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1a St Martin's House, Polygon Road, London NW1 1QB

Telephone : 020 7235 5122 Fax : 020 7259 6771

Web Site : www.iransociety.org Email : info@iransociety.org

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The objects for which the Society is established are to promote learning and advance education in the subject of Iran, its peoples and culture (but so that in no event should the Society take a position on, or take any part in, contemporary politics) and particularly to advance education through the study of the language, literature, art, history, religions, antiquities, usages, institutions and customs of Iran.

ACTIVITIES

In fulfilment of these objects, the Society, which is registered in Great Britain as a charity, shall, among other things:

Hold meetings and establish, promote, organise, finance and encourage the study, writing, production and distribution of books, periodicals, monographs and publications,

Do all such other lawful and charitable things as shall further the attainment of the objects of the Society or any of them.

The full text of the Rules of the Society may be inspected in the Society's offices.

Those wishing to apply for membership can do so through the Society's website, or by writing to the Hon. Secretary for an application form. Students are encouraged to join.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY 2015-16

Lectures

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| October 12 th | Dr Sussan Babaie
Persian kingship and architecture |
| November 17 th | Dr Lloyd Ridgeon
The Heritage of 'Javanmardi' in Iran |
| January 20 th | Professor Edmund Herzig
Religious conversion and self-fashioning
among Armenians and Georgians in Safavid
Iran |
| February 18 th | Dr Shirin Shafaie
Oral and pictorial accounts of the Iran-Iraq
war |
| April 21 st | Dr Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood
Beyond the chador: Iranian dress for women |
| May 24 th | Professor Robert Hillenbrand
Low-life and Sufism in late Timurid painting |
| June 22 nd | Eleanor Sims
17 th -century oil-paintings from Safavid
Isfahan: 'People from Parts Unknown' |

TRAVEL GRANTS

This year five grants were awarded to graduates and undergraduates either planning to carry out research in Iran or to spend time in one of the Tehran universities as part of their Persian language degree courses. Of those awarded grants two were from Exeter University, one from Oxford, one from SOAS and one from Kent. A grant was also made to the Edinburgh Iran Festival which opens on the 10th February 2017.

JOURNAL

The aim of the Journal is to reproduce edited versions of some of the lectures given over the year, to review books of interest to members and to publish short articles of general interest. The editor welcomes contributions and suggestions. The journal is financed by a benefaction from the Kathleen Palmer-Smith Publication Fund.

***Javānmardī* in the Iranian Tradition**

**A lecture given by Lloyd Ridgeon (Reader in
Theology and Religious Studies, Glasgow University)
on 17th November, 2015**

INTRODUCTION

In the present age of globalisation it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify themes or particular elements that distinguish one nation from another. In the case of Iran, scholars have often questioned the notion of Iran (*Iraniyat*), asking what it actually means to identify as Iranian, given all the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists within the territorial boundaries of present-day Iran. Although I do not propose to offer a definitive answer to such a question, it is possible to propose suggestions about constituent factors in notions of Iranian identity. One of these is the idea of *javānmardī*, which has often been translated as “chivalry”. This compound word, constructed from *javān* (young) and *mardī* (manliness), occurs in a variety of texts from the 10th century onwards, and appears regularly in contemporary Iran (in names of films, streets, and in associations made by many with Iran’s great sporting and chivalric champions). The value of the term lies partly in the fact that its semantic meaning does not appear to have changed in over one thousand years of development. While there are subtle differences in manifestations of *javānmardī*, the medieval concept of chivalry, for example, remains perfectly comprehensible to contemporary Iranians.

In this brief article I propose to delineate the way in which *javānmardī* was understood when it first appeared in New Persian treatises of the 10th century. It seems that the meaning of the term

was quite broad, indeed, I argue that it was sufficiently wide to permit a classification of three different groups that espoused the virtue of chivalry. It should be stressed that this classification is not made by the authors of medieval texts, it is my own taxonomy. Nevertheless, it appears to fit not only the medieval tradition but also very recent manifestations and understandings. This article, therefore, will be divided into two sections, the medieval and the modern, that foreground the same taxonomy of *javānmardī*. To appreciate what the concept of *Irānīyat* means, observers cannot afford to ignore or dismiss this vital component of Iranian identity. Indeed, *javānmardī* is not limited to the contemporary geographical entity of Iran; rather, the term and its influence was significant in medieval times wherever Persian cultural influence was strong. Thus, it is possible to witness the significance of *javānmardī* in regions as far apart as Baghdad and Bursa, and Istanbul and Islamabad. Detailed discussion of this point is beyond the remit of this brief article, however, it is mentioned simply to alert readers to the wider importance of the term to appreciate the full import of the concept.

MEDIEVAL JAVĀNMARDĪ

One of earliest discussions of the term occurs in the *Qābūs-nāma*, a work in the ‘mirror for princes’ genre which was written in the late 10th century. *Javānmardī* is discussed as a quality that pertains to the tradesperson, soldier and the outlaw (*‘ayyār*). Furthermore, the term is discussed as one that includes qualities such as bravery, hospitality, generosity, recognition of the truth and chastity. The work provides anecdotes which reveal that the chivalrous person needs to possess a degree of sagacity or “canniness” – being flexible with the truth – to allow a full manifestation of mercy or chivalrous attributes.¹ Other texts from the same period reveal similar perspectives, perhaps the most famous of these is the folk-tale of *Samak-i ‘Ayyār*. Samak is the hero of the story who is an outlaw, yet displays such heroic and chivalrous attributes that it questions the very nature of the term *‘ayyār*. Whether such individuals banded

¹ *Qābūs-nāma*, Kay-Kavus bin Eskandar, edited by Gholam-Hosayn Yusefi (Tehran: 1373/1994-5), 247-8.

together to create social institutions is open to debate. Indeed, the scholarly consensus has not improved on Richard Bulliet's observation that "there is enough information to demonstrate the importance of the *futuwwa* [a synonymous term for *javānmardī*] but not really enough to show what it was or what it did."² At the same time, other individuals in the Persianate world were discussing chivalry within a completely different context. The Sufis derived inspiration for *javānmardī* from the Qur'ān, especially as several individuals were labelled with the term *fatā*, which is the Arabic equivalent of the Persian *javān*. From the term *fatā* is derived *futuwwat*, which explains the interchanging of *futuwwat* and *javānmardī* in treatises composed after the 11th century. In effect, Sufis such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī (d. 1021) portrayed this ethic as one which foregrounded hospitality, selflessness, and mercy. It was an ethic grounded in the promotion of harmonious human relations without having any explicit connection to metaphysical investigation. Into the eleventh and twelfth centuries the evidence of urban associations of young men espousing the ideal of *javānmardī* is well documented. It appears that the advocacy of chivalrous behaviour within such associations frequently took denominational and theological colourings, and there were often outbursts of militancy and violence, which also resemble territory wars.³

Thus far we have focused upon three different groups (the outlaw, the Sufi and the fighter) that have advocated *javānmardī*, and which for the sake of convenience may be categorised under the terms "felon, faithful and fighter". These terms are not mutually exclusive as the boundaries between the three groups was porous. For example, the eleventh century Persian Sufi Hujwīrī discusses a certain Nūh the 'Ayyār, and reports how he delivers a definition of his form of chivalry to a Sufi bystander, which leaves the reader in no doubt that this outlaw was also a Sufi.⁴

² Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, 43-4.

³ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī, *Kitāb al-futuwwa*, in Naṣrallāh Pūrjawādī (ed), *Majmū'a-yi athār-i Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Sulamī* (Tehran, 1980-3). This work has been rendered into English by Sheikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi al-Helveti as *The Book of Sufi Chivalry*.

⁴ Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, edited by M. 'Abidī (Tehran: Surūsh, 1386/2007), 278.

At the beginning of the 13th century *javānmardī* or *futuwwat* was thrown into the limelight following the actions taken by the Caliph of the crumbling ‘Abbasid Empire. It seems that the Caliph, Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, taking advantage of some violent disputes among the chivalrous groups in the capital Baghdad, decided to ban all the *futuwwat* associations except one, which was the one he had previously become a member of. Not satisfied with this, the Caliph made himself head of this organisation. In effect, this was the Caliphal method of tightening his control within society. He expected local rulers and chiefs to join these organisations and thus demonstrate their fealty to the Caliphate. At a time when the Empire was fractured into a chain of principalities this was a significant move. A number of treatises were composed to delineate the functions and rituals of the organisation which reveal the heritage of the semi-military and Sufi history of *javānmardī*.

Of major interest here (and because of how Iranian history developed in the subsequent centuries) is the pivotal role given the “patron-saint” of these organisations. All the treatises of this period and after describe the contribution made by ‘Alī ibn abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the first Imām of Shi‘a Islam. Through his reported sayings and acts, ‘Alī became an exemplar of the *javānmardī* tradition. From a very early stage of Islamic history ‘Alī had been venerated as a great military champion (perhaps feeding into the need among the *‘ayyār(ān)* for their own hero), and he was also designated by the Sufis as one of the prototype Sufis because of his humility and magnanimity. In any case, by the 13th century ‘Alī was recognised as the inspiration behind the movement, which in the Persian case assumes greater significance in the light of the establishment of Shi‘a Islam as the religion of Iran in 1501.

Texts and travelogues from the 13th century indicate the close relationship these organisations had with the Sufi tradition, such as sharing the same ideals, engaging in similar practices (ritualised ceremonies for listening to the recitation of devotional poetry, sometimes accompanied by music), communal meals, the need to follow an experienced guide, and the recitation of God’s **names**. The appeal of Sufism among such individuals is hardly surprising given the widespread appeal of Sufism. Indeed, one historian has claimed that at this period Sufism resembled “institutionalised mass

religion.”⁵ But it would be wrong to consider the social significance of such *javānmardī* solely within the realm of religion, for the breakdown in central authority and power in the region in the wake of the Mongol invasions most likely resulted in some form of order being asserted by the men of cities and villages, that is to say, the members of the *javānmardī* organisations. It is only with the establishment of the Safavid dynasty in the 16th century that such groups (and also many Sufi orders) were weakened and ceased to have such a strong and centrally defined social visible presence in society. The weakening of the associations from the 16th century onwards does not mean that the personal ethic of *javānmardī* vanished. Indeed, the concept still permeated Iranian society through its presence in Persian literary masterpieces, typified by the figure of Rostam, the champion of Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāma*. Moreover, it is arguable that the concept remained significant within alternative urban groups that emerged during the Safavid era, such as the groups that coalesced within urban wards and engaged in territorial violence that seems to have been sponsored by the royal court. Here I am referring to the Ni‘matollāhīs and Ḥaydarīs. A more religiously oriented attraction to *javānmardī* appears in this period within the literature of the trade guilds and professional organisations. The trade guilds appear to have adopted the same kinds of themes (and for that matter literary style) as the 13th and 14th century *javānmardī* treatises. This includes the adoption of a spiritual hero as a “patron-saint”, the foregrounding of the ethic of *javānmardī* in the day-to-day business of the person involved in the trade, and the simple and easily comprehensible literary style. Thus in the pre-modern period, the taxonomy of felon, faithful and fighter are observable among individuals, groups and within the Persian literary tastes.

⁵ Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University Press, 1974), Vol 2, p. 210.

