



# Persian Heritage

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# Persian Heritage

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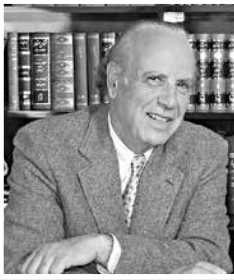
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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

During the past few months the world has witnessed many upheavals. They have taken an emotional and physical toll on us all. With the founding and advancement of a group (ISIS) thousands of lives have been turned upside down. ISIS's acts of displacement, murder, beheading and other atrocities against innocent civilians, Yazidis, Shiites and Christians in Iraq and Syria are inhumane and uncivilized. It is unbearable to watch what they have and continue to do with their captives. While we so want to believe the saying "history repeats itself" it is sadly true. We are horrified to see beheadings in the 21st century, during our lifetime! It is surreal and unimaginable. We must ask God to help put a stop to these atrocities. I always thought that the problems of Iran and Iranians, America and Americans were my priority, because these groups are first in my heart and have my love and compassion. Today, however, I ask myself how I can, how can anyone, ignore what is happening to these innocent displaced people in Iraq and Syria? How can I, how can anyone close their eyes to what is being done to innocent people? How is it that all religions teach love and compassion yet, all religions, have committed at some time, inhumane deeds? From where does this brutality come? Is it from religion or from those who propose to be its interpreters and leaders, in other words not from the words of God but rather from the words of man?

The leaders in Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states have given ISIS a stamp of approval, by not speaking out fiercely against this organization. Their lack of rage continues to fuel the world's idea that Islam is the root of this brutality. Is that truly what Islam represents?

A few days ago I listened to a retired CIA agent on TV. He believed that the President of the United States was not concerning himself with the situation, because it is not the responsibility of the US to resolve the issue between the Sunni's and Shiites. They should fight this battle until they rid themselves of each other. Interesting words, don't you think?

These events and words distracted me from the events in Iran. But then I heard very sad news that brought my attention immediately back to them. According to the news in The Voice of America, one of the religious leaders in Iran was anxious about the hi speed internet and 3rd generation phones. In the hopes of satisfying his concerns, the Director of Communications stated that 3rd generation phones would be permitted if they did not have the ability to send pictures and videos.

Upon hearing this news the Iranian public became outraged. A few days later the Grand Ayatollah met with Parliament, where he stated that his statement about the internet was untrue and that he never said that. He believed however, the information being received and sent through technology should be filtered or purified. It is surprising to me that during this

time in our society, when news and personal life events can be communicated around the world, within seconds, that someone would want to prevent this. In a world where Face book, Twitter, Google Plus and others have reduced the world's size to a village why would someone want to prevent this? In a world where families and friends who are separated by miles and can have those miles removed by instant exchange of information through technology, why would someone want to prevent this? I ask how can an important religious leader, such as this Grand Ayatollah, want to prevent this? Does he think that this religiously imposed regulation will be followed by the youth and young adults in Iran? They are masters of technology, it is now part of their DNA.

One of my daily curiosities on Face book is to access information about Quchan, Iran, the place of my birth. I enjoy reading and seeing what the community is doing and I am always proud to read and see how many great poets, writers, artists and other prominent people have emerged from Quchan. I must ask this Grand Ayatollah, "On what basis do you want to issue this religious regulation?"

We must be grateful that in these times you cannot easily tighten the lips of people by force and control, to prevent them from speaking. In these times you cannot blindfold people to prevent them from seeing. In these times you cannot muffle people's ears to prevent them from hearing. In these times you cannot stop the growth of peoples mind. They will surmount obstacles, so why make it difficult for them? Do you truly want to stop brilliant minds like Maryam Mirzakhani, the 37-year woman who was the first female in the world to receive the highest Medal of Honor in mathematics? How could you look at her and others like her and tell them that it is in their best interest that internet access be filtered and the use of technology be controlled? What are these leaders thinking?

When my grandchildren, ages 4-12, come to visit us, after a brief greeting they spread around the room and get busy on their computers and iPads. They are researching, reading, listening to music, watching a movie etc. While we may not agree with it we must all admit that technology has not prevented their growth and education. It has instead for them and others created avenues that might not otherwise be available. Yes, technology has negatives, but is the job of the parents to govern that aspect of a child's life, not a religious ruler. The children of this century amaze me on what they know at 4 to 12 years of age and what they achieve by age of 16 and 28; the creation of Apple, Microsoft, Face book and so on and so on.

Can this Grand Ayatollah and others in this age group, including myself, remember we traveled town to town, distances of 30 miles, on a donkey? We progressed to horses and

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

carriages. Gradually we moved to gas moving vehicles. Today even the smallest town in Iran can be reached by private or public modern transportation. These sophisticated means of travel are from the west and developed from generations of advancement in technology. Does the Grand Ayatollah wish to regulate their use and go back to traveling on a donkey rather than in a comfortable climate controlled car or plane? Would he consider preventing the use of digital technology in religious centers? I think this would be doubtful!

He must accept the importance of technology for his citizens, as we ALL sadly must accept the fact that with each positive advancement made by mankind, someone has and will always abuse it, turning its goodness into evil. But the goodness SOOOOOO outweighs the bad, and inspiring minds must continue to be allowed to inspire.

Again, as I have asked before, "are these new regulations and restrictions on the use of phones and technology in Iran something else to distract Iranians from the REAL social issues affecting their daily lives?"

I am happy to say that I close this editorial with a bit more confidence for the future of the Iranian youth. They will find a way to communicate with the outside world regardless of restrictions! They are HUNGRY, not just in their bellies. Their brilliant minds long for the continuous food technology provides for them. They are hungry to share space in the modern world, to work hand in hand with others. They are eager to share with the world their brilliant literature, art, culture, hospitality, humanity and friendship.

They are eager to erase the present images unjustly and unfairly imposed on them by actions of a government. Are you not proud of that Iranian, the basis of our soul's foundation? Iranians are people whose power lies in the greatness of their minds and souls not in the power of uncontrolled might!

Again I am hopeful for them as I am hopeful that their leaders will come to their senses and understand that Iran (Persia) has made in the past numerous historical contributions to the world. Restricting their youth in any way will prevent the necessity of Iran and Iranians to continue to contribute to global society.

I hope also that the leaders of Iran will soon understand that they need to open Iran's doors and their hearts to the two million Iranian diaspora who love and adore their Iran. Though they may call other places home, they wish to, without fear, again feel Iran's soil under their feet, smell the aromas of its food and flowers, hear the joy of the music and see the smiles of lost friends and relatives. I hope that this wish for me and others is not far from our grasp. What joy I would have in showing my grandchildren, as I did my children, the wonders of Iran. Wishing everyone good, peaceful and beautiful days ahead.

*Shahrokh Alavi*

A Bilingual, Cultural & Educational Publication

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**THANK YOU**

I was touched by this amazing gift of the latest *Mirass Iran* publication. May I humbly ask for a hard copy to be mailed to me? I would love this and cherish this of course.

*BaSepas e Faravan,  
Kaveh Farrokh*

**APPRECIATION**

Thank you for the latest issue and thank you for all your work for Iran. Since the monthly publication has ceased publication, I have not been in touch with you too much. I want you to know and not just me, but, all of us in the Pan Iranist Party appreciate all your work for Iran.

*Shahin Arvand*

**IT MEAN SO MUCH**

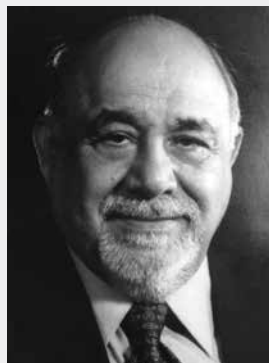
Thank you so very much for publishing Leila's letter and campaign. With people like you hope for a better future shall never die.

Saeed and Mai, Leila and Mehdi

**A HEARTFELT THANKS**

Your *Mirass-Iran* summer issue needs a heartfelt thanks and a huge congratulations. I really enjoyed reading it. It has beautiful interviews, excellent journalism and is a wonderful gift to the Iranian American community. Thank you for your efforts and hard work.

*Farideh*



*Remember Me!*

**in the memory of**

*Dr. Shoja  
Sheikholeslamzadeh*

**Azar Aryanpour**

*Remember me!  
The grieving widow  
The sad but proud woman  
Shedding tears of despair  
For a great man  
who had once  
Cherished her  
To create  
three wonderful saplings!*

*Remember me!  
The grieving widow  
Who buried a great man today  
Not in the dark, deep hole  
that mother earth offered  
But in the brightest niche  
of her heart  
Never to be forgotten  
Never to be perished!*

**COLLECTIONS:  
ARTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD**

Smithsonian's Museums of Asian Art

The phrases “arts of the Islamic World” and “Islamic art” refer to a variety of artistic traditions that have flourished since the advent of Islam in the late seventh century across a vast geographic area ranging from southern Spain and North Africa to the islands of Southeast Asia. While different regions developed their own distinctive styles, they also share certain characteristics, such as the use of calligraphy to transform simple objects into works of art or the use of abstract designs to decorate works intended for religious contexts. The continuous movement of artists, patrons, and objects throughout the Islamic world has played a critical role in determining the dynamic nature of its artistic tradition.

The Freer and Sackler galleries have one of the finest collections of Islamic art in the United States, with particular strengths in ceramics and illustrated manuscripts.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COLLECTION INCLUDE:**

- An important collection of ceramics from the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century, representing a variety of shapes, techniques, and designs, primarily from Iran and the Arab world:
- Egyptian and Syrian metal-



- work from the 13th century, including two of the most important examples decorated with Christian imagery
- A collection of 9<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup>-century Korans (intact volumes and detached folios) from Iran, the Arab world, and Turkey
- 14<sup>th</sup>-century Syrian glass
- A distinguished collection of illustrated and illuminated manuscripts from Iran and the Arab world, including the Divan (Collected poems) of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir, ca. 1400; Haft Awrang (Seven Thrones) by Jami, dated 1556–66; and the largest number of illustrations from the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Mongol Shahnama (Book of Kings), one of the most important illustrated texts of the Islamic world.

**ON THE WAY TO AMAZON**

Babak Parviz, recognized as the Google Glass Creator is making a career change. In a recent post he did not specify the role he will be taking but stated, “ Having worked at companies ranging from tiny start-ups to huge corporations and universities in Europe and the US, I have found each one to be fun in its own way.

I founded and led a few efforts at Google ( Among them Google Glass and Google Contact Lenses are public so far: ) prior to moving to Amazon and worked on a few other things now...”

Wherever he goes we know the company will be blessed by his skills and dedication.

**TEN IRANIANS ON LIST OF WORLD'S MOST INFLUENTIAL SCIENTIFIC MINDS**

Source: Tehran Times

Ten Iranian scientists have been named to Thomson Reuters' list of The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds 2014. The list includes more than 3,200 scientists from around the world who have published the highest number of articles that are cited the most frequently by other researchers.



1. Mehdi Dehghan, Engineering, Amirkabir University of Technology, Iran
2. Farnoush Faridbod, Engineering, University of Tehran, Iran
3. Mohammad Reza Ganjali, Engineering, University of Tehran, Iran
4. Davood Domiri Ganji, Engineering, Babol Noshirvani University of Technology, Iran
5. Mehrorang Ghaedi, Engineering, University of Yasuj, Iran
6. Parviz Norouzi, Engineering, University of Tehran, Iran
7. Siavash Riahi, Engineering, University of Tehran, Iran
8. Hassan Ali Zamani, Engineering, Islamic Azad University, Iran
9. Saeid Abbasbandy, Mathematics, Imam Khomeini International University, Iran
10. Mehdi Dehghan, Mathematics, Amirkabir University of Technology, Iran

The scientists have all recently published at least 15 papers with notably higher levels of citations.

Thomson Reuters is a leading producer of bibliometric statistics and one of the main sources of impact factors used in the assessment of scientific articles and careers.

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## New Persian Art Lecture Series at the Asian Art Museum

Explore the extraordinary traditions and world-wide influences of Persian art through this new free four-part lecture series at the Asian Art Museum. David Stronach, University of California at Berkeley professor emeritus of Near Eastern art and archaeology, kicks off the museum's new Perspectives on Persian Art series with a lively talk about the influence of traditional Persian gardens in Asia and Europe.

From 1961 to 1963 UC Berkeley Professor David Stronach was able to excavate the Royal Garden of Cyrus the Great (559-530 BC) at Pasargadae in Southwest Iran. Since that time he has studied the relationship of the royal gardens of Mesopotamia – the gardens associated with Nineveh and Babylon – with the gardens at Pasargadae. It was at Pasargadae that Cyrus appears to have introduced the first example of a four-fold garden (a type of garden that is known in Persian as a *chaharbagh*) – a type of garden that not only remains in use in present-day Iran, but which is also still to be seen in the great gardens of India and Spain.

Future programs are August through December and include talks by: Robert Hillenbrand, University of Edinburgh; Ladan Akbarnia, British Museum; and Amy Landau, Walters Art Museum. Each speaker will present an additional lecture as part of the Society for Asian Art's "Arts of the Islamic World" lecture series.

## Tattooing, a Lucrative Business in Iran

Source: [Radio Zamaneh](#)

Tattooing, risen to an unprecedented demand gaining a wide market in many countries across the world, has also become a top earning occupation in Iran. While tattooing is actually illegal, it is being offered overtly in all beauty salons and spas in all the major cities of the country.

