azerbaijan

**Brian H. Appleton**

A moving story, beautifully told. Brian Appleton has painted for us an exquisite portrait of the disappearing multi-ethnic society of the Middle East. He captures a reality that unfortunately threatens to vanish under forces of intolerance and the drive for uniformity.

John W. Limbert



To order online go to:  
**Zirzamen.com**

Often when a book is so large and filled with extraordinary pictures and facts the best way to review it is to allow it to speak for itself. In this case Jean Perrot will explain the purpose of this most beautiful research book.

This book brings together and presents the current state of knowledge on Susa in the period of the great Achaemenid Persian kings through the building works of Darius and his successors. The contribution of archaeology is still necessary here. Other than the inscriptions of Darius and the administrative and economic tablets of Persepolis, we suffer from a severe lack of literary resources, even indirect ones. Under Darius I, Herodotus was not yet born. The period from 522 BC to 486 BC is of exceptional interest, as it saw the finishing touches to the formative years of what one might call the Achaemenid period. The new archaeological data allows us to better understand Darius' personality, all too often imbued in a generic way with traits common to all the Great Kings. The data allow us also to define and expand the vision we have of Susa, and its place and role in the organisation and functioning of the Persian Empire.

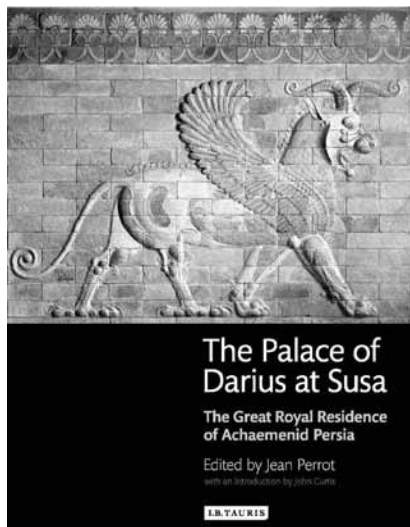
The discovery of Susa goes back to the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the memory of a palace of the Achaemenid kings had remained strong in the mind of humanity through biblical tales (Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, Daniel), the theatre (Aeschylus' *The Persians*, Racine's *Esther*) and Greco-Roman literature. In the Middle Ages, great travellers such as Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela made their way to Susa and admired its ruins. The British archaeologist William K. Loftus was the first to dig at Susa in 1852; then, from 1884 to 1886, Marcel and Jane Dieulafoy uncovered a gigantic capital and elements of a frieze in glazed brick which were, in 1888, the glory of the oriental galleries in the Louvre. From 1897 the excavations of the palace recommenced in a haphazard way, becoming bogged down in an architectural complex which the imagination of successive excavators had trouble in mastering.

It would take luck and the circumstances occasioned by the preparations for the commemoration of the 2,500th anniversary of the monarchy in Iran in 1969, to relaunch interest in the great Achaemenid sites (Pasargadae, Persepolis, Susa). From 1969 to 1979, excavation and research brought Susa to life in all its greatness, with its defensive system and dependencies, a

## THE PALACE OF DARIUS AT SUSA

### The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia

Edited by Jean Perrot  
Introduction by John Curtis



residential palace which had no equal in its time in oriental architecture (Ecbatana's has still not been discovered and the terrace at Persepolis has no residential palace).

Susa, today called Shush-i Daniel, in Khuzestan, was founded 6,000 years ago at a spot where the Iranian plateau widens onto the Mesopotamian plain, north of the Persian Gulf. It had for a long time been the capital of a powerful Elamite kingdom that had united Susiana and the high country of Anshan, which would later become Fars. Destroyed by the Assyrians in 646 BC., the city had little by little disappeared from the political horizon. By the sixth century, it was no more than a staging post from Persia (Fars, Pasargadae, and the region of Persepolis) on the way to Babylonia. Its position, however, remained important strategically, and Darius could not ignore this when planning the great routes of the empire.

It is thanks to the support and encouragement of the Iranian authorities that restoration work was soon followed by systematic excavations that were able to be conducted at Susa from 1969 to 1979 on the Apadana tell. Preliminary reports were published regularly in the Cahiers de

la Delegation archeologique française en Iran (DAFI), and also in Persian, in the series of the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research (ICAR) actively directed by Firouz Bagherzadeh. Students, members of ICAR and of Tehran Museum participated in each season of excavations. Articles also appeared in numerous French and foreign journals as and when discoveries were made.

The events of 1979 led to research being interrupted and the teams breaking up. This affected continuity in the production of excavation reports. Meanwhile, from 1981 to 1984, a Franco-American programme led to a preliminary evaluation of the results, which were presented in 1985 during a Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale organised in France under the auspices of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

An account was published in *Paleorient* (vol. 11/2, 1985) and Assyriologists and Elamite scholars (centred around M.-J. Steve) managed to bring together a general survey in the columns of the *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible*; while 1996 saw the masterly work by Pierre Briant (*From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*).

