



KĀNUN-E PARVAREŠ-E FEKRI-E KUDAKĀN VA NOWJAVĀNĀN IX. FROM 1979 TO 2009: AN OVERVIEW

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ix. From 1979 to 2009: An Overview

Kamāl Ḳarrāzi (a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Houston, 1976, who later became Minister of Foreign Affairs), was appointed as the managing director of Kanun by Mehdi Bāzargān's transitional government (August, 1979). He was able to keep Kanun and its main objectives intact and to put forward Kanun as a government organization, albeit with some slight modifications, accountable to the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education; the following year, its statutes were approved by the High Council of Revolution (Šurā-ye āli-e enqelāb). Since 1981, Kanun has come under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. After eight months of service, Ḳarrāzi left Kanun for political assignments and was replaced by 'Ali-Rezā Zarrin, a young, militant high school teacher in his early twenties, who managed Kanun for about 13 years. Since 1992, Moḥsen Činiforušān, a civil engineer with an M.A. in cultural planning, has served as Kanun's managing director.



Due to Iran's rapid urbanization—urban population increased from 50 percent of the total population in 1976 to 70 percent in 2006 (*National Census of Population*, 1976 and 2006)—and in order to cope with the increasing demands for cultural centers, Kanun needed to develop and to expand its centers. Despite the fact that, according to the director of Kanun, the number of cultural centers increased from 222 in 1979 to over 827 in 2010 to satisfy demand on a national level (including 61 mobile and 52 postal libraries), it is estimated that Kanun needs to develop a total of 2,500 cultural centers across the country. The same source defined Kanun's active members as totaling some 800 thousand with approximately 8 million semi-active member children across the country. Kanun's publications and other cultural productions also increased significantly in type, subject, and quantity, and even during the eight devastating years of the *Iran-Iraq War* (1980-88), production continued its upward trend (new books, films, live and puppet plays, film strips, tapes). Kanun is now also producing creative/educational toys and electronic games, and it has created the first Iranian website for children aged 6-16 with topics such as news, books, music, jokes, messages, painting, and so on (32 publications of Kanun available to the author; information received from Kanun's Public Relations Department; information gathered from former colleagues in the Kanun; and author's personal observation during the first year after the Revolution).

New services and offers have been introduced and have become integral parts of the cultural centers wherever possible and/or justified, such as planetariums and biology centers, as well as facilities for physically impaired children. An important educational service created in the post-Revolution period is ILI (Iran Language Institute, which replaced the Iran-America Cultural Center complex in 1979), which is assigned the national mission of developing foreign language learning skills. ILI is a state-owned, non-profit organization with, in addition to its central headquarters, over 30 teaching schools and more than 100,000 students each term (4 terms per year), with over 1,000 qualified language teachers in Persian, English, French, German, Spanish, and Arabic across the country. It is important to note that ILI has its own production program to publish books and interactive educational materials for different language learning levels of elementary, intermediate, and so on (see official site of ILI: <http://www.kanoonzaban.net>).

Kanun has become more actively involved internationally in children's cultural affairs, participating in organizations such as the International



Association of Theater for Children and Adolescents, Asia/Pacific Cultural Center for UNESCO, International Federation of Library Associations, UNESCO, United Nations Children’s Fund, the International Board on Books for Young People, the International Center of Films for Children and Young Adults (Daftar markazi-e sâzmân-e bayn-al-melali-e film barâ-ye kudakân va nowjavânân) (see description at www.kanoonnord.com).

Following plans for closer cooperation with its tutelary governmental Ministry of Education, Kanun has implemented educational and cultural collaborations with some 2,000 schools (elementary and high school) since 2008 (ibid.).

Most of the infrastructural expansion and development, as well as its products and services, are progressively moving the institute away from the pre-Revolution Kanun’s apolitical position and more subject to the outright influence and penetration of the Islamic Republic’s ideology and propaganda. The number of religiously oriented films, plays, and books, and of teaching, training, and “cultural or artistic” events which are organized in total synchronization with Islamic passion events and mourning months has increased rapidly in the 2000s. Children under elementary school age (7 years old) are summoned to Islamic holy book recitation classes at the cultural centers. Innumerable and sometimes suspect compilations of sayings attributed to Imams and other holy men of Shi’ite Islam have become the sources for writing books on everything from animals to morality tales. Kanun is also now responsible for furnishing the libraries of other institutions, including mosques (author’s review of 32 books published by the Kanun; see also www.kanoonnord.com).

See also [WEB POSTER EXHIBITION](#) – A short history of children’s posters in Iran.

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1. Interviews. Due to the paucity of published information about Kanun, interviews have served as the main method of data collection in this survey. Numerous interviews were conducted with the following persons from the fall of 2009 to the summer 2010, by telephone, email, letter correspondence, or



combinations thereof: Aḥmad-Rezā Aḥmadi (Tehran, interviews by telephone and written information). Lily Amir Arjomand (New York City, interview by telephone and email). Manuchehr Anvar (Paris, interview by telephone). Dāryuš Āšuri (Creteil, France; personal interviews). Parviz Davā'i (Prague, Czech Republic, interview by telephone and email). Farideh Farjām (Boise, Idaho; interview by telephone and email). Sheida Gharachedaghi (Toronto, Canada; interview by telephone and email). Rezā Gowharzād (Los Angeles, Calif., interview by telephone). Parviz Kalāntari (Tehran, handwritten story answering the main questions). Don Roger Laffoon (Los Angeles, Calif., interview by telephone and email). 'Ali Mirzā'i (sent copies of two printed interviews with him and interview by telephone and email). Ardavan Mofid (Los Angeles, Calif., interview by telephone and email). Esfandiār Monfaredzādeh (Los Angeles, Calif., written answers to the questions). Niv Nābet (Paris, France, sent a 15-page handwritten letter answering the main questions). Rasoul Nafisi (Washington, D.C. (interview by telephone and email). Nikzād Nojumi (New York, personal interview). Ḥosayn Samākār (Los Angeles, Calif., interview by telephone and email). Homā Zāhedi (Geneva, Switzerland, interview by telephone). Nur-al-Din Zarrinkelk (Tehran, interview by telephone and an eight-page handwritten letter answering the main questions, as well as follow-up email correspondence).

(The author would like to extend his gratitude to all interviewees as well as to Joan Vālānežād, who was also very helpful in providing the contact information for a number of interviewees, and her son Kurosh, who helped us in scanning and sending a number of cover pages of Kanun's publications.)

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