Khabar online published an article penned by Baharaeh Cheraghi comparing prices offered for tattooing services across Tehran.

According to the report, tattoo artists make anywhere between 8 to 100 million *toumans* per month: "Tattoos may differ in price from neighborhood to neighborhood due to different styles of application and the material used. For instance an eyebrow tattoo in a beauty salon in southern Tehran is anywhere between 90 to 100 thousand *toumans* while a similar tattoo in north of the city will be offered at 250 to 300 thousand *toumans*."

Amongst Iranian women, eyebrow, eyeliner and lip line tattoos are very popular. Many people use tattooing to give shape to their eyebrows and it is safe to say that eyebrow tattooing is very trendy. Small patterns and symbol tattoos, mostly in demand by women go for 50 to 70 thousand *toumans* and yet some very small designs on sensitive locations of the body may be even costlier. For instance tattoos on eyelids, behind the ear or on major veins can cost anywhere between 300 to 400 thousand *toumans*.

The report on Khabaronline adds that larger tattoos have different prices as well depending on the area they cover and the variety of colors used. It can also depend on whether it is a two dimensional or three dimensional designs. "Hand designs go for 1.5 to 2.5 million *toumans*, full legs depending on the design and color variety go for 3 to 4 million and a complete waist design may be anywhere between 3.5 and 4.5 million *toumans*."

Complete body tattoo, more popular amongst men than women may cost anywhere between 10 to 12 million *toumans*. The symbols and designs may vary from a Zoroastrian symbol, an Iranian miniature painting design of the flower, candle and moth design, to a few verses of poetry or sad lines in prose.

Tattoos can only be removed by laser and special creams and ointments and the price of completely removing them, depending on the area and kind of work, may be anywhere between 50 thousand and one million *toumans*.

Importance of legalizing the tattoo business in Iran to keep it hygienic

Tattoo artists in Iran are usually trained in Iran or Thailand. The price of each tattoo needle is 250 *toumans*. Other tools needed for the service are antiseptic spray, anesthetic agents and disposable gloves. The chief overhead for the tattooing business is the sterilization equipment. Without this equipment, the overhead becomes at most 10 thousand *toumans* for each small tattoo while the customer is charged anywhere between 100 to 300 thousand *toumans*.

In addition to artistic prowess tattoo artists need specific expertise in use of tattooing equipment, including the sterilization gear. The price of sterilization equipment can cost anywhere between 1.5 to 8 million *toumans*. Since tattooing is illegal in Iran the businesses are not subject to government regulations or supervision in terms of adequate sanitary practice.

Lack of adequate sterilization may lead to several health complications for tattoo customers. These complications include itchiness and hives around the tattoo site, swelling or sagging of skin, redness and inflammation and infection. The government should seriously consider legalization of the tattooing business in order to ensure health and safety of the public in view of the high demand for this service.

According to a number of statistics about 20 percent of 18 to 35 year olds around the world have a tattoo.



# the committee

New York, New York (July 15, 2014)—On the occasion of the fifth-year anniversary of the opening of the exhibition “Iran Inside Out” at the Chelsea Museum in 2009 and on the first anniversary of “Iran Modern,” which debuted at the Asia Society in 2013, curators Roya Khadjavi Heidari and Massoud Nader are pleased to present “Portraits: Reflections by Emerging Iranian Artists,” a groundbreaking group show which further shed light on, and explored, Iran’s contemporary art scene by showcasing work by over 20 young Iranian artists who were raised, educated, and born there

“Despite all its societal and political challenges of the past thirty years, which led the country into isolation, Iran has experienced an artistic revival that has defied all expectation, yet the work of most emerging artists is still unknown in the United States,” say Heidari and Nader. “It is for this reason that we began this project with the hope of bringing awareness to our U.S. audience, and to familiarize them with this new body of work.” “The multidisciplinary nature of the show, with its emphasis on various artistic styles and techniques, demonstrates exactly the remarkable breadth of Iran’s artistic community. The current generation of Iranian artists is not afraid of experimentation—they often test the limits of acceptability in their own land.”

“Portraits: Reflection of Emerging Iranian Artists” will include paintings, photography, sculpture, mixed media, and video works by Ahmad Morshedloo, Alisia Morassi, Arash Sedaghatkish, Babak Bidarian, Bahar Behbahani, Dadbeh Bassir, Hossein Edalatkhah, Jinoos Taghizadeh, Morteza Pourhosseini, Nasser Bakhshehi, Samira Alikhanzadeh, Sepanta Ghassemkhani, among others, many of whose works have never before been exhibited in the United States.

As Sohrab Mahdavi, co-founder and editor of Tehran Avenue.com, Iran’s most important journal focusing on contemporary artists,

writes in his essay for the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, “Artists represented in this exhibit are preoccupied with their society, in their daily engagements, but also in their estrangement from it. Sadeq TIRAFKAN wrestles with the notion of sacrifice in his Untitled work (Sacrifice series, 2010) and all that it culturally entails – bodily mutilation, deformation, and defamation. Morteza POURHOSSEINI’s forehead bears the stamp of Quranic invocations; his back is ready for the sword and shield of tradition (Circus series, 2011). The boy with the bandana in the painting of Babak BIDARIAN (Boy in Passion Play, 2013) is looking directly at the painter, who can only be an observer in the reenactment of a liturgical drama, whose meaning the artist is not privy to. The girl in another painting of Mr. BIDARIAN (Coming of Age, 2013) is looking at the painter threateningly. The procession of mourners behind her is half-covered by daubs of paint. Amirhossein RADAIE’s bronze sculptures of women in full Islamic dress (2012) shine to impose their in-your-face-ness, but since there are no faces to behold, the experience of looking at them becomes one of an outsider’s.”

“The works in the show diligently create a dialogue between contemporary art on one hand and the rich cultural influence of Iran’s past on the other,” said Heidari and Nader. “Indicative of the tactful intelligence of this young generation, this exchange provides a departure from strictly western artistic styles.” According to Heidari and Nader’s curatorial vision, “The emphasis on emerging Iranian art does not aim to ghettoize the artists either geographically or philosophically. Rather, by holding such a show in New York City—the epicenter of the global contemporary art market—we hope to highlight the talent of these seldom-recognized artists and to celebrate their courage, stamina, and love of their craft.”

## “My” Mother; “Our” Mother:

*Be Be Zahra Baigom Ghavami e Maibodi*

She transitioned spiritually to infinity, just weeks ago.  
Telephone ringed. I just listen to my brother.

*“KehGoft, Mamany Raft”*

A long pause and a loud cry.

She had “Forgiving” and “Giving away to needy”,  
disease all her life.

She was our Mother “Theresa”.

A year or two before “Our” father flying away,

She got Alzheimer disease (*Faramooshi*)

Thank you our “CREATOR”.

It was a blessing for her not to feel the pain of separation.  
As I did for “decades”.

*Ou Hamisheh me goft “madarjooon dalam barat tang shodeh, pass to kay meiy”? Vah Man hamisheh my goftam, madarjooon “Khaili Zood” Vah Ou me goft “OmidvaramMadaram”.*

She took her body, But left her “spirit”, “hopes”,  
“courage”, and “Mehrabani” for “Me” and “Us”.

Since her fly, every night,

When I go to bed,

I see her walking away quietly from the bedroom,  
making sure I am being covered properly.

We all miss her a lot.

I remember our brief conversation:

*Madar Joon pass kay meiy?*

And I promise her, I will be with her forever,

And I request and she grant me her permission.

To finish my writings and poems,  
that are dusting in my intellectual property,  
with the help of others.

To make this planet a border less homeland,  
for all homeless, freedom and justice loving beings  
living with hope for a heavenly planet,

“Here” and “Now”

“Here” and “Now”,

I promise to you my “Mother”, my “Sun”,  
my “Star” and my “Universal” Spirit.

And I end up my poem with one wish:

I hope she come to my dream once the least.

I want to kiss her.

I want to tell her that I love her for ever.

I want, I want . . .

And last favor *Madar jooon*.

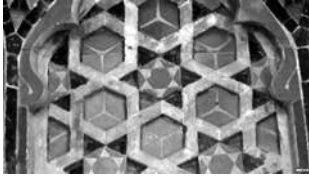
Give a hug to your husband and our father.

*“Shoma Hala ay “Ashegh”, o “Mashogh” zamoneh.*

*Ham sayeh divar be divar hastin. Yadetoon be khair.*

*Zia Ghavami, Mim. Dal. Omid e Maibod*

**MERCEDES BENZ LOGO AND THE CITY OF NATANZ**



Who would have thought that the tiles found in the Grand Mosque of Natanz, a city of Iran, could possibly be the influence that resulted in the recognizable Mercedes Benz logo? Members of the Natanz community wrote

a letter to Mercedes Benz Corp. informing them of the similarity of the three point star on the car's logo and the image found on the tiles in their mosque. In the letter, accompanied with images of the tiles and mosque, they questioned if this few hundred year old design was the inspiration for the company's logo.

According to Mercedes, the logo, an image with three vectors, represents their strength and connection to the earth, sea and sky. It was first used in 1909 on what would now be the oldest gas burning automobile. The more recent logo came into use in 1937. Mr. Rashidi, one of the authors of the letter, asked that the Mercedes Benz company do more research on the matter and to give the town of Natanz credit for the design, after all while Mercedes has used it for a few decades, Natanz has used it in their architecture for a few hundred years.



**GOLFING IN IRAN**



Currently Iran's only golf course is situated in Tehran on the Enghelab Sports complex. The Enghelab course (which translates as 'Revolution') is the only 13 hole golf course in the world. Previously 18 holes, 5 of them were confiscated in 1992. The

course is in a dramatic surrounding with the towering Alborz mountains to the north and the sprawling city of Tehran to the South. The course plays as 18 holes with 3 to 7 being also played as 12 to 16. Despite only having one golf course, the sport is becoming more and more popular within Iran, particularly amongst women. Due to the increasing popularity of the sport, over the last two years, the Iranian Golfing Federation has hosted two local tournaments for Iranians and foreign diplomatic staffs. Now though, for the first time ever, Iran is opening their doors to the worlds golfing community, allowing all nationalities to travel to Iran to take part in this historic event.

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**Friendship Games Between the USA and Iran**

The USA-Iran Volleyball Games were held on Saturday August 9th at USC, Wednesday August 13th at Anaheim Convention Center, on Friday August 15th at San Diego State University, and on Saturday August 16th at UC Irvine. The following image is compliment of Robert Abedi, Esq. one of the events sponsors.



**A LOW BUDGET "WORLD CUP"**

IRNA: These days we are all caught in the excitement of the World Cup and all the magnificence surrounding the games. However, there are also many "little cups" happening all over the world that don't get much attention. There are no billion dollar budgets; no fancy stadiums or green grasses; no nice balls, jerseys and shoes. These games are rather played on rough dirt fields, most often with no shoes and with flat balls. Yet the players and their spectators seem to be happy just the same.

Here are some photos from one of these "little cups" in Iran's Sistan o Baluchestan province taken by photographer Akbar Tavakkoli.





According to Küntzel, German leaders have at least two other reasons for helping Iran defy the United States. The first is German resentment of defeat in the Second World War followed by foreign occupation, led by the US. The second reason is that Iran is one of the few, if not the only country, where Germans have never been looked at as “war criminals” because of Hitler.

As the 5+1 group ends another round of negotiations with Iran, commentators assume that the four Western powers involved – the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany – are united in their determination to curtail Iranian nuclear ambitions. However, in this fascinating book, German scholar Matthias Küntzel argues that Germany’s position on this issue may be closer to that of Russia rather than the United States -- with Germany acting as “a shield for Iran against America,” as Germany’s former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer described his country.

The reason, according to Küntzel, is the “special relationship” that Iran and Germany have built since 1871, when Germany emerged as a nation-state. Two years after Germany was put on the map as a new country, Nassereddin Shah of Iran arrived in Berlin for a state visit of unprecedented pomp.

It is not hard to see why the two sides warmed up to each other. For over a century Iran had looked for a European power capable of counter-balancing the Russian and British empires that had nibbled at the edges of Iranian territory in pursuit of their colonial ambitions. In 1871, Germany looked like a good ally. As for Germans, they saw Iran as their sole potential ally in a Middle East dominated by Britain and Russia.

The friendship was put to the test in the First World War, when Iran refused to join the anti-German axis and suffered as a consequence. With the advent of the Nazi regime, Küntzel shows, a new dimension was added to the Irano-German relationship: the myth of shared Aryan ancestry. In World War II Iran again declared its neutrality, but was invaded by Britain and Russia after refusing to sever relations with Germany.

Iranians had always regarded themselves as heirs to an Aryan identity, asserted in bas reliefs dating back to more than 2500 years ago. The Achaemenid King of Kings, Darius, describes himself as “Aryan son of an Aryan”. The very

name of the country, Iran, means “the land of Aryans.” The idea of Germans as Aryans, however, dates back to the 19th century and the rise of nationalism in Europe. Then, writers such as Herder and Schlegel claimed that Germans were descendants of original Aryan tribes somewhere in Asia, splitting into several groups moving into India, Iran and Europe. (Much later, the Irish also claimed they were Aryans and named their newly-created republic Eire, which means land of Aryans.)