MODERN JAVĀNMARDĪ

These three categories are also present during the modern period of Iranian history from the Qājār period onwards. The first category, the felon, corresponds to the emergence of the *lūtī* in Persian society. The *lūtī* was an individual who at times distinguished himself by acts of courage and bravery, especially in defying the central authorities when their actions abused the downtrodden or disenfranchised members of society. And yet the *lūtī* frequently engaged in activities that transgressed legal codes. The good and the bad *lūtī* is perhaps best typified in the short story by Sādeq Hedāyat in 1932, entitled *Dāsh Ākol*, and which was subsequently made into a feature film by Massoud Kimiai in 1971. The popularity of such books and films indicates that the code of *javānmardī*, as typified in the *lūtī* had strong resonance in Iran, even until the 1979 Islamic revolution. *Javānmardī*, and particularly *lūtī-gari* have also been associated with the *zūrkhāneh*, or the gymnasium where the so-called “traditional exercises” are performed to the sound of benedictions for the Imams and recitations of the *Shāhnāme*. Such an association was made by Jamāl-zādeh in the account of his youth entitled “Isfāhan is Half the World”.⁶ Several of the athletes of the *zūrkhāneh* have become celebrities in their own right, displaying various dimensions of the code of *javānmardī*. The negative side was manifested by the notorious Sha‘bān Ja‘farī (also known as Ja‘far-i bī mokh – or “Ja‘far the brainless”) who was instrumental in bringing down the democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Moḥammad Moṣaddeq in 1953. Since then, and perhaps because of this, the image of *javānmardī* has suffered, although many Iranians believe that Sha‘bān Ja‘farī should not be accorded a place within the pantheon of great Iranian *javānmards*. Rather, the positive image of the *javānmard* is usually associated with the Olympic gold-medallist for wrestling, Gholām Ḥusayn Takhtī. It is sometimes difficult to untangle the myths from the more prosaic realities of individuals who have been hoisted up as heroes; nevertheless, the figure of Takhtī has been and continues to be regarded by many as the greatest exemplar of *javānmardī* in modern Iran. To demonstrate how Takhtī dovetails

⁶ M.A. Jamalzadeh, *Isfahan is Half the World*, translated by W.L. Heston (Princeton: University Press, 1983).

into the *javānmardī* mould it is sufficient to point to several episodes in his life that are paradigmatic of the tradition. First is his sportsmanship in a wrestling competition when he refused to take advantage of his Russian opponent's injured right knee and only sought to attack the right side of his wrestling partner. Second, Takhtī is perceived to have been a champion of freedoms and a supporter of Mosaddeq, and was wary of backing the Shah. His piety as a good Muslim is frequently referred to in the almost "devotional" literature. In effect the myth of Takhtī has resulted in the emergence of a larger than life figure, to the extent that streets are named after him, postage-stamps bear his image and sporting stadiums carry his name. It may be that in the "Takhti-isation" of *javānmardī* the Islamic Republic of Iran has attempted to put its own distinctive stamp on the tradition by creating its own heroes and associating them with the tradition. This is the case with Mohammad Fahmideh, a thirteen-year-old boy who became an overnight "hero" during the Iran-Iraq war when he threw himself under an enemy tank and exploded a grenade belt that he had around him. The Islamic Republic commemorated his example through the issue of stamps, the painting of murals, and the well-maintained *zurkhaneh* in Tehran (used for displays to foreign visitors) which was named after him. Aside from attempts by the state to promote its own form of *javānmardī*, the decade-long Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s threw up many examples of the ethic, highlighting the bravery, courage and self-sacrifice of the soldiers. A genre of war-films has also arisen which foregrounds some of these qualities, but it is debatable whether the war-hero, or for that matter, Mohammad Fahmideh seriously rivals Takhtī as the epitome of the modern *javānmard*. Inevitably, his life and legacy have become politicised, and the annual commemorations of his death at his tomb in Tehran attract Iranian nationalists and those dissatisfied with the Iranian regime as much as anything else. Naturally, the Islamic Republic has its own understanding of the ideal *javānmard*, and while Mohammad Fahmideh may serve some purpose, the overwhelming emphasis in state establishments is upon Muhammad and the Imams. Indeed, the Islamic Republic does not promote those within its own clerical ranks as exemplars of the *javānmard* tradition. So, in the modern period, the threefold taxonomy of felon, faithful and fighter is provided by the *luti*, Imam 'Alī and Takhtī.

CONCLUSION

This brief description of the persistence of the theme of *javānmardī* has attempted to demonstrate a high degree of cultural continuity. Given that the concept of *javānmardī* is rather broad, it is inevitable that diverse individuals have been taken as exemplars of the tradition. However, by focusing upon three types, the felon, the fighter and the faithful, it is possible to trace common themes that contribute to perceptions of how Iranians have and continue to view their own identity. The theme is arguably so strong that it transcends attempts made by authorities to impose their specific interpretations on the concept, ensuring that the ideal will continue to inspire generations to come as globalising forces pressure everyone into mass conformity and heroes become “Disneyfied” or “Marvel-fied”.

17TH- CENTURY OIL PAINTINGS FROM SAFAVID ISFAHAN: "PEOPLE FROM PARTS UNKNOWN"

A lecture given by Eleanor Sims on 22nd June, 2016

In the autumn of 1975, I was invited to catalogue five pictures painted in oil on canvas (Figs. 1-2, 3-5) for an exhibition to be held as part of the "Festival of Islam" in the following summer of 1976. It is germane to say that all five were purchased by Queen Farah of Iran, whence they were then sent; it is also germane to say that, within three years, the Iranian Revolution altered that world forever. These remarkable paintings then ceased to attract much attention, scholarly or otherwise, for more than a decade.

The five pictures are rectangular and close to life-size; they come from two different figural ensembles; they show standing men and women in 17th-century Persian garb; and the trio might offer the impression of being, somehow incomplete. None is either signed or dated, nor does any have even a fragment of writing that helps to set them into context. The obvious questions, then, were: by whom, and when, and where were they painted? Who may the subjects be? And why were they painted? Because there is, also, something strange, unsettling, even bizarre, about them: in the presentation, the combination of technique and support, with subject and dress; even in the fact of certain facial and textile similarities.

I myself felt all of those things when I first laid eyes on them. Yet I was also fairly convinced that they were paintings of the second half of the 17th century, executed in a European technique, but not in Europe or painted by a European hand; I then went on to argue this in print, many times; as have, now, others. (See bibliography) Decades later, I remain convinced of my initial attribution. I shall not, however, deal with the issue that once seemed paramount: who might have painted them? For in 1975, I had sought assiduously to answer this question, as had others, some among my dearest friends and colleagues; and if they did not have a name to propose, they certainly had suggestions as to what ethnic part of the 17th-century Safavid milieu such elusive names might reside. In the end, they were all—I dare to suggest--both right, as well as they were wrong.

I did not, for a moment, believe they were the unsigned work of the finest of Persian painters working in what I had long ago coined the tag "the eclectic Safavid style": Muhammad Zaman, `Ali Quli Jabbadar, Shaykh `Abbasi, Haji Muhammad Zaman. I did consider the possibility that perhaps the artist--or

artists--might be a European who was just not particularly good at painting but is documented as being in Isfahan at some point in the 17th century; of such, I could then round up fewer than a dozen. Yet in the past four decades, no shred of evidence has ever emerged to connect any of these latter names with any surviving painting--of any scale or medium--unquestionably executed in 17th-century Isfahan. Given the kind of documentation we do not have for this period, as well as the general paucity of painters who signed work at this date, any such exercise usually leads to little more than what I call "scenario-writing": the endeavour itself is unsatisfactory and usually rests on quicksand.

Inasmuch as these five pictures, as well as others of the genre that have since come to light--I reckon, now, at least some eight (Figs. 6-10), that are closely related in manner and quality, if stylistically different (in addition to several more, either bad "wannabe's," later, or the exception that proves the rule)--are all both unsigned and undated; thus we must look to the works themselves to "tell" us how to set them into context. Four decades on, however, the group still embodies unanswered questions. One would be their function--or at least, their purpose: were these Persian oil-paintings intentionally made to "spread the image," as did the many images of that most colorful Qajar ruler, Fath 'Ali Shah, so brilliantly and in the same medium, a century and a half later? Or might they perhaps better be seen as souvenirs--*yadgari*--of the largest, most impressive, most colourful and glamorous variety, to be sure: an enduring vision of persons--*types* of persons--encountered in an exotic and faraway place?

Few in this audience need reminding that the Isfahan of Shah 'Abbas I was THE destination for those of adventurous spirit--merchants, mendicants, men of the cloth; men of ambition, restless, curious, often also younger sons: it was a place both to "see and be seen." As for the European monarchs from whose lands came these travellers, they certainly wished to be represented to the Persian shahs by----well, let us say: "diplomats" (who were, then, as also into the 20th century, as likely to be spies), and traders, as well as being merely "adventurers." As early as the middle of the 16th century, Europeans, *farangi*--foreigners--had been coming to Persia; throughout the 17th, where they went was to Isfahan: English, Spanish and Portuguese, French and Italians, Dutch and Germans, Swedes and Poles and Russians. And as Europeans, lay or secular, traveled to, and through Persia, they kept diaries and recorded their travels. We have a huge, and useful, wealth of contemporary sources written from a European point of view; contemporary Persian sources are equally useful but neither so numerous, nor so easily accessible to non-Persian readers.

Let me return to the paintings and start with an apparent pair (Figs. 1-2). They appear, at first glance, to be pendant figures, although I suspect these two

were not, originally. The man faces left and wears rich 17th-century Safavid garb; the lady faces right and is dressed in a silvery-white robe "patterned with a tight formal design"--a bit like a trellis. Their garments are very well understood, and quite descriptively painted—unlike the splendid van Dyck portrait of Sir Robert Sherley in Persian court dress, for which he posed for the artist in Rome, in August of 1622. The lady's headdress is quite specific and might seem unusual; but together with the dark drinking-horn she carries in her raised right hand, it identifies her as Georgian. Georgians occupied a special place within Safavid society and have been described as virtually the third ethnic element of Persia in the 17th century.

Both painted figures here stand in similar settings: buff and dark-red checkered stone floors, shown in an approximation of a perspectival rendering, move the eye backward to carved gray stone pedestals; they support a pair of twisted columns wreathed with putti in vine-scrolls, but partially obscured by the lustrous draped curtain--green, behind him, and, behind her, pinkish-red with golden fringes. The terraces, in both pictures, end at a railing of reddish stone balusters, and behind it--again, in both pictures--is a distant landscape. Beyond him stretches a large lake edged with foliage, offering an even more distant view of buildings at the foot of a mountain; behind her, the view seems to show a small pond with a large tree behind it.

Moving back into the pictures, each figure stands beside a table of European design and height --Safavid Persia had no such furniture--heavily draped with cloth and laden with unusual—and, for the man, largely non-Persian—objects. In 1975 I spent much time considering the origins of setting and objects; permit me to quote myself:

"...the floor of checkered marble squares is typical of early seventeenth-century Dutch painting; the carved stone architectural features are known from both Flemish prints and paintings of the two previous centuries; the composite landscapes are both Venetian and Flemish in origin; the dog calls to mind Veronese paintings; the ...draped curtain is the standard accessory of European painting both north and south of the Alps for well over a century; the clock is German, seventeenth century and probably the pocket-watch as well, and the large bouquet of flowers looks as if it had been lifted bodily from a seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting." I then went on to say: "...the chronological and geographical eclecticism of these paintings suggests that their sources lie in a particular class of object than...specific articles of trade[And] what is most likely to have introduced such a variety of European features...into the painting of seventeenth-century Isfahan, ...is European works of art themselves, prints and particularly oil-paintings."