Nonetheless, there was a feeling among the researchers and technicians of the Susa Archaeological Mission of incompleteness, and of a debt owed to a country which had welcomed them and entrusted them with the exploration of its prodigious past.

It was at this point, in 2007, that the idea was born of a work, which, while answering to the needs of the diverse disciplines which archaeological research has spawned, would also be highly illustrated to render it accessible to a wider interested public. The present volume therefore represents the results of recent excavations by placing them in the context of earlier work and the interpretations to which it gave rise.

These results have enabled, in a certain measure, a survey of the techniques and methods of Middle Eastern architecture at the cusp of the sixth to fifth centuries BC. In iconographic studies they have advanced our understanding of the way traditional forms of religious symbolism were substituted for a new imagery translating royal ideology. Archaeology here compensates for deficiencies in literary sources and, through Darius' statue, clarifies the singular relationship between Persia and Egypt.

An Interview with

# Nicky Nodjoumi

Painter

Shahrokh Ahkami



*Can you please tell our readers about you and your family?*

I was born in Kermanshah, a city in Western Iran, during the World War II (1942). My parents had six children; five boys and one girl. I spend my childhood and teenage years in Kermanshah.

*How did you discover you had a talent for art?*

It was in preschool that teachers noticed that my drawings and paid special attention to my work. By the time I was in high school I was able to copy Russian Realist painters such as Shishkin, Aivazovsky and Repin. Obviously, I did not have access to the original paintings and my models were prints that I found in books and magazines. I knew my passion was to be an artist and at that time the only way to pursue art education was to attend Tehran University's School of Fine Arts. After passing the general exam and the drawing test I was accepted to the School of Fine Arts in 1961. I graduated in 1967. Starting in 1968, I was to receive a scholarship to study at the Beaux-Art School in Paris for two years which coincided with the May 68 student uprising in France. Consequently, all scholarships were dropped including mine and in 1969 I decided to go to New York to continue my education.

*What was life for you like when you arrived in the United States?*

Once I arrived in NY, first, I had to have major heart surgery for a congenital heart defect which set me back sometime and then I become involved with the Iranian Student Association for Political Freedom in Iran which demanded a lot of my time. As a result it was not until 1972 that I started my studies at the City College of NY for my MFA. The prevailing mood in art education at the time was firmly rooted in Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Minimalism. Although I did have an interest in each of these styles, my main interest had been figurative art and by then I was searching to find a meaningful relationship between Art and Politics. You could say by the time I got to NY I was searching to find my style.

*Tell us a little about your art career.*

In the beginning I was working according to the requirements of the School of Fine Arts in Tehran but during my spare time I experimented with different schools of art, such as Impressionism, Cubism and Abstraction.

I was always interested in exploring the human condition and drama in my work, but not necessarily in Realism style but metaphorically; with an expressionistically political undertone. Francisco Goya's work would be a good example. Later, the combination of the content and subject matter, which I described above, with the painterly brush stroke, became my trademark. I am trying to express my ideas through a painterly approach; actually, this painterly approach is as important to me as the content.

*Do you have interests outside of the arts?*



The One Who Sees What is Hidden, 2011, Oil on Canvas



Naturally, I am interested in cultural, social and politics. I love the time in which I live. I am interested in the contemporary life - not the past or the future. I belong to this period with all its beauties and its ugliness. I have lived and experienced two different cultures and for better or worse, through the years, I have developed a critical eye for societies, Iran, my country of birth, and the USA, my adopted country.

***You were close friends with Ardeshir Mohasses, would you share something about him with our readers?***

Ardeshir was a great and influential artist whose work touched generations of artists inside and outside of Iran. One of the reasons that Ardeshir and I became and remained friends for such a long time was that we had common likes and dislikes. We understood each other. Ardeshir's greatest influence was his humorist approach to politics and politicians.

He influenced me, like so many other artists, however, my interest was painting and his was satirical drawings.

***How are you different from other Iranian artists?***



**Just Having Fun, 2009, Oil on Canvas**



**Push and Pull, 2008, Oil on Canvas**

As for the lack of similarities between my work and that of other Iranian artists, this is a broad question and difficult to answer. For one thing, 'Iranian art' includes many different styles and tastes, from Qajar style to Miniature, from Saagha Khaneh to different Contemporary schools of art, 'Iranian art' varies greatly. My approach to painting is basically Western, that is to say that I prefer the human expression in the style of Renaissance, which meant appreciation of natural human body and emotions. Traditional Iranian styles of painting are not suited to my artistic temperament.

***In your opinion does an artist have a duty or obligation to society?***

An artist has NO duty except to do his or her art according to his or her desire. What makes for good art is how it has been done in terms of the execution and form.