In the 1930s, Alfred Rosenberg, one of Hitler’s philosophers, published “The

## Iran and Germany: A 100-Year Old Love Affair

BY AMIR TAHERI

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org>, July 31, 2014



Myth of the Twentieth Century”, a book in which he claimed that the torch of Aryanism had passed from Iranians to Germans. The reason was that Iranians had been “corrupted” by Islam and mixed with “inferior races” such as Arabs, Turks, and Mongols. Thus, in 1936, when the Third Reich wanted to publish its official list of “superior” and “inferior” races, there was some debate regarding the place to be assigned to Iranians. In the end *raison d’etat* prevailed and Iran was declared an “Aryan nation”.

However, that was not the end of story. The Iranian government demanded that the Reich recognize all citizens of Iran, including Jews, as “Aryans”. That demand provoked anger among Nazi of-

ficials charged with the “elimination” of Jews.

Küntzel shows that Adolf Eichmann insisted that Iran’s Jews, numbering over 60,000 at the time, be listed and rounded up by the Iranian authorities. Tehran rejected that demand and even went further by issuing visas to hundreds of German Jews who wished to leave the Reich. (The Iranian embassy in Paris did the same for hundreds of French Jews).

The “Aryan” myth was a source of major misunderstanding between Tehran and Berlin.

To Iranians, the term “Aryan” was cultural not racial; anybody who partook of Iranian culture could claim to be Aryan. One of ancient Iran’s most famous queens, Esther, was Jewish. The maternal grandfather of Rustam, the mythical hero of Iran’s national epic “Shahnameh” (The Book of Kings), was the Arab Zahhak. The late Ayatollah Khomeini boasted of his partially Arab ancestry by claiming to be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

To Germans, however, Aryanism was a racial concept linked to blood and biology. The Nazis published supposedly scientific texts about the shape of the heads of “superior” and “inferior” races, the color of hair and eyes and the various shades of skin tan.

The misunderstanding continues even today.

In 1986, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the mullah who served as President of the Islamic Republic, wrote a letter to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl emphasizing “our common Aryan roots.” Kohl’s Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel liked to speak of “our joint heritage and a 100-year alliance”.

In 2009 in a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed that the Irano-German “alliance, broken by the Allies in 1941” should be revived. Remarkably, German leaders did not bother to disown Hitler and distance themselves from the murderous myths spun by Nazis.

In the past 50 years or so, the “special relationship” between Iran and Germany has been highlighted in numerous ways. The first German industrial fair held in a foreign country after the Second World War was hosted by Tehran in 1960 with Economy Minister Ludwig Erhard leading a delegation of over 100 German businessmen. After that, all German Chancellors, starting with Konrad

Adenauer, made a point of visiting Iran until the fall of the Shah. Even after the mullahs seized power, Germans pursued the special relationship through high-level visits, including that of Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. The only time the German Federal parliament approved a law unanimously was when it enacted legislation to guarantee investments in Iran.

Some critics claim that the Germans are attached to Iran for purely economic reasons.

Küntzel shows this not to be the case. As the world's number-one exporter, Germany has little need of Iran, which represented less than half of one per cent of all German exports in 2013. Nor is Germany a major importer of oil or anything else from Iran.

According to Küntzel, German leaders have at least two other reasons for helping Iran defy the United States.

The first is German resentment of defeat in the Second World War followed by foreign occupation, led by the US. That resentment cannot be publicly expressed, if only because Germany is a member of NATO and needed US protection against Russia, an even more dangerous enemy, during the Cold War. If Iran thumbs its nose at the US, so much the better.

The second reason is that Iran is one of the few countries, if not the only one, where Germans have never been looked at as "war criminals" because of Hitler. For over 100 years, Germany has been the favorite European power of most Iranians. Germans reciprocate the sentiment by having a good opinion of Iran. Küntzel cites a number of opinion polls that show a majority of Germans regard the US and Israel, rather than Iran, as the biggest threat to world peace.

Küntzel also asserts that Germans are fed up with being constantly reminded of Hitler's crimes and beaten on the head with what Martin Walser, one of Germany's most famous writers, calls "the Holocaust cudgel."

Walser says: "The motives of those holding up our disgrace stem not from a desire to keep alive the idea of the impermissibility of forgetting but rather to exploit our disgrace for their present purposes."

That the Holocaust never attracted popular attention in Iran is a relief to many Germans. "Supreme Guide" Ali Khamenei and former President Mah-

moud Ahmadinejad have repeatedly asserted that Holocaust never happened. Former President Hashemi Rafsanjani has disputed the figure of six million Jews killed by Hitler, putting the number at "around 20,000". Former President Muhammad Khatami claims, that "the facts of the situation have not been independently verified and established."

Finally, the Iranian nuclear dossier provides Germany with an opportunity to play in the diplomatic big leagues. In economic terms, Germany is a bigger power than Britain, France, Russia and China. And, yet, it has no place in the Security Council. The 5+1 formula creates a parallel Security Council in which Germany has a decisive say. The exercise could become a precedent for other international initiatives in which Germany is treated as a member of the "big powers club."

Küntzel cites another possible reason for Germany's attempts at helping Iran maintain its nuclear program with a minimum of modifications. In the 1990s, Germany tried to develop a clandestine nuclear program, very much like what Iran had been doing, by developing two sites closed to inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). At the time, President Bill Clinton forced the Germans to shut the program by threatening them with sanctions, a similar tactic used against Iran so far without success.

With the United States in global retreat under President Barack Obama, Germany is beginning to assert its independent personality: It is in neither Western nor Eastern camps, Küntzel shows. It is at the center of a new "political pole" in Europe.

Küntzel's book is of special interest for the glimpse it offers into what many German politicians and scholars feel and think in silence.

A recent official German report states: "The Federal Republic has no evidence showing that Iran's nuclear program has a military aspect." That may explain, at least in part, Berlin's ambiguous position during the 5+1 negotiations with the Islamic Republic.

Originally written in German, Küntzel's book is also available in an excellent Persian version and is due for publication in English as well.

*Amir Taheri is an Iranian journalist and author.*

## *I Think of Thee*

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

*I think of thee!*

*– my thoughts do twine and bud*

*About thee, as wild vines,*

*about a tree,*

*Put out broad leaves,*

*and soon there's nought to see*

*Except the straggling green*

*which hides the wood.*

*Yet, O my palm-tree,*

*be it understood*

*I will not have my thought*

*instead of thee*

*Who art dearer, better!*

*Rather, instantly*

*Renew thy presence;*

*as a strong tree should,*

*Rustle thy boughs and*

*set thy trunk all bare,*

*And let these bands of greenery*

*which insphere thee*

*Drop heavily down,*

*– burst, shattered, everywhere!*

*Because, in this deep joy to see*

*and hear thee*

*And breathe within thy shadow*

*a new air,*

*I do not think of the*

*– I am too near thee.*

Persian  Heritage

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# By Rooting for the Iranian World Cup Soccer Team, I Was Rooting Against Iran

Shirin Najafi

“First published in the L.A. Weekly Friday June 27, 2014. Reprinted with permission.”

As an Iranian-American who was born in the United States, at times I've wished that I could claim another heritage. Like the time in 2007, just months after my graduation from Columbia University, when Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke on the campus and denied the holocaust or the existence of gays. Or when I visited the country at age eight, traveling with my mother and four-year-old sister, and we were pulled aside in the Tehran airport and taken into a room where my mother was forced to hand over her American passport. We were stuck in Iran for months, finally rescued by my father who flew to Germany and pulled some strings with the Iranian embassy.

Or throughout my upbringing in the 1980s, when resentment toward Iranians still lingered from the hostage crisis. Though I grew up in a relatively liberal and open-minded neighborhood in the Bay Area, I couldn't help but feel like I was viewed through a negative lens. I couldn't help but feel dread or embarrassment anytime someone asked me, “What kind of name is Najafi?”

There's a reason why Iranians in the U.S., and especially in Los Angeles, where I now live, call themselves “Persian.” It's easier to refer to our ancient roots than own a regime our families moved halfway around the world to avoid. So why on earth did I scream at the television when Iran made a goal attempt on Nigeria? Why did I obsessively Google the math behind the World Cup and calculate the various scenarios in which Iran could advance to the second round? Why did I feel insane euphoria in the 90th minute of the Argentina game,

when Iran, ranked 43rd, was still tied with Argentina, ranked 5th?

The answer has a strange sort of irony: I was actually rooting against Iran in rooting for its soccer team. I was rooting for soccer - a positive, internationally enjoyed event - which like many things in Iran, has been suppressed by the government.

The Iran team has been notoriously deprived of government funding, even as it misses out on international sponsorships because of the regime's nuclear-related sanctions. Because of its small budget, the team lost critical opportunities to practice with other teams. They trained in near obscurity and had to scrape by with so few funds that the coach has already announced he's quitting at the end of this World Cup.

Just having an Iranian team at this event is a small victory against an oppressive regime. It's a victory against a country whose female citizens can't participate in sporting events unless their bodies are fully covered, and whose female citizens can't even watch sports in stadiums in Iran. A country that forbids its citizens from accessing any social media, including YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. A country that recently arrested and imprisoned a group of six Iranians who made a video of themselves bopping around benignly to Pharell's “Happy” on the grounds of “obscenity.” A country that has no trade relations with the United States and whose banking system is isolated from the rest of the international banking system, and whose consistently combative nature is causing its economy and society to collapse on itself.

When I'm rooting for Iran's team, I'm rooting for a country that I know is better than this. A

country whose citizens are already better than this, as we saw in the 2009 election, when millions of Iranians poured into the streets in support of a change of regime during the Green Movement. A country that I know can be great, because Iranians, as a people, are great. Iranians in the U.S. occupy some of the highest percentiles of income and educational degrees. It's no secret that the country wouldn't be floundering if it afforded its citizens just a fraction of the same freedom and opportunities as they have in the U.S.

When I'm cheering for Iran's team, I'm cheering for Iran's opportunity to do something positive on the interna-

tional stage. To participate for once, rather than to alienate. To be known in the eyes of the world as soccer players, instead of as terrorists or a nuclear bomb threat.

Yet as I watched Iran compete these last few weeks, before the Wednesday loss to Bosnia that ended its tournament play, I couldn't help but hope for something truly irrational. Something I knew was 100 percent impossible, but still I was hoping for it. It was the hope that Iran would win the entire World Cup so that maybe its government would wake up and believe that Iran could be better than this too.

*Shirin Najafi is a freelance writer.*

## AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURERS VYING FOR IRAN MARKET

**Tasnim News:** Major aircraft makers and spare part producers have reached out to the Iranian companies to grab a share of the country's potentially lucrative market once the anti-Iran sanctions are eased, an Iranian official said.

Iran's Deputy Minister of Road and Urban Development Ali Mohammad Nourian said the aircraft manufacturers have increasingly contacted Iranian firms recently.

He said the foreign aircraft makers are going to extremes not to lose Iran's lucrative market and to guarantee their presence in the country once trade conditions are normalized. “A positive atmosphere is currently being shaped in all fields,” Nourian said.

Back in April, Boeing Co., the world's biggest airplane maker, and engine maker General Electric Co. announced they had received waivers from the US Treasury Department to export certain spare parts for commercial aircraft to Iran under a temporary sanctions relief deal that began in January.

Both Boeing and GE had applied for permission to export aircraft parts to Iran based on a six-month interim deal agreed by Iran and six world powers in November last year.

On November 24, 2013, Tehran and the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany) signed an interim deal on Tehran's nuclear program Geneva. The two sides are now engaged in a fresh round of negotiations in Vienna to clinch the permanent nuclear agreement, which will lead to a lifting of the whole sanctions on Iran.



# *Miracle Mosque*

*The Nasir al-Mulk Masjid  
(Mosque) in Shiraz, Iran*

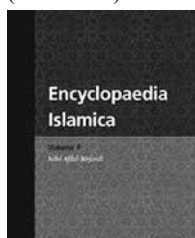
The Nasir al-Mulk Masjid (Mosque), located in Shiraz, Iran, is truly an artistic master piece. Even more amazing than the intricate designs is what happens every morning when the rays of the rising sun hit the Masjid. Every morning as sunlight passes through the windows of the Masjid, the interior is transformed into an ocean of colors. This is something you have to see to believe. Work on the Masjid began in 1876 and took 12 years to complete. The designers were Muhammad Hasan-e-Memar and Muhammad Reza Kashi Paz-e-Shirazi.



## REVIEWS

## ENCYCLOPAEDIA ISLAMICA, VOLUME 4

(Brill 2013)

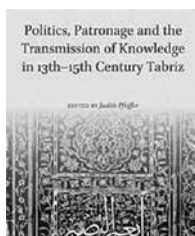


Especially in the world today the more you know the better understanding you have about everything. This holds true in Volume 4 of Encyclopaedia Islamica. With each volume the contributors are making their way through the alphabet of Islamic history. Now only up to the “Bu” the series is just at the beginning of educating its readers.

**POLITICS, PATRONAGE AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE 13<sup>TH</sup>-15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TABRIZ**  
 Edited by Judith Pfeiffer

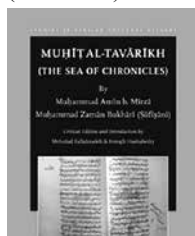
(Brill 2014)

This book unfolds the role that Tabriz played in the development of society between the 13th and 15th century. Most are unaware of the contributions Tabriz made on early society in learning, cultural productivity and politics in post-Mogol Iran and the Middle East. It is one of a series in Iran Studies and well worth the read.



