



IRAN NAMEH

IRAN NAMEH, the oldest post-Islamic Revolution scholarly journal published by the Iranian Diaspora. It is, as the cover of every issue proclaims, a “Persian Journal of Iranian Studies,” published quarterly by the Foundation for Iranian Studies. The Foundation, a non-profit organization, was established in 1981 by an endowment created by Princess Ashraf Pahlavi and has been led by Mahnaz Afkhami. It has also undertaken a modern Iranian oral history project and has set itself the task of contributing to the study of Iranian language, literature, and society. *Iran Nameh*, it was decided at its inception, would stay clear of contemporary day-to-day political affairs of Iran and concentrate instead on long-term issues of preserving the Persian language, understanding the Persian culture, and appreciating its continuity and contribution to world civilization.

To launch the journal, the Foundation searched for an editor whose scholarly credentials would immediately create credibility for the journal and help solicit contributions from the renowned and respected specialists from the field of Iranian studies. Furthermore, in the frenzy of post-revolutionary politics, the journal’s success was predicated on its ability to stay clear of the vagaries of politics and of identification with any overt political point of view. The board finally agreed to offer the position to Jalāl Matini, who had been a Rector of Mashad University before the revolution and prior to that the Dean of Faculty of Literature at the same university. Furthermore, he had published widely in the field of classical Iranian letters. Before long, *Iran Nameh* found its place in the pantheon of Persian scholarly journals as exemplar in terms of



both form and content.

The first issue of *Iran Nameh* was published in autumn of 1982. In its inaugural issue the editor described the journal as “a response to the needs of our time, from the people who consider safeguarding and expounding the culture of Iran as their chief task” (*Iran Nameh* 1/1, p. 1). *Iran Nameh*, he wrote, is pledged to providing a forum for disseminating the works of scholars dedicated to “research and writing on Iran’s glorious past” (*ibid.*, pp. 2-3). All the articles were to be in Persian, but at the same time, to afford those who only speak English a glimpse of the journal’s content, English summaries of each article were provided at the end of each issue of the journal. Finally, a five-men advisory board, consisting of distinguished scholars in the field—Peter J. Chelkowski, Moḥammad Ja’far Maḥjub, Seyyed Hosayn Nasr, Ḍabiḥ-Allāh Ṣafā, and Roger M. Savory and later joined by Ehsan Yarshater—helped the editor in his work of editing a new journal and affording it scholarly legitimacy and authority. The advisory board was expanded in 1990 to include a number of prominent political scientists, economists, sociologists, writers and poets.

The initial format of the journal, composed of articles, book reviews, letters to editors, and selections from the classics, was modeled on such Persian literary journals as *Yaḡmā* and *Yādgār*. In fact, as far as the editor and the Board directing the Foundation were concerned, the fact that nearly all such literary journals had died, or were on the verge of extinction under the censorship policies of the Islamic Republic, made the existence of a forum like *Iran Nameh* a more urgent necessity.

For the first seven years until 1989, Matini was the journal’s sole editor and one of its main contributors. With Matini’s departure, Dāryuš Ṣāyegān, an internationally known philosopher, and Dāryuš Āšuri, a recognized linguist and literary critic, successively, took over the editorship of the journal until spring of 1993, when Hormoz Hekmat, a political scientist, former professor of political science at Tehran and Melli Universities was named the journal’s editor. At the same time, the late Shahrokh Meskoob, a well-known writer, social critic, and literary historian, also joined the editorial board of *Iran Nameh* as its sole permanent member and contributed much, including many of his exceptional essays on the *Šāhnāma* among other topics, until his death in 2005.

Since its inception, *Iran Nameh* has gradually changed its focus from



predominantly literary and cultural themes to social, economic, and political subjects. Thus, while in the first seven years about two-thirds of the articles were on Persian literary issues, in the second phase over two-thirds were devoted to Iran's contemporary social, economic, and political features.

Another significant change was the introduction of guest editors for special issues devoted to select aspects of Iranian society, history, and culture. Special issues included "Non-Muslim Communities in Iran" (Spring 2001), "Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda" (Summer 2003), "Iran's Economy" (Spring 1995), "Persian Memoirs" (Fall 1996 & Winter 1997), "Iranian Identity" (Fall 1994), "Aḥmad Kasravi" (Summer 2002), "Civil Society in Iran" (Fall 1995 & Winter 1996), and "Shahrokh Meskoob" (Winter 2006), which were edited by Janet Afary and Reza Afshari, Jahangir Amuzegar, Ahmad Ashraf, Ali Banuazizi, Mohamad Tavakoli-Tarqi, Farhad Kazemi, and Hasan Kamshad.

In this latter period, *Iran Nameh* has been successful in attracting an array of distinguished contributors and guest editors who represent a wide range of ideological and philosophical perspectives and methodological approaches to Iranian studies.

Iran Nameh is sold primarily to its subscribers, particularly academic institutions and research libraries that make it available to students and scholars of Iranian studies around the world. Since September 2005, articles published in current issues of *Iran Nameh*, and in most of its special issues, have also become available on the internet.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbas Milani, "Iranian Studies," in *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 November 1997.

A series of interviews with Ahmad Ghoreishi and Jalal Matini, on numerous occasions.