



SOCIETAS IRANOLOGICA EUROPÆA

SOCIETAS IRANOLOGICA EUROPÆA (SIE), international association in the field of Iranian studies.

On the 1st and 2nd of October 1981 a “Meeting of experts in Iranian and Persian studies” was held at the British Academy in London. In addition to J.Carswell and M.Evans of the British Academy, the meeting was also attended by C.Wilson and S.Pratt as representatives of the Europæan Science Foundation (ESF), M.Gueritz on behalf of the British Institute of Persian Studies, and fifteen scholars from nine European countries: A.Destrée, F.Mawet, and L.Vanden Berghe (Belgium); J.P.Asmussen (Denmark); Ph.Gignoux (France); H.Gaube and H.R.Roemer (Germany); I.Gershevitch, B.Gray, and P.R.S.Moorey (Great Britain); J.T.P.de Bruijn (The Netherlands); G.Gnoli (Italy); B.Utas and G.Widengren (Sweden); and G.Redard (Switzerland). The meeting had been promoted in the first place by the ESF, which had invited its various member organizations from different nations to take part. These organizations had, in turn, chosen their own representatives.

It was the intention of the ESF to act upon the initiative of British scholars and set up a learned society of international standing as a way of coping with the somewhat difficult situation in which Iranian and Persian studies in Western Europe and Israel—this being the area it covered institutionally—had come to find themselves after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.



In this sense the London meeting was decisive. It concluded with the nomination of a Steering Committee whose main task was to found, within the next two years, a European association of Iranology. The committee was composed of seven scholars: J.P.Asmussen (he later asked to be replaced, and B.Utas took over from him), I.Gershevitch (he was the most firmly convinced upholder of the project right from the very beginning), Ph.Gignoux, B.Gray, H.R.Roemer, L.Vanden Berghe, and G.Gnoli (acting as chairman). After two meetings, held in Rome at the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO) on 16-17 April and 12-13 December 1982, the Committee organized the Colloquium which was to be the occasion for founding the association, setting the date of 18-20 June 1983, and addressing experts in Iranian and Persian Studies from the countries of Western Europe (and Israel), that is, from countries represented in the ESF. Mention should be made, however, that from the very outset the new association was open to co-operation with Eastern European countries and, for obvious scientific reasons, with non-European countries as well, from Japan to the U.S.A. The meetings of the Steering Committee were financed by the ESF and the IsMEO.

On 18-20 June 1983 the First European Colloquium of Iranology was held in Rome, at the IsMEO, for the purpose of setting up an international association. One of the first aims of this new association was to review the state of Iranian and Persian studies in Europe, as a preliminary step for deciding upon what initiatives were necessary for the future. The Steering Committee, which was to withdraw from the scene on that occasion, decided to ask six eminent colleagues to present the state of the art in the following fields: art and archaeology of the Islamic period (B.Gray); pre-Islamic art and archaeology (L.Vanden Berghe); philology and linguistics (G.Lazard); literature (J.C.Bürgel); history (B.G.Fragner); and religion (A.Bausani). J.Duchesne-Guillemin was invited to give an opening address illustrating the past and present reasons for the interest shown by European culture in Iranian civilization. In addition, the Committee drew up a list of some forty names of persons to be invited, and this list was sent to the ESF to solicit the relevant nominations by the ESF member organizations from different nations.

Considering that some of the persons invited (J.P.Asmussen, J.Aubin, H.W.Bailey, F.Mawet, M.Mayrhofer, P.R.S.Moorey) were unable to attend, forty scholars from twelve different countries were present at the First European Colloquium of Iranology, organized and financed jointly by the ESF and the IsMEO. They formed a constituent assembly and founded the association,



approving the statute that was subsequently signed in the presence of a notary, in accordance with the Italian law. In addition to the seven aforementioned colleagues who were speakers at the Colloquium and the members of the Steering Committee (in which B.Utas had replaced J.P.Asmussen), the founder-members were: P.Bernard, J.T.P.de Bruijn, J.Calmard, G.D'Erme, A.Destrée, R.E.Emmerick, H.Gaube, K.Hoffmann, H.Humbach, J.Kellens, P.Lecoq, D.N.MacKenzie, F.Meier, A.S.Melikian-Chirvani, P.Mortensen, C.Nylander, A.M.Piemontese, G.Redard, A.V.Rossi, G.Scarcia, U.Scerrato, Sh.Shaked, N.Sims-Williams, P.O.Skjærvø, G.Vercellin, D.Wasserstein, D.Whitehouse, and G.Widengren. Thus, the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* (SIE) was founded. Its goal was the promotion and fostering of Iranian studies, without any aims of political nature, and it had the task of convening the European Conference of Iranian Studies.

The Statute approved by the forty founder-members states that the Association shall have two different organs: the Board, which is to be composed of seven members, and the General Assembly, of which all Association members are part. One of the duties of the General Assembly is to elect the Board, which then appoints from amongst its members the President, the Vice-President, and the Secretary, as well as the Treasurer (though the latter does not have to be a Board member). The Board is the governing body in both administrative and scientific matters. Its members remain in office for a four-year term and cannot be re-elected for more than two consecutive terms. At the end of each term of office, three or four of its members may be re-elected alternately.