**MUHIT AL-TAVARIKH (THE SEA OF CHRONICLES)**  
 Muhammad Amin b. Mirza, Muhammad Zaman Bukhari (Sufiyani), Critical Edition and Introduction by Mehrad Fallahzadeh and Forogh Hashabeiky

(Brill 2014)



This book is a study and critical edition of chapters nine and ten of The Sea of Chronicles. Muhit al-tavarikh is a valuable source for the study of late seventeenth century Central Asian History, historiography and language. The present work represents the first critical edition of a primary source of Subhan Quli Khan's reign. The ninth chapter (bab) offers accounts of the Timurid

kings, Abulkhayrid/Shaybanid and the first four Ashtarkhanid/Janid khans. The tenth chapter presents a detailed account of the life and times of the last great Ashtarkhanid/Janid khan, Subhan Quli Bahadur (1668-1702), revealing historical information essential for scholars of the period and region.

**ALAMUT, THE ASSASSIN'S NEST**  
 M Shokouhi N

(Xlibris LLC 2014)

This book combines intrigue, politics and love. The story told is during the 11th century and therefore presents the reader an opportunity to learn about history during the Seljuk Dynasty of the Persian Empire.

It begins with a wedding that is interrupted by events and leaves the reader in suspense trying to figure out what the outcome will be for the bridegroom and the bride. It is a book difficult to figure out but easy to read.



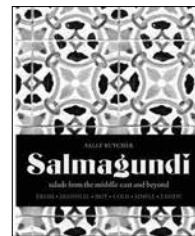
## SALMAGUNDI

## A Celebration of Salads from around the World

By Sally Butcher

Photography by Yuki Sugiura

Salmagundi is a 17th century English word denoting a salad dish comprising, well ... everything. This comprehensive new book from acclaimed food purveyor and cookbook writer Sally Butcher looks at salad bowls across the world and centuries in 150 wide-ranging recipes for every season, meal, and occasion.



The recipes are all accompanied by Sally's practical approach to cooking, her extensive knowledge of food and food history, and, just as important, her red-headed joie de vivre and sense of humor.

Divided into fourteen chapters (Herbs and Leaves, Vegetables, Beans, Roots, Grains and Pasta, Rice, Cheese, Fish, Meat, Dips, Fruity Salad, Salads for Dessert, The Dressing Room, The Prop Cupboard), no lettuce leaf is left turned in pursuit of salads of every stripe. Recipes are flagged where relevant with tags such as “super-healthy,” “skinny-minny,” or “main course” to make it more user-friendly.

There are marvelous salads here for everyone – even the most staunch salad misanthrope. Beautifully illustrated by Yuki Sugiura, and punctuated with Sally's trademark mixture of folklore and anecdote this is an essential update for any foodie's bookshelf.



# Persian Dance and Its Forgotten History

part one

**Nima Kiann (2002)**

**Founder and Artistic Director of Les Ballet Persans**

Persian Heritage: Our thanks is given to the author and Iran Chamber Society for this article

Iranian dance history is characterized by many fascinating and also tragic incidents. It seems to be completely unknown to the outside world, partly because of the present political situation of the country that has toned down the interest for a profound research effort. The other reason is the current archaeological discoveries and excavations in Iran, during the past thirty years. They have made it possible to have access to material and evidence for the origin of Persian dance, ever since the appearance of the cult of Mithra about two thousand years before our calendar.

By virtue of these bases, Iran can be considered as one of the ancient world's empires, which methodically and actively was devoted to the development of the art of dance. For this ancient nation, dancing has been an important social phenomenon and a religious ritual.

It is the irony of history that ever since the revolution in 1979, this art form has been

prohibited in the same country that once upon a time performed a central role for its expansion and advancement.

The several thousand years of Iranian history is characterized by great events that influenced important parts of the world and its civilization. It

ranges over eras of grandeur but also over painful and absurd periods of defeat and destruction.

The following is a prelude to an exhaustive research work about the history of Persian dance, which I will become absorbed in during the coming years. I hope that it will improve in quality and content and will make a contribution to expose this national art form. The forgotten history of Persian dance is the story of a world heritage, which has to be given a new birth.

In this summary article I have chosen to spotlight seven different eras, from the prehistoric cult of Mithra until the present, which have included decisive events and episodes for developments, but also destructions of this art form. The rise of the new millennium undoubtedly implies a new productive period for Persian dance, as the Iranian society and the new generation of Iran move toward an era of enlightenment.

## **The Cult of Mithra**

## **and the Origin of Persian Dance**

The origin and rise of Persian dance as an independent and distinctive art form is estimated to be parallel with the birth of Mithraism and its spread. This cult centrally revolves around the ancient Persia's sun and light God, Mithra, who is the main figure in this mystery religion that during the late antique era spread over the entire Roman Empire. Numerous temples and depictions of the legendary Mithra have been located and excavated in the three continents of the ancient world; Asia, Africa and Europe. The latest discovery has been done in London as late as 1954.

The most important ritual in this cult has been the worship of Mithra, as he is sacrificing a bull. This act was believed to promote the vigor of life. The consecration to this belief was accomplished among other rites through the baptism in the blood of a bull, followed by a ritual dance performed only by men. This ceremonial act is considered as the earliest known form of Iranian dance, and the origin of the magic dance of the antique civilizations. It is typical for sacred Persic (Persian) dance, so called "Danse Persique Sacrée."

The most significant bases for researching around the ancient Persian dance can be found in the Greek historian from Halikarnassos, Herodotos' superb work "Nine

Books". He describes the old history of Asian empires and Persian wars until 478 BC.

In several occasions he has indicated and in detail described the cultural and social habits of Persians. He has mentioned the wide cultural exchange that Persians had with the ancient world. "From every corner of the known (antique) world, the most appreciated artists were imported to the imperial court in order to practice their artistic abilities in the presence of the majestic Emperor and his court."

## **Achaemenians, An Art Patronizing Imperial Dynasty**

The cultural exchange with the ancient civilizations, particularly with Egypt and Greece has been extensive and proceeded during several centuries. In various works by Greek historians "Persian dance masters" (choreographers and pedagogues) have been mentioned as they have appeared in antique Greece, and Greek "sportsmen, poets and dancers" have been sent to the Persian Empire.

This cultural exchange has been described as one of the distinctive characteristics of ancient Persian culture, which gave rise to the term of "acculturation", meaning the acceptance of new cultures. This was an evident quality for the legitimation and survival of an empire that ruled over numerous nations, from Egypt in North Africa, to

India in Far East. It was the world's first religiously tolerant empire and consisted of a multitude of different languages, races, religions and cultures.

Achaemenians, the first ruling dynasty of the Persian Empire, contained several enthusiastic emperors who encouraged the advancement of different art forms. Ketzias, another Greek historian writes about the popular and talented female dancer, Zenon from Crete, who was Artaxerxés II: (Ardeshir Shah II) court dancer and "the apple of the King's eye."

Another Greek historian, Polukleitos, reports that at the marriage of Alexander the Great with the Persian woman "Roxana" in Susa, which continued in five days, he was amused by Greek musicians, singers and dancers who were engaged at the Persian Imperial Court.

Ketzias has specifically mentioned a sort of Persian dance, which was performed in connection with the ceremonies of Mithrakana (Mehrgan) in which even the King participated.

"The King in India never appears if he is drunk. But unlike him in Persia, the Emperor drinks precious wine and devotes himself to the Persic dance during the ceremonies arranged in honor of Mithra". Douris from Samos reports about the same royal tradition: "Only in one occasion the King drinks wine and dances Persic dance and it is when worshipping Mithra."

Contemporary history writers of our time, such as the French historian and professor Pierre Briant, has convincingly certified in his master piece "L'Histoire de l'Empire Achemenid" that dancing has been an important part of the religious worship among Achaemenians and in the faith of Zoroastrianism (another Persian religion that

is still practiced all over the world).

Professor Briant quotes Xenophon, the antique writer of the Cyropédie (a biographical depiction of the first Achaemenian Emperor's life, Cyrus the Great): "When Cyrus was devoted to the traditional sacrificing rituals in Pars (Persia) he commanded the Persians to perform a dance, which was influenced by the customs of their ancestors: *Kata ta patria*."

Xenophon emphasizes that this kind of Persic Dance (*Danse Persique*) has been very usual and as popular as "riding" because "Persic Dance, like a sport, strengthens the muscles!"

The importance of the art of dance among Persians can clearly be viewed relatively numerous Greek history books. Different forms of dance have existed as they were performed on ceremonial, ritual or entertaining occasions. "For acquainting their horses with the tumultuous scenes of war, the Persians used to execute a "military dance", which meant that in a collective arrangement, clashing the weapons together rhythmically and dancing with their horses".

"...the man from Mysie performed a Persic dance by clashing his shields together, bending himself forward and rising up again. He did all that harmonically and proportionally to the rhythm of the flute."

Dancing was a well-developed and protected art form during the existence of other dynasties of Persian Empire, for instance Parthians and Sassanians. According to the Greek texts, there have been detailed descriptions for different forms of dancing, like fire dance, sword dance and even horse dance, which meant dancing while riding on horseback.

*to be continued*

## HISTORY: ANCIENT AND MODERN

Iran's history spans several millennia. Therefore, it is a formidable task for any author to squeeze this complex and long history into a single-volume guidebook. Nevertheless, some authors have managed to do so.

### *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*

by Sandra Mackey (*Plume/Penguin, 1996 and 1998 with a new Afterword*), 464 p.

Coming from the pen of a veteran journalist who has reported on the Middle East for decades, this book is perhaps the first one to read because of its charming prose and its comprehensiveness and well-focused explanations of the contemporary issues. Mackey has dedicated her book to "teacher, mentor and friend Professor R. K. Ramazani" whose classes she took as a graduate student at the University of Virginia in 1963. Mackey shows that splitting Iran's history into a bygone pre-Islamic and a distinct post-Islamic Iran and then trying to glorify one part and eliminate the other part is not an accurate narrative; instead, she documents a continuity of society, land, people and heritage spanning Iran's long history. For writing the book, Mackey made three extensive trips to Iran in the early 1990s. However, this is not a travel book but a historical attempt to understand Iran. When Mackey shared her vision of writing such a book with a university professor, he said, "Your task is difficult. Not even Iranians understand Iran."

*The Persians*, by Gene R. Garthwaite (*Wiley-Blackwell, 2005 hardcover; 2006 paperback*), page 336.

Published in the Wiley-Blackwell's "Peoples of Asia" Series, this book will appeal more as a college textbook on Iranian history although its usefulness for the general reader should not be underestimated. Chapters include: Persia: place and idea; The Achaemenians (550-331 BC); Alexander (330-323 BC), the Seleucides (312-129 BC) and the Parthians (247 BC to 224 AD); The Sasanians (224-651 AD); "Non-Iran" Arabs, Turks and Mongols in Iran; The Safavids (1501-1722); The Qajars (1796-1926); The Pahlavis and the Islamic Republican Iran (1921-2003). Gene R. Garthwaite is a professor of history at Dartmouth College.

He is also the author of *Khans and Shahs: A Documentary Analysis of the Bakhtiari in Iran* (1983).

### *A History of Iran: Empire of the Mind*

by Michael Axworthy (*Basic Books, New York, 2008 hardcover; 2010 paperback; Penguin Books, 2009*), 358 p.

This book is a historical account of "the remarkable resilience of the Idea of Iran" despite "invasions, conquerors, battles and revolutions." Chapters include: Origins: Zoroaster, the Achaemenids and the Greeks; The Iranian revival: Parthians and Sassanids; Islam and invasions: Arabs, Turks and Mongols; Shiism and the Safavids; The Fall of the Safavids; The Crisis

## *A Guide to Guidebooks on Iran*

the second and last part  
Rasoul Sorkhabi



of the Qajary monarch; The Pahlavis and the Revolution of 1979; Iran since the revolution; From Khatami to Ahmadinejad and the Iranian predicament. Michael Axworthy is a Lecturer at the University of Exeter in England. From 1986-2000 he served as the head of Iran desk at the British Foreign Office and from 1998-2000.

His previous book, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, was published in 2006.*

### *The Persians: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Iran*

by Homa Katouzian (*Yale University Press, 2009 hardcover; 2010 paperback*), 448 p.

Dr. Homa Katouzian teaches Iranian history and Persian literature at St. Antony's College and the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford. He has published numerous books in English and Persian on Iran's history, economy and literature; he is also editor of the journal *Iranian Studies*. His book, *The Persians*, includes an overview of Iran's historical shaping with a focus on the modern era from the Constitutional Revolution through the Pahlavi rule to the Islamic Republic. Coming from the pen of a native Iranian scholar, the book is a valuable contribution to the literature.

Another book by Homa Katouzian and similar to *The Persians* in its coverage but very modest in length and depth, this book is published in Oneworld's "Beginner's Guide" Series, and as its name implies, it is a basic level book to read. Highly recommended. Chapters include: Ancient Persia; Medieval Persia; The Dilemma of modernization and the revolution for law; Iran under the Pahlavis; The 1979 revolution and the Islamic republic; Post-Khomeini Iran.

### *Iran: A Beginner's Guide*

by Homa Katouzian (*Oneworld, Oxford, 2013*), 268 p.

Another book by Homa Katouzian and similar to *The Persians* in its coverage but very modest in length and depth, this book is published in Oneworld's "Beginner's Guide" Series, and as its name implies, it is a basic level book to read. Highly recommended. Chapters include: Ancient Persia; Medieval Persia; The Dilemma of modernization and the revolution for law; Iran under the Pahlavis; The 1979 revolution and the Islamic republic; Post-Khomeini Iran.

