

## The 50<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of *Iranian Studies* Notes by Former Editors

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### *Iranian Studies*, Then and Now

The Society for Iranian Studies and its journal *Iranian Studies* started in 1967 to fill a gap in academia. It was designed in part to provide a forum for young academics to discuss and publish papers; in part to bridge the gap between scholars abroad and those in Iran; in part to apply modern social science paradigms to Iran; in part to encourage research into arenas from which established forums tended to shy away—especially in social, economic and cultural studies; and in most part to delve into topics that established institutions deemed too sensitive, too contemporary, and too problematic (*Iranian Studies*, hereafter *IS*, 40/1, 2007, pp. 1-4).

The driving force behind the journal was Ali Banuazizi assisted by Farhad Kazemi—both were at that time graduate students in North America. They were helped by a handful of fellow students and recent PhDs—mostly in the social sciences. As the launching issue of the journal declared, the “main objective” was “to encourage the study of Iranian culture and society, including history, language, literature, social, economic and political problems of Iran” (*IS*, 1/1, 1967, p. 2). Some would have put the emphasis on the very last phrase.

The early issues may now look like shoestring operations but contained innumerable innovative and intellectually provocative articles. By today’s measures some of those may sound conventional and mainstream but were not at the time. They included: Ahmad Ashraf’s “Historical Obstacles to the Development of a Bourgeoisie in Iran” (*IS*, 2/2-3, 1969, pp. 54-79); Manoucher Parvin’s “Military Expenditure in Iran: A Forgotten Question” (*IS*, 1/4, 1968, pp. 154-160); Marvin Zonis’ “Educational Ambivalence in Iran” (*IS*, 1/4, 1968, pp. 133-153); Majid Tehranian’s “What Road to Oil Sovereignty” (1/4, 1968); Sidney Mintz’s “Social-Science Research by North Americans Abroad: Some Reflections” (*IS*, 1/2, 1968, pp. 34-40); Richard Cottam’s “The United States, Iran, and the Cold War” (*IS*, 3/1, 1970, pp. 2-22); William Millward’s “Traditional Values and Social Change in Iran” (4/1, 1971, pp. 2-35) and “The Social Psychology of Anti-Iranology” (8/1-2, 1975, pp. 48-69); Hamid Enayat’s “The Politics of Iranology” (*IS*, 6/1, 1973, pp. 2-20)—which raised the issue of Orientalism before the publication of Edward Said’s path breaking work; Fereydoon Adamiyat’s “Problems in Iranian Historiography” (4/4, 1971, pp. 132-156); Nikki Keddie’s “Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914, and Its Political Impact: an Overview” (*IS*, 5/2-3, 1972, pp. 58-78) and “An Assessment of American, British and French Works since 1940 on Modern Iranian History” (6/2-3, 1973, pp. 152-165); Eric Hooglund’s “The Khwushnishin Population of Iran” (*IS*, 6/4, 1973, pp. 229-245); Farhad Kazemi’s “Economic Indicators and Political Violence in Iran: 1946-1968” (*IS*, 8/1-2, 1975, pp. 70-86); Howard Rotbat’s “Structural Impe-

diments to Change in the Qazvin Bazaar” (*IS*, 5/4, 1972, pp. 130-148); and a lively exchange between Marvin Zonis and James Bill—the two leading political scientists working on Iran at the time—on elite versus class analyses in Iranian politics (8/3, 1975, pp. 134-149 and 150-163, respectively).

The early issues did not confine themselves to the social sciences. They contained short stories by Āl-e Ahmad, Forugh Farrokhzād, Sādeq Hedāyat, and Gholām-Hosayn Sā‘edi. They also contained analytical pieces on Persian culture, such as A. H. Zarrinkoob’s classic “Persian Sufism in its Historical Perspective” (*IS*, 3/3-4, 1970, pp. 139-220); Sorour Soroudi’s “Akhavan’s ‘Ending of the Shahnameh’: A Critique” (*IS*, 2/2-3, 1969, pp. 80-96); and D. A. Shojai’s “The Fatal Rage: Heroic Anger in Modern Iranian Fiction” (*IS*, 8/4, 1975, pp. 216-234).

The early period reached maturity in 1974 with a special annual issue on Isfahan. This volume, divided into two parts, was edited by Renata Holod and contained a series of meticulously researched papers presented at the Fogg Museum at Harvard University. The authors included such well-known names as Oleg Grabar, Lisa Golombek, Priscilla Soucek, Annemarie Schimmel, William Hanaway, Nader Ardalan, Ehsan Yarshater, Peter Chelkowski, Roger Savory, S. H. Nasr, Brian Spooner, Richard Ettinghausen, and Vartan Gregorian. With this volume (*IS*, 7/1-2, 1974), one can say that *Iranian Studies* had arrived and entered the mainstream.

Since the early issues much has changed. The mum-pap operation has now grown into a highly professional journal. The graduate students and assistant professors of those early years have now reached retirement—some are no longer with us. The number of academics working on Iran—as well as on the Middle East as a whole—has grown by leaps and bounds. Topics that sounded avant-garde in the 1960s are now considered quite mainstream. Topics that were taboo—such as sexuality—are now considered fair game. What is more, social, economic, and cultural studies have given way to semiotics, post-structuralism, and post-modernism.

The journal has managed to reflect many of these larger changes while grappling with the formidable task of moving beyond the simple description of things that are interesting in Iran—and most things in Iran are interesting—to instead focus on specific questions. In other words, we now need to move away from typical anti-quearianism to the investigation of specific problems that are intellectually significant and interesting.

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