Given the numbers of Europeans in Safavid Isfahan, European images were no longer unusual. For instance, the personal property of Nicholas Wilford, an English painter-cum-commercial agent sent to Persia by Charles I in 1637 but who died on board the East India Company ship before it ever landed, included a volume of floral engravings, and a "booke of perspectives." Wilford's first duty in Persia, read the King's commission, would have been to deliver to the "'Emperor of Persia'... ..pictures of or selves, or Queene and children..." Following his untimely death, the pictures--presumably oil-paintings, --were eventually presented to Shah Safi I (1629-1642) in Isfahan, in mid-April of 1638.

Moreover, such paintings in oil on canvas had been circulating in Persia for several decades already. The Italian traveller, Pietro della Valle, records an evening, in August of 1619, with Shah `Abbas I: after dining in company with the Shah and "the ambassadors," [*gli Ambasciadori*] they strolled in the Qaysariyya, the great bazaar, where the king stopped in several places and then, at that of our Venetian Alessandro Studendoli...; [it was] filled [to overflowing] with everything: pictures, mirrors, and other similar 'Christian' kind of objects. To the Indian Ambassador, the King showed paintings, which were, practically all, portraits of princes, of the kind that are sold in Piazza Navona for a scudo each but, here, even a single one sells for as much as 10 sequins." [*poi a quella del nostro Venetiano Alessandro Studendoli,...; piena più di tutte, di pitture, di specchi, e di simili cose curiose di Cristianita`. Il Re,...all' Ambasciadore Indiano [,] mostrava le pitture, che eran quasi tutti ritratti di Principi; di quei che si vendono in piazza Navona a uno scudo l'uno, ma qui dieci zecchini l'uno almeno, e profumatamente; ...*]

Such documentary comment, of course, does not pronounce upon quality: the Armenian community, transplanted from Julfa, built a cathedral, All Saviours, and a large number of other churches in New Julfa; the interior of the cathedral, between its vaulted ceilings and its fine Safavid tiled dadoes, was literally covered with what seem acres of religious oil-paintings by Italian-influenced Dutch and Flemish 17th-century *tenebristi* imported from Holland and Flanders.

As for the oil-painted portraits of Charles I and Henrietta Maria dating from around 1635, no trace of them, in Iran, has ever come to my attention, but I have long assumed, that they would have been of the type known as the "Portrait with a Prospect." It was especially popular in England around 1630--where it was so often executed by good Dutch and Flemish painters, such as Daniel Mytens. A well-dressed figure stands on a stone terrace ending in a balustrade, beyond which, on one side of the painting, stretches a spacious and distant landscape--the "prospect"--which may look out over water and thus contribute atmosphere; on the other side of the background is usually a swagged and draped curtain that may--or

may not--partially obscure an impressive column or two. The figure is usually shown standing; beside a royal personage is usually a richly draped table upon which the relevant crown is placed. The formulaic "prospect" then became a standard element in painted portraits for several centuries thereafter, and selected features in the setting then appear for diverse subjects well into the 19th century. Indeed, the models furnished by the Charles I "Portrait with a Prospect" type, for settings of the Georgian lady (Fig. 1) and the Persian man (Fig. 2), have led me to call the ensemble to which they belonged "The First Prospect Suite." But despite their European-derived settings, and the unmistakably European medium and support--oil-painted canvas, what indubitably sets them in 17th-century Isfahan is that they all wear some version of 17th-century Persian clothing that is both well-understood and well-rendered. And what made me immediately doubt that they were ever intended as portraits, is the fact that, in each group, or set, or suite, the faces of the figures seem really the same face. Notes I had made very early in my study in 1975, in consultation with a restorer, include this observation: "the brush-strokes in all the visages are pure cliché, with no freedom in the execution of either faces or hands."

The same is true of the faces in the "Trio." A Persian woman faces right (Fig. 3); another Georgian woman faces left (Fig. 4); and a man, in a version of clothing worn by grooms or running footmen, the *chawush* (Fig. 5), also faces right. The ladies' garments display different floral patterns on the same red robes, and differently patterned sashes are worn in the same manner. All three stand in a fairly undefined outdoors with the horizon more-or-less in the middle of the painting. And all three figures gesture in the same formulaic way: one arm bent at the elbow with the hand in front of the body, and the other extended, either holding something or pointing. The Persian lady holds that stock item of daring licentiousness, a large bulbous transparent glass bottle partially filled with red liquid which is, of course, intended to be "read" as wine. The Georgian lady again holds a drinking horn; and at her feet are both a Safavid blue-on-white painted ceramic bottle as well as a low dish with a pair of piglet-heads: together, they make the point that she is not Muslim. But despite the distinguishing headdresses, the gold-brocaded short coat worn by one, and the differing positions of one arm of each, the Georgian lady is, really, the flipped image of the Persian. And in all three, the same face is painted in the same way: brush-strokes and modelling, shape of nose and contour of cheek, chin, and mouth. They have been likened to the facial type made fashionable in later 17th-century portraits by Peter Lely and Godfrey Kneller, such as his "Hampton Court Beauties" of 1691, or his portrait of Princess Anne, the future Queen Anne, of about the same date.

From all of which might be concluded: all five of these nearly life-size paintings were representations of types of handsomely dressed people, the "pair" in a lavishly furnished setting, and the "trio" in a varied but open landscape; they were not portraits of anyone. This was underscored by the presence, in the same exhibition of 1976, of an album of figural paintings on paper, on the spine of which were the Dutch words *persiaensche teekening*—"Persian drawings," whose subjects are, also, 17th-century Persian men and women, a single figure to a white page of European paper. Some show virtually the same subjects as both the "First Prospect Pair" and the "Trio": a man with the same kind of voluminous striped Isfahani turban; a *chawush*; a Persian dancing-girl balancing three smaller glass bottles half-filled with red wine; a Georgian woman, cradling something in one arm and wearing a marten-lined golden floral jacket over her shoulders. Evidently, the artists were "picking and choosing" from a larger repertory of accoutrements with which they could vary and enliven their otherwise typical figures, no matter the scale.

Still engaged in this research, I soon learned of another oil-painted lady who also belonged to the "First Prospect Suite" (Fig. 6). She is Armenian—it is her coin-fringed headdress that so identifies her-- but she is dressed in the very same silvery garment as the Georgian lady. Both hands are again similarly occupied, and she stands in a setting almost identical to that of the Persian man with the huge turban—even to the hairy, clawed foot seen below the golden fringes of the draped table. The large, peculiarly dark- coloured, acanthus-handled footed vase held by the Georgian lady now stands on the floor, filled with another Dutch-derived bouquet of tulips and lilies. Only her long, dark eyebrows lend a certain individuality to her face; whereas the faces of the Georgian woman and the Persian man in this suite appear to be versions of the same face (Figs. 1-2).

The pictorial relationship was falling into place: all three would be but half of one original suite of paintings, an ensemble composed of three pairs of persons, of reasonably elevated social status in the principal groups the European visitor of status might encounter in Isfahan in the middle of the 17th century, persons distinctly exotic, to European eyes and sensibilities: Persian, Armenian, Georgian, a man and a woman each. I saw, and still do see, this suite as the product of one "atelier"-- I would still not like to say "one painter"--who could devise the settings for his Isfahani figural types from European paintings he had seen, owned, or otherwise noted, rearranging the elements for variety. The women could all be shown similarly garbed--resolving the problem of access to unveiled women, of any class and origin; headgear would serve to identify their ethnic and religious origin; accessories and the varied position of "props" would clearly differentiate them.

Nor is the male-female pairing unusual: it is a standard organizing principle in 17th-century Persian mural decoration. Comparable examples include the no-longer-standing Ayina-Khana, the "Mirror House;" on its entrance-*talar* was a pair of standing figures, male on the left and female on the right. And at the Chihil Sutun, built for Shah `Abbas II (1642-1666), its exterior side *talars* are painted with "exotic" foreigners, including a lady in an approximation of Tudor dress, and a French "courtier following the latest fashion."

The merely wealthy of Safavid Isfahan followed court fashion, in domestic decoration (as Emma Loosley, several years ago, had observed to this Society) as, also, in dress. The Dutch traveller Cornelis de Bruyn describes the house of Khwaja Sarfraz in Armenian New Julfa; he was a member of one of the 20 preeminent Armenian merchant-families that controlled the silk trade: "...all the walls painted and full of figures as big as the life...A Turkish man and woman, [...] other figures dressed after the Persian and Spanish manner." Now known as the House of 'Soukias,' it still retains this later 17th-century decoration: the walls of the exterior *talar* display yet other "exotic" foreigners, not only Georgians but also Indians and Europeans.

Yet another pair of oil-painted canvases (Fig. 10-11), exhibited in Burlington House in 1931--where they had attracted virtually no notice whatsoever) also followed Safavid court fashion: the subjects are also figures in Safavid Persian dress, a man and a woman. These paintings are somewhat smaller than even the pictures of the "First Prospect Suite" but the lady wears exactly the same dress as had its Georgian and the Armenian ladies; and their settings are a reduced version of that seen in the "First Prospect Suite:" checkered floor, swagged curtain on one side, balustrade closing the composition in front of the distant view. And again both also have the same face--if we mentally strip away his `Abbasi moustaches. Moreover, this pair has a 17th-century English provenance: family tradition holds that they were given to a younger son of the Booth family, who had been in Safavid Isfahan, by `Abbas II, as well as a rich "'dress of honour,' in which dress the young man was painted after his return to England." Originally in Cotterstock Hall in Northamptonshire, in the 1830's the oil-painted pair came to Basset Down, in Wiltshire, and hung there until they were sold at auction at Christie's in 1974; and then, effectively, they disappeared for several decades.

By which time—early in the 21st century—several significant features of this group of paintings were acquiring "critical mass." The first was shape: all of these life-size images painted on canvas in the European manner, but almost probably not by European painters, are rectangular. Whereas, in 17th century Isfahan, as in so many places elsewhere in Persia, and for centuries prior, a constant architectural feature is the pointed arch: it is used both for three-

dimensional constructions as well as two-dimensionally, when the use is non-structural but decorative, to articulate a facade or an interior space, to surround an independent painting of similar shape.

Provenance was the other feature then also approaching critical mass: when any of these paintings could be traced to the later 17th century, the origin proves to be English or, at the least, European. The "Trio" (Figs. 3-5) came from Drayton House, also in Northamptonshire, having been installed there by 1701 at the latest and, possibly earlier, perhaps in the reign of James II (1685-1688); there is said to be a connection with both Mary of Modena, who had come to England (as James' second wife) in November of 1673; and Henry Mordaunt, second Earl of Peterborough, resident at Drayton when the "Trio" was installed. And the Basset Down pictures (Fig. 10-11) had unquestionably been in Booth family possession since the late 17th century.

Unfortunately, for the other eight paintings of the type I know at present, I have virtually no such information: not the three of the "First Prospect Suite" (Figs. 1-2, 6) or their presumed (albeit presently unknown) companions; nor a pair of rectangular oil-painted pictures of a Georgian man and woman. Only the single male figure (Fig. 9), perhaps the only potential portrait of the entire group, is known to have been "in Europe" since the early years of the 20th century.

As for the last pair of the group (Figs. 7-8), comprising what I now call the "Second Prospect Suite," it has settings almost as rich and complex as the "First," although they are somewhat smaller: size being an important point about these pictures that is, sometimes, overlooked unless it is emphasized—or seen in person. At present, only two paintings of this suite are known, a Georgian archer facing right and a Georgian lady facing left.