## TRAVELING IN IRAN

Traveling to Iran is not easy. Aside from politics, foreign travelers face challenges in terms of language, logistics and the sheer geographic expanse of Iran. Indeed, given the long history, rich culture, cuisine, and varied landscape of the country, tourism can be a significant way for Iran to strengthen local economies and international cultural ties although this has not been fully exploited.

Travel guidebooks in English (and other languages) can be a great tool to facilitate tourism in Iran and make the traveler's experiences comfortable and fruitful. Fortunately, there are a couple of travel guidebooks on Iran in English (described below) which are useful for foreign visitors. Although these travel guidebooks also provide maps, for a single large map of Iran I should mention *Iran Travel Reference Map* (at the scale of 1:1,800,000) published by International Travel Maps (2008, 4th edition). The same publisher has also brought out *Tehran and Northern Iran Map* (2009).



***Lonely Planet Iran (Country Guide)***

by Andrew Burke, Virginia Maxwell and Iain Shearer (*Lonely Planet*, 2012, 6th edition), 368 p.

Lonely Planet is a well-known brand for travel guidebooks. Therefore, *Lonely Planet Iran* is probably the most widely used book by foreign travelers in Iran. First published in 1992 (authored by David St. Vincent), the book has gone through six editions, a further testimony to its popularity. Like the other *Lonely Planet Country Guides*, this book is packed with information about how to travel to, and where to stay and eat, and what to see in various towns of Iran. The 2001 and 2008 editions of the book were about sixty pages longer than the sixth edition. Mention should also be made of ***Lonely Planet Farsi (Persian) Phrasebook*** by Yavar Dehghani (2008, 2nd edition) which foreign travelers will find very handy and useful in their conversations with Iranians.

***Iran, Persia: Ancient and Modern***

by Helen Loveday, Bruce Wannell, Christoph Baumer and Bijan Omrani (*Odyssey Illustrated Guides*, 2010, 4th edition, *Airphoto International Ltd.*), 464 p.

This book was first published in 1993 and written by Helen Loveday, a Swiss historian of Central Asian cultures. Subsequently three other scholars have joined Dr. Loveday in revising and expanding the book from a 260-page to a 460-page work. Profusely illustrated with color photographs of people, crafts and landscape, what sets this book apart from *Lonely Planet Country Guide* is its scholarly effort to present Iran's history and geography, and thus situate the traveler's experience on a firm literacy.

***Iran: Bradt Travel Guide***

by Hillary Smith and Patricia L. Baker (*Bradt Travel Guides*, 2014, 4th edition)

This is another Iran travel guidebook which was first published in 2001 and currently enjoys its fourth edition. It has a large number of color photographs. Hillary Smith, an independent writer and lecturer, first went to Iran in 1976 and has visited the country regularly since then. Patricia Baker, Ph.D. who died in 2008, first visited Iran in 1971 and was author of *Islamic Textiles* (British Museum Press, 1975) and *Islam and the Religious Arts* (2004).

***Persian Pilgrimages: Journeys across Iran,***

by Afshin Molavi (*W.W. Norton*, New York, 2002 hardcover). Also published as ***The Soul of Iran: A Nation's Journey to Freedom*** (*W.W. Norton*, 2005 paperback, with new introduction and epilogue), 335 p.

Afshin Molavi's book is not strictly a travel guidebook but a travelogue. However, it is included in this list because the book covers a comprehensive journey to various parts of Iran including Tehran, Rey, Tabriz, Shiraz, Persepolis, Mashhad, Tous, Neishapour, Isfahan, Kashan, Ahavaz, Abadan and Khoramshahr. An informative and entertaining book.

Molavi writes, "For more than a year, I traveled across this old and sophisticated and tormented land to observe, listen, discuss, think, and write." Afshin Molavi holds an M.A. from John Hopkins University and has contributed articles on Iran to Reuters, The Washington Post, and Foreign Affairs. He is currently a research fellow at The New American Foundation in Washington D.C. ■

# PERSIAN, FROM THINKING TO SPEAKING

**An essay in linguistics on speaking and writing in authentic Persian**

**ASHAKOOROSH AMIR-JAHED,**  
Published by: Amir-Jahed Pars Foundation)

## OVER A MILLENNIUM AND HALF A CRY FOR FREEDOM

The book “Persian, from thinking to speaking”, authored by Asha K. Amir-Jahed and written in Persian, targets those Persian speaking readers who are fond of reading and speaking Persian in its original purity without foreign words from Arabic, Turkish, and other languages. The reasons for educated nationalistic Iranians to deplore the intrusion of foreign words in Persian, which has its own euphonic character and vast extent of vocabulary, and for their enthusiasm and efforts to save their authentic Persian cultural heritage, are manifold. The outstanding one is Persian Patriotism trying to save the patriarchal “Good Thoughts~ Good Words, and Good Deeds” of the ancient Zoroastrian culture in a continuing struggle facing Arab invasion over a millennium past, with nefarious evidences still continuing.

This long lasting struggle, since mid seventh century A.D., has repeatedly surfaced using Persian language as the only weapon that could be used against the invaders, in a way resisting their ferocity. Attempts to reshape merciless Islam by refining it in burgeoning various multiple ideologies and sects, mainly in the form of Sophism, also showed another manifestation of that continuing struggle.

These two fronts, lingual and ideological, have firmly stood and seem standing forever until the real Persian identity is regained. Thus, Persian as a symbol of resistance, standing firm in the first four centuries of despotic Islamic dominance, showed in reality a clear example of linguistics serving in a special line of service, namely nationalism.

The reasons as well as the consequences of the Arab invasion of Persia have been scrutinized, dissected, and shown by Persian and non-Persian authors in the last fourteen centuries. Results have provided solid grounds for the educated Persian public to sense more and more the need for a decisive liberation from forced Arab supremacy under religious authority in the untouchable name of Allah, and also from the heavy burden of unnecessary Arabic words in Persian language. This state of affairs has now reached its apogee with the inhumanly oppressive Islamic government heresies in Iran.

The present cry of oppressed Iranians for freedom of thinking openly rejects Arabic culture, namely Islam and its language. Arabic words in the Persian vocabulary silently submit Persian minds to tolerance and obedience. Hence, an elaborate response to this cry is made in the theme of the present essay.

Uprising against Arabic speaking and writing in Persia initiated in the first century after Arab invasion (mid 7th A.D.), and like a real battle on a strong hold repeatedly won or lost,

it continued in the official correspondence and book keeping in Persian versus Arabic language in the first four centuries of post Sassanid time until the ultimate Persian victory saved the language with yet a heavy component of Arabic invader words.

Historically, the contribution of the great epic poet, Ferdowsi, reinvigorated Persian for the first time in the late fourth century after Arab invasion. Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh (The Book of Kings) reduced Arabic words to about a mere 8%.

The ultimate revival of nationalistic enthusiasm was reached when the first Persian Academy for expanding authentic Persian language against foreign intruder words was officially established in 1935, ordered by Reza Shah the Great. The present enthusiasm is now following the same reason, reinforced in the midst of Islamic destructive deeds aiming to eradicate basic Persian cultural foundations.

Forcing Islamic cultural tenets in schools but eliminating the ancient Persian history from official educational history books, downgrading and banning authentic Persian traditions, and even torturing and executing discontent eminent elite of the country, are clearly criminal acts against Persians and their culture that summarize the achievements of Islamic Republic of Iran in the last thirty-three years. Notwithstanding the religious oppression, supporting Arabic teaching and expanding it further acts as an unnoticeable culpable regrettably ignored, where as indeed, it needs due recognition and rectification as evidenced in this book.

This book is written in authentic Persian except when comparison of Persian with mixed Persian-Foreign words or single Arabic loan words is made for needed corrections. In its 1073 pages. ■

**When were you born and how did you become interested in writing and literature?**

I was born on January 1, 1928. Literature was an important part of my life at an early age.

When I was in high school, my father hired a French language professor to teach me French. Later, for one year, I went to a French school in Tehran. It was there that I learned how to translate books from French to Persian.

**When did your writing career begin?**

My first writing was after August 19, 1953.

**What was your writing style?**

I would call it "humor." I wrote for a publication called *Ferdowsi*. My column was called *Asemun-o-Rysmun*. These pieces were a critique of literature.

**I read your articles in *Ferdowsi*. When did you write your first book and was it *Daae Jan Napoleon* (My Uncle Napoleon)?**

No, my first book was a satire called *Bobol*.

**That is an interesting title, how did you come up with it?**

This book contained 34 stories and one of them was *Bobol*.

**When *Daae Jan Napoleon* was written Iran also made a television series from it. While I was not living in Iran at the time, when my wife and I returned for a visit, my mother presented her with the book. Once she picked it up she did not put it down until it was finished. Why was it so popular?**

This statement makes me a bit angry because that book has overshadowed all my other work. In fact the BBC inter-

AN INTERVIEW WITH

## Iraj Pezeshkzad

IRANIAN WRITER AND AUTHOR

Shahrokh Ahkami



viewed me for two days and their interest was only this book. I explained to them that this book was about two groups, one the older and more traditional and the other was comprised of the younger generation.

It is interesting because the group with the older people were in the decline of their lives and the other on the rise, still earning their education and place in life. The older group, however, did not accept the younger and constantly humiliated them. The clashes between the two were constant. You see, one of the members of the traditional older group believed that everything that happened to Iran was because of the British. This all came from the 150 years of British intervention in Iran. Somehow it became the theme of the book.

During the interview with the BBC they completely ignored this theme and censored it from the interview, despite my quoting them Sir Anthony Parsons (the last British Ambassador in Iran before

the fall of the Shah) who stated, "We, for 150 years made the decisions for Iran instead of allowing the people to make their own decisions."

Instead the BBC pushed the book as a love story. When they asked me about this, I told them of course young people are falling in love, but you are ignoring the books main theme. Anyway the book as I stated was presented as a love story. To date the producer of the show calls me every day to tell me how that my interview has the largest audience of any Persian program. I am certain he thought I would be excited about this but I told him that it did not make me happy. What would make me happy if the book was presented with the real theme and still had the highest viewers of a Persian show?

**To date into how many languages has this book been translated?**

Until the interview with the BBC, the number was eight. After the interview I was called by the publisher stating there would be a ninth translation. I must say I was surprised that it was into the Estonian language!

**Were the characters in the book real?**

No, but some of them were inspired by personalities around me.

**We all are aware how popular the book became, but what do you think made the television series so popular?**

Yes, it was popular and I am not sure why, I guess for the same reasons as the book. I want everyone to know that the only person who financially benefited by its success was the producer. After the revolution the series was pulled, but the black market continued to make print copies and video copies.

**Is there a copyright in Iran?**

Interesting question! In a place where you would have to get permission to print a condolence in a paper, no copyright pro-

tected the written works.

**How many books have you published or rather written?**

Over twenty.

**And are they all fiction?**

No some are non-fictional and deal with history of the French and Russian Revolutions and the events of June 5, 1963 in Iran, the Iranian Constitutional revolution.

**You refer to the June 5, 1963 date, for those readers who are not aware of the date's significance it was during the time when there was a strong protest over the arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini. The arrest came after a speech by Khomeini in which he attacked the Shah, Israel and America. The Shah's regime was taken by surprise with the mass demonstrations of support for Khomeini. Although the protests were quickly crushed by the military, these events established the importance and power of the Shia support against the Shah and Khomeini's acceptance as a major political leader. Is this the significance of that date?**

The mullahs said that the demonstrators, on that day, became the foundation of the Islamic revolution. The Shah stated that this date was the turning point of his reign. Based on these two statements I gathered as much information on the subject that was available and wrote the book.

**Where were you on that date?**

I was working as a diplomat at the Iranian Embassy in Czechoslovakia.

**What was the opinion of the events in Iran in Czechoslovakia and other countries? Did they look favorably at Iran?**

Different countries had different opinions, but many saw Iran as a country whose decisions were made by one person. We were acting as dip-

lomats but were void of any power. All decisions were made by the Shah. Interestingly I have never made that statement until this very moment.

**Why?**

Because the mullahs would have benefited from a statement like that! Imagine, when I was in charge at the Embassy in Western Europe, I had no idea what was going on in Iran. As I stated all the decisions were being made by one person from one place. I did write an article on Bahrain in the publication Nimrooz, a newspaper, in London. Mr. Reza Ghassemi wrote a rebuttal stating that I had false information. He said, "if there as the head of the Bahrain Bureau I knew about these statements."

In response, I sent him a copy of Alam's memoirs in which he stated, "even Mr. Khaltabari, the Foreign Minister, at the time, was not allowed to participate in these negotiations." So if Khaltabari was not allowed to participate how could a Bureau chief be privy to such secret negotiations?"

As you know Bahrain, at that time, was part of Iran. The British controlled the area and put pressure on the Shah to make a referendum in which the people of Bahrain would decide if they wanted to be independent from Iran.

**I remember in Alam's mem-**

**oirs, the former Prime Minister and member of the Royal Court, stated that the Shah said, "Give away Bahrain because over there a bunch of leftists are demonstrating against us." Do you think Iran could have kept Bahrain?**

The British and the United States backed the independence of Bahrain. They would never have allowed Bahrain to remain a part of Iran because of Bahrain's richness in oil and gas. Of course there was a show by the United Nations to see if the referendum was legitimate. They sent a representative, who well knew Bahrain's independence was prearranged, to observe the people.

