

ایران

# WONDERS of PERSIA



Written by  
Nazli Irani Monahan

Illustrations by  
The Children of Iran

A Journey through 2500  
years of Persian history,  
culture and art set in the  
background of this magic  
land of high mountains,  
vast deserts, and green  
pastures that shine under  
Persia's turquoise blue sky



# WONDERS *of* PERSIA

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زیبای‌های ایران

Written by  
Nazli Irani Monahan

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The Children of Iran

Aarrow Publications, California  
2001



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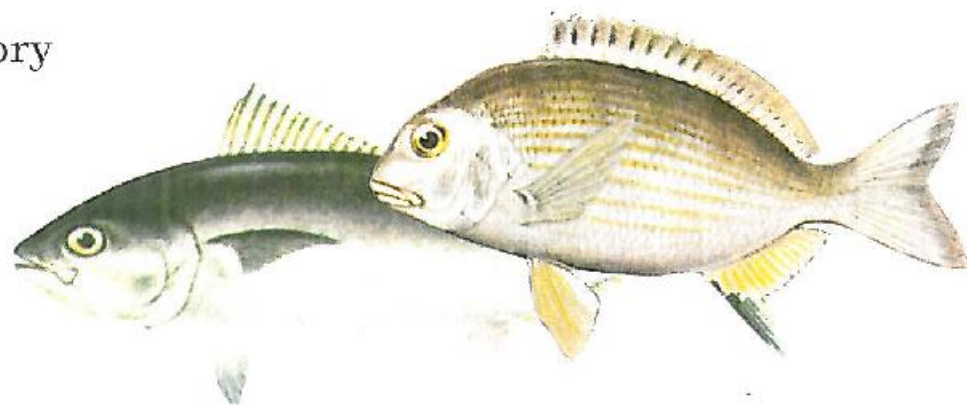
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Please address all inquiries to:

Aarrow Publications

P.O. Box 1905, Orinda, California 94563-3120, U.S.A.

Phone: (925) 253-1776, Fax: (925) 253-1888

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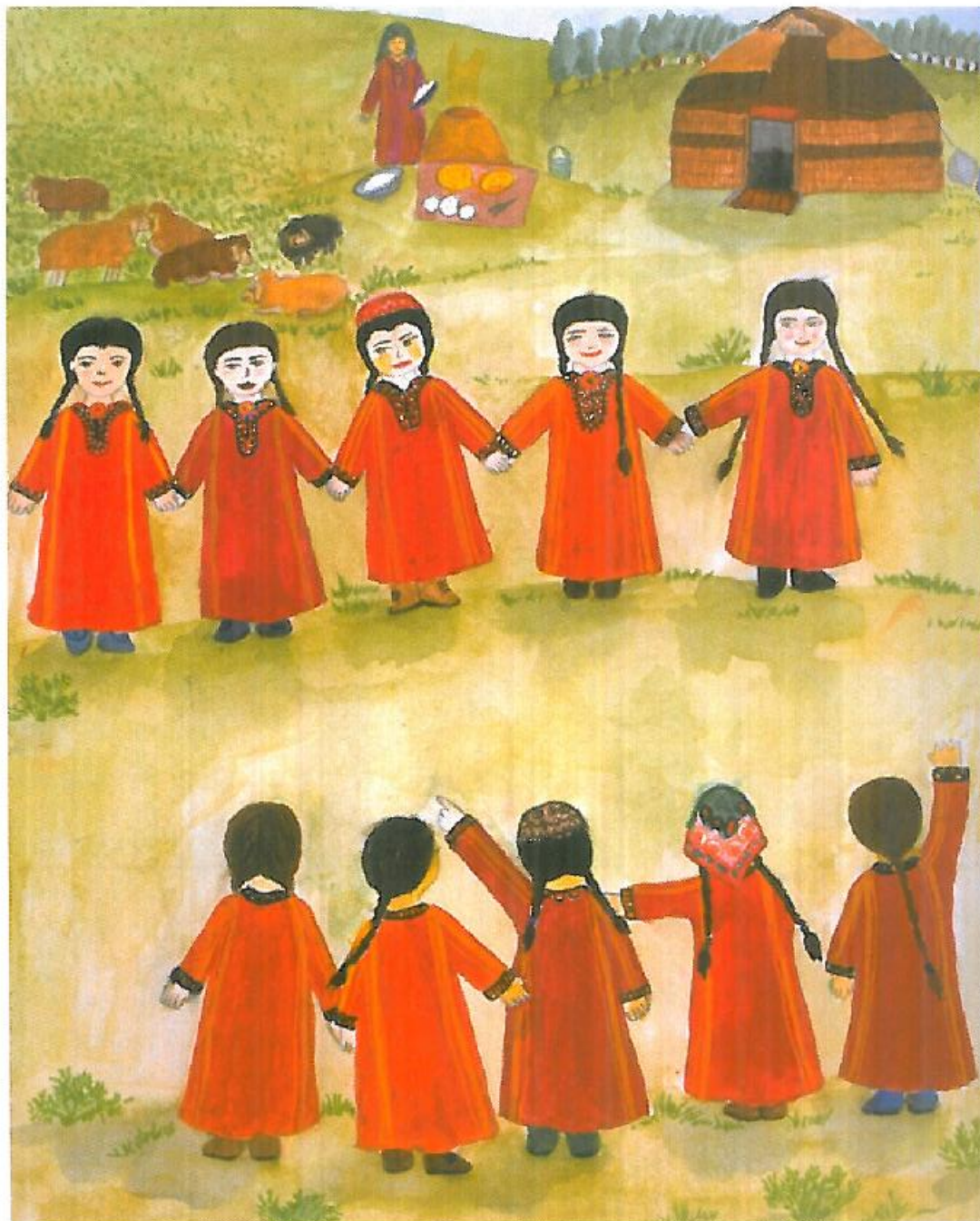
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## ایران رسامهای ایران

To the boys and girls who are drawn to this ancient civilization either through ancestral ties or by a desire to learn more about this historic land.