***Why do you think there is such a global emergence of Iranian artist?***

I think there are two reasons for the sudden emergence of Iranian art on the global scene. The Geo-political importance of Iran to the West in general and the US in particular in contrast to the Islamic aspirations of the leadership of Iran in the Middle East, makes Iran a notable and important country; On the other hand, Iranian artists have struggled for a number of generations to achieve a local identity in the global cultural scene. They have had some success in specific areas such as film and art starting before the 1979 revolution, which continues to this day. This progress has been much more noticeable in recent years because of the development of the Middle Eastern art markets.

***Can you leave us with any words of inspiration?***

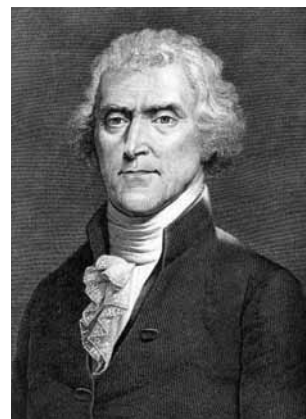
My generation and the younger generation of Iranian artists have always struggled to find a voice, or shall we say a style that could be called 'Iranian' regardless of their different outlooks. This struggle for finding one's individual artistic expression is a genuine democratic exercise. It contrasts the efforts of the Islamic regime to create a homogeneous Islamic voice, which is by definition totalitarian and undemocratic.



## Cyrus and Jefferson: Did They Speak the Same Language?

BY W. SCOTT HARROP

Spring 2013 Newsletter, Department of Middle Eastern  
and South Asian Languages and Cultures,  
University of Virginia



Even as the Middle East grapples with Jeffersonian ideals of freedom and democracy, Americans are learning that Thomas Jefferson may have been inspired by an ancient Middle East ruler, Cyrus “the Great” of Persia.

This intriguing possibility arises from brilliant cultural diplomacy. The British Museum has loaned one its most iconic holdings, the Cylinder of Cyrus, for its first ever tour of the United States. During a similar tour of Iran in 2010, Iranians by the hundreds of thousands marveled at this 9 inch long clay artifact, crafted over 2,500 years ago.

Smaller than an American football, the Cyrus Cylinder stands to its admirers as the world’s first human rights proclamation. Having just conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., Cyrus, King of Persia, issued what amounts to a “press release” to appeal to his new subjects.

The Cylinder records Cyrus’s policies to repatriate displaced peoples, to encourage the conquered to continue in their local cultures and religions. It testifies to Cyrus restoring temples and leaving people free to worship the god(s) of their own choice.

Since, 1971, the United Nations has prominently displayed a replica of the Cylinder as the world’s first human rights charter, and has translated its text into all official

UN languages.

Yet the image of Cyrus as a tolerant, even benevolent ruler is not well known in America today. By contrast, America’s founders were well acquainted with the ideas of Cyrus.

At the recent unveiling of the Cylinder at the Smithsonian’s Sackler Gallery, Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, boldly proclaimed that “when the American founding fathers” were “trying to decide how you will run the United States, what role will religion play, this is the model” they followed, and “the United States Constitution is a reflection of these ideas.”

“What appealed to the founding fathers about Cyrus,” according to MacGregor, was “a model of a state that was equidistant from all religions, rather than either adopting a state religion, or else being anticlerical.” Put differently, “the relic asks the question: can a state be equidistant from all religion?”

Invoking Cyrus as a model for Jefferson and the American founders will be extraordinary news to most students of Jefferson, early America, and the classics. Yet the startling claim deserves careful exploration in a Jeffersonian spirit of free inquiry.

Such analysis can begin by acknowledging a common language. As is well known, religious toleration was vital

to Mr. Jefferson. For his tombstone, Jefferson requested to be remembered as author of the American Declaration of Independence, founder of the University of Virginia, and author of the seminal Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, which in turn inspired the American Constitution’s first amendment on religious freedom. Yet contrary to media reports, Cyrus was unknown to Jefferson via the Cyrus Cylinder because it was not unearthed until 1879, 53 years after Jefferson’s death.

On the other hand, Jefferson and his contemporaries surely knew the favorable accounts of Cyrus in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Therein, Cyrus is the liberator of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, the generous enabler of their return to Jerusalem.

Jefferson, Ben Franklin, James Madison and other founders also knew of Cyrus via their readings of *Cyropaedia*, an idyllic account of Cyrus’s life crafted by Xenophon, the Greek historian, philosopher, mercenary, and student of Socrates.

In antiquity, and again from the Renaissance into Jefferson’s lifetime, Xenophon’s classical works were appreciated alongside Plato and Aristotle. *Cyropaedia*, “The Education of Cyrus,” was Xenophon’s masterpiece and was read widely by elite students in colonial America

as a handbook of military success, social organization, and virtuous political leadership.

Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* sharply contrasts to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Machiavelli famously intoned that it was “better to be feared than loved,” while Xenophon’s Cyrus explicitly preferred to be loved, not feared.

Jefferson owned at least three *Cyropaedia* copies during his life, in both Greek and Latin. In 1787, he even sought an Italian rendering.