Misidentified as a youth, she had "appeared" at auction only in the spring of 2005. But if she is among my more recent "acquaintances", and while I still have no information on her origin, she has proven to be of singular importance. She makes a connection to a secondary set of three oil-painted canvases circulating--but separately--on the international art market; and all of the three are distinguished by having pointed, rather than straight tops. The lady of the "Second Prospect Suite" is, essentially, the same figure as the Georgian lady in the painting with the pointed-top, the pose again flipped and her garb simplified. She, in turn--or rather, her face--eventually showed the way to the two others, a Persian man with a hawk, and a dancing-girl of uncertain origin: all three, once again, have the same face. And must surely have been made for some context in which pictures of this shape would fit perfectly into an arched niche (or space). They probably now represent only a part of the ensemble, either three of four, or

of six. But that they are truly Persian paintings for a Persian context seems indisputably evident from their shape.

Lastly, function—or, purpose: comparison with an ensemble of Ottoman Turkish figures commissioned by an Austrian nobleman, returning in 1629 from a diplomatic mission to Istanbul, a set of life-size oil-painted images of the "exotic" Ottoman types he had seen in his time at the Porte, suggested the obvious purpose for the later 17th-century oil-painted pictures of men and women in Safavid Persian dress. Those that once hung at Drayton House, and at Basset Down, and elsewhere, in England, as elsewhere in Europe, from which ambassadors, diplomats, traders and younger sons, set forth for the "exotic" orient, must surely also have been commissioned. Even without the bespoke European setting of Greillenstein, some of these returning travellers must also have wished to display similarly large and impressive images of typical persons they had seen on their travels, images that would recall their voyages to, and sojourns in, lands farther East, lands much farther away from home than was the Porte from Upper Austria, from which they too might bring home, for framing in elaborate gilded frames, their own pictures of people from "parts unknown."

NB: I should like to express my thanks to Geoffrey Phillips for his technical assistance in illustrating this publication.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

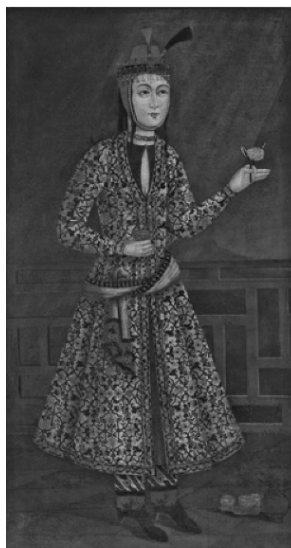


Figure 10



Figure 11

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Report by Travel Scholar, Marc Czarnuszewicz

Right from my arrival in Tehran in October 2015 for my year abroad, I was determined to try and see as many of Iran's historic and ancient sites as my period of study there would allow. Iranian history has an enormous cast of colourful characters but in my first year of study at the University of Oxford, I'd developed a specific interest in the much-admired Seljuk Grand Vizier Nizam al-Mulk and thus resolved to concentrate my travelling on sites related to him and the Seljuk era.

Perhaps the most famous and romantic place linked to Iran's Seljuk era and Nizam al-Mulk is the ancient city of Nishapur. The chief of the metropolises of Greater Khorasan, both culturally and economically, Nishapur had thrived and expanded under Seljuk rule. Although I'd read the tale of its decline and fall



in Bulliet's 'The Patricians of Nishapur', I reasoned that in spite of the destruction caused by the internecine fighting and the Mongol invasion, there ought to be at least a remnant of one of the world's largest cities at the time still standing. Arriving in modern Nishapur late on a fairly cool March evening after the long coach journey from Tehran, I was immediately welcomed into the home of one of my fellow passengers who insisted that I stay with their family who would be my guides to the city. Their warm welcome however could not disguise the fact that modern Nishapur is merely a normal, medium-sized Iranian town, a fraction of the size of its illustrious predecessor and without any building over a couple of hundred years old. A road at the edge of the town leads to the tombs of the poets Attar and Khayyam and following this road a little further on the plain takes the traveller to archaeological excavations of the old city. What is revealed gives more an impression of the extent of the

destruction the city suffered than what was once there. Underneath a protected canopy the ground has been cut away to reveal the densely-packed foundations of houses, streets and walls below. Unprepossessing at first glance, these ruins are only a fragment of a city which no doubt stretched well into the verdant fields now surrounding the site and represent a cautionary reminder of man's power to destroy.

Seeking a more complete monument with which to study the Seljuk history of the area I continued on to Mashhad. The city and shrine, however, were lacking in this regard, aside from the remains by the tomb of Ferdowsi at Tus. Fortunately, I'd read about an



interesting Palace and Minaret about 30km south of the city at a place called Sangbast. From the poorly organized sprawl of Mashhad coach station I hopped on the service to Torbat-i-Jam and although I understood very

little of the driver's regional accent, I persuaded him to stop when the Dome and Minaret of Sangbast came into view. The site is dramatically positioned on a plateau of dusty land and well away from any other buildings. Modern Sangbast is a little village a short distance away, but in the past it had been a strategically positioned place of significance where the road east to Herat split off from the road turning north towards Tus. The large domed structure that is visible for miles around was either a mausoleum or a palace which has been attributed to the Ghaznavid governor of the region. Approaching the building on foot, however, my first difficulty was how to get inside, the single entrance being securely locked and a nearby hut being empty. After several fruitless minutes, I spotted a

phone number on the side of a hut and a few minutes after calling it the guard appeared on a motorbike with a pair of keys. The interior decoration of the building was exceptional considering its apparent isolation. Geometric patterns of great variety and ingenuity were displayed in both the brickwork and the painted decoration, making a dramatic statement as to its instigator's wealth and majesty. But ignoring the beauty of the interior, the guard quickly beckoned me outside, walked boldly over to the door of the adjoining minaret, opened it and told me to go on up. Climbing up the narrow thousand-year-old winding staircase was surprisingly painless, that is until I disturbed a group of nesting pigeons who were clearly unused to visitors. The view from the top of flat plains rolling away in every direction demonstrated to me the prominent place this structure must have held in the political-geography of the region.

In terms of penetrating the world of Nizam al-Mulk though, these structures, while likely to have been known to him due to their proximity to Nishapur and Tus, don't form part of his and the Seljuk period's considerable architectural legacy. I'd previously seen in Esfahan at the Jameh Mosque the dome which is perhaps the most prominent of his legacies but I really had hoped to see one of his Nizamiyya, the chain of *madrasahs* he endowed across the Seljuk Empire to help provide a more standardised system of Islamic education. The only place I'd heard of in Iran where the remains of a Nizamiyya had been found was at Khargird near the Afghan border. I'd seen some of the stucco work from Khargird at the Museum of Islamic

History in Tehran but going to the site itself would mean ignoring the FCO advice about the border region and invalidating my travel insurance. It



was with no little excitement therefore that I learnt of the excavations of the city at Esfarayen in North Khorasan province. I was pointed in this direction by the cultural and tourism office in Bojnurd who armed me with reports of the excavations there and told me to contact the local office when I arrived. Esfarayen is now a modest town whose chief tourist attraction is the great Safavid walls of the citadel which after the destruction of Bam in 2003 became the largest adobe structure in Iran. The archaeologists working there explained to me that these walls were in fact smaller reconstructions of a larger set of Seljuk walls which had not only protected a citadel but an entire city that had once covered what were now but grassy fields. My enthusiastic guide took me across these fields to show me his team's latest discoveries, all of them Seljuk in date. Firstly, a water cistern, then the foundations of a mosque and finally what they believed to be the foundations of a *madrasah*. It was difficult to explain my excitement at seeing the remains of one of the world's first sites of standardised Islamic education only about 100km from Nizam al-Mulk's birthplace. It was also significant that this important site for the development of Sunni Islam was being excavated with such care so close to the Shi'ite shrine city of Mashhad.

The building of the Nizamiyya has long been thought to be a counter-measure against Nizam al-Mulk's great adversaries, the Nizari Ismailis who were also the likely authors of his assassination. In understanding his actions, it is therefore also useful to understand the actions of those he was fighting against. Finding substantial evidence of their built legacy is, however, more difficult as while



every good Tehran tour agency offers trips to the ‘Castle of Alamut’, like other major Ismaili fortresses, Alamut was systematically destroyed in the Mongol invasions and very little of interest remains. Fortuitously, the library of the British Institute of Persian Studies in Tehran held a copy of Peter Wileý’s work, ‘Eagle’s Nest’, which described a large, exceptionally well-preserved but remote fortress in the mountains near to Semnan. No one at the Semnan tourist office had been to this castle of Saru but they were able to find a pair of local mountaineers who knew how to get there. A long uncomfortable journey following a spaghetti of dusty mining tracks brought us into a pretty valley over which the walls of the castle loomed from their lofty peak. The fortress in fact consisted of two castles: a great triple-walled citadel and a smaller double-walled outpost to protect the water supply on the other side of the valley. The main citadel was the better preserved and the more difficult to access and it was only after an arduous climb that we reached its peak. On its steepest side 3-metre-high walls had been placed atop great cliffs of solid stone, providing the observer with a vertiginous lesson in the art of deterring an attacker. The vast majority of the towers had significantly deteriorated, but several ceilings were still intact. Behind one of the outer walls also appeared to be a large *Ab Anbar* water reservoir still partially intact. The view from the peak extended all the way down to the distant main road; anyone passing along the road would have been visible long before they could approach the castle. This illustrates clearly the value of the castle of Saru, along with that at Gerdkuh, for the Ismaili movement and the threat they posed for the Seljuk Empire. The Ismailis could threaten and attack the main East-West route connecting prosperous Khorasan with the rest of the empire from bases that were impossible to reduce easily either by siege or assault. But today Saru is the last of the great Ismaili castles in any real state of preservation and the Nizari Ismailis are only a tiny minority in Iran. Nizam al-Mulk’s genius lay in his being one of the first to understand the need for a systematic state intervention in the transmission and development of Islamic doctrine as a path to unify and pacify a state against such threats. His assassination is perhaps the reason that his Nishapur died and now sits beneath verdant fields. But the ideas of governance and state that he gave birth to have outlived even Saru’s great walls.

Sweet Boy Dear Wife: Jane Dieulafoy in Persia 1881-1886, by Heather Rossiter, Wakefield Press, South Australia, 2015. ISBN: 978 1 74305 378 2.

Reviewed by David Blow

Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916 CE) was a famous French archaeologist, writer, photographer and feminist. She is forever associated with the palace built by the Achaemenid king, Darius I (522-486 BCE), at Susa on the eastern edge of the Mesopotamian plain. Jane and her husband Marcel, who was a trained engineer, first visited the site of Susa in a private capacity in January 1882 after an arduous journey through Persia. They returned to Susa on two official archaeological missions in 1885 and 1886 where, with the permission of the Qajar ruler, Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896 CE), they carried out the first extensive, scientific excavations of the palace. There they unearthed, among other things, two of the glories of Achaemenid art – the polychrome glazed brick friezes known as the *Frieze of the Lions* and the *Frieze of the Archers*, which once covered part of the interior walls of the palace. Since 1886 they have been among the prize possessions of the Louvre Museum in Paris.