*"The game of 'Ay-tarag, Goon-tarag' (Give Me the Moon, Give Me the Sun) is a traditional Turkman game. In this game the children are divided into two equal groups and each group holds hands and starts the game by singing songs. This game brings all Turkman people fond and sweet memories of their childhood. It had the same effect on me while I was painting it."*

*Mariyeh Sayyadchi*

*Turkman Children Playing  
Ay-tarag, Goon-tarag  
by Mariyeh Sayyadchi  
age 14, from Gorgan*



## Prologue

Last week the daughter of a Swiss friend was getting married to a Persian boy near Zurich. The father of the bride had asked me for a few Persian words of welcome, as the boy's family was gathering from Iran and other corners of the globe for the occasion, and he thought some of the guests might speak only Persian.

Knowing my compatriots, I decided to get help from Hafez, the beloved poet of Iran who has enchanted Persian speakers for centuries, and I wrote some Hafez verses in Latin alphabet (transliteration) so he could read it loud in the original Persian. I also included some rough translations so he would know the general atmosphere of the poem. I even picked a line that included an allusion to the groom's name, which is not unusual as Hafez includes us all.

The next day I received this message from the Swiss friend which could be directly addressed to Hafez: "My very dear friend, thanks, thanks, thanks! My little speech was an incredible success. I am still delirious. After only a few words, it was sheer jubilation in the audience and when I had finished reciting the poems, all the elder guests were drying tears of joy and the young boys and girls clapped and cheered and gave me a standing ovation. Like magic, in 10 minutes the two families who had met for the first time were like they had known one another intimately and forever. It was by far the happiest day for our family".

It is not easy to discuss the breadth and depth of Persian poetry in a few lines, nor the results of centuries of scholarship on its influence on the Iranian psyche. Suffice it to say that the road to the heart of a Persian speaker, from Samarcand to Tehran, Tabriz, Ghonia, Europe, New York, and Los Angeles (TehrAngeles), goes through their poetry.

If you look at the map of Asia, on the southwest corner you will see a sitting-cat-shaped piece of land called Iran or Persia where peoples of very different backgrounds, looks,

religions, philosophies, attires, and political persuasions live. There is one thing however, that binds them together and sets them apart: they have spoken the same language for over a thousand years. The reason for this is the high quality of their poetry and its widespread popularity, from Rudaki (859 - 940) and Ferdowsi (935 - 1020) to Sepehri, Forough, and Nima.

Ferdowsi has had such a profound and lasting influence on his compatriots that he may have single handedly standardized and stabilized Persian language for good. Even today after over a 1000 years the language spoken in the streets and bazaars of Iran is astonishingly close to Ferdowsi's. While they may be diametrically opposed to each other's political, philosophical, and religious ideas, Iranians still share a love of poetry.

*Arise and let us with joy throw our souls,  
upon that painter's brush  
Who had such wondrous designs,  
in the turn of a magic compass  
(Hafez)*

In her uniquely optimistic, generous, enthusiastic style, Nazli offers a concise overview of her beloved country, combining Iran's rich heritage and past glory, with its present day wonders seen through the lively, well focused eyes of Iranian children, and this point of view in itself creates a bridge of hope into the future.

Nazli's Wonders of Persia Project made it possible for hundreds of Iranian children to participate in a painting contest and exhibition. Unbelievably beautiful works of art arrived from far corners of Iran for the San Francisco exhibition, a number of which are shown here as illustrations. The art works were accompanied by letters from the young artists

*continued on next page*



### *Prologue continued*

describing their subject, the mediums they used, and the reasons for their choice. Many of the letters are as lovely as the art works and I have suggested that Nazli include them in a book of their own.

Last fall Nazli personally carried many suitcases full of awards, cash prizes, specially designed and manufactured medals, and certificates from San Francisco to Iran and handed them personally to the winners of her art contest project during a special ceremony in The Center for Intellectual and Cultural Development of Children and Young Adults.

Her emphasis is and has always been on the positive and the affirmative, stressing the common grounds and reinforcing the bonds that unite, rather than harping on the subjects that divide. Her unique and innovative method of looking at Iran through the eyes of its children is just one example of her success in finding common grounds and focusing on points of agreement. Putting the light on concord rather than discord. "Blessed are the peace makers".

*Goli Farrell, Geneva, 2001*

## Introduction

Wonders of Persia is the result of a few recent trips I have made to Iran after being away many years. A lot has changed but much remains the same. The mountains still stand tall and majestic and are snow covered most of the year. The sun is still shining bright in a background of turquoise blue sky. The famous Persian carpets are still being created by hard working artists in the most intricate designs and magnificent color combinations. The people are still kind and generous and children are still lively and

bright with penetrating eyes. The artisans are still passionately at work creating unique works of art using metal, wood, ceramic, clay, leather, textile, paper and whatever else they can get their hands on. The poetry and literature I grew up loving is still a source of inspiration for everyone. Ancient monuments still stand strong, symbolizing a glorious past and are witness to the turbulent history that has made this country's people strong and resilient. Above all, people's sense of humor has not changed. They still create and exchange the wittiest and funniest jokes to help them cope with the hardships of every day life.

Through the chapters of this book I hope to depict the beauty of an ancient country that has been a cradle of civilization, and despite many foreign invasions and interventions throughout its history, has kept its identity and remains a wonderland. Its fertile soil and bright sun manage to yield a unique variety of delicious fruits, aromatic herbs and tasteful vegetables that are turned into the most delicious dishes.