Xenophon’s idealized account of Cyrus opens by lamenting man as the most difficult living thing to rule over, regardless of government form. Xenophon marvels that the subjects of King Cyrus obey him willingly, and he seeks to explain why.

For Xenophon, Cyrus exemplifies a just, tolerant ruler, a munificent monarch who preferred persuasion over force, a ruler whose exhibited virtues included temperance, self-control, politeness, and mutual respect between peoples.

Jefferson also owned Andrew Ramsay’s best-seller “A New *Cyropaedia*: the Travels of Cyrus.” Ramsay, a Jacobite, casts Cyrus as a model of enlightened constitutional monarchy, fusing divine will and the laws of nature. Yet documenting Jefferson ownership of books about Cyrus is easier than demonstrating how and when Cyrus accounts

influenced his thinking.

In 1815, Jefferson's sale of his books to the Library of Congress included two copies of the *Cyropaedia*. Jefferson obtained both in 1806. One is currently on exhibit with the Cyrus Cylinder and shows substantial Jefferson markings. The second copy was inherited from George Wythe, Jefferson's beloved law mentor. This volume likely was in Wythe's library while Jefferson was under his tutelage in the 1760s.

Family letters provide further hints of Jefferson's high regard for Xenophon and the *Cyropaedia*. In early 1803, Anne Cary Randolph wrote to "Dear Grand Papa" that her brother, Jefferson Randolph, was busy "translating the history of Cyrus by Xenophon." Seven years later, in a letter to another grandson, Francis Wayles Eppes, Jefferson advised him "to undertake a regular course of history and

poetry in both languages. (Greek & Latin) In Greek, go first thro' the *Cyropaedia*, and then read Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon's *Hellenus* and *Anabasis*...."

The *Cyropaedia* became less favored in western education not long after Jefferson passed from life. Yet in recent decades, a Cyrus revival has been emerging in fresh *Cyropaedia* translations and new debates over his legacy, his place in the history of human rights.

Credit the British Museum for unleashing the Cyrus Cylinder as a "weapon of mass diplomacy," a catalyst to considering common principles between nations too often thought to embody "clashing civilizations." While inquiry is just beginning into how much Cyrus influenced Jefferson, the parallels are fascinating to contemplate. Jefferson's ideals on religious toleration resonate with Cyrus; they spoke the same language.

## Always Together

Nicholas Gordon

*Although we have to be apart,  
We'll always be together,  
Close enough in mind and heart  
To manage any weather.*

*Reality is often bleak,  
But love remains inside  
A glass house on a mountain peak,  
The wintry world beside.*

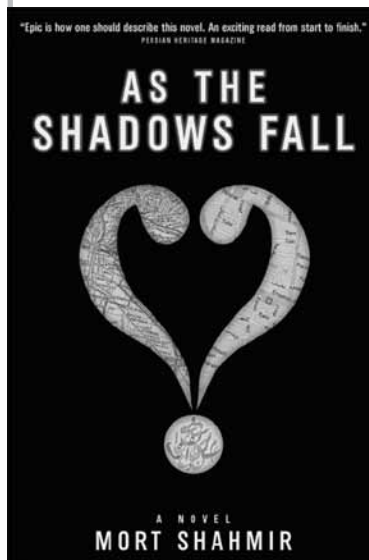
*Love can build its own four walls  
And heat its own small room.  
Through icy winds and blinding squalls,  
Love can be in bloom.*

*Though continents drift far downstream  
And mountains disappear,  
And life dissolve into a dream,  
Our love will still be here,  
You'll turn, and I'll be here.*

# As The SHADOWS

## Fall

A Novel By: Mort Shahmir



وقتی

که

سایه‌ها

می‌افتند

نوشته:

مرت شاهمیر

**Please visit: [mortshahmir.com](http://mortshahmir.com)**

for a review of the synopsis and the excerpt of the book and download instructions to Kindle, Nook, or iBook.

**The print version will be available soon.**

*As The Shadows Fall* is the love story of a young man and a young woman of Persian heritage in the US, the friendship of their families, and a brief account of Persian history (past and present), customs, literature, and arts. As the story unravels the reader will learn about the characters' secrets, past traumatic lives, and their undiminished yearning for the beautiful country and the rich culture that they have left behind.

**Contact:**

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**270 791 9985**

In the galaxy of modern Iranian intellectuals, the late Shojaeddin Shafa was a rare star. By modern I mean those intellectuals who grew outside traditional religious institutions that, atrophied by lack of speculative courage, were bogged down by shabby shibboleths. There were also those who had spent time at madrasahs, people like Hassan Taqizadeh and Ali Dashti who were, subsequently, to discover broader horizons, without being fully able to jettison their religious baggage.

By the first decades of the 20th century, the clerics that had formed the main body of Iranian intelligentsia had shut themselves out of the real world. A new generation of secular intellectuals was asserting its claim of leadership. Although few were prepared to admit it, this new generation wished to see Iran regain a major place in the modern world through this or that mainstream Western ideology.

