



IRĀNŠAHR (3)

IRĀNŠAHR, an encyclopedic collection of articles published in the 1960s under the auspices of the UNESCO National Commission in Iran, with funds provided by the Pahlavi Foundation and a number of departments of the Persian government (Figure 1, Figure 2). The ambitious idea, as presented in the preface of the first volume (p. y), was to produce a highly reliable condensed, but comprehensive, sourcebook based on definitive documents and unadulterated facts, covering every aspect of the history, culture, and civilization of Iran from the ancient times to the year 1960 without any hyperbolic or chauvinistic pretense (I, pp. há, y).

As an encyclopedia exclusively devoted to all cultural and historical phases of Persia, *Irānšahr* is the first of its kind in the literary history of Persia. It is filled with essays, parts, sections, maps, tables, and illustrations that, especially concerning social and cultural questions, provide a variety of invaluable information, some of which is not easily accessible otherwise, for instance the law governing pious endowments (pp. 1273-76), the statistics concerning epidemics (pp. 1427-28) and the issuance of banknotes (p. 1978), the tables listing tribes in terms of affiliations and locations (pp. 116-66), the essay on folklore and popular traditions and beliefs, and the article on indigenous professions and trades.

Some parts of the book, however, suffer from lack of proper documentation (e.g., pp. 174-252, 322-24, 1240-41), including cases where an author is referred to as the source, but no mention is made of the title of his work (e.g., pp. 216, 1801, 1817, 1827, 1891, 1269-71, 1952), even, occasionally, when a direct



quotation is used (e.g., pp 1829, 1842). There is no bibliography, but sources of a number of entries are recorded, albeit at times in a truncated fashion, in the footnotes. Articles are not signed, but the lists of scholars (27 Persian and 7 Westerners) and their articles are given at the beginning of the volume they have contributed to. Moreover, the reader may wonder why the texts of a good number of very significant documents are missing from such a sourcebook, for instance, the Constitution, or the treaties of Golestān and Torkamāncāy. Last but not least, the sections dealing with political aspects of contemporary history (esp. pp. 499 ff., apparently put together by the editors) must be used with caution; in these the expected factual objectivity has, more often than not, given way to the political exigencies of the time: thus the National Front's campaign in the parliament to have the oil industry nationalized is branded as just a cover for the personal animosity of its members towards Ḥāji-'Ali Razmārā, the prime minister (p. 520); with a quote directly from the shah's *Ma'muriyat barā-ye waṭan-am/Mission for My Country*, Moḥammad Moṣaddeq is mentioned as a politician astonishingly ignorant of the very elementary rudiments (*oṣul-e badwi wa moqaddamāti*) of production, trade, and other economic factors, and the coup of 1953 is referred to as a national uprising and a miraculous event (pp. 520-24); the opposition members of the parliament are labeled as *'anāṣer-e mafsadaju* "malicious elements" (p. 1023). Even the choice of the year 1960, referred to as "the beginning of a new auspicious era," was due to a banal political consideration (I, p. *ya*).

Irānšahr was published in a large two-volume set (Tehran, 1963-65), arranged in four books (*ketāb*) of varying lengths and scholarly merits. Each book is divided into separate chapters, each of which is made of sections that are broken into small subsections. A select list of some notable events mixed with pieces of ordinary daily news items (e.g., two pleasure trips of the king to Austria, p. 2026) of the years 1339-43 Š./1960-65 is appended to the end of the second volume. An English version had also been promised, which evidently never materialized (II, p. *j*). 'Ali-Aṣḡar Ḥekmat (q.v.), then the head of the National UNESCO Commission in Iran, was the general editor and the driving force behind the project; he also contributed the article on education (*farhang*). [Below, the numbers in parenthesis refer to pages].

The first book, "Geography" (*Joḡrāfiā-ye Irān*) is treated in the seven chapters: physical geography (3-15), geology (16-34), climate (35-44), areas and regions of Iran (46-90), population and ethnic makeup of Iran (divided by province and including useful tables, 91-166), and urban planning and city organizations



(167-73), folklore and popular traditions and beliefs (174-253).

The second book, “Political and cultural history” (Tāriḳ-e siāsi wa farhangi), is broken into two major divisions (political and cultural history) made of 32 chapters, covering over 70 percent of the entire volume: calendars and dating systems (255-67), pre-historical period (268-85), Median empire (286-94), Achaemenid empire (295-318), Alexander and his successors (319-28), Parthian empire (329-43), Sasanian empire (344-65), the Arab invasion (366-80), local dynasties (381-408), the Mongols (409-23), Timur and the Timurids (424-32), the Safavids (433-52), the Afsharids and Zands (456-69), Qajars (470-98), Pahlavi dynasty (499-572, chaps. 17-20), religion (573-619), philosophy (620-35), linguistics (636-46), literature (647-94), science (695-713), schools (pp. 695-744), books (745-56), scripts (757-75), painting and sculpture (774-816), architecture (817-36), music (837-98), and theater (899-933).

The third book, “Administrative and social institutions” (Sāzmānhā-ye edāri wa ejtemā’i), is made up of sixteen chapters: the flag (947-55), legislative and judiciary branches (956-1013), the Constitution (1014-26), the executive branch (1027-41), civil institutions (1042-76), armed forces (1077-120), finance (1121-264), education (1165-247), the press (1247-264), pious endowments (1264-398), medicine and hygiene (1399-444), social services (1445-452), roads (1453-496), electricity, post and telegraph (1497-529) tourism (1530-539), and labor (1540-558).

The fourth book, “Economy and development” (Eqteṣād wa ‘omrān), is an essay organized in nine chapters: agriculture (1559-697), fisheries (1698-727), industry (1728-787), professions and trades (1788-887), oil industry (1888-917), commerce (1918-959), insurance (1960-965), money and banking (1966-85), Plan Organization (1986-2011).

Each volume contains subject illustration indexes; a comprehensive alphabetical index is also added to the end of the second volume. It is, however, rather surprising that *Irānšahr*, despite its extensive scope and the fact that it was the first one of its kind in Persian, does not seem to have ever been the subject of a critical review, except for the one by Maḥmud Katirā’i, who discussed the chapter on folklore and popular traditions and beliefs (*Negin* 3/9, 1967, pp. 39-41).