After one of my trips to Iran, I decided to ask young Iranian artists from Iran and beyond to express their view of the beauties of their country through their paintings. The result was the "Wonders of Persia" art exhibition and contest that opened in San Francisco on March 22, 2000, marking the start of the Persian New Year and the dawn of the new millennium. Paintings by these young artists have brightened the pages of this book with their vivid and colorful depictions of the wonders of Persia.

I hope everyone reading this book will have a chance one day to personally discover these and other beauties Iran has to offer.

*Nazli Irani Monahan, 2001*

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Iran Today



## Is It Persia or Iran?

Over the years I have been asked this question so often and I have thought about the reason why the words Persia and Iran (*ee-run*) and Persians and Iranians (*ee-run-yans*) have been used interchangeably.

The word Persia comes from Parsa, the heartland of the ancient Persian Empire that extended from the Indus Valley in India to the Nile River and parts of present-day Libya in northern Africa. Ancient Greeks including the famous Greek historian, Herodotus, were among the first to use the word Persia and Persians. People of this land have always called their country Iran, or the land of the Aryans, referring to their Indo-European origins.

Webster's Dictionary describes the word "Persian" as **a:** *one of the ancient Iranian Caucasians who under Cyrus and his successors became the dominant Asian race.* **b:** *a member of one of the peoples forming the modern Iranian nationality.*

My personal preference is to use "Iran" when referring to the recent identity of the country and "Iranians" to refer to the recent generations of people from this country. "Persia", on the other hand, is what comes to mind when thinking of a country that has over 3000 years of history and "Persians" are the people who have inherited this country and lived there generation after generation. I have therefore used "Iran" when talking about the modern day facts of the country and "Persia" when referring to its history and heritage.

*Iran's Location in the World*  
by Saeed Delshad-Sani  
age 19, from Jaajrood

## Where Is Iran?

Iran, called the land of flowers and nightingales (*keshvar-e golo bolbol*), is a large country located in the Middle East in the continent of Asia. It is surrounded by seven neighboring countries and three bodies of water. In the north, it is bordered by the Caspian Sea and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan; to the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan; to the south by the Oman Sea and the Persian Gulf; and to the west by Iraq and Turkey. The map of Iran looks like a cat sitting down with its head to the northwest and its tail to the southeast.

As a little girl living in Tehran, the capital of Iran, I was trying to learn my geography lesson one day and figure out the location of the United States of America. My sister, Goli, who has always been my best teacher, picked up an orange and pointed to one side of it and said: "If this is where Iran is located, then the opposite side of the orange would be the United States. In other words, if you poked a hole from the Iran side of the orange, you would come out somewhere around California on the other side." It is no wonder so many Iranians like living in California!







*Map of Iran and the Neighboring Countries*  
by Saeed Delshad-Sani  
age 19, from Jaajrood



## Facts About Iran

Iran is the 16th largest country in the world and is almost three times the size of France, but has about the same population as France. It is about the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River.

**Official Name:** Iran

**Capital City:** Tehran

**Size:** 636,369 square miles  
(1,648,195 square kilometers)

**Population:** 65,619,636

**The Head of State:** The president is elected by a general election for a four year term. The House of Representatives consists of 270 members who are elected for a four year term as well.

**Geographic Divisions:**

Iran is presently divided into 24 provinces (ostaan), 277 townships (shahrestaan), and 604 districts (bakhsh). Each province is assigned a governor.

**Language:** Persian, or Farsi (Parsi), is the official language of Iran. However, several other languages and dialects, such as Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian, and Assyrian, are spoken throughout the country. In the northwest, most people speak Turkish. In the south, some speak Arabic and in central west, the Kurds speak Kurdish.

**Money:** Official Iranian money is the Rial and 10 Rials makes one Toman. Due to inflation, most people these days use just the term Toman.

سایه های ایران

**Flag of Iran After the Revolution**



**The Flag:** The Iranian flag is green, white and red with an emblem on the white section. Before the 1979 Islamic revolution, the emblem was the lion and sun, but now it is an Islamic emblem symbolizing Allah (God).

50 Rial Bill  
by Ossman Alivissi  
age 17, from Kermanshah



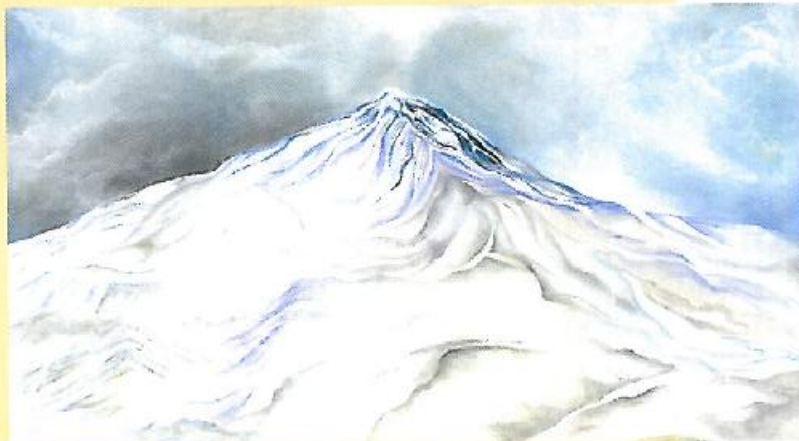


## Geographic Conditions of Iran

Iran's landscape is quite diverse, from high mountains and lush forests to tropical coasts and dry deserts. Generally, more than half of the country is mountainous, one third is desert and the rest is arable land suitable for farming. The central part is a dry plateau 3000 to 5000 feet above sea level. A large part of the plateau is covered with two deserts, Dasht-e Lute and Dasht-e Kavir.