**Can you tell our readers a bit about your education?**

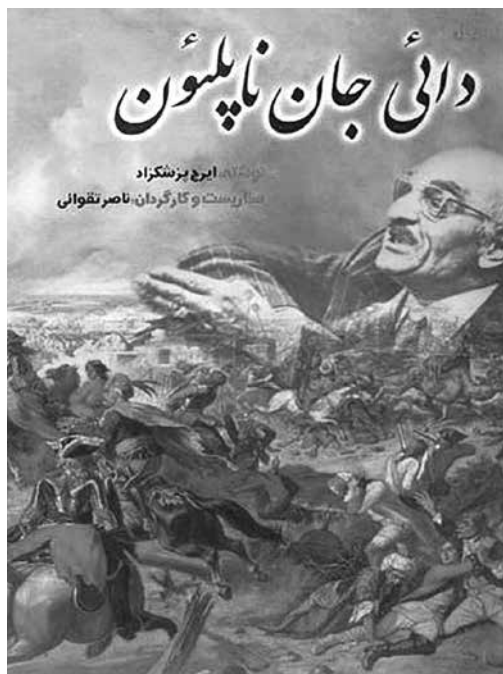
I finished my primary education in Iran. I then studied law in France. While trying to get my doctorate the currency devalued and I could no longer financially afford the goal. So, I returned to Iran where I worked as a judge in the Department of Justice for five years and then went into the foreign ministry.

**At the time you could not just get into the foreign ministry how did you make it?**

According to the law no outsiders were allowed to hold positions within the ministry. But they came up with an exam. I passed it and therefore got employed.

**During the revolution Mr. Khalatbari, the former foreign minister, was executed. One of the reasons was his position on oil and nuclear energy matters... am I correct?**

No, they wanted to execute a few people in order to instill fear in the masses. His trial was on television and you could see he was so visibly shaken by what was happening, that he was unable to correctly answer the questions posed by the court. They asked him if he agreed with the dumping of atomic waste from Austria onto Iran's soil. He was against it, but his words came out opposite. You see in the spring of 1979 he went to Austria by formal invitation.



I accompanied him as a high-ranking official. While there the Austrian government told us that the people of Austria made a referendum against all nuclear power and waste and therefore there would not be any Austrian nuclear waste dumped on Iranian soil.

Another question he failed to answer correctly was regarding the return of the Shah to Iran. He was asked how many countries made a pack not to exchange criminals to Iran. He said 38. This was crazy because four months earlier there was only a pack with three other countries and later a fourth, which was Italy. In fact the Italian Parliament rejected an exchange of prisoners. I just don't know why he answered as he did.

***Isn't it ironic that he was executed because of the nuclear issue and that is the heated topic of today? Repeatedly Mr. Khalatbari's picture accompanies discussions of this sort on Facebook.***

Unfortunately, he was a victim of circumstances. He, like most people surrounding the Shah at the end, was not an independent thinker and "yes" man. Historically when one wants to be the sole ruler he will surround himself only with people who agree with his decisions rather than those who question their decisions.

***Like yourself there have been so many qualified Iranian writers, yet an Iranian has not yet won the Noble Peace prize, why? Do you think this is because of politics?***

Well in reality we did not have anyone around to translate the books of prominent writers. You need this to have the books become known.

***How do you do this, for instance your book has been published in so many languages?***

Yes, but my book was not considered.

***Who at this time is your favorite modern Iranian writer?***

I am really not qualified to answer this question. Over the past twenty years I have only read about one or two fiction

books. My focus is on history and biography books. I would venture to say that I know more about French history than most of the French. Also, new books are very expensive. Where I live in Paris there are book markets on Saturday and Sunday where I can purchase old books for a few Euro's otherwise they run 30-40 Euro's.

***Whose biographies do you read?***

Since I have been in France I read about the French leaders from Louis XIII to the present.

***Let's go back to Daej Jan Napoleon, for a moment, you have written so many wonderful books, why is this one so popular?***

Again this does not make me happy because it has overshadowed all my other writings. Maybe it is so popular because it has sold so many copies, in a number of languages, while the writer is still alive. In Russia over 10,000 copies have been sold and that is also true in Israel, Spain and Turkey.

***Have any Iranian writers living outside of Iran created a worthy masterpiece, in your opinion?***

Unfortunately, outside of Iran there are not good publishing companies or distributors for these books and therefore it is difficult to get your hands on them. I am not sure why this is, as we are a group of a few million Diaspora.

I do not even know of a newspaper that has extensive printing. Of course occasionally you will get an invitation for a speech from Voice of America (VOA). Once in Paris I was invited to speak and read a few of my stories. They took my pictures and then in VOA they said Iraj Pezeshkzad was honored.

***You are very humble!***

No not humble, I just do not think I rise to a personality to be honored.

***Well, thank you for sharing your time with our readers.***

I thank you and it was delightful having this conversation.

## Fezana Journal article on Ancient Iranian Women

(Publication of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America, Vol:28)



**Iranian tribal woman in shooting competition on horseback in Fereydanshahr Olympiad in Iran.**

The Fezana Journal has published an article by Kaveh Farrokh on the ancient women of Iran:

As noted in the beginning of the article: "One topic that has received little attention in academia is ancient Iranian warrior women. There are in fact numerous references to ancient Iranian female warriors, from classical sources to post-Islamic Iranian literature."

It is further averred in the article that: "The rights of women in Achaemenid Persia were remarkably "modern" by today's standards: women worked in many "male" professions (e.g. carpentry, masonry, treasury clerks, artisans, winery working), enjoyed payment equity with men, attained high-level management positions supervising male and female teams, owned and controlled property, were eligible for "maternity leave," and received equitable treatment relative to men in inheritance".

The legacy of the status of the women of Iran is emphasized in the article as thus: "To this day, women in Iran's tribal regions continue to be seen wielding their weapons".

# A Perpetual Paradigm on the Concept of Time, Calendar, and Norouz

part three

DAVOOD N. RAHNI

Zodiac	Persian	Arabic	Sanskrit	Hindi	Bengal	Urdu	Tamil	Chinese
Aries	Barre	Hamal	Mesha	Vyshak	Vaisakha	Baisakh	Chaitram	Tse/Rat
Taurus	Gaw	Thur	Vrisha	Jyest	Jyestha	Jeth	Vyassie	Chau/Ox
Gemini	Dopeykar	Jawza	Mithuna	Ashadh	Ashadh	Asarh	Auni	Yin/Tiger
Cancer	Kharchang	Saratan	Karkata	Shrawun	Sravana	Sawan	Audi	Mau/Hare
Leo	Shir	Asad	Sinha	Bhadurpud	Bhadra	Bhadon	Auvani	Shin/Dragon
Virgo	Khushe	Sunbula	Kanya	Ahwin	Aswina	Asan	Paratasi	Se/Snake
Libra	Tarazu	Mizan	Tula	Kartick	Kartiku	Kartik	Arpesi	Wu/Horse
Scorpio	Kazhdom	Aqrab	Vrishiga	Margashirs	Margasirsha	Aghan	Kartiga	Wi/Sheep
Sagittarius	Kaman	Oaws	Dhanus	Poush	Pousha	Pus	Margali	Shin/Monkey
Capricorn	Bozghale	Jadi	Makara	Maugh	Magha	Magh	Tye	Yu/Rooster
Aquarius	Dul	Dalw	Kumbha	Phalgoon	Phalgoona	Phagun	Maussi	Siuh/Dog
Pisces	Mahi	Hur	Mina	Chytr	Chaitra	Chait	Punguni	Hai/Pig

TABLE I. Zodiacal Nomenclature

## YEZDEZRED AND JELALI CALENDARS

This calendar is named after the last Persian Sassanid King before the Arab invasion, Yezdezred, who mounted the throne on June 16, 632 CE. It corrected for the five day discrepancy in the Zoroastrian calendar, and was used by almost all people in Persia who were then primarily Zoroastrians by faith, but small minorities Mithraism and Mazdakism followed it, too. This calendar conformed to solar motion by the inclusion of a leap year by Omar Khayam in 1077 ACE at the bequest of Sultan Jeleleddin Malik Shah bin Alkh Ashlan Suljooghi of Persia. The Yezdezred Calendar epoch is June 16, 632 CE.

In one of his famous quatrain in Rubaiyat, Omar Khayam Nishabouri reflects on the concept of time and calendar:

*Ah, but my calculation, people say,  
Have squared the year to human  
Compass, Eh?*

*If so, by striking from the calendar  
Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday-  
why not enjoy the present*

The Persian plateau, the area that we now know as Iran has used many calendars throughout its long history. During the early period, it used the Chaldean, Babylonian, and Zoroastrian calendars. However, after the advent of Islam it used a solar based Islamic calendar. Whereas the rest of Islamic and Arabic world, they used a lunar based calendar with its epoch anchored on the immigration (Hegira) of the prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Medina. Within the past two centuries, four calendars, Gre-

gorian (primarily in larger cities and of correspondence with the west), Iranian lunar Hegira for religious observances, the Borji, based on zodiac signs, and Solar Hegira, have been widely used. A Fifth calendar, Turco-Mongolian was also used in the small Caspian region Turkman Sahara and Gorgan. In the latter part of the Pahlavi dynasty era (mid 1970's), a new calendar, yet, based on the coronation of the Cyrus the Great of the Achaemenids was devised. It currently stands at 2587. (Iranian calendar)

The Borji or Zodiac calendar was extensively used, occasionally as the official calendar, in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In this calendar, the beginning of the month corresponded with the date of the entry of the sun into the various signs of the zodiac. Although Arabic names of the months were used for official purposes, the populace nevertheless, preferred the Persian name equivalents.

## BORJI AND SHAHANSHAHI CALENDARS

The Borji calendar was replaced with the Iranian solar calendar by Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925. In the mid-70's, the government unsuccessfully experimented with a calendar called Shahanshahi that had its epoch at 599 BCE, when Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire, was enthroned. However, it was found to be impractical and politically unpopular among certain segments of the society. The New Year is observed on March 21, the vernal equinox that has its origin in the Chaldean, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Zoroastrian calendars. The

Borji Calendar epoch is July 16, 622 CE. The Shanshahi Calendar epoch is 559 BCE, presumably the birth of Cyrus the Great, the Persian King from the Archaemenid Dynasty. There is, however, a movement to the concept of utilizing the first Persian King Dia'O'Ko of Medean Dynasty, where the epoch is 708 BCE.

## INDIAN CALENDAR

At the peak of Independence movement in the 1940's, India found itself with no less than 30 calendars! Such diversity had its roots back in 3000 BCE, from a mother calendar called Kali Yuga on dawn that was based on many bits and pieces of information but no coherent astronomical data. After the advent of the Muslims in 1200 CE, a lunar Hegira calendar was adopted for administrative and Muslim religious purposes. This calendar was continually used through 1757 (when the British brought the Gregorian calendar) except for one short period (1556-1605) when Emperor Akbar imposed his own calendar. At one point, March 12 was also celebrated, but now the harvest festival of deep waali marks the New Year. The date which we know as March 21 1957, would be called Chaitra 7 in Bengal, Chitra 8 in Orissa, Phalguna 8 in the South, and, Chaitra Vadi 6 or Phalguna Vadi 6 by the Indian lunar calendar. Ironically, the Indian solar year begins around April 13/14, according to the western calendar. This year is divided into 6 seasons of two months each: Vasanta, Grishma, Varsha, Saruda, Hemanta, Sisira. One of the Indian Calendars has an epoch of 569 BCE.

Month	Persian	Arabic	Eastern (Afghani Pushtoo)	Western (Afghani Pushtoo)
1	Farvardin	Muharram	Hasan wa huseyn	Hasan huseyn
2	Ordibehesht	Safar	Gul shakara	Sapara. thapara
3	Khordad	Rabi al-awwal	Rumbey chor	Lumrey khor
4	Tir	Rabi ath-thani	Dwayema chor	Dwaheyma khor
5	Amordad	Jamadi al-ulya	Dreyema chor	Dreyma khor
6	Shahrivar	Jamdi al-akhira	Thalorema chor	Thalarema khor
7	Mehr	Rajab	Do Hadaï/ Bzerga Miasht	Do hadai taali miasht
8	Aban	Sha'ban	Shawkadar	Barat
9	Azar	Ramadan	Rozha	Rozha
10	Day	Shawwal	Warukay arctar	Kuchnay akhtar
11	Bahman	Dhul-Qa'da	Miyana miasht	Miyana
12	Esfand	Dhul-Hijja	Loy achtar	Loy akhtar

**TABLE II. Names of the Months**

In Old Pahlavi Persian, the Achaemenid era, the days of the week, beginning with Saturday were: Kayvan-shid, Mehr-shid, Mah-shid, Bahram-shid, Tir-shid, Ormoz-shid, and Nahid-shid.

**ERA OF NEBAKANEZER**

It was during the reign of Assyrian King Nebakanezer (747-734 BCE), when a solar based, 365 days duration corrected version of the Babylonian solar-lunar calendar was devised that had no leap year, but every fifth year began a day earlier. It had 12 months of 30 days each with five days added at the end. Again, this calendar was extensively used in the Southwest Asia/North Africa (currently referred to with the politically fabricated name, the Middle East), and was finally adopted by the Greek Seleucides. Its holidays were essentially the same as the Babylonians, and in certain areas local names were used to denote the months, but the Babylonian names were predominantly used throughout. From the time of the invasion of Egypt by the Persians in the 6th Century BCE until the calendar reform there by Diocletian in 284 A.C.E., the Egyptian calendar was identical to that of Nebakanezer. The Era of Nebakanezer epoch is February 26, 747 BCE.

