



IRANSHENASI

IRANSHENASI, a journal of Iranian studies, which began publication under the editorship of Jalāl Matini and with the help of generous Iranians who have been willing to subsidize it since the spring of 1989, when its first issue was published. Matini founded the journal a year after he left the *Iran Nameh* (q.v.) as its chief editor. The Keyan Foundation—a non-profit organization, established in 1988 by a successful Iranian-American physician, Dr. ‘Atā’-Allāh Montazeri, and “dedicated to the preservation and flourishing of the traditional Iranian culture in modern times—”was the most generous and instrumental of the new journal’s sponsors (*Iranshenasi* 1/1 Spring 1989, pp. 1-2).

The new journal’s advisory board included an impressive array of scholars from around the world. Three members of *Iran Nameh*’s Advisory Board joined *Iranshenasi*: Peter Chelkowski, Roger Savory, and Zabihollah Safa. They were joined by three other distinguished scholars: Djalal Khaleghi Motlagh, Heshmat Moayyad, and Ehsan Yarshater. When Ehsan Yarshater left the board sometime later, Mohammad Jafar Mahjoob became its newest member.

The cooperation with Keyan Foundation as the journal’s financial sponsor lasted nearly fifteen years until 2002. Considering the fact that the magazine accepts no advertisement, and taking into account its small circulation and the hefty cost of printing a scholarly journal, the Foundation’s financial sponsorship was both substantial in its total sum and crucial to the continued life of the magazine. In the spring of 2003, however, *Iranshenasi* began a “New Series” with the financial support of a new Iranian benefactor, without



changing its objectives or editorial policy.

In format and content, *Iranshenasi* continued the pattern Matini had set up earlier in *Iran Nameh*. Aside from substantive scholarly essays and short book reviews, a usual issue of *Iranshenasi* is composed of letters to the editor, excerpts from classical writings, and brief notes—usually no more than a few lines—introducing books published inside or outside Iran. At the outset, *Iranshenasi* had also an English section, edited first by Hamid Dabashi and later William L. Hanaway, which included either an essay or a book review on different aspects of Iran. English abstracts of all articles are provided in each issue of the journal.

Iranshenasi has been chiefly committed to the history of Iranian letters and culture. In its first ten years, almost two-thirds of all the articles published were dedicated to classical and modern Persian culture and literature. In almost every issue, the lead article of the journal is penned by the editor. While the over-all editorial policy of the journal has remained intact, the focus of the editor's own contributions gradually shifted away from literature to Iranian politics and history. Thus, he wrote a long series of articles on Dr. Moḥammad Moṣaddeq and his political life, which has since been published in a book. Furthermore, topics like the relationship between what museums have increasingly come to call "Islamic art" as opposed to Persian art, as well as the issue of ethnic minorities in Iran, have been recurring themes of his essays.

A remarkable aspect of *Iranshenasi* has always been the care that the editor, Jalal Matini, gives to ensuring that articles are free from errors of fact or of typesetting. He also regularly consults with the journal's advisors, as well as scholars who are not members of the advisory board, about the merits of articles that the magazine receives and that fall outside his own scholarly purview.

On a few occasions, *Iranshenasi* has dedicated an entire issue to commemorating the work of a scholar or artist. Special issues on Parviz Nātel Kānlari (1913-90; *Iranshenasi*, Summer 1991), Dabiḥ-Allāh Šafā (1911-99; two issues, Spring 1991 and Fall 1999), Neẓāmi Ganjavi (two issues, Fall 1992 and again Winter 1992), Mehrdād Bahār (1929-94; Winter 1995) and Richard N. Frye (Summer 2004) are examples of these issues. The Neẓāmi issues were, in fact, devoted to the publication of essays offered at one of the handful of conferences that have been, over the years, organized by either *Iranshenasi* or the Keyan Foundation.



The journal is primarily distributed to its subscribers. Though that number is no more than a few hundred, the journal's influence is much greater than the number might suggest. First, most research libraries in the world that have a Middle Eastern or Iranian section are subscribers. Second, it is considered to be one of the most authoritative scholarly journals on Iranian culture and literature.

Bibliography:

Iranshenasi, various issues. Jalal Matini, interview with author, 12 April 2004; Abbas Milani, "Iranian Studies," in *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 November 1997.