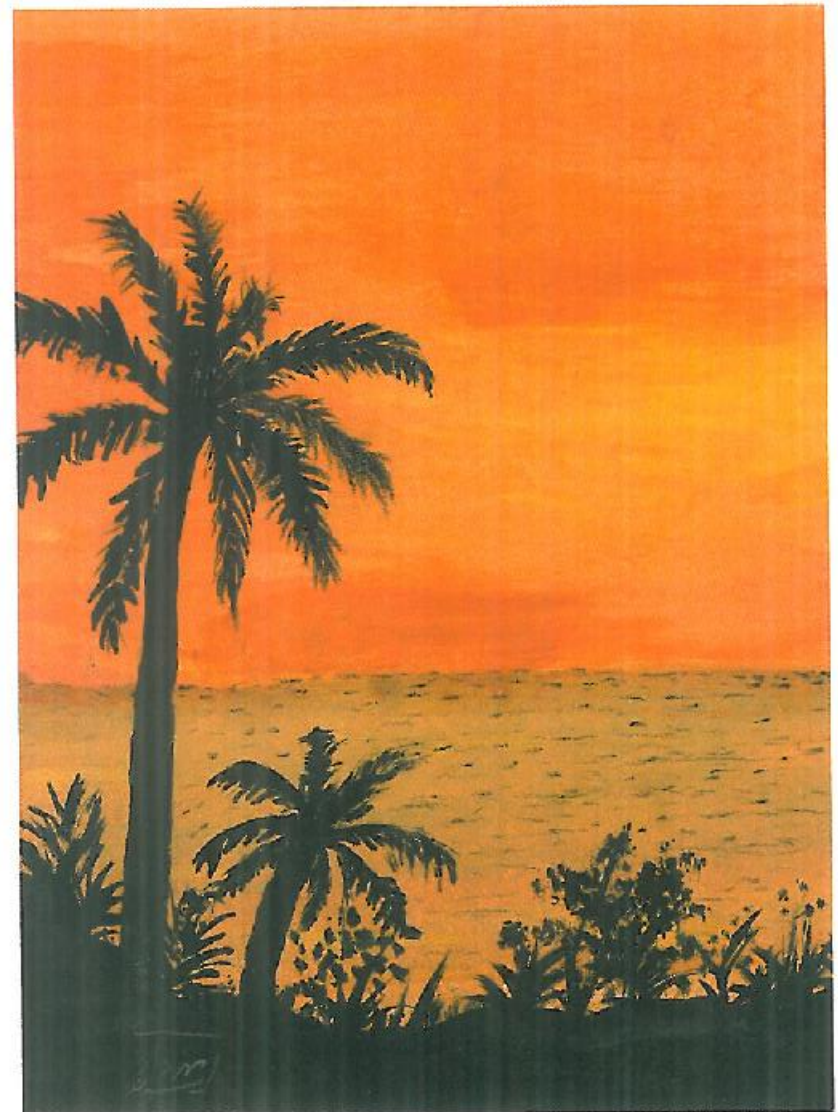
The two major mountain ranges of Alborz and Zagros cover the northern and western portions of Iran. The Alborz Mountains extend from northeast to northwest and are located at about the same latitude as the Himalayas. The Zagros Mountains run from northwest to southeast along the western border of Iran. They separate the coastal plains of the Persian Gulf in the south from the dry and barren central plateau.

### ایران و سرزمینهای ایران



The highest mountain peak in Iran is Damavand, which is part of the Alborz range in the north central part of Iran, and is 18,603 feet high (5,670 meters).