**MACEDONIAN CALENDAR**

This calendar was very similar to the Babylonian and Nabonasser calendars used widely since the 9th Century BCE, except that the New Year was celebrated in October, instead of March. It was a lunar-solar calendar, using a 354 lunar year with a periodic intercalated month of 29 or 30 days to correct for divergence between solar and lunar motions. This is the first documented calendar where the month was either divided into ten or seven day intervals. The Macedonian names of the months were: 1

Dios, 2 Apellaeus, 3 Andynaeus, 4 Peritius, 5 Dystrus, 6 Xanticus, 7 Artemisios, 8 Daeisius, 9 Panaemus, 10 Lous, 11 Gorpiaeus, 12 Hyperberetaeus. The Macedonian Calendar epoch is October 4, 526 BCE.

Currently, the Holiday Season in Greece begins on the morning of Christmas Eve with the advent of Kallikantzari, the mischievous goblins. It is a gremlin like mythological creature that ascends upon the earth from inside around mid-night, similar to its American cousins to check what all the excitement is about (11). In order to placate Killikantzari, sausages and sweets are left for them atop the roofs. A series of ceremonial rituals commencing on Christmas ends by the feast of Epiphany.

**HEBREW CALENDAR**

The Jewish calendar is influenced greatly by the 6th Century BCE Babylonian exiles, had its origin in the 7th century as an observation rather than calculation based lunar calendar. It was finally fixed as a lunar-solar calendar. The Hebrew New Year, at one point celebrated in Nissan, i.e. in spring, was later moved to Tishri, when the Babylonians celebrated it. The Hebrew names for the months were also replaced with Babylonian names. So, for calendric purpose, the day begins at 6:00 am, but it commences at sunset for religious purposes.

The day consists of 24 hours, each being divided into 1080 parts, or 3.3 seconds each. The Jewish calendar is complicated by certain religious requirements that pre-determine that certain events not fall on specific days. For instance, New Year must not fall on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday. The Day of Atonement must not fall on Friday or Sunday; the day of Tabernacles must not fall on a Saturday; and, Passover and Pentecost must precede the New Year by 163 and 113 days, respectively.

The Hebrew names of the months: 1 Tishri, 2 Marheshvan, 3 Kislev, 4 Tebeth, 5 Shebat, 6 Adar, 7 Nissan, 8 Lyyar, 9 Sivan, 10 Tammuz, 11 Ab, 12 Ellul. The Jewish calendar uses a solar cycle of 28 years and a lunar cycle of 19 years. The Hebrew calendar epoch, the “year of creation: Anno Mundi” is 23 September, 3762 BCE.

**SELEUCID AND ERA OF ANTIOCH CALENDAR**

Based on its precursor, the calendar used in Syria, Seleucus Necator, one of Alexander’s generals, devised this calendar in the 4th Century BCE. He established an empire that ultimately stretched from Asia Minor to India. The calendar was a solar one of 365 days with an extra day every fourth year to account for divergence of solar motion. It was comprised of 12 months of 30 days each and an extra five (or in leap year six) days at the year’s end. Due to the rather extensive size of the empire and its diverse religious and ethnic groups, many variations of the same calendar were used. For instance, Greeks in Syria and the native Syrians celebrated the New Year on October 9, Greeks and Indians on September 1, and Persians and Chaldeans on March 21. But soon after the Roman invasion of Syria in 64 BCE, the Syrians adopted yet another variation of the calendar, moving back the New Year from October to August, with the Seleucid epoch in 48 BCE, called the Era of Antioch. The Seleucid Calendar epoch is October 2, 312 BCE.

*to be continued*

English	Persian	Hindu	Indian	Tibetan	Burmese
Sunday	Yek-shanbeh	Ravi-var	Etwar	Gyah-nyi-ma	Tanang-ganve
Monday	Do-Shanbeh	Som-var	Peer	Gyah-zla-va	Tanang-la
Tuesday	Se-shanbeh	Mangal-var	Mungul	Gyah-mig-amar	Ang-gar
Wednesday	Chahar-Shanbeh	Budh-var	Boodh	Gyah-thag-pa	Bhdhha-hu
Thursday	Panj-Shanbeh	Guru-var	Jumerat	Gyah-phur-bu	Kyasa-pade
Friday	Adineh	Sukra-var	Juma	Gyah-pa-sangs	Sok-kya
Saturday	Shanbeh	Sani-var	Sunnecher	Gyah-spen-pa	Cha-na

**TABLE III. Names of the days of the Week\***

## An Interview with

**Dick Davis****Professor and Translator****Part Two**

***Tell us about Jahankhatun...what attracted you to her work?***

Many things. To begin with as far as I know she's the one Persian woman poet from before the 19<sup>th</sup> century (she's 14<sup>th</sup> century) whose complete divan has come down to us (and it's a big divan, she has three times as many ghazals as Hafez for example). This in itself would make her of major interest. Then what we know of her life makes her a fascinating figure – a princess, the daughter of a king, her father murdered when she was in her teens, a poet at her uncle's court until he too is murdered after a coup d'état when she's around 30; then the slim available evidence points to her enduring imprisonment and exile, until she finally makes it home again and lives to a fairly ripe old age. Her uncle, at whose court she lived, was the major patron of Hafez as well as of a number of other important poets; she certainly knew Hafez's poems because she quotes them, and it's extremely likely that she knew him personally.

She was lucky in that the family she was born into didn't segregate women in the way that was done at many Islamic courts in the Middle Ages; aristocratic women took part in their court's life along with the men. Also she was taught to read and write as a child, which was quite rare for women at the time. And then there is her poetry, which is just marvelous. When you start to read it, it can sound like the same old stuff as it were - nightingales, and roses, and cypress trees, and the absent beloved, and midnight tears, and moths fluttering around candles, and the whole kit and caboodle of medieval Persian lyric poetry. But, as you read, her own voice emerges, and it's an extremely beguiling, individual voice – tender, plaintive, angry, witty, acerbic, very conscious of the precariousness of her situation as a woman in a man's world and, in what we can take to be her later poems, as a member of a deposed and despised dynasty. There's no-one quite like her, and her best poems are heart-breakingly beautiful.

***I read that you memorized the Rubayat as a child. I personally consider Omar Kayyam one of the lesser poets. I wonder why Fitzgerald chose him and how good was his translation?***

It's pretty certain that virtually none of the quatrains attributed to Khayyam are actually by him, and so his status as a poet is not really discussable. Though, as you indicate, collections of medieval Rubayat are not generally thought of as among the major productions of Persian poetry. FitzGerald changes the status of the poems in his translation; in Persian the quatrains are discrete poems (and probably by a variety of poets), but FitzGerald selects and arranges, and produces a kind of narrative out of his selection. It's been accurately said that he translated a poem that didn't exist (though most of its separate constituents existed). He's pretty free in some places (he "mashes" – his word – quatrains together sometimes, a couple of the quatrains are taken from other sources than the ms. of "Khayyam" that he mainly worked from, and at

least one quatrain he seems to have simply made up, as no original has been found for it). It's been implied that his Persian wasn't very good, but his letters to his Persian teacher, Cowell, about his work on the poems still exist and it's clear from these that his Persian was more than up to the task. For example, he queries a reading because it doesn't scan properly – to be able to pick that up implies quite a sophisticated knowledge of Persian verse. And there are other similar examples of his noticing things a novice in Persian would almost certainly miss.

The reason he chose to translate "Khayyam" was probably because he found the quatrains extremely sympathetic to his own circumstances and world-view; he was a homosexual atheist, and he (in my opinion quite correctly) thought he discerned both homosexuality and atheism in the quatrains he was translating. And there was an even more personal reason; he was almost certainly in love with his Persian teacher, Cowell. Cowell married, and then sailed for India; his parting gift to FitzGerald was the ms. of "Khayyam"'s poems that FitzGerald worked from. His letters to Cowell in India about the translation were his way of staying in touch with the person he loved, and indeed his Rubaiyat can be seen as a sort of disguised love poem. How good a translation is it? Well, as I said, it's fairly free in places. On the other hand there is no other translation of Persian poetry into English that comes so near to conveying to a reader who is without Persian what Persian verse is actually like. The feeling is right, the tone is right, the sentiments are right, the form is as right as it can be given the different rules of Persian and English verse. It's an extraordinary achievement, and every English speaker who loves Persian poetry is immeasurably in FitzGerald's debt. To carp at what he did, in the name of more accurate scholarship, seems to me to be churlishly ungrateful. We should all do so well, and then perhaps we can begin to nit-pick.

***Which of the many works you have translated proved to be the most difficult and why?***

Hafez is by far the most difficult poet I've tried to translate, and in fact I once published an essay, which achieved some notoriety, called *On Not Translating Hafez*, in which I set out why I thought his work was impossible to translate. Nevertheless, a few years later I found myself trying to undertake the task. The richness of his language, his constant allusiveness, his almost equally constant ambiguity, the way he can – seemingly out of nowhere - completely change the direction of a poem, the play of different registers within the same poem – all these things make his poems a veritable mine-field for a translator. And one cannot but fail in translating Hafez; the only thing you can try to do is, as Beckett says, "fail better".

***Which is your favorite chapter of the Shahnameh? How long did it take you to translate that?***

Very hard to choose, but it would have to be either the story of Seyavash or the story of Esfandiyar. Those stories belong together in a way; they are about the same problem, but their protagonists find different solutions to the problem, both fatal. Ferdowsi's writing in those tales is a thing to marvel at; spare and strong as it always is, but rich and nuanced, compassionate, at the same time; profoundly human and humane. Translating the Shahnameh took me seven years. They were wonderful years too, I learned an enormous amount from that experience.

***Who was your favorite professor of the Persian***



***studies you took at university and why? Did you ever study under Richard Frye?***

You know I hardly studied Persian at university. My undergraduate degree, and MA, are in English Literature. My advisor for my PhD was Norman Calder, who was really an Arabist, though he knew Persian very well too. But when I was officially his student he didn't spend a lot of time teaching me – mainly he said, “Go away and read the Shahnameh and come back with a Dissertation subject”. Before I ever did my PhD, Norman and I had shared a house in Tehran, and when I started to learn Persian he took me through classical Persian poems. I remember almost the first thing we read together was the first book of Rumi's Masnavi, which is like starting to read poetry in English by opening Paradise Lost and embarking on Book. But Norman was a good teacher, extremely patient and extremely meticulous, and he made me work hard at it. Perhaps that's the reason he felt he didn't have to browbeat me too much when he became my PhD advisor, years later. But by far my best Persian teacher has been my wife, Afkham, bless her, in that she's always been there and she's always been my first recourse when I get stuck on something. I could never have done any of the work I've done in Persian without her, none of it.

I never studied under Frye, though we have met, and I have great admiration for his writings.

***What was the subject of your doctoral thesis?***

I can't remember its title exactly, but it was about father-son and king-subject conflicts in the Shahnameh. The basic thesis was that although the Shahnameh is clearly a text that celebrates both patriarchy and monarchy, when there is conflict between father and son, or between king and subject, the reader's sympathies are clearly directed towards the “inferior” – the son or the subject – in the relationship. The fathers and the kings have the power, but the sons and the subjects occupy the moral high ground as it were. This isn't in fact always the case, but it is the case often enough for it to be a recurrent structural motif in the poem, and of course it substantially complicates the poem; good and bad in such conflicts become inherently ambiguous, with society pulling one way and conscience pulling the other way.

***When did you first go to Iran and in what capacity? How did you end up teaching at Tehran University and what did you teach?***

The British Council was recruiting people to teach English at Tehran University; I applied and got one of the positions; that was in 1970. After a year there was a row between the Council and the University and the contracts were cancelled, but by that time I had met Afkham, who later became my wife, and I wanted to stay because of her, so I found another teaching job at a liberal arts college. I stayed at that job for 7 years, until 1978.

***Tell us about the unique features of classical Persian poetry? About its meter and format, which make it different than other poetry and does the artistry of the calligraphy of the Arabic script itself influence the poetry which would be lost in translation?***

This would require a book to answer properly. The first thing to be aware of is its extreme formality. It's metrically highly dexter-

ous, complex, and various (Hafez uses over 20 different meters); it rhymes obsessively – there is no such thing as an unrhymed line in Classical Persian verse (what looks like an unrhymed line in a rubai is a half line; the line as a whole rhymes). And in fact a minor medieval poet, Shatranji, says in one of his rubaiyat, “The beauty of a verse is in its rhyme”. The meters of Persian poetry are quantitative, depending on syllable length. Though it has many meters it only has two common forms – mono rhyme (the same rhyme sound is used throughout the whole poem, and this can go on for over 30 lines sometimes) or couplets. Narrative poems are in couplets, virtually all other poems are in mono rhyme. There are a couple of hybrid forms, that have the equivalent of a refrain in English, but they are rare. So, broadly, we can say that Persian has many meters but only two forms, whereas metrical English poetry has only two meters that are at all common but many forms (blank verse, the couplet, the sonnet, the ballad ... and so on). It's a rather sweeping statement but it's generally true that much of classical Persian poetry's rhetoric, particularly but not exclusively in the short poem, derives from the rhetoric of praise poetry, and this rhetoric is used fairly indiscriminately to talk about a beloved, or a patron, or God. Some poets, e.g. Hafez, deliberately write poems in which it's very hard to decide which of these three is being addressed, and in fact this multiple ambiguity, the indeterminacy of what the poem is actually about, is a large part of the aesthetic point of the poem; it's what the poem is doing. Confronted with such a poem a western reader's instinct tends to be to want to say it's “really” about God, or it's “really” about a beloved, but this instinct should be resisted; the indeterminacy is a major part of what the poem is, which can be discomfiting at first for people used mainly to European literatures. Of course many such poems really are about only one referent, but some aren't, and one has to be open to that possibility. Perhaps that's enough to be going on with.