But the fame of Jane Dieulafoy rests just as much, if not more, on the notebooks she filled and the photographs she took during the expeditions that she and Marcel made to Persia. Her record of their first expedition from January 1881 to March 1882, in particular, has become one of the classic European accounts of Persia during the long reign of Nasir al-Din Shah. Entitled *La Perse, La Chaldée et La Susiane 1881-1882*, it describes their journey from Azerbaijan in the north-west of Persia to Susa in the far south-west. Such is the interest of this work that Heather Rossiter draws on it for well over two-thirds of her book, which is essentially a retelling of Jane's account – the remainder drawing on Jane's record of their excavations at Susa on the two subsequent expeditions, when most of the journey from France was made by sea to the Persian Gulf. Rossiter's retelling of the story is vivid and thoroughly enjoyable, although the passages in which she explains the historical background contain a few errors. Thus, Darius I was not the son of Cyrus the Great; that was Cambyses. Darius came from a collateral line and claimed to have seized power from a pretender after the death of Cambyses. Darius

did not build Susa before Persepolis, but at the same time. Hafez never wrote “more than 6,000 Sufi poems”; most of his poems are *ghazals* or lyrics, which total less than 500 and few modern scholars would describe them all as ‘Sufi’ in content.

Jane Dieulafoy was born Jane Magre on 29 June 1851 into a comfortable bourgeois family in Toulouse. As Rossiter explains, she succumbed to the fashionable fascination with the Orient from an early age and found a kindred spirit in Marcel Dieulafoy, who was from a similar Toulouse background and whom she married in May 1870. Marcel had worked as an engineer in North Africa where the early Islamic architecture had made a deep impression on him. But before they could explore their mutual interest any further, the Prussians invaded France and besieged Paris. Marcel enlisted in the French army of the Loire as an engineering officer with the rank of captain and Jane joined him as an irregular or ‘*franc-tireur*’. This was the first time Jane wore trousers: male dress would later become her trademark and an expression of her feminist insistence on being treated as an equal with men. They endured a harsh winter with the army, but after the fall of Paris in January 1871 they returned to Toulouse and civilian life.

Over the next few years, the Dieulafoys visited Islamic monuments in Morocco, Egypt and Spain. Marcel also became interested in Gothic architecture after coming under the influence of the French architect, Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879 CE), who was restoring Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris and for whom he worked for a time. Marcel came to believe, as have others before and since, that key features of medieval European Gothic architecture, notably the pointed arch, were derived from Islamic architecture and he concluded that the origins of Islamic architecture lay in the architecture of the ancient Persian dynasty of the Sasanians (224-651 CE). The idea that European Gothic architecture came about as a result of contact with Islamic architecture remains controversial, but Rossiter embraces it as if it were universally accepted. The same is true of her assertion that the Crusaders played a key role in introducing the techniques of Islamic architecture into Europe.

Viollet-le-Duc encouraged Marcel to leave his post with the municipal services of Toulouse and to obtain an unpaid assignment in Persia in order to investigate further his theory of the Sasanian influence. By the time they left France in February 1881 both Marcel

and Jane had learnt enough Persian to be able to converse and Jane had also taken a course in photography. They travelled by ship to Constantinople, from there to Poti on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, then through Georgia and across the Araxes River into the Persian province of Azerbaijan. Except when she visited the women's quarters in Persian households – the *anderun* -- Jane wore the clothes of a young man, although her appearance was more boyish than manly. Her costume, as described by Rossiter, consisted of a white cotton shirt held at the neck by a light silk cravat, trousers and a woollen coat buttoned only to the waist to facilitate riding astride a horse. Jane had become a crack shot during the Franco-Prussian War and her baggage in Persia included revolvers, rifles and ammunition. As Rossiter says, in Persia “Jane was always ready to confront an armed threat with pistol drawn” and she invariably faced down her opponents. There was also her cumbersome and fragile photographic equipment. Jane took many photographs of Persians and scenes of Persian life, but Rossiter says it was her photographs of women in the clothes they wore in their homes, having cast aside the all-enveloping *chador*, that were truly revelatory when published in France. She describes one of the women Jane photographed, the wife of a Muslim merchant, as wearing a “short gathered skirt hanging from generous hips and [her] breasts peeking through transparent black lace above a bare rounded stomach.”

At the time, there were virtually no roads in Persia worthy of the name. The Dieulafoys rode along ancient tracks on horseback with caravans of load-bearing mules and donkeys. Sometimes Jane organised their own caravan by engaging a chief muleteer (*charvadar-bashi*) who led the way and provided the necessary beasts of burden, attendant muleteers and cook; at other times, they travelled with one of the large Persian caravans. The long caravan stages across vast, windswept plains and through perilous mountain passes, the extremes of heat and cold, the uncertain supply of food from impoverished villages and the rudimentary accommodation too often infested with rats and armies of bed-bugs, all tested their endurance to the limit. Jane was bitten by a scorpion in Saveh and both she and Marcel suffered from severe bouts of malaria for which they over-dosed with quinine. There were, however, welcome comfortable breaks, when they stayed with the keepers of the British telegraph stations at Kashan and Shiraz and in the convent of the

Roman Catholic community in the Armenian suburb of Julfa on the outskirts of Isfahan.

But for Jane the discomforts of travel were more than compensated for by the magnificence of the Persian landscape. She writes of this most movingly, in a passage cited by Rossiter:

“In the sparkling brilliance [of dawn] when the earth is lit by the rays of God himself.....breathe in the gentle morning air, let your eyes roam the immense plain, bigger than an ocean, more iridescent than pearl shell, [and see] on the mountains the blue and purple ribbons, distant and final curtain of a sublime décor.”

She also enjoyed talking to ordinary Persians – those she met on their journey and those she and Marcel later employed in the excavations at Susa. She came to feel a deep sympathy and affection for them – not least because she saw them as the victims of a corrupt and venal ruling class, intent solely on exploiting them. It was also this system, she believed, that was responsible for their habits of lying, cheating and robbing. As Rossiter puts it: “She believed that if the people were treated fairly and honestly, their considerable virtues would dominate.” She had a particular sympathy for the women. As a feminist, she was horrified by the practice of confining women to the *anderun* and felt a corresponding admiration for the freer women she encountered among the tribes and among the followers of the new Babi religion.

The title of Heather Rossiter’s book is taken from the Dieulafoys’ audience in Tehran with Nasir al-Din Shah. They were presented to the Shah in the gardens of the Gulistan Palace by the Shah’s French doctor, Dr.Tholozan. Nasir al-Din Shah was astonished to learn of the true sex of Jane in her trouser suit. What!” he exclaimed, “That sweet boy is a woman?” “Indeed, your Majesty,” replied Colonel Dieulafoy, “she is Madame Dieulafoy, my dear wife.” The Shah then observed that Jane’s adoption of male dress was sensible, because “in my country a woman can’t go about unveiled without exciting the population,” adding, with unwitting prescience, “but can you think what a sensation a veiled Persian woman would be on the Paris boulevards?” Rossiter says that because they did not have official diplomatic support in Iran, they were not shown the Crown Jewels and were dismissed with ‘a wave

of the hand'. She says this also meant that they were not invited into the homes of ministers and other high-ranking Iranians, where they might have learnt something of 'the intrigues and power struggles' that went on behind 'impenetrable walls'. The Shah did grant the Dieulafoys a pass permitting them to enter any building 'of significant architectural merit', but this did not always prove effective in the face of local outbursts of Shi'ite fanaticism.

As they journeyed to Susa, Jane was struck by the run-down appearance of most of the cities and the impoverished condition of the villages – much of which she attributed to misgovernment and extortionate taxation. She was shocked by the appearance of Isfahan, having read so much about its past splendour under the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722). It gave her the impression of a city that had been taken by storm and sacked. The governor of Isfahan when the Dieulafoys arrived was the Shah's eldest son, the Zill al-Sultan, who was further desecrating the former Safavid capital by using timber from the plane trees that lined the famous Chahar Bagh avenue and decorative features from the buildings for his new palace in Tehran. In Shiraz, she contrasted the embellishment of the city by the short-lived Zand dynasty (1750-1794), whose memory was revered by its citizens, with "the Qajar reality of cracked walls, broken minarets and collapsed caravanserais". Worst of all, however, was Shushtar, which the Dieulafoys' caravan approached over the impressive bridge and dam built by Roman prisoners-of-war in the 3rd century CE:

"Passing beneath the tiled gateway at the far end of the bridge, the Dieulafoys' caravan entered a wide street.....The street led into a maze of alleyways, which quickly revealed the ruined state of Shushtar and its appalling sanitary arrangements. Dropped into chutes within the masonry walls of the houses, wastes of all kinds spilled from openings at street level and slopped towards an open drain in the centre of the roadway. The stench was nauseating, the contrast with the dignity of the great bridge pathetic. The crumbling, half-abandoned houses, more shocking even than the dilapidation of fabled Isfahan, revealed the degraded and depopulated condition of Khuzestan's capital city."

The one exception among the cities seems to have been Kashan, which Jane described as a “city richer and more industrious than most Persian towns, as its prosperous aspect testifies”.

Jane and Marcel viewed many historic buildings along the way – Marcel filling his notebooks with technical details while Jane took photographs. In addition to the permission they had been given by the Shah to enter buildings of architectural merit, they received a specific authorisation to visit religious places from the Zill al-Sultan, who governed all of southern Iran as well as Isfahan. They were only allowed, however, to access the surrounding galleries of such places and not the prayer floor. Even with this authorisation, they had to contend from time to time with outbursts of popular anger at the presence of infidels.

Early in their journey Jane discovered the wonders of Persian tilework which quickly became a passion with her. The truly revelatory moment came when they were visiting the mausoleum near Tabriz of the Mongol Il-Khanid ruler of Persia, Ghazan Khan (1271-1304). In Rossiter’s words:

“A peasant brought Jane a glazed eight-pointed tile. On a cobalt blue baked tile an artisan had painted a writhing dragon into his design, then flecked gold dust onto its scales, before putting the tile on a rack to be refired. When it emerged from the kiln a golden dragon was caught in a net of stars and arabesques. Jane stared at the dragon and saw the durability of a tile. The brick buildings had crumbled to dust, yet the tile survived.”

Rossiter adds that “only in retrospect did she (Jane) realise that this was when her search for the enamelled brick *Frieze of the Archers* began”.

On their way from Shiraz to Bushire on the Persian Gulf, the Dieulafoys explored the ruined Sasanian palaces at Firuzabad and Sarvestan, which were visible proof of Marcel’s theory that key techniques of Islamic architecture – notably the use of squinches to place a round dome on a square space – originated with the Sasanians. However, Marcel mistakenly thought that these palaces were Achaemenid, which led him to conclude, as the French scholar, Pierre Amiet, has it, “that the vault and the dome had originated in a popular building tradition”.