*Mount Damavand  
by Khadijeh Rezaeiyan  
age 15, from Fasa*



*Tropical South  
by Mehrdad Issvandi  
age 14, from Karaj*

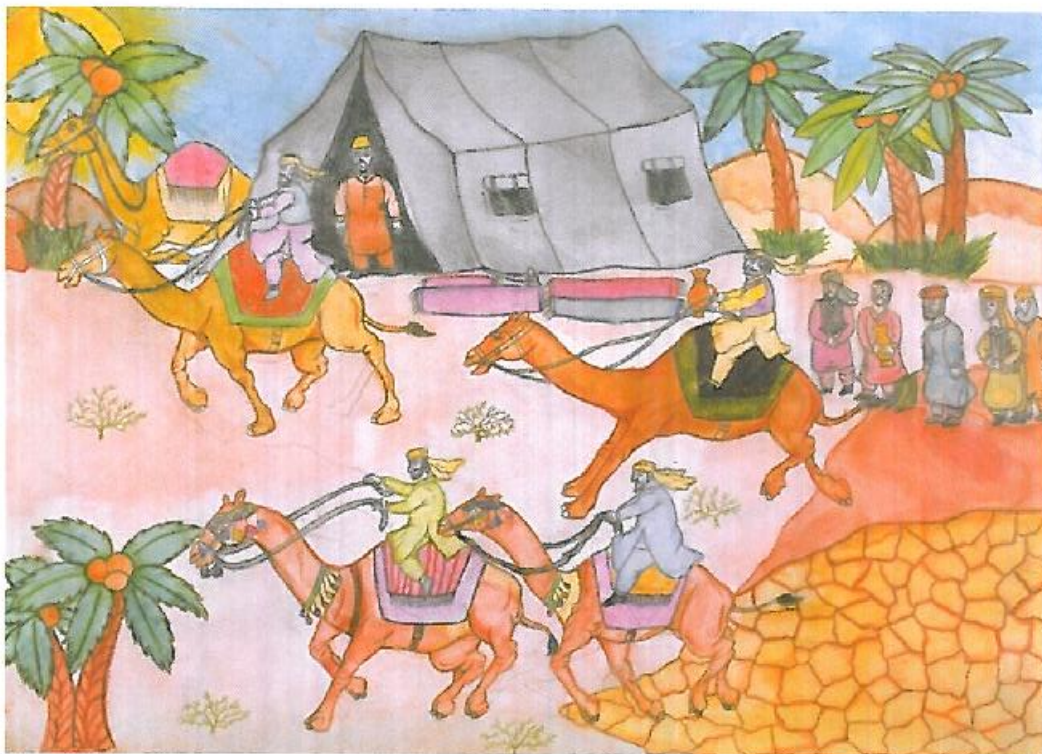


## Regions and Climates

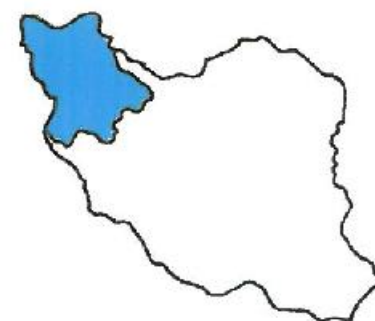
Due to the diverse landscape, the climate in Iran varies throughout the country. In the north, the Gilan and Mazandaran regions bordering the Caspian Sea have plenty of rainfall all year round and are the most fertile lands in the country. This area gets as much as 78 inches of rain annually as opposed to the southeast's two inches of rain per year.

The mountainous areas of the northwest can get as cold as 2°F in winter. The interior lowlands can get as hot as 115°F or more in summer.

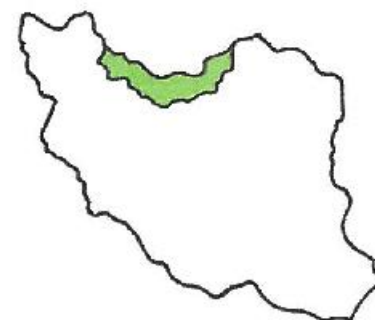
Generally, Iran's climate gets hotter and dryer as you travel from north to south and from west to east.



*Tribal Men Riding Camels*  
by Omid Shahbaz  
age 11, from Zahedan



*Northwest region*



*Caspian Sea region*



*Interior Desert regions*

## Tehran, The Capital City

Tehran is the capital city of Iran with a total population of 7,225,000. The greater Tehran area is believed to have a population of 10.4 million.

Tehran's history dates back to the 13th century, when it was just a small town near Rey, the capital city at the time. Tehran became the official capital in 1795, at the time of Agha Mohammad Khan, founder of the Qajar Dynasty. Most of the historic buildings in Tehran are from this period.

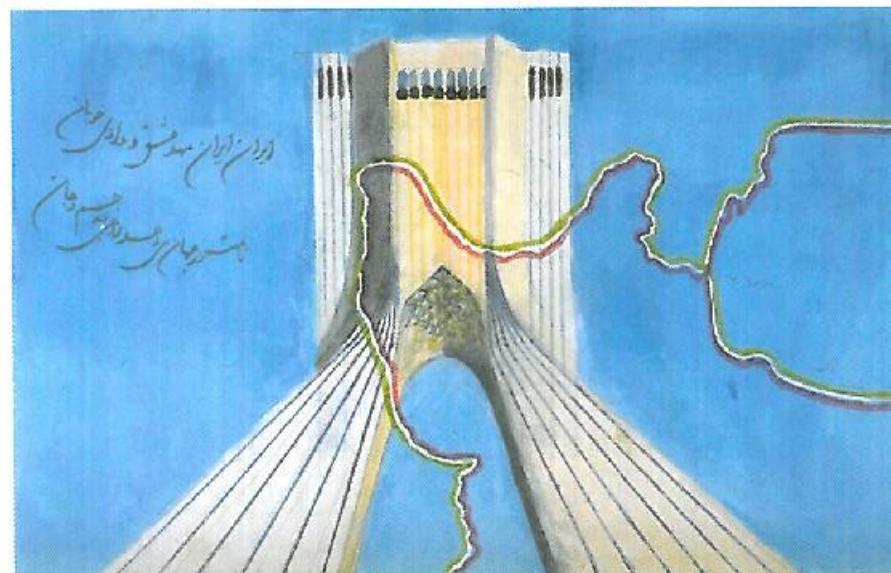
### ایران و استانهای ایران

The city sprawls at the foot of the Alborz mountains and has an average elevation of 4,592 feet (1,400 meters). Temperatures vary through the year with hot, dry summers and cold winters.

• Tehran



*Sunrise in Tehran with  
Damavand mountain barely  
showing on the left*



*Azadi Monument  
by Maryam Molla-Zainal  
age 15, from Karaj*

The present day symbol of Tehran is the more modern Azadi (Freedom) Monument (formerly Shahyad) built in 1971. It is located near Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport on a large square. The tower is 148 feet (45 meters) high.



## Places of Interest in Tehran

Tehran offers an abundance of interesting activities for visitors. The most important places to see are the museums, such as the Museum of National Jewelry, the National Museum of Iran, the Carpet Museum of Iran, Golestan Palace (the royal residence of the Qajar dynasty built in mid-19th century), and the former royal palaces now turned into museums. There are also many art galleries displaying the latest works of art.

Shopping is another favorite pastime in Tehran. The traditional covered bazaar in the southern section of Tehran, with its narrow passages and variety of merchandise, can be both a sightseeing and a shopping experience. The more modern midtown and uptown shops, however, offer more fashionable goods. Excellent quality jewelry, carpets, and handicrafts can be found in specialty stores.

For sport-loving visitors, Tehran offers several public parks, among them Mellat (Nation) Park, and Laleh (Tulip) Park. Hikers can enjoy the picturesque mountain trails north of Tehran and get some fresh air while seeing panoramic views of the city. In winter, skiers can enjoy the powder snow and sunny slopes of Dizin, Shemshak, and Tochal, that can offer some of the best skiing in the world.