Between the 1940s and the 1970s, the period in which Shafa's generation was front stage, a majority of Iranian intellectuals saw themselves as part of a global left inspired by Socialism and Communism. By adopting a nationalist stance, Shafa was one of the few exceptions along with others such as Kazemzadeh Iranshahr, Zabih Behruz and Parviz Natal Khanlari.

Shafa believed that Iran should dig deep into its own history and culture to find elements that could form the foundations of a renewed national identity. To do that, Shafa insisted, Iran had to re-examine its relationship with Islam, especially in its duodecimal Shi'ite version. Echoing Jalaledin Mowlavi's famous dictum, Shafa wanted to take the core and throw the chaff to donkeys.

Although they had broken with religious traditions, many Iranian intellectuals could not or would not abandon the deep-rooted infliction of taqiyah or dissimulation. As a result, they developed a double life. They could be senior officials in a government and, at the same time, sympathetic to a radical ideology that wanted to overthrow it.

In this, too, Shafa was an exception. He had no qualms in working for the government and, in time, for the Imperial Court. He was deeply and sincerely

attached to Iran's ancient monarchy, a feature of "Iranian-ness" that distinguished Iran from the numerous "fabricated republics" that have mushroomed all over the world in the post-colonial era.

Shafa was an exception for yet another reason. He would not allow his official position and, in later years his closeness to the centre of power as the Shah's principal speech-writer, to dominate his life. Even in his busiest years as a high functionary, Shafa continued to do his intellectual work, reading, writing, translating, organizing conferences and, for a while, doing a weekly column for Kayhan, a newspaper that I edited at the time.

Over the years, Shafa produced a whole library of works distinguished by

The long years of exiles proved that, in his second career too, Agha Shoja was an exception. Now, he saw himself as a soldier engaged in a war that, in his opinion, had started with the Arab invasion of Iran over 14 centuries ago. In the first few years, Agha Shoja's seemed to belong to the club of lost causes. The "Arab affliction", as he called Islam, seemed to be triumphant and on the offensive on all fronts. Nothing could stop the self-assured Khomeinist ideology that, having seized control of the Iranian state, dreamed of world conquest in the name of its brand of Islam.

Once again, Shafa proved an exception in his foresight. He was among the first to realize that Khomeinism was a nine-day wonder, an epiphenomenon that, despite the damage it could do to Iran, would not be able to alter the fundamentals of Iranian life.

Initially, in exile, Shafa looked like a lone ranger, fighting almost alone, and his audience limited to a handful of nostalgia-stricken monarchists.

He, however, knew otherwise. What mattered, he would say even in the darkest days, is for those who believe in Iran, a different Iran, an ideal Iran, even an Iran that might not become reality in their life-time, is to work and work and work.

In time, Shafa became a best-selling author once again, although his books topped the black list established by the Ministry for Islamic Guidance and Culture in Tehran. Both among the millions of Iranians in exile

and for many more inside Iran, Shafa's message has found a resonance far beyond what his friends hoped and his foes feared.

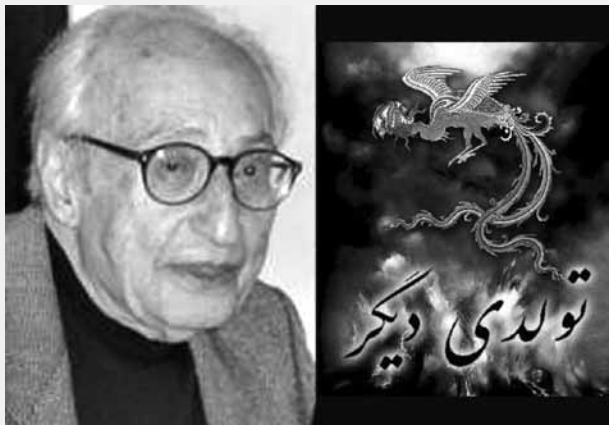
Shafa's war against obscurantism was, and remains, Iran's war. In that war, a true fighter does not set time-limits; nor does he even make his participation in battle conditional on a guarantee of victory.

"Iranians have fought in this war for more than fourteen hundred years," he would say. "They may have to fight for many more years. That fight has defined us as a nation, prevented us from losing our identity, and inspired the creation of our rich culture." Shafa's message was: the fight must go on!

Agha Shoja, the fight will go on!  
END. ■

## Shojaeddin Shafa

AMIR TAHERI



their eclectic extent and excellence. Had things ended in 1978, Shafa would have been remembered as a major literary figure of modern Iran. His masterly crafted prose, his superb taste in choosing works for translation, and the vast spectrum of his interests had already assured him more than a pedestal.

In the cold days at the end of 1978, when the Khomeinist insurrection was provoking fire and bloodshed in some of our cities, no one knew that Agha Shoja, as friends called him, was destined for a second, and entirely different, career as political philosopher, social critic and nationalist activist.