Rossiter gives a dramatic account of the last stages of their journey to Susa and their race to catch a French ship in the Shatt al-Arab to take them home. After an unsuccessful attempt to approach Susa via the Karun River, they took a much more circuitous route through Ottoman territory, culminating in a difficult caravan journey across the Mesopotamian plain to Susa from Amarah on the Tigris. It was early in January 1882 and the rains had come, turning the plain into a quagmire. At one point, they had to endure what Rossiter calls “a night of terror” when the caravan became lost in a swamp and they were caught with no proper shelter in a violent storm that raged all night, as a result of which Jane suffered another severe attack of malarial fever. She struggled on, but eventually almost lost consciousness and fell off her horse. Marcel wrapped her up and laid her along the back of a mule till they reached the tents of the Beni La’am, Marsh Arab tribes that controlled the area and preyed on such caravans, but who were now obliged by custom to extend hospitality. Marcel paid the Beni La’am for a safe passage onwards and the caravan set off again the following morning, Jane having recovered sufficiently with the help of quinine and warm sunshine. But her fever returned as they crossed the Kerkhah River, a torrent with strong currents, to be met on the other side by a hunting party of the Persian Bakhtiari tribe, who were also known for their plundering habits but treated them courteously and gave them refreshments. Then on to Dizful, where they were held up for two days by “rain that fell in sheets” before finally riding out to the flat-topped tumulus that was Susa. They made two visits to the site while staying at the nearby Muslim shrine of the Prophet Daniel with the permission of the chief mullah of Dizful. But Jane was now almost permanently racked with fever. They urgently needed to reach the Shatt al-Arab before the end of January, when a French ship that would take them home was due to call at Basra. There was another fearful caravan journey, this time from Shushtar to Ahvaz, often again in pouring rain and with Jane swaying in the saddle. They were delayed in Ahvaz by the local governor who demanded a sum of money they could not afford for a boat to take them down the Karun River to Mohammerah (known today as Khorramshahr) and only gave way when he heard that an emissary of the Zill al-Sultan was about to arrive. At Mohammerah, Marcel hired a boat with Persian oarsmen to take them across the Shatt. But “as they were lifted high on the crest

of a wave”, they saw the stern of the French ship sailing away downstream. The shouts of the Persian oarsmen, however, were heard on the ship which slowed down, turned broadside to the current and took the Dieulafoys on board. Had it not done so, Jane might well have died.

As Rossiter explains, the Dieulafoys owed their return to Persia nearly three years later to the strong support of the director of the French national museums, Louis de Ronchaud. Hearing their description of the mound at Susa, he saw an opportunity for the Louvre to rival the archaeological acquisitions from Mesopotamia that were filling the British Museum. But Rossiter says that he was also “bewitched” by “the blue-eyed Jane”, “captivated” by her “combination of physical beauty and ruthless intellect”. So it was that the Dieulafoys returned to Bushire in January 1885 with an official commission from the French government to carry out archaeological excavations at Susa and with the necessary finance. They also had French military and naval support: two Algerian Muslim soldiers had been appointed to guard them and a French naval ship brought them to the Persian Gulf. In addition, two young Frenchmen were attached to the mission: Charles Babin, an engineer, and the naturalist Marcel Houssaye. In giving permission for the excavations, the Shah had stipulated that he was to receive a half-share of the finds as well as any gold or silver.

This time, while Jane continued to wear her trouser suit, she no longer pretended to be a man. She felt that now that she was living and excavating at Susa it was safer to make it clear that she was Marcel’s wife. But Rossiter says that “her fair colouring and small size led to rumours that she was a sorceress.” This superstitious suspicion of the infidels was just one of the challenges that the Dieulafoys had to face during this first season of excavations. There was a constant threat from Shi’ite fanatics, even though the Dieulafoys enjoyed the protection of a number of senior clerics. At one point, fanatical pilgrims to Daniel’s Tomb invaded the excavation site and destroyed or damaged many of the artefacts that had been found. The excavations were also liable to be disrupted by the conflict between the Persian Bakhtiari tribes and the Marsh Arab tribes of the Beni La’am. The Dieulafoys faced hostility from the chief of one of the Beni La’am tribes, on which they depended for food supplies, but Jane won his respect after she bested him in a

shooting contest. But most trying of all was the governor of Khuzestan, Mozaffer al-Molk, who did everything he could to obstruct the excavations, even threatening to cut off the ears of “scoundrels who continue to work for the foreigners”. Rossiter finds his motives hard to fathom.

The Dieulafoys had only a short time to excavate before the intense summer heat set in. Persuading local people to work for them was no easy task and there were only five when the first trench was dug on March 1st 1885. More came as news spread of the generous pay and good treatment that was on offer. Eventually the Dieulafoys had as many as 295 labourers working for them, drawn, as Rossiter says, “from three distinct and mutually intolerant groups” – Dizfulis, Bakhtiaris and Beni La’am. As well as keeping the peace, Jane established a cordial relationship with the workforce. Rossiter writes that whereas Marcel was scrupulously fair but remote, Jane “would listen to their problems and acknowledge their human dignity”.

For most of the dig the Dieulafoys were accommodated in two white tents which they had brought with them, but these offered little protection from robbers, fighting tribesmen and violent storms; later they had a rudimentary house built by a carpenter from Dizful. The excavations revealed much about Achaemenid Susa and uncovered many important objects, but by far the most impressive find was undoubtedly the enamelled brick *Frieze of the Lions*, discovered by the workmen and identified by Jane. But as Rossiter writes:

“Many laborious stages spanned the moment at Susa when Jane recognised an incomparable lost masterwork and the day the *Frieze of the Lions* was exhibited in Paris for all to enjoy – the delicate work of retrieving each individual brick or fragment without damaging its enamel; the charting of its position and its labelling; painstaking packing and transport; months of anxiety; chemical stabilisation of the fragile service; and, finally, reassembly according to the record Jane made as she and her small group of specially selected workers disinterred it.”

In May, by which time the heat was unbearable, the Dieulafoys ended their excavations. They packed up their finds in fifty-five crates and travelled with them by caravan and river transport to Amarah, leaving Babin and Houssaye behind to spend the summer in

Fars. In the course of the journey, Marcel succumbed to malaria and they were twice attacked by Marsh Arabs. The Persian officials had ended their obstruction and had permitted them to take almost everything to France, after the Dieulafoys led them to believe that they could be decorated by the French government for their 'helpfulness'. However, in Amarah, the crates were impounded by the Turkish customs and the best that could be done was to have them shipped to Basra "where they were corded and sealed in the presence of the French consul."

The Dieulafoys arrived back in France in July 1885 to learn that Nasir al-Din Shah had given in to pressure from the clergy of Khuzestan to refuse permission for further excavations. According to Jane, the clergy claimed, in a petition to the Shah, that the heavy rain and flooding that had afflicted the province were "signs of divine rage" because the Dieulafoys had extracted "from the depths of the soil the talismans which our Prophet had buried there to safeguard Susuane province". The Shah was eventually persuaded to change his mind, but in reaffirming his permission he added that their lives would not be his responsibility and that they must leave Susa before the annual pilgrimage to Daniel's Tomb in early April.

A French warship brought the Dieulafoys to Basra in November 1885, where its presence was enough to persuade the Turkish officials to release the fifty-five crates they had been holding, which were now shipped to France. The Dieulafoys made their way up the Tigris to Amarah, accompanied by a naval carpenter, Jean-Marie, who had been attached to the mission. It was once again an all-too-eventful journey to Susa. Half their mules were stolen in a night raid by the Beni La'am, they were detained by an Arab robber chieftain who tried to exploit their loss, and Jane was confronted by eight armed nomads when she was alone on the banks of a flooded Kerkhah River. Holding her nerve and aiming her revolver at them, she forced them to back off.

The Dieulafoys were given an enthusiastic welcome by their workers when they arrived at Susa on the 12th of December 1885. The feelings of the workmen are reflected in a song of the night watchmen, which Jane recorded:

"If the foreigners, who don't rob us and don't beat us, will come to Susa, we will cultivate the soil, we will have a profusion of golden

herbage, of calves, buffalo and sheep. No one will seize them and the people will live happily.”

As time was limited, since they had to be out by April, the Dieulafoys decided to concentrate their excavations on the site of the Achaemenid palace. Their most exciting find came on Christmas Day, when a workman shouted out that he had found something beautiful. It was an enamelled brick which Marcel thought was “part of a great panther”, but which Jane told him, after studying it overnight, was “the shoulder of a man dressed in a splendid robe”. One by one over the coming weeks they brought out the brilliantly coloured bricks that, once assembled, revealed soldiers in Persian dress, armed with bow, quiver and spear. Jane believed that the Frieze of the Archers, as it came to be known, represented the elite corps of the Ten Thousand Immortals described by Herodotus, although this cannot be established for certain.

As the time approached for packing up and leaving, Jean-Marie, the French naval carpenter, built carts which were loaded with the larger objects they had excavated by means of pulleys and ropes brought from France. The Dieulafoys departure was delayed until the last minute by the troublesome governor of Khuzestan, Mozaffar al-Molk, who insisted that all objects must remain at Susa, but relented when Marcel agreed to ask the French government for a decoration for the governor’s superior, the Zill al-Sultan. The Shah also waived his claim to half the finds, considering them to be of little interest.

The Dieulafoys finally left Susa on 29 March 1886 for Ahwaz, where they were to meet up with a French warship, which was to take them and their finds back to France. The larger finds were taken in the carts to the Ab-e Diz, a tributary of the Karun, while Jane and Marcel travelled in a long caravan of mules directly to the Karun to arrange for boats to collect the finds stacked up on the banks of the Ab-e Diz.

Jane was now four months pregnant. She was rapidly weakened by the increasing heat and humidity, by having to fend off repeated threats to their caravan by Arab tribesmen, and by a ‘nightmare of journeys up and down the rivers’ to find boats to bring down their treasures. Then one day, she fell unconscious from her horse and miscarried. Marcel brought her to Ahwaz where she lay seriously ill for a week, but was comforted by the news, not only that the

treasures from Susa had been brought down by boat but also that the hated governor of Khuzestan, Mozaffar al-Molk, who had given them so much trouble, had been driven out in a popular uprising. With her, as she was carried aboard the French warship, went 327 crates and 45 tonnes of baggage.

Later that year, on 20 October 1886, a ceremony was held in the Louvre Museum in Paris to inaugurate the opening of the Dieulafoy rooms, where the treasures they had brought back from Persia were exhibited. During the ceremony, Jane was made a *Chevalier* of the *Legion d'honneur* by President Carnot. In the following years, she presided over a brilliant literary salon, wrote historical novels, the first of which, *Parysatis*, was inspired by the history of Susa, and achieved her ambition of being treated as an equal with men in literary and intellectual circles. She maintained her interest in archaeological research, and both she and Marcel were bitterly disappointed when Jacques de Morgan was chosen to head a new mission to Susa. They never returned to Persia.

When the First World War broke out, Jane accompanied Marcel to Morocco, where he was attached to the corps of engineers at Rabat while she oversaw excavations at a ruined 12th century mosque near the city. There she fell ill and was diagnosed with amoebic dysentery, but Rossiter says that 'the long pain-filled course of her illness suggests cancer'. Marcel took her back to France, to her family home near Toulouse, where she died on 25 May 2016.

Memories of a Bygone Age: Qajar Persia and Imperial Russia 1853-1902, by Prince Arfa'. Translated and edited by Michael Noël-Clarke. Gingko Library, 2016, 306 pp, ISBN 978-1-909942-86-8, £30.00

Reviewed by James Buchan

Mirza Reza Khan, Arfa' od-Dowleh, later Prince Arfa', was an Iranian diplomat and man of letters of the late Qajar period. Born in modest circumstances in Tabriz in about 1853, and bred to the seminary, he entered Nassereddin Shah's service and became in succession Consul-General in Tiflis in Georgia, Minister in St. Petersburg, Ambassador in Istanbul, Minister of Justice, and Iran's representative to the League of Nations. Having amassed a fortune, Prince Arfa built fine houses in and near Tiflis and the Moorish villa in the Moneghetti district of Monaco now known as the Villa Ispahan.

Just before his death in 1937, Prince Arfa' returned to Tehran and put in order his memoirs, which were published as the *Khaterat-e perans Arfa'* in Tehran in 1965, and re-issued in 1999. Michael Noël-Clarke, a former chairman of this society who is married to Prince Arfa's great-granddaughter, has translated into English much of the first half of the memoirs, ending in 1901.