*Tehran University's Entrance Gates  
by Maryam Molla-Zainal  
age 15, from Karaj*



*Laleh Park, Tehran*



*Tehrani skiers in Dizin*



## Other Major Cities

### Isfahan

Isfahan, known as the Jewel of Persia, sits in the very heart-land of Iran. Its history dates back 2700 years, but its glory days began in the 17th century, when the Safavid king, Shah Abbas the Great, made it the capital city. Shah Abbas and his successors turned Isfahan into an architectural jewel and a center for artisans of all types. Today, Isfahan offers some of the best sightseeing experiences in the Middle East with

its famous Imam Square, palaces, mosques, shaking minarets, gardens, the Bazaar, and fascinating handicrafts.

رسانهای ایران

#### Main Features of Isfahan

**Area:** 97 sq miles (250 sq kms)

**Elevation:** 5,166 feet (1,575 meters)

**Population:** 2,589,000



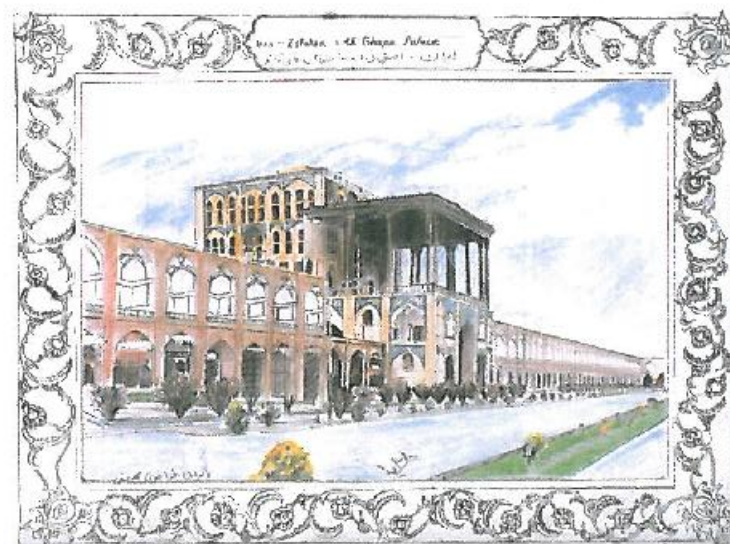
Imam Square



A tour of Isfahan can begin with **Chehel Sotoon** (40 Pillars) **Palace**, built by Shah Abbas and famous for its vaulted and arched mirror work, wall frescos, and the 20 pillars of the front veranda. The pillars reflect in the long pool in front of the palace so that they look like 40 pillars. The next destination should be the famous **Imam Square** (formerly **Naqsh-e Jahan Square**, meaning "Image of the World"). This is a giant square, 1804 ft (550 meters) long and 525 ft (160 meters) wide, that houses not only the magnificent **Ali Ghapoo Palace**, the **Imam Mosque** and the **Shaikh-Lotfollah Mosque**, but is also the place to see hundreds of craft stores with artisans busy creating the handicrafts that are unique to Isfahan.

■ **Ali Ghapoo Palace** (meaning "The Grand Door Palace") gets its name from the door that was brought from the holy city of Najaf in Iraq. The palace also features a copper pond on the third floor and an intricate Musicians' Room on the seventh floor.

Ali Ghapoo Palace  
in the Imam Square  
by Kamran Khajavi  
age 14, from Tehran





■ **Imam Mosque**, formerly the "Shah Mosque", is another architectural and artistic marvel. It was built in two sections over a 25-year period during the reign of Shah Abbas. It has four minarets instead of the usual two, and also the Chahar-Aivan (Four Veranda) design rather than the traditional one large hall design. In the courtyard there is a sundial to show the correct time for the midday prayer.

The most amazing and mysterious feature of Imam Mosque, however, is the southern dome that reflects sounds seven times. If you stand in a central point under the dome and make any kind of sound, you will hear seven echoes of it. The dome is built in two layers, one that is 170 ft high (52 meters) and a second one that is 125 ft high (38 meters). Although the



*Imam Mosque*

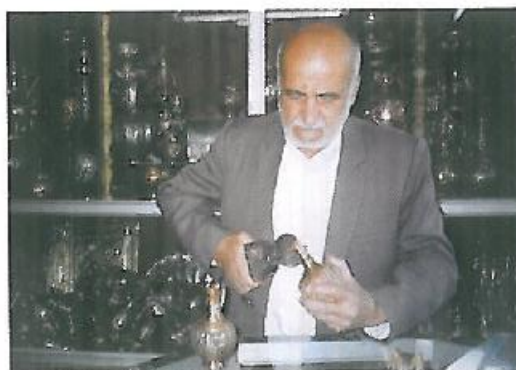
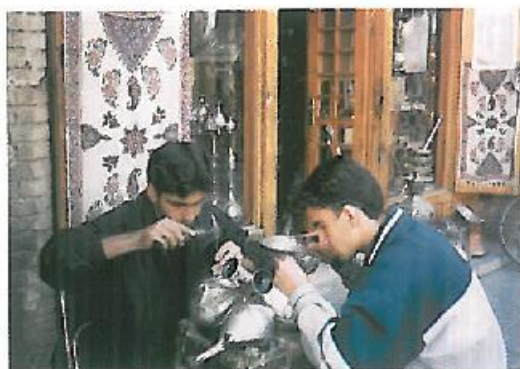
seven echoes remain an architectural mystery to this day, it is thought that the gap between the two domes creates the effect. Imam Mosque also features an entrance gate made of gold and silver, several large stone bowls for drinking water, each carved out of a single stone, and the seven-color tile work and intricate mosaics by masters of Koranic calligraphy such as Alireza Abbasi, Hossein Isfahani, and Imami.

■ **Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque** was built by Shah Abbas for the royal women. Located directly across from Ali Ghapoo Palace, the mosque was connected to the palace through an underground tunnel so that the royal ladies would not need to go outside. It took 17 years to build and was named after

a pious clergyman who lived there. The Mosque faces the Ka'be in Mecca and the ceilings and wall frames are made of genuine turquoise. The tile work was done by Master Hossein Isfahani.



