



FRANCE XIII. INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE RECHERCHE EN IRAN

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The Institut français de recherche en Iran (IFRI) was established in its present form and under the above name in 1983, although in Persia it is usually referred to as *Anjoman-e īrān-šenāsī-e farānsa dar Īrān*. Since then it has been concerned with the study of the Iranian world, and thus not only with Persia, but also with countries and areas where the Persian language has been, or still is, in use (Afghanistan, the Indian subcontinent in the Mughal period, and parts of Central Asia in collaboration with the French Institute in Tashkent).

The Institut was the result of the amalgamation of the Délégation archéologique française en Iran (q.v.), founded in 1897 and especially active in Šuš (Susa) and Kūzestān until field activities were stopped in 1979, and the Département d'iranologie de l'Institut franco-iranien de Téhéran en Iran, founded in 1946 by Henry Corbin (q.v., 1903-78) and directed by him until 1975. Corbin and his Persian colleagues including Moḥammad Moʿīn, Sayyed Jalāl-al-Dīn Āštīānī, Moḥammad Mokrī, and Sayyed Ḥosayn Naṣr, edited medieval and modern Persian and Arabic texts, mainly philosophical, mystical



and religious, including some early Isma'ili texts. Many of the works edited belonged, according to Corbin's interpretation as developed fully in his *En Islam iranien* (q.v.), to a distinctly Iranian trend in theosophy with a long and evolving tradition of its own. The authors whose works were edited and commented on either by him alone or in collaboration with others included Šehāb-al-Dīn Yaḥyā Sohravardī, Rūzbehān Baqlī Šīrāzī, Mollā Šadrā Šīrāzī, and Ḥaydar Āmolī (q.v.). Apart from philosophy, other fields were also studied in Tehran by Gilbert Lazard, Marijan Molé (1925-60), and Jean Aubin (1927-98), and the results of their often pioneering research were also published by the Institute. From the early seventies, the Institut d'iranologie became more concerned with social and human sciences in the Persian world, reflected in the field research of Christophe Bala, Jean-Pierre Digard, Bernard Hourcade, Yann Richard, and other visiting or resident scholars of the institute. The annual publication *Abstracta Iranica* was founded in 1978 during the directorship of Charles-Henri de Fouchécour (1974-79) and published in Tehran and Paris. It contains a comprehensive annotated bibliography of current articles and books in different languages concerning Iranian studies. The trend towards a better coverage of social and human sciences in the Institute was further reinforced under Bernard Hourcade (director, 1979-93), and Rémy Boucharlat (1993-98).

The present day institute is one of the twenty-six French research centers throughout the world, supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is supervised by a board of about twelve academic members which advises the director on the research programs and elects from three to five research fellows, usually doctoral candidates from France or other countries of the European Union, for periods of one to three years.

The institute has three main functions: research, library and documentation, and publications.

Research is carried out by resident fellows, including some Persian associate members, as well as researchers on short-term scholarships, and scholars visiting Persia for their fieldwork. All of them work in close contact with the Persian institutions related to their research topics (ministries, universities, foundations, etc.). In the last decade, the major fields of study have been modern history, classical and modern literature, history of sciences and techniques, anthropology, economy, and urban and social studies. Apart from research undertaken by individual members or groups, the institute also organizes meetings and international conferences in collaboration with



Persian institutions and provides support for conferences in France. A recent example was the conference entitled “La Science dans le monde iranien,” held in Tehran from 7 to 9 June 1998, organized by IFRI and Pažūhašgāh-e tārīk-e ‘olūm of the University of Tehran. Among the topics discussed were history of texts, history of techniques, mathematics, alchemy, mineralogy, astrology and medicine.

The original holdings of the library and documentation center were related to the needs of its two founding branches, archaeology and classical Persian literature and philosophy. Since then the collection has expanded to include social and other human sciences. About 110 current periodicals are available, about half in Persian, and the rest in foreign languages, mostly English and French; some going back to the early 20th century. The library contains more than twenty thousand volumes in the same ratio of languages as well as microfilms, maps, and photographs (related to art and archaeology only). The library does not have a manuscript collection.

Publications by the institute include the already mentioned *Abstracta Iranica* and three series of publications all printed in Tehran and distributed in Persia and in the West. The *Bibliothèque iranienne*, was founded by Corbin. Its well-known series of twenty-two volumes of predominantly philosophical texts were published between 1949 and 1975. They have often been reprinted, some up to five times, or re-edited with the addition of a Persian translation of the French introduction and commentary. Starting with volume 23 (1980), Marcel Bazin’s *Le Tâlech: une région ethnique au nord de l’Iran*, the series expanded to include social and human sciences, publishing original studies in French by Iranian and French scholars, as well as collections of conference papers organized or supported by the Institute (e.g. J. Calmard, ed., *Études safavides*, published in Tehran and Paris as vol. 39 in 1993). Volume 51 was in press in 1998. In 1980 the *Bibliothèque iranienne en persan* began publication of the recent series in Persian. Another accompanying series, *Traductions*, provides Persian translations of scholarly works and collected papers on Persian philosophy, music, crafts, and on Afghanistan (7 vols. published so far). Both Persian series are sometimes published in conjunction with Iranian academic institutions, such as Markaz-e našr-e dānešgāhī, or private publishers, including Tūs and Mo’in publishing houses. The institute also offers advisory support to local publishers on the publication of Persian translations of French works on Iranian studies. IFRI also supported the publication of the last volumes of the archaeological studies of Susa (*Mémoires de la Délégation*



archéologique en Iran and *Cahiers de la DAFI*); two volumes in each of the two series are to be published.

Functioning more and more as a European and international research center, IFRI is able to welcome researchers from all countries and accommodate a handful of them for variable lengths of stay. Since 1994, many nationalities have been represented and put in touch with Persian colleagues and institutions and given access to facilities and library services. With the academic institutions, the close links are based more on practical grounds and specific joint projects than on general or official agreements. Basically, the primary aim of the institute is to facilitate collaborative research in the field of Iranian studies.

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