But that is how history works; it is never written in advance.

## *Impressions of Iran*

**Adrienne Rudge**

Although Iran had never been on my “life list” of countries to visit, I jumped at the chance to spend almost a week there in early November with my good friend, Gretchen, an art historian. The trip was an add-on to a 10-day cruise in the Persian Gulf, sponsored by Zegrahm Expeditions, an American travel company based in Seattle. As soon as I booked the trip, I heard concern and disbelief from friends and family about why I would put myself in “harm’s way.” I confess that when the Iran began trading threats with Israel last fall, I became uneasy, but by the time we got on the plane, I was excited about the adventure ahead.

Our journey to Iran began a day late from a devastated New York City, three nights after Hurricane Sandy hit the area. After an overnight flight to Frankfurt and a connecting one to Tehran, we arrived at 2:00 am on Saturday, November 3, and were immediately instructed to don headscarves. Having seen the movie “Argo” a week before departure, I was a little uneasy as we offered our passports and visas to be checked several times, but the airport staff was cordial and business-like. It was also a bit unnerving to be fingerprinted by a tiny, chador-clad woman. We were soon on our way to our hotel and were so tired that we did not even hear the call to prayer before dawn.

Our travel group was an intimate eight, six women and two men. One of the men was a bird watcher and delightful raconteur from South Africa; he seemed the most frustrated by the fact that not even a glass of wine was available for purchase in the country. The rest of us were Americans. Our American guide, Gary Wintz, met us and introduced us to our resourceful and knowledgeable Iranian guide, Hadi. As one of our group members wrote after the trip, “Hadi epitomized the amazing kindness, warmth, intelligence and hospitality we experienced everywhere in Iran.”

We visited three cities, Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz. In Tehran we got used to posters of stern Ayatollahs looking down from buildings, learned to cross the streets while dodging crazy drivers and enjoyed chicken, lamb or fish kabobs with rice and vegetables at lunch and dinner. We all adored the fabulous warm flat bread. We also got used to being greeted by English

speaking Iranians, mostly women, who seemed both amazed and pleased that we were visiting their country. We posed for several photographs with Iranian families while visiting an estate that once belonged to the Pahlavis, the family of the last Shah of Iran. It is now a public park. The Carpet Museum in Tehran has an amazing collection and offered a guide to motifs in Persian art that the group would see throughout the country.

My preparation for the trip had been very limited, but I had read the novel, “The Blood of Flowers,” which is set in 17th century Isfahan. In that ancient city, I was prepared to be wowed by the beautiful Persian architecture and tiles in palaces and mosques, and I was not disappointed. We visited the old bazaar, the Royal bazaar and the Friday mosque and again were met with polite stares (none of us had quite mastered the art of wearing a head scarf) or enthusiastic greetings. Isfahan is considered “the pearl of the Islamic world” and many of its architectural wonders were created by the Safavids in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Our last stop was Shiraz, my favorite city of the three. It has beautiful gardens as well as gorgeous architecture. The city sits among the Zagros Mountains, and we got to see quite a bit of the southern countryside on a day-long bus ride from Isfahan to Shiraz. Our group was originally booked on a short airline hop between the two cities, but our plane got cancelled and at first we were disappointed to have to give up most of a day of sightseeing in Shiraz for a long bus ride. However, the trip through the countryside revealed rural farms, sheep grazing, vineyards and some challenging terrain. The trip gave our guide Hadi a chance to discuss the history of Iran during the twentieth century and to give us a glimpse into his own family.

A highlight for me was our morning at Persepolis. It is the ancient city, now in ruins, which was built by Cyrus the Great and partially destroyed by Alexander the Great. A lively group of middle school girls were touring the site with their teacher, and, while ignoring his instructions, they giggled and took photos of each other and of us.

In short, I loved my taste of Iran. The accommodations in each city were comfortable and the service was friendly and helpful. Before we flew to Dubai to begin the next phase of our trip, we were treated to the best caviar I have ever eaten, fresh from the Caspian Sea. It was Hadi’s parting gift to us. Since my return, I have suggested to quite a few people that if they are interested in visiting a country with an ancient and magnificent history, beautiful art and welcoming citizens, to please consider Iran. ■



An Interview with

**Hamid Rahmanian**

Filmmaker and Illustrator of "Shahnameh"

## Persian Heritage

**PREFACE**

A little over a thousand years ago a Persian poet named Ferdowsi of Tous collected and put into heroic verse the millennium-old mythological and epic traditions of Iran. He called his sixty-thousand-verse tome *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings). However, long before Ferdowsi's epic there existed a tradition of depicting the folklore of the Iranian plateau. This tradition grew with the *Shahnameh* and reached its zenith in the seventeenth century. The art from lost momentum over a century ago and has been illustrated since, except in a few sporadic folios.