*Shaikh Lotfollah Mosque*



*Isfahani artisans at work*



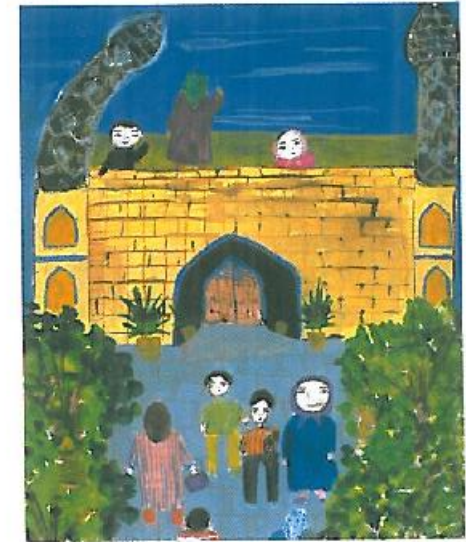
■ **Ghaisariyeh Bazaar**, Isfahan's famous bazaar is behind the Imam Square and is connected to it through many passages. Inside the shops, artisans are busy creating the many specialties of Isfahan with textile, metal, wood, silver, and gold.

■ **Jaam'c Mosque**, is another mosque to visit near the bazaar. It is the oldest mosque in Isfahan, dating back to the 11th century. The mosque features three kinds of decorative work: brick from the 12th and 13th centuries, plaster molding from the 12th to 14th centuries, and mosaic and tile works from the 14th to 17th centuries. It also has a very old door dating back 800 years.

Other places of interest to visit are **Menar Jonban** (the Shaking Minaret), originally built in the 14th century with the addition of the minarets in the 17th century. To this day no one knows how the minarets can shake without falling apart. Also **Hasht-Behesht** (Eight Paradises) **Palace** with octagonal shaped rooms and mirror work in the verandas, the **Armenian "Vank" Church and Museum** in Jolfa district of Isfahan, **Sioscpol** (33-Arch Bridge) that stretches almost 1000 feet over Zayandeh River, and **Atashkadeh Mountain** that houses the 1600-year-old Zoroastrian Fire Temple.



*Isfahan's Bazaar  
by Shima Nabavi-Nejad  
age 13, from Isfahan*



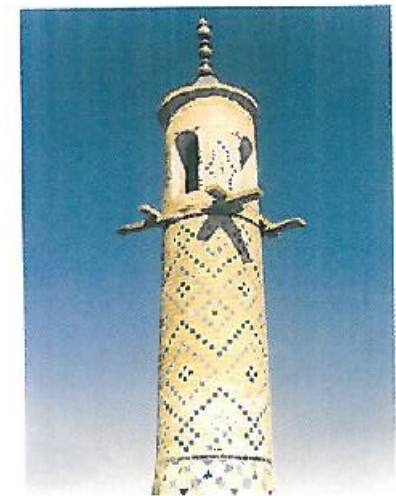
*Menar Jonban  
by Fatemeh Khalili  
age 11, from Isfahan*



*Hasht-Behesht*



*Atashkadeh*



*Menar Jonban*



## Mashad

Mashad is the third-largest city in Iran and a holy city for all Shi'ite Moslems worldwide. It is the capital of Khorasan province in north-east Iran. Khorasan is a very important region for its history and its contribution to Persian literature through great masters such as Ferdowsi, Omar Khayyam, and Attar.

### استان خراسان

#### Main Features of Mashad

**Area:** 77 sq miles (200 sq kms)

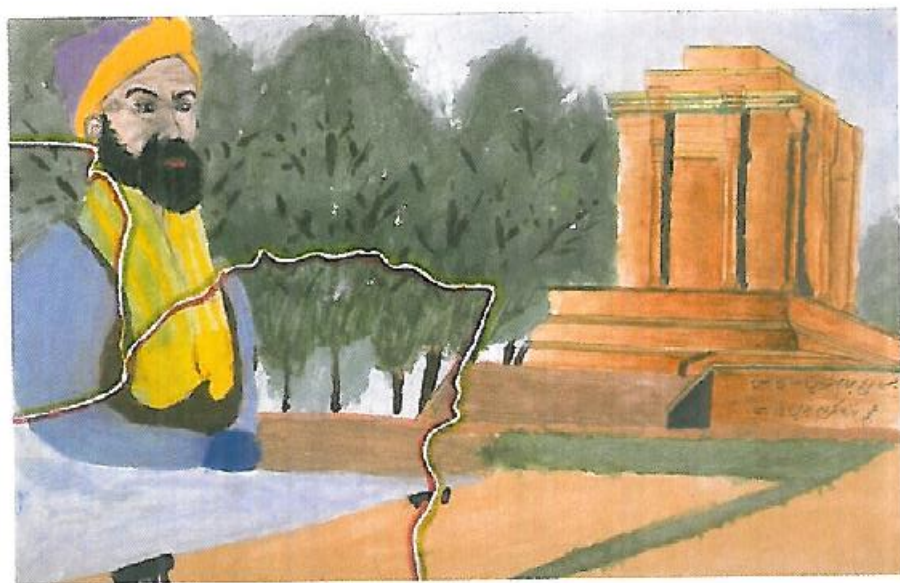
**Elevation:** 3,182 feet (970 meters)