The Statute also lays down that the different types of membership include honorary members, ordinary members, and benefactors (both natural persons and legal entities), and that the financial resources of the Association shall be made up of the dues paid by ordinary members and benefactors, public and private grants, revenues from property, proceeds from the organization of special events, and the sales of publications, contributions, and any other available funds. Lastly, the Statute rules that the seat of the Association shall be in Rome at the IsMEO (from 1996 onwards, Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, IsIAO), and that the offices of this Institute shall be responsible for administrative matters, in agreement with the Board, the General Assembly, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the SIE. Each financial year, two auditors appointed by the General Assembly are to check the accounts and submit the report that will be subjected to the approval of the General Assembly.

The life of the SIE proceeds in four-year periods, and at the end of each period



a European Conference on Iranian Studies in general is held. On the occasion of each conference, the General Assembly is convened to vote for the renewal of a half of the Board (see above), and the Board appoints the new President and other officers. In addition to the organization of the European Conference on Iranian Studies, the Board may organize international conferences on specific subjects. Since the foundation of the SIE in 1983, five European Conferences of Iranian Studies have been held: the first in Turin, on 7-11 September 1987; the second in Bamberg, on 30 September to 4 October 1991; the third in Cambridge, on 11-15 September 1995; the fourth in Paris, on 6-10 September 1999; the fifth in Ravenna on 6-11 October 2003; and the sixth in Vienna, on 19-22 September 2007. SIE have also organized three international conferences on specific subjects: “Transition periods in Iranian history” (Freiburg in Breisgau, 22-24 May 1985), “Recurrent patterns in Iranian religions. From Mazdaism to Sufism” (Bamberg, 30 September-4 October 1991), and “Religious studies in Iranian languages” (Copenhagen, 18-22 May 2002). The proceedings of both series of conferences have already been published, except for the fifth European conference and the conference held in Copenhagen, as have the proceedings of the First European Colloquium of Iranology that was held in Rome in 1983 (see above) and a guide to Iranian studies in Europe concerning the institutions and teaching programs in twelve countries of Western Europe (see Bibliography).

Thanks to its steady expansion in Europe and in the rest of the world and on account of its conferences and publications, the SIE is now the most important international association in the field of Iranian studies. Its membership has increased from the forty or so original members to more than three hundred (317 to be precise) that were registered at the time of the Sixth European Conference in 2007, representing 27 different countries: Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, and USA. Since its foundation, the SIE has been able to count amongst its honorary members some of the leading scholars in Iranian and Persian studies, such as V.I.Abaev, H.W.Bailey, I.Gershevitch, B.Gharib, J.Harmatta, A.K.S.Lambton, G.Lazard, V.A.Livshits, H.R.Roemer, A.Schimmel, W.Sundermann, G.Widengren, E.Yarshater. Seven different presidents have succeeded one another: B.Gray, Ph.Gignoux, B.G.Fragner, Sh.Shaked, A.Panaino, M.Macuch, and C.Cereti. The present Board, elected by the General Assembly on 30 September 2007 during the Sixth European Conference in



Vienna, includes Carlo Cereti (Rome, Italy) as President, Anna Krasnowolska (Krakow, Poland) as Vice-President; Claus Pedersen (Copenhagen, Denmark) as Secretary; Alberto Cantera (Salamanca, Spain), Almut Hintze (Cambridge, UK), Maria Szuppe (Paris, France), Dieter Weber (Moringen, Germany). P.F. Calieri is acting as the Treasurer.

The association has its own website (www.societasiranologicaeu.org) and has decided to create a Newsletter in order to promote communication between members and to give information about the various activities, conferences, workshops, etc. in the field of Iranian and Persian studies. On several occasions, information about SIE activities has been published in the journal of the Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes in Paris, in *Studia Iranica*, in the journal of the IsMEO/IsIAO, and in *East and West* (see Bibliography).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Information about the foundation of the SIE can be found in Ph.Gignoux, "Colloque international de Rome (Juin 1983). Fondation de la «Societas Iranologica Europaea»", *Stud. Ir.* 12, 1983, pp. 233-34; G.Gnoli, "Allocution de bienvenue et introduction aux travaux" and B.Utas, "The foundation of the Societas Iranologica Europaea," both in *The First European Colloquium of Iranology*, ed. G.Gnoli (see below), on pp. XI-XV and XVII-XXI respectively. A report on the constitution of the SIE and on its various activities and events up until the end of the 1980s can be found in Ph.Gignoux, "'Societas Iranologica Europaea': its formation and growth," *East and West* 40, 1990, pp. 289-92. This first report has been followed up regularly by the annual reports edited by B.Utas, in his capacity as the Secretary of the Association (*Stud. Ir.* 13, 1984, pp. 275-76; 14, 1985, pp. 273-74; 15, 1986, pp. 283-84; 17, 1988, p. 119; 18, 1989, p. 149) and by his successor, J.T.P.de Bruijn (*Stud. Ir.* 22, 1993, pp. 145-60; 23, 1994, pp. 153-56). Application forms for membership have appeared in *Studia Iranica* and also in *East and West* (40, 1990, pp. 388-89).

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(Gherardo Gnoli)

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