It is in this long tradition that I have created the illustrations for this new edition of *Shahnameh*. It is important to mention that I approached this work from a purely artistic perspective. It was aim to revive this historic art from that sits at the center of Iranian visual culture. This effort has been made with the outmost respect to the master painters and illuminators whose names have been lost in the mist of history but whose pages still inspire awe. It was my desire to introduce this legacy to a new audience.

In this edition I have illustrated themes that have not been depicted before not only nightmares and dreams but also plots such as the birth of Shaghad and the occultation of King Kay Khosrow.

Mixing old tradition and modern technology, I have tried to create a new *Shahnameh* in a dynamic way that would appeal to both those familiar with the stories as well as those unfamiliar with the mythology of Iran.

Hamid Rahmanian



*Most interviews start with an introduction of the individual such as birthplace, family and education. I would like to start with the following question: What made you decide to become a filmmaker?*

I had been working as a graphic designer for a few years, in Iran. When I moved to the US in 1994, I studied Computer Animation at Pratt Institute, then moved to Los Angeles and worked at Disney Animation for a while. But, I became less interested in the abstract and more attuned to human stories, to their complications, dilemmas and depth.

*In what way have you been influenced by Your family:*

I was the black sheep of my family. I came from a very conservative family and had to fight to study art, play music and think independently. I think that constant struggle made me fight harder for what I wanted. I had to push the boundaries of everything. I think I'm still doing that.

*By other movies and producers:*

The movies that resonate the most

with me are the simplest ones. The films that came out of Iran in the 80s and 90s are obvious examples, and *Still Life* by Sohrab ShahidSales in the 70s. The Dardenne Brothers from Belgium, the Italian neorealist director, De Sica, Michael Haneke from Austria and Werner Herzog from Germany are all amazing filmmakers that I am inspired by for their direct, seemingly simply bleak stories that have incredible powerful impact.

*Your surroundings:*

I am a city boy and the energy of the city inspires me. I love being surrounded by people and their craziness, whether it's in Tehran or New York. It makes me feel alive and fuels my work.

*Your personal life experiences:*

I think artists always use their life experiences to inspire their work. All of my work started from a personal encounter.

*Prior to film you were a graphic artist. Can you explain exactly what is a "graphic artist?"*

A graphic artist assembles together images, typography or motion graphics to create a piece of art, often in an informative way that is both accessible and memorable and usually for commercial and cultural purposes. I use a lot of different media to tell stories graphically. My computer is my main instrument of creation.

*Now, please tell us where and when you were born and about your family?*

I was born in Tehran Iran in 1968. I came from a big family, the youngest by 8 years of 4 brothers and 1 sister, a lot of nieces and nephews. My father was in the pistachio business, my mother stayed at home to raise the family. Mine was a pretty typical traditional family. Before the revolution they were a pious family and became more ideological and conservative afterwards. Most of my nieces and nephews followed my lead and staked out their own path, pursuing art, music and religious freedom. Now everyone is spread out around the world doing his or her own thing.

*Tell us about your education?*

While I was in high school, I kind of assumed that I would go into business, like my other brothers. I didn't know you could study art, although I loved it and painted all the time. When someone told me that you could study art, my whole life changed. I took the college entrance exam and got into the University of Tehran. I received a BFA in Graphic Design. I had my own graphic design studio and worked for five years after graduation before moving to New York where I studied and received my MFA in Computer Animation. In 1997 I was awarded the student Emmy and was nominated for a student Oscar for my thesis animation, *The Seventh Day*.

***You are married to another film producer, if you like can you tell us how you met and do you have children?***

I met my wife, Melissa Hibbard while making my first live action film in 1998. She was the decorator of that show, *An I Within*. Since then we have collaborated on all of our projects. Together we have made four documentaries, a narrative film and a book. Our latest project is our daughter who is eighteen months old and pretty much running the show now.

***You left Iran. Can you explain the circumstances and reasons for your departure?***

One night I read a poem by Saadi that went something like this: You are just happy with a basket of fruit; I am in search of the garden. I suddenly felt like I had to push my boundaries, which up until then were pretty comfortable and predictable.

***Have you returned since then?***

Absolutely. Up until 2007, I was back and forth often, making films there all the time.

***You established Fictionville Studio with certain goals? Can you explain them and what is the progress in achieving them?***

Our goal with Fictionville Studio has been to produce engaging, socially responsible content that challenges our audiences' perceptions about what they know and how they look at the world around them. All of our work has touched on issues or stories

that for the most part are unfamiliar to western audiences, and to some extent even our Iranian audience. We strive to create artistic works that inspire and inform.

***You believe movies to be one of the greatest information givers. At times, however, information given and circumstances depicted can create untruths. How do you make sure that what you are making remains factual and not tainted by an opinion?***

I'm not a journalist and my goal is not to give an untainted view of the world. I'm an artist. I am interested in the human experience as told in story-form and the way we are connected to each other. I want my audience to walk away from my work contemplating their surroundings and relationship to others, I want them to be motivated, perplexed and questioning what they know. I don't claim to have any answers and don't want my audience to think that. I just create a window to peer into. The rest is up to the audience.

