



SAḤĀB, ‘ABBĀS

SAḤĀB, ‘Abbās (b. Tafreš, 1921; d. Tehran, 2000), founder of Sahab Geographic and Drafting Institute (q.v.; SGDI); considered by many as the father of modern Persian cartography ([Figure 1](#)). At the age of seven his family moved from Tafreš (q.v.) to Tehran, where he was educated in the modern schools system established under Reza Shah Pahlavi (see [Education](#)). His talent in drawing, painting, and drafting bloomed in the early years of high school, and the maps he prepared under continuous encouragement of his father Abu’l-Qāsem and his teachers won him prizes. As a teenager he prepared a detailed and cartographically precise map of Tehran and manually prepared a few hundred blueprints of it. At the age of seventeen, he managed to draft another guide map of Tehran in Roman script ([Figure 2](#)). He established the SGDI in 1936 and spent the rest of his life expanding it.

Saḥāb made about seven hundred maps and atlases, many hand-drafted, originals of which are kept in the SGDI’s library. He closely supervised every project from the start to the end (Maḥmudiān, p. 44). Saḥāb’s devotion to his work and his love for the field made him travel to hundreds of settlements in Iran, sometimes on foot, to collect data. To assure continuity of his legacy, he took his twin young sons, Moḥammad-Rezā and Ġolām-Rezā, with him on the expeditions and gave them, as well as his four daughters, responsibilities in daily management of SGDI, a strategy that proved successful in keeping the family business alive after ‘Abbās Saḥāb.

In addition to modern cartography, ‘Abbās Saḥāb was interested in history. He projected a series on the Persian Gulf, of which three volumes were published



(1971, 1985, 1989), and he laid out the scheme for a multi-volume, historical atlas of Islamic art, of which *The Art of Calligraphy* (in Persian and English) was published in 2002.

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