It's true that calligraphy is a much prized art in the Islamic world, including in Iran, but I don't think it has particularly influenced the forms of Persian poetry. The main reason is that writing a poem down was always seen as secondary to performing the poem, often with musical accompaniment of one kind or another. We say, “to write a poem”; the equivalent phrase in Persian means “to speak a poem” and this indicates the essentially oral nature of the art form in the classical Persian world. Both Hafez and Jahan Khatun (and many other poets) talk with pride and pleasure about the musical performance of their poems. The writing down came later, as a kind of after-thought, so that others could perform the poems too; but the performance was the thing that really mattered, that's what the poem was seen to be, not the words on the page. Over time that changed, and the text itself became more important, but in the “classical” period this performance aspect of a poem was still paramount.

***I read that you have no desire to go back to Iran since the revolution and want to remember it the way it was.***

Personally I was pro revolution even though I had friends in the royal family and among the old aristocracy like the sons of the famous PM Mirza Hassan Ashtiani Mostowfi al Mamalek of Vanak. I shared your experience of marching along with the protestors and the euphoria of the Iranian Spring albeit short lived. Both the Pahlavis and the IRI have their good points and bad and what I did note when I went back in 2008 for the first time since the revolution was a greater sense of equality and less class barriers than before.

*I was in Iran in 2008. It was great seeing old friends. There was a certain sadness due to the economic stagnation caused by the crippling sanctions but the culture and the civic sense survive as do the values of friendship and family. I think you should go back. Any thoughts on that you wish to share?*

Well, the heart has its reasons that Reason knows nothing of, as Pascal says. I might go back to Iran one day, but as I say I'm in no hurry to.

*Tell us about your own poetry. How would you characterize your style? Is there a common theme or motif or subject or do you write it on everything?*

Well, as you might expect from what I've said above, it's metrical, and tends to be written in traditional forms. Poetry was my first love, before pretty well everything else, and it has remained at the center of my life. I'm not sure why, and I suspect it's as much something atavistic as explicable by conscious decision. My style is fairly plain and fairly understated; I don't shout much in my poems. If they were pictures I guess they'd be water-colors, or pencil or charcoal drawings. My themes come out of the life I've lived; a lot of love poems, a lot of poems about travel, a lot of poems about what happens when different cultures come up against each other. Getting to know Persian poetry has definitely influenced the way I write; for example I've written some poems in mono rhyme, imitating Persian models. And I write quite a lot of epigrams, a form that Persian delights in. But it's also influenced my poems in more subtle ways that it's harder for me to put my finger on; perhaps an interest in a certain delicacy of sensibility that I think of as particularly Persian. I want people to like my poems, obviously, but I don't proselytize for them as I do for my translations. With the translations I feel I know I'm doing something useful in putting them out into the world; but with my poems, who knows? I feel it's for others to decide the worth of my poems, if they have any. Of course I hope they do, or I wouldn't write them.

*Of all your literary awards which one do you value the most?*

I was elected a Fellow of The Royal Society of Literature in 1981; at the time I think I was the youngest Fellow. This meant a lot to me, especially coming from the background I did – very much a “wrong side of the tracks” sort of a background. I felt the life I had chosen for myself, a life of books and poetry, had been in some sense validated, that it hadn't been an awful, idiotic mistake.

*Did you find the business of getting your writing published and marketed and sold, difficult and daunting?*

I've always been lucky with my Persian translations. Penguin Classics took the first one, which was a real stroke of luck, and since then everything of that nature that I've done has been published by Mage Publishers in very beautiful hardback editions; Mage then typically sells the paperback rights to Penguin, or in one case to Random House. I've been generally lucky too with my own poetry, in that I've always found a publisher for my books, but that has sometimes been more of a shop-around. I very rarely send poems to journals; usually only if an editor asks me for something, which happens from time to time.

## Iranian Researcher MARYAM MIRZAKHANI Receives the 2014 Clay Research Award



Maryam Mirzakhani, an Iranian university professor and mathematician at Stanford University, is the recipient of the 2014 Clay Research Award from the Clay Mathematics Institute. Mirzakhani well-known for her prominent theories on geometry and ergodic theory, received the award along with Peter Scholz, another

prominent mathematician on Algebraic geometry.

Mirzakhani was introduced as one of 10 selected young minds in North America by Popular Science Journal in 2005. She has received several scientific awards so far.

Her research interests include Teichmuller theory, hyperbolic geometry, ergodic theory, and symplectic geometry.

Mirzakhani is an alumna of the National Organization for Development of Exceptional Talents (NODET), in Tehran, Iran. She studied at *Farzanegan* High School. She found international recognition as a brilliant teenager after receiving gold medals at both the 1994 International Mathematical Olympiad (Hong Kong) and the 1995 International Mathematical Olympiad (Toronto), where she finished with a perfect score.

Mirzakhani obtained her BS in Mathematics (1999) from the *Sharif* University of Technology. She holds a PhD from Harvard University (2004), where she worked under the supervision of the Fields Medallist Curtis McMullen. She was a Clay Mathematics Institute Research Fellow and a professor at Princeton University.

Mirzakhani has made several important contributions to the theory of moduli spaces of Riemann surfaces. In her early work, Maryam Mirzakhani discovered a formula expressing the volume of a moduli space with a given genus as a polynomial in the number of boundary components. This led her to obtain a new proof for the celebrated conjecture of Edward Witten on the intersection numbers of tautology classes on moduli space as well as an asymptotic formula for the length of simple closed geodesics on a compact hyperbolic surface.

Her subsequent work has focused on Teichmuller Dynamics of Moduli Space. In particular, she was able to prove the long-standing conjecture that William Thurston's earthquake flow on Teichmullerspace is ergodic.



## Stanford's MARYAM MIRZAKHANI Wins Fields Medal

Maryam Mirzakhani is [the first Iranian and] the first woman in the world to ever win the Fields Medal – known as the “Nobel Prize of Mathematics” – in recognition of her contributions to the understanding of the symmetry of curved surfaces.

By Bjorn Carey

Stanford Report, August 12, 2014

Maryam Mirzakhani:

*This is a great honor. I will be happy if it encourages young female scientists and mathematicians.*

*I am sure there will be many more women winning this kind of award in coming years.*

Maryam Mirzakhani, a professor of mathematics at Stanford, has been awarded the 2014 Fields Medal, the most prestigious honor in mathematics. Mirzakhani is the first woman to win the prize, widely regarded as the “Nobel Prize of mathematics,” since it was established in 1936.

“This is a great honor. I will be happy if it encourages young female scientists and mathematicians,” Mirzakhani said. “I am sure there will be many more women winning this kind of award in coming years.”

Officially known as the International Medal for Outstanding Discoveries in Mathematics, the Fields Medal will be presented by the International Mathematical Union on Aug. 13 at the International Congress of Mathematicians, held this year in Seoul, South

Korea. Mirzakhani is the first Stanford recipient to win this honor since Paul Cohen in 1966.

The award recognizes Mirzakhani’s sophisticated and highly original contributions to the fields of geometry and dynamical systems, particularly in understanding the symmetry of curved surfaces, such as spheres, the surfaces of doughnuts and of hyperbolic objects. Although her work is considered “pure mathematics” and is mostly theoretical, it has implications for physics and quantum field theory.

“On behalf of the entire Stanford community, I congratulate Maryam on this incredible recognition, the highest honor in her discipline, the first ever granted to a woman,” said Stanford President John Hennessy. “We are proud of her achieve-

ments, and of the work taking place in our math department and among our faculty. We hope it will serve as an inspiration to many aspiring mathematicians.”

### ‘LIKE SOLVING A PUZZLE’

Mirzakhani was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. As a young girl she dreamed of becoming a writer. By high school, however, her affinity for solving mathematical problems and working on proofs had shifted her sights.

“It is fun – it’s like solving a puzzle or connecting the dots in a detective case,” she said. “I felt that this was something I could do, and I wanted to pursue this path.”

Mirzakhani became known to the international math scene as a teenager, winning gold medals at both the 1994 and 1995 Interna-

tional Math Olympiads – she finished with a perfect score in the latter competition. Mathematicians who would later be her mentors and colleagues followed the mathematical proofs she developed as an undergraduate.

After earning her bachelor’s degree from Sharif University of Technology in 1999, she began work on her doctorate at Harvard University under the guidance of Fields Medal recipient Curtis McMullen. She possesses a remarkable fluency in a diverse range of mathematical techniques and disparate mathematical cultures – including algebra, calculus, complex analysis and hyperbolic geometry. By borrowing principles from several fields, she has brought a new level of understanding to an area of mathematics called low dimensional topology.

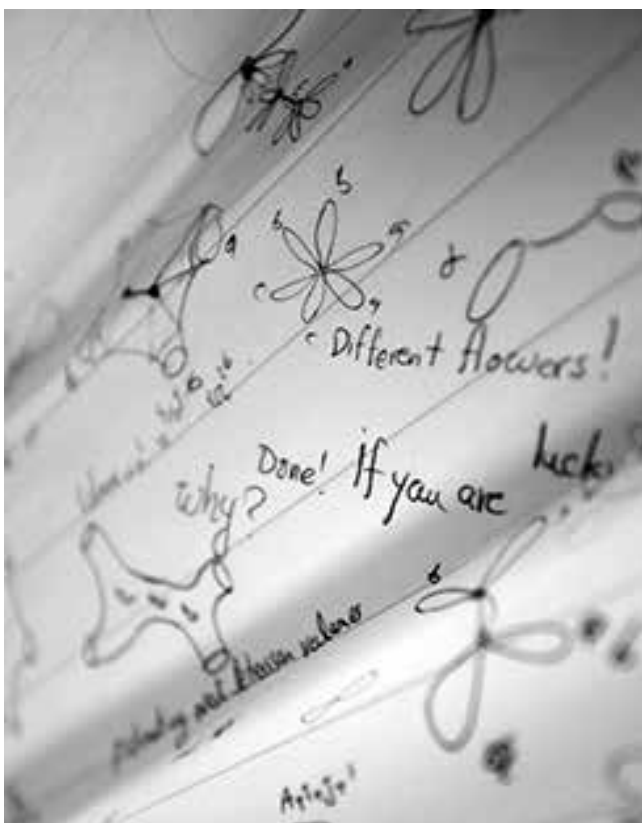
Mirzakhani's earliest work involved solving the decades-old problem of calculating the volumes of moduli spaces of curves on objects known as Riemann surfaces. These are geometric objects whose points each represent a different hyperbolic surface. These objects are mostly theoretical, but real-world examples include amoebae and doughnuts. She solved this

by drawing a series of loops across their surfaces and calculating their lengths.

"What's so special about Maryam, the thing that really separates her, is the originality in how she puts together these disparate pieces," said Steven Kerckhoff, a mathematics professor at Stanford and one of Mirzakhani's collaborators. "That was the case starting with her the-



Doodling is the way of her thinking and concentrating, about what her 3-year-old daughter thinks she paints!



*Mirzakhani: "... It is the reason why doing research is challenging as well as attractive. It is like being lost in a jungle and trying to use all the knowledge that you can gather to come up with some new tricks, and with some luck you might find a way out."*

sis work, which generated several papers in all the top journals. The novelty of her approach made it a real tour de force."

### PURE MATHEMATICS

From 2004 to 2008, she was a Clay Mathematics Institute Research Fellow and an assistant professor at Princeton University. In 2008, she became a professor of mathematics at Stanford, where she lives with her husband and 3-year-old daughter.

Mirzakhani's recent research further investigates the symmetry of surface geometry, particularly within theories regarding Teichmüller dynamics. In general, her work can best be described as pure mathematics – research that investigates entirely abstract concepts of nature that might not have an immediately obvious application.

"Oftentimes, research into these areas does have unexpected applications, but that isn't what motivates mathematicians like Maryam to pursue it. Rather, the motivation is to understand, as deeply as possible, these basic mathematical structures," said Ralph Cohen, a profes-

sor of mathematics and the senior associate dean for the natural sciences in Stanford's School of Humanities and Sciences. "Maryam's work really is an outstanding example of curiosity-driven research."

The work, however, could have impacts concerning the theoretical physics of how the universe came to exist and, because it could inform quantum field theory, secondary applications to engineering and material science.

Within mathematics, it has implications for the study of prime numbers and cryptography. Despite the breadth of applications of her work, Mirzakhani said she enjoys pure mathematics because of the elegance and longevity of the questions she studies.

"I don't have any particular recipe," Mirzakhani said of her approach to developing new proofs. "It is the reason why doing research is challenging as well as attractive. It is like being lost in a jungle and trying to use all the knowledge that you can gather to come up with some new tricks, and with some luck you might find a way out."