Noël-Clarke's version casts a brilliant side-light on Iranian life and Nassereddin's Court and administration under the shadow of British and Russian encroachment. It portrays an attractive young man who through his talent as a linguist and versifier, luck, boldness and prudence, and by attaching himself to a succession of great men, negotiates a perilous and illusive Court. It is a handsome book, well-made, -printed and -illustrated, not expensive, and provided with not one but two silk bookmarks.

As so often with political memoirs, the early pages have the most charm before success, money and power bring in what Adam Smith called "the corruption of our moral sentiments." Reza's youth passed in the last truly Iranian age, before the pressure of the world caused that people to modify distinctive habits of thought and conduct.

Son of a cloth merchant in Tabriz, Reza was destined for the turban before a flood in 1872 destroyed his father's stock. He was sent to Istanbul to work in the shop of a relation, Hajji Reza Aqa Salmasi. Passing through Erivan, he heard for the first time the words "geography" and "Australia" and saw, in a sort of epiphany, the shortcomings of his traditional education.

In Istanbul, Mirza Reza learned good French and some English, but the climate disagreed with him. Returning through Tiflis, he was engaged as a clerk at the Iranian Consulate-General, where he learned to speak Russian and to please European ladies, the guardian angels of his career.

In 1878, as Nassereddin Shah travelled through the Caucasus on his second European trip, his Russian-language interpreter took the wrong pills, and Reza was taken on as substitute. He acquitted himself so well as to be appointed a secretary at the Consulate-General in Tiflis, and then, in 1883, the interpreter for the joint commission to delimit the border between Russia and Khorasan. There, he gained the favour of the Shah by persuading the Russians to withdraw the frontier so as not to cut off the village of Lotfabad from its farms and pastures. He also attached himself to the Amin os-Soltan, later prime minister. Despatched to Enzeli to accompany to Tehran the new Italian minister, Alessandro de Rege di Donato and his countess and her companion, Mirza Reza started to see his homeland through a foreigner's eyes.

In 1889, Mirza Reza was included in the party for Nassereddin Shah's third visit to Europe. He records unforgettable scenes: the Shah trying to give his courtiers the slip to roam Warsaw incognito, or leaving a ball in Edinburgh because he could not bear to see the kilted Scotsmen's knees. At Buchanan Castle near Stirling, seat of the Duke of Montrose, after the Shah had gone to bed, Mirza Reza and the prime minister were rowed by moonlight across the lake by two sisters, one of them singing. The Amin os-Soltan said in his ear: "If I spend the rest of my life in prison and in fetters, I would not exchange this moment."

On his return, Mirza Reza was appointed Consul-General in Tiflis, and given a charge on the issue of all Iranian passports in the Caucasus. He discovered a taste for money. Five years later, he became minister in St Petersburg, and his memoirs go downhill.

His good fortune, which up to then had been a matter of providences and premonitions, becomes his own doing. The ladies cease to be angels, but frail creatures who cannot resist his charm. At the Empire Theatre in London, he had hypnotised the Princess of Wales. Now, the Tsarina seeks him out in a crowded room. The reader begins to doubt him. His account of how he outwitted Counts Lamsdorf and Witte over the terms of the Russian loan to Iran of 1900 is especially hard to credit.

At this point, the translator, with the ruthlessness of all posterity, calls a halt and, but for a haunting account of the classical dancer Monavvar-e Shirazi, ends his labours. We thus miss, amid much of little value, some matters of interest and importance.

Noël-Clarke has aimed his translation at the general reader, or rather that general reader who can navigate what the founder of the Iran Society, Edward Browne, called the "appalling complexity" of Qajar nomenclature: that confusion of Molks, Dowlehs and Saltanehs that is "one of the great obstacles to the popularization of Persian history." Noël-Clarke attends to this problem, providing from the best sources a glossary of the leading figures of the late Qajar Court and public service. Hence the second book-mark.

Nazi Secret Warfare in Occupied Persia (Iran). The Failure of the German Intelligence Services, 1939-45 by Adrian O'Sullivan, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014, hb., xxv, 286 pp. Illustrations, Appendix. ISBN 978-1- 137-42789- 2

Espionage and Counterintelligence in Occupied Persia (Iran). The Success of the Allied Secret Services, 1941-45 by Adrian O'Sullivan, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2015, hb., xxviii, 293 pp. Illustrations, Appendix. ISBN 978-1- 137-55556- 4.

Reviewed by Venessa Martin

Two German intelligence organisations were involved in overseas intelligence immediately before and during the World War II, the *Abwehr* (the German Army) and the *Sicherheitsdienst* (the SS Security Service known as the SD). O'Sullivan, like other current historians of the Nazi Reich, emphasises their overall inefficiency, but the *Abwehr* had successes in the pre- and early war years against Sudetenland, the Dutch underground and in the destruction of Norwegian and Danish shipping. There is some indication that the Nazi regime, having secured its major objectives, gave only limited support and funding to its overseas operations. Two reasons behind this, as O'Sullivan discusses, were Hitler's mistrust of *Abwehr* loyalty, and his playing the two organisations against each other to ensure the security of his own position. The overall *modus operandi* of the two organisations abroad was to focus on sabotage and the exploitation of discontented minority groups.

Iran lay on the periphery of the envisaged Nazi realm, bordering the expected Japanese empire of South Asia and Asia. It was therefore not high on the list of Nazi ambitions in terms of resources, and Germany's interest in Iran in 1939 was not heightened by the outbreak of war. It therefore continued its pre-war expansionist policies and interests, though with the ultimate goal of occupation. At this stage, it focused on political subversion and preparation for invasion. After the Anglo-Russia invasion of August 1941 German ambition to fight in Iran waned, the more so since it had no vital interests there. Instead, German clandestine activities became more pronounced, causing the British to strengthen their Tehran-based security intelligence force. From 1943, following the defeats at Stalingrad and at Alamein, Germany changed from the strategic aims of creating a fifth column and intelligence gathering, to using the tribes in particular for sabotage and disruption of supply lines, especially of oil. Overall, however, its secret war in Iran was characterised by lack of strategy, over-extended resources and isolated field agents. Where funds, arms and ammunition were required, the Germans sent a series of young, ill-trained agents. The outcome was that of at least nineteen operations in Iran twelve were cancelled, five ended in capture, one in loss at sea and one was aborted, so not one was successful.

Few Iranians really understood the atrocious nature of the Nazi regime, and of the horrors inflicted by its occupation of other countries. To some Iranians, Germany represented the prospect of release from the long domination of Britain and Russia, and they felt a certain sympathy for it on that account. In addition, the economy was in a desperate state, and most Iranians lived in a condition of financial deprivation, with food shortages, crop failures and inflation. A principle motive of those favouring the Germans was thus financial gain together with the advantages of the privileges they offered, such as a special economic status, allowing for example, the lucrative export of carpets. Amongst the young, more susceptible to German propaganda, there was an element of idealism. There were, however, some Iranians who formed a distinct connection with the Germans, partly from admiration for Germany and partly for their own political ends. Most prominent among these was General Fazlollah Zahedi, Governor General of Isfahan, who was deeply implicated with the Nazis.

The Germans focused on training Iranians not in Iran itself but in Germany where there was a largely young student community. Apart from the practicality of this initiative, the Germans encountered the problem that, as in Iran, the Iranians were not of one political view, but composed of small factions and parties at odds with each other. This political characteristic defeated German attempts to create a substantial organised exiled community which could be manipulated to their purpose of creating networks in Iran linked to Berlin.

When it came to subversion, however, and the creation of a fifth column, the Germans did have some success in at least alarming and unsettling the British. Two agents of some significance were sent to Iran, Franz Mayr (recruited by the SD) in November 1940, and Julius Berthold Schultze-Holthus (recruited by the Abwehr), in May 1941. The Anglo-Russian invasion of August 1941 ended their initial plans, and thereafter they agreed to divide the country between them. Schultze-Holthus went south and assumed responsibility for dealing with the Qashqa'i and other tribes, whilst Mayr remained in Tehran with the task of building up a fifth column centred there. Schultze-Holthus encountered the age-old struggle of the Iranian tribes to free themselves from the power of the state, which had been forced on them with notable rigour under Reza Shah. However, any success involving the Qashqa'i depended on German victories, and more particularly on money. Since neither appeared, Schultze-Holthus's success in influencing the tribe was very limited. Eventually handed over by the Qashqa'i to the British in 1944, Schultze-Holthus failed to impress them nearly as much as his wife, Gertrud, who had accompanied him for cover.

Mayr was much the most remarkable of the German agents. His fifth column, Mellium, included 160 names carefully committed to paper (and found by the British). Amongst them were General Zahedi, Habibollah Naubakht, the Majles Deputy for Shiraz, who was a link with the Qashqa'i tribe, and Nasir Khan Qashqa'i, their chief. A useful courier for Mayr's contacts in Tehran itself was his lover, Lila Sanjari, but his principal factotum was Mohammad Vaziri, a man of such dubious loyalties that the British described him as 'quadruple-crossing everybody', and who was also working for the Russians. However, some of the names on Mayr's list, which included cabinet ministers and members of the Iranian army, could have been imaginary, as he had little contact with them. With government control largely absent from the tribal areas, the organisation was partly protected by Zahedi, as a result of which he was seized in a British raid in December 1942, and interned for the rest of the war. Mayr, who was captured in 1943, probably never knew quite how far his organisation was successful. He collected much information on railway traffic, especially to Russia, and prepared the ground for sabotage, but he had great difficulty in communicating with Berlin. Nasir Khan and his brothers were ultimately persuaded to exchange their German connection for the British by their formidable mother, Bibi Khanum Qashqa'i.

In reality, the young and underfunded German agents were up against the well-established presence of British intelligence in the Middle East, with all its experience of holding down that area and India. Before the Allied invasion, there had been no previous British intelligence services operating in Iran as it was a neutral country. In January 1942 Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME – controlled by MI5) based in Cairo established a Combined Intelligence Centre Iraq and Persia (CICI) in Tehran, answerable to the CICI HQ in Baghdad under Edwin Wood, trained in the Indian Army. The Tehran office was also more usually known as Defence Security Office (DSO) Persia, and maintained a close liaison by wired correspondence with the Security Service in London, benefiting from its immense resources. The head of DSO Persia was Joe Spencer, and he operated with a comparatively small staff of 20-25 people and liaison officers in the regions, with rigour, precision and consistency.

DSO also maintained close cooperation with the Russians, with regular weekly meetings to ensure a uniform policy towards Iranians. In addition, DSO cooperated with the Americans, who were most concerned to secure the vital supply lines between the Persian Gulf and Russia. However, Spencer only discovered by chance that there were US agents operating in Iran without his knowledge. Censorship extracts proved the most effective means of identifying suspect Iranians, especially couriers between the Iranian fifth column and the Germans, even though the detailed work involved was time consuming. The success of breaking Mayr's fifth column, the major achievement of DSO during the whole period, was achieved by meticulous attention to detail in the planning. It also required judicious decision making, particularly in rejecting a plan for widespread arrests in favour of close penetration of Mellium to avoid the ill effects of overreaction. Apart from the local perspective, operations against the Germans were also supported by overall military policy in the Middle East, which included strategic deception and misinformation, such as the creation and maintenance of bogus units which pursued their objectives with continuity and consistency.