***Now let's discuss your project, the Shahnameh. Have you read the Shahnameh in Persian? If yes, how does this translation compare to others? Do you believe that it catches the spirit, fluency and linguistic power, as it does in its original Persian?***

I have read *Shahnameh*. Our translation is very different from what is

currently out there. Our text covers the first two-thirds of the original poem. We stopped at the death of Rostam and the demise of his clan. We wanted to make the text first and foremost accessible to an audience unfamiliar with the poem and we wanted to create a story that had a single narrative thread. Professor Ahmad Sadri, who translated and adapted the text, did a really great job weaving together the stories into a narrative that modern readers could appreciate. It flows well, stays true to the original text and captures the spirit of Ferdowsi.

***What was your goal in starting this project and have you attained them?***

To introduce *Shahnameh* to a new audience, who know a lot about world mythologies but have never heard of Persian mythology. Also to give younger Iranians, especially outside the country, a chance to discover their culture and read one of the most important literary works from Iran. And I think we are attaining that. It's a big goal.

***Is it an attempt to help younger generations hold onto this precious piece of Iranian heritage?***

Absolutely. Most Iranians know about the *Shahnameh* and can recognize a few names and stories, but haven't read the text. In today's busy world, very few outside of scholarly circles have time to read such a long work. Our *Shahnameh* is a great dive into the stories and legends of



Hamid Rahmania      Melissa Hibbard      Ahmad Sadri

the culture and an entertaining introduction to these epic stories.

***At what age did you first read the Shahnameh and how did it influence your life.***

I think I was like most people of my generation. I read a story here and there growing up but never delved into it. It intimidated me. And maybe it seemed a bit too antiquated.

***What part was most significant to you?***

Once you get into the stories, you find that all the stories are fascinating; it's kind of like watching a film series, they are all connected. But for me, creating the geography of the Shahnameh map was really fun.

***How long did the project take from start to finish?***

Almost four years. Melissa and I started thinking about doing something with Shahnameh in 2008. It took a while to settle on this book format and then the actual production, which was very labor intensive, took close to three years. I spent over 10,000 hours creating the illustrations for the book. I'm very satisfied with the final product. We wanted to create a really beautiful, high quality book that readers would cherish for generations to come. As you probably know, we produced two editions of the book – a regular edition and a hand crafted luxurious collector's edition of 299 books.

***With all projects there are usual difficult moments, did you confront any difficulties along the way?***

Aside from trying to raise funds to produce the book, which is a whole other story, it was the production of the illustrations. I think I was naïve in the beginning, thinking I would spend a few short months illustrating the Shahnameh. For one, I didn't have a lot of material to work with. I think I bought every book ever produced on miniatures and art from that region from which I scanned and clipped art. The restoration of the images themselves was also a very painstaking, laborious process and as Dr. Sadri sent me chapters, I found I had to illustrate more



and more of the stories. Originally, I had envisioned writing 100 pages and creating 100 pages of illustrations. The book ended up being almost 600 pages with 500 pages of illustrations!

***How did you get interested in the illustrations?***

As a graphic artist, I was familiar with the original works through my studies and interest in Persian culture. I had always wanted to do something with the images, a project that could highlight the history of the work. Each page in this edition is a new work of art and something that never existed before. I was motivated to revive the old tradition of illustrating this national epic after over 150 years.

***Besides yourself and many others, I am sure, there are two other names that had an important contribution to the project Melissa Hibbard and Professor Ahmad Sadri, can you give our readers a brief introduction to them?***

I have already introduced my wife, Melissa Hibbard who was the editorial director. She worked closely with Ahmad Sadri who translated and wrote the adaptation of the work. Sadri worked tirelessly with us to create a text that was engaging and modern but that stayed true to the original text. It was challenging because as an academic himself, he had a duty to text in a scholarly sense and he was battling Melissa and I who just wanted to get to the point and make the text as entertaining, fast paced and as embellished as possible. I think we hit a good strong middle.

***What responses are you receiving since the project's release both within and outside of the Persian community?***

I think the best response from Iranians has been the surprise they show at how beautiful the book is and how accessible the text is. It's both a coffee table book and a book families can open up and read to their kids. I think that goes for both Iranian and non-Iranian communities.

***Do you think that you will take on other influential Persian literary pieces? It would be a great idea!***

Who knows!

***Can you leave our readers with any words of inspiration regarding your heritage and your career path?***

We have a very long and rich history. There is so much in our culture that can influence and inspire us. All of my work is deeply connected to my culture. I try to approach my work without cultural blinders or pre conceptions about the subject. We should be proud of our heritage and approach it with open eyes.

I think that contributes to depth and a fresh perspective to any work. And most importantly we should take an active role in creating culture, even in our new far from home homes. We can't simply talk about our glorious past. That will not help us. We have to contribute in order to become part of our new lives and be accepted.