O'Sullivan's two books make a highly significant contribution to a little-known and understudied topic of Iranian history. They constitute the first in-depth and detailed examination of covert intelligence operations in Iran in the Second World War, and are the result of prolonged and assiduous archival research. Most of the material comes, as would be expected, from the British archives, but the author has also studied the scarce and fragmentary records in Germany. Those of Russia are still in the early stages of access, at least by non-Russian scholars. Given the complexity and obscurity of the subject, the books are not only very knowledgeable but clearly written and accessible to the non-specialist. The author also appropriately places his detailed study within the wider historical context and considers thoughtfully the issues and implications which it raises. *Espionage and Counterintelligence* also contains a chapter each on the Russians and the Americans.

SHIVA RAHBARAN – WRITERS UNCENSORED:

Dalkey Archive Scholarly Series (USA) 2012, 978-1-56478-688-3 2012.

Reviewed by Antony Wynn

One of the unexpected results of the Islamic Revolution was the explosion of literary output in Iran: volumes of memoirs, historical writing and poetry being sold almost on every street corner. How to make sense of all this writing? There were times of heavy censorship, imposed in order that the purity of the revolution should not be corrupted by western immorality and political notions, and there were times when the lid was partially lifted for a while. There was censorship and there was self-censorship. Authors knew that, if they were to be published, their work had to be acceptable to the authorities. The heavy guiding hand of the censors forced writers to be creative in a way unknown to their colleagues in the west. The censors did not often ban books as such; rather, they would require passages to be changed or deleted before publication was permitted. At the Goethe forum in Munich a German writer, speaking of Henry James's dictum that novelists open windows on life, said that many western writers envied Iranian writers this censorship, in that they had more opportunity to open windows, since they faced more walls. This is the recurring theme of this book: that censorship is a forcing house for creativity.

Shiva Rahbaran, a new member of the Iran Society, has produced a compilation of interviews with eleven prominent contemporary Persian writers. Each interview is preceded by a summary of the writer's life and work and follows the format of a series of identical questions, the answers which lead on to other questions and discussion. The questions revolve around censorship, the writers' response to it and a discussion of the development of contemporary literature and the role of intellectuals in society.

Simin Behbahani, responding to the question about censorship, pointed out that there is nothing new in censorship; Iranian writers have always had to be careful about what they wrote. Pleasing a patron could lead to having one's mouth filled with gold; displeasing a ruler led to loss of one's head. However, there was a grey area

where writers of *madh* in eulogy of a ruler could carefully remind the ruler of his duty to provide justice for his people. The skill of the poet lay in knowing where the limits lay. In Mongol times, not times of subtlety or conscience, poets could only enjoin their readers to retreat into patience and ascetic contemplation. Modern writers instead resort to metaphor and symbolism.

Mahmoud Dowlatabadi's colossal novel *Kelidar*, which describes the lives of the Kurds of Sabzevar in the late 1940s, is noted for its length of three thousand pages and has been reprinted fourteen times. Its success, and the success of Dowlatabadi's shorter novels about rural Iran, are due to their subject matter and natural language being close to the people. His later, more ambitious, novels adopted forms from a variety of European writers. He conceded nothing to the censors; if they required him to change or delete a passage he would put the book away and wait for them to change their minds.

Mohammad Hoquqi considers that novels have not been successful and that poems and short stories come more naturally to Iranians. Modern Iranian poets have lost themselves in a misguided conception of post-modernism; modern intellectuals live in a bubble remote from the people; their writing should not be a direct transposition of European poetry. The traditional Iranian view of poets is that their writing is divinely revealed, whereas a novelist merely 'writes'.

Manouchehr Atashi holds that literature is in a far better place than before 1979, but warns writers to steer clear of post-modernism and other schools of thought. Before 1979 censorship drove poetry into symbolism, which could be understood only by the élite. The new censorship is more moral than political, he avers. Since the Arab conquest, Iranians have had to drop their swords, but they have never dropped their pens.

Mohammad Ali Sepanlu picks up the point about the change in the nature of censorship: before 1979 Ionesco's play *Exit the King* was banned on political grounds, whereas now Apollinaire's *The Breasts of Tiresias* is banned as obscene.

Ali Ashraf Darvishian finds that novelists cannot get round censorship in the same way that poets can. There is a wonderful scene in his *Salha-ye Abri* (Cloudy Years) in which a very traditional grandmother dances joyfully at a wedding, struggling to keep her

chador in place. In order to allow the book to be published, he was obliged to strike out the immoral 'dancing' and change it to 'foot-stamping'. Absurd as this may seem, it does show a degree of flexibility on the part of the nervous censor, who of course himself can be called to account.

Amir Hassan Cheheltan holds that the rise of the novel over the last twenty-five years reflects a shift in society from emotion and mysticism towards rationality and level headedness, a welcome step that will rid society of old sediment and superstitions. Nevertheless, he admits that the language of the novel has nothing on that of classical poetry, which shimmers in ever-changing colours, reverberates between hidden potentials and sets the strings of the soul thrumming. Modern literature cannot do this. Iranians think that words have magical powers. "We talk a lot, but only in order to hide a substantial part of the facts."

Moniru Ravanipour holds that the Islamic revolution has been a great boon, in that it stripped away religious and traditional delusions and led to a much greater self-knowledge of society. The most important service that it rendered to literature was that it took the politics out of literature; writers have had to learn how to express their ideas in literary form without falling into the trap of polemics and sloganeering, as they used to do. Censorship forbids description of the sexual act; in order to describe a wedding night, she put the couple in a boat and described the movement of the oars.

Shahryar Mandanipour makes the same point about young writers being prevented from sloganeering under the guise of literature. He criticises the likes of Bozorg Alavi as not being artistic, saying that he could have written about a tree and made it into a political story. Modern novels, he says, are reasonably good at character and different types of narrative, construction of time, place and even form, but not up to scratch on composition. "If you think about it, our music is monophonic – multiple instruments but only one voice and one melodic line. This is our weakness...we see things in black and white, as absolutes. Our mind cannot accept that several voices or several factors can exist in harmony together. We can do short stories because there are only one or two characters. We can't cope with five or six in a novel. It is because we don't understand democracy that we have few good novelists."

When asked what he thought about the influence of western culture, his reply was, “Western culture is pressing against the wall, like a river against a dam, but then bear in mind that it is the scum and the filth on the surface that tends to flow first over the top of the dam.” And what of *Irandoosts*, the likes of EG Browne, who devoted his life to the study of Persian literature and history and to support for the constitutionalists? Mandanipour is scathing. They may well, he says, have been friends of Iran, but they betrayed that friendship by using it to ‘acquire information’ about Iran to pass on to their masters in government. Shiva Rahbaran put the same question to Moniru Ravanipour, saying that some people see the study of contemporary Persian literature by westerners as a kind of tool for exploiting Iran yet again, that this type of research takes the Iranian soul hostage. Ravanipour would have none of that, and mocked those who held that view as being inveterate ‘Uncle Napoleons’ who should grow up.

There could be no better introduction to contemporary Persian literature and the thoughts that underlie it than this comprehensive collection of interviews which, collectively, show the commitment of the authors and the genius of the Iranian mind in its effort to find a synthesis between Rostam, Hossein and the modernists. What also comes out strongly from these interviews is that, where writers strike a chord with the people, Iranians turn out in force for them, witness the thousands who turned out for the funeral of the poet Ahmad Shamlou.

The interviews were all conducted in Persian but translated brilliantly and seamlessly by Nilou Mobasser, who worked for the BBC until, six months after the book came out, she was found dead in her flat in Reading.

***The Love of Strangers*, Nile Green, Princeton
University Press 2016, 388 pp incl notes**

Reviewed by Antony Wynn

The subtitle of this unusual book is *What Six Muslim Students Learned in Jane Austen's England*. In 1815, just after the battle of Waterloo, a ship sailed into the harbour of Great Yarmouth carrying five Iranian students, escorted by Captain Joseph D'Arcy. They had been sent by Abbas Mirza, the Crown Prince of Iran and Governor of Tabriz, to learn European technology partly to enable progress in Iran and partly to improve the odds against the Russians advancing through the Caucasus into Iranian territory. The source of this book is the diary kept by Mirza Saleh Shirazi, in which he records everything that he saw, but not everything that he did, for he was a handsome man much admired by the ladies of London and the diary was to be shown to Abbas Mirza on his return.

Mirza Saleh was a young man who had been brought up in the court of Abbas Mirza. Although ignorant of England and English, he was socially sophisticated and a very astute observer. His aim was to attend Oxford University, but he was thwarted by the fact that Oxford was run by Protestant clerics who would admit only Christians, and Protestants at that. He was struck by the similarity between Oxford and the madrasehs of Qom and Mashhad, and their teaching syllabuses. What he wanted was technical knowledge, which was of no interest to the learned dons.

Of the other students, Mirza Reza was to learn about artillery and the making of cannons, Mirza Ja'afar was to learn chemistry, Mohammad Ali, a blacksmith, was to learn how to make locks and Mirza Ja'afar Hosseini was to learn engineering. Captain D'Arcy had been training soldiers in the Caucasus when Abbas Mirza gave him the expensive honour of taking responsibility for the education and welfare of these five. The sixth student was Hajji Baba Afshar, who was one of two students sent out in 1811 by Abbas Mirza, who had imposed this obligation on Sir Harford Jones, the British minister to Iran. Hajji Baba studied medicine. His companion, Mohammad Kazim, died in London in 1813.

D'Arcy was not a man of means and was unable to fulfil his undertaking to support his students, who were obliged to find a way of supporting themselves. All they could offer was teaching Persian. At that time Persian, as the language of administration in northern India, was being taught to colonial officers of the East India Company at Addiscombe, near Croydon. What was surprising and frustrating to the students was that, in their early days in England, they were taken under the wing of clerics interested in Persian for missionary purposes. There was an evangelical fervour abroad in the land. The Bible had been translated into excruciatingly meaningless Persian by Henry Martyn, whose rendition of the Lamb of God was met with mirth by the Shirazis, who said that they needed not a lamb but a lion.

Mohammad Ali was spared the evangelicals and was apprenticed to Wilkinson the sword makers, who taught him how to produce rifled gun barrels. Mirza Ja'far Hosseini studied the production of paper and printing, hoping to bring the first printing press to Iran. He also became a Freemason.

What became of these students, who had arrived speaking no English and departed, four years later, with a great number of English friends who, once the barrier of language had been broken, took them to their hearts? Mohammad Ali, the artisan, who had the lowest social standing of them, took an English wife back with him, the daughter of his apprentice master and became superintendent of Abbas Mirza's arsenal at Tabriz. Mirza Saleh founded Iran's first newspaper *Kaghaz-e Akhbar*. Hajji Baba became *hakim-bashi* or chief physician to Fath Ali Shah. Mirza Ja'afar became Iran's chief engineer and then ambassador to Constantinople. Mirza Reza became chief engineer to the army and designed the *Dar ol-Fonun*, Iran's first polytechnic, which opened in 1851.

The ultimate success of these young men was due to a combination of their own determination and charm. They so impressed all whom they met that, when money ran out, Lord Castlereagh persuaded the government to subsidise them. Thoroughly open-minded, they quickly adopted English manners and became a part of society. Were they *gharbzadeh*, poisoned with western ideas, as some have said? Far from it; the diaries show that they were amused by some of the more bizarre aspects of London society, but far too polite to show it.

The author has shown a remarkable empathy with these young men and has skilfully placed their lives in the context of Jane Austen's world of new science and technology, fervent evangelical religion and the rowdy social life of London from the grand houses of society to houses of a different nature around Covent Garden, all of which Mirza Saleh recorded