**Population:** 2,329,000

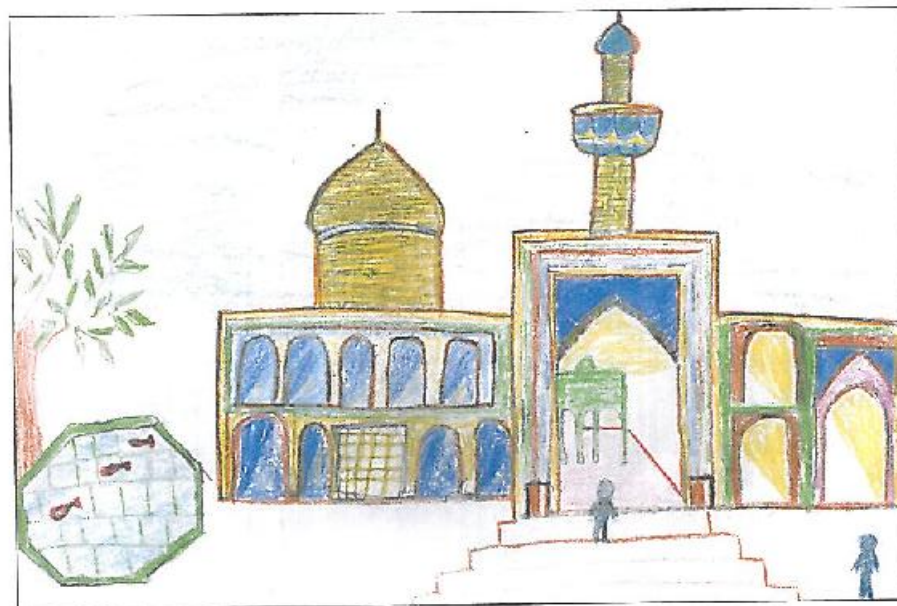


The Holy Shrine in Mashad houses the tomb of Imam Reza, the eighth Shi'ite Imam who died in the ninth century in Khorasan and was buried in Mashad. It is believed that he was murdered, which is why the city of his burial is called Mashad, meaning "the place of martyrdom".

Ferdowsi (935-1020) is one of the greatest Iranian poets, known to have revived Persian history and language with his 60,000 verse Book of Kings (Shah-Nameh). He was from Khorasan and is buried in Tbos near Mashad.



*Ferdowsi's Mausoleum  
by Maryam Molazainal  
age 15, from Karaj*



*The Holy Shrine of Imam Reza  
by Seyyed Mehdi Mahebbian  
age 9, from Tehran*



## Tabriz

Tabriz, the fourth largest city in Iran, is located in the north-west region of Azarbaijan, one of the richest and most fertile provinces in Iran. The people of Azarbaijan speak a dialect of the Turkish language known as Azari.

Tabriz has always been a commercially prosperous city, more so during the heydays of the Silk Road when caravans carried merchandise between the Far East and the West. Tabriz, with its strategic location on the Silk Road, was a center of commerce where merchants of the East and West exchanged their goods. Marco Polo, the Venetian merchant and explorer of the 13th century, visited Tabriz and later wrote:

*"The people of Tabriz live by trade and industry for cloth of gold and silk is woven here in great quantity and of great value. The city is so favorably situated that it is a market for merchandise from India and Baghdad, Formosa and Hormuz and from many other places. And many Latin merchants come here to buy precious stones which are found here in great abundance. It is a city where good profits are made by traveling merchants. The city is entirely surrounded by attractive orchards full of excellent fruit."*

## استحای ایران

### Main Features of Tabriz

**Area:** 54 sq miles (140 sq kms)

**Elevation:** 4,480 feet  
(1,366 meters)

**Population:** 1,191,043



The same favorable climate that produced the "excellent fruit" Marco Polo referred to was also known to rid one of illness and to "lower the fever", which is what "Tab-riz" means. Tabriz was twice the capital city of Persia between the 13th

and the 15th centuries. The famous Blue Mosque, built in the 15th century, is a reminder of the city's glorious past. Tabriz is also where Rumi's beloved Shams of Tabriz came from, hence his famous Divan of Shams (see page 48).

Today Tabriz remains a commercially viable city in Iran with its covered bazaar and abundance of high-quality merchandise, from jewelry and carpets to handmade silver dishes and colorful textiles.



City Hall Square in Tabriz



## Shiraz

Shiraz, known for its flowers, nightingales, lyrics, and cypress trees, is located in south central Iran. The history of Shiraz dates back 2500 years, when it was a small town near the ancient city of Estakhr. At the time, Estakhr had close to 100,000 residents, but it gradually fell into ruins and most of the population began to move to nearby Shiraz.

Today, Shiraz is the fifth largest city in Iran. It has been the capital of Iran several times, including in the 18th century, during the reign of Karim Khan Zand of the Zand Dynasty. Karim Khan did not call himself "king" but rather "Vakil", meaning "Deputy". Many of the monuments in Shiraz are from this period and named after him, such as the Vakil Bazaar and Vakil Mosque.

Shiraz is surrounded by the Zagros Mountains and this apparently is the reason it was originally called "Shahr-e Raz", meaning "The City of Mystery", which gradually changed to Shiraz. Today Shiraz is the capital of the province of Fars. It has excellent universities, as well as established industries such as petrochemical, textile, sugar, and appliances. Shiraz is also a nomadic city with several well-known nomadic tribes living near it. The most famous of these are the Qashqais, who set up their tents in Firooz-Abad, south of Shiraz, during the winter, and migrate 250 miles (400 kilometers) north in summer towards Isfahan.

Visitors to Shiraz can see both the ancient pre-Islamic ruins near the city and the Islamic period monuments that are in the city itself. The ancient remains of the pre-Islamic period, such as Persepolis, are testimony to the glorious days of the Persian Empire and are among the most important archeological sites in the world.



*Takhte-Jamshid (Persepolis)  
by Khadijeh Rezaian  
age 15, from Fasa*

## رسانهای ایران

### Main Features of Shiraz

**Area:** 85 sq miles (220 sq kms)

**Elevation:** 3,990 feet (1,540 meters)

**Population:** 1,053,025





### ■ Islamic Period Monuments in Shiraz

All visitors entering or leaving Shiraz pass through the famous **Koran Gate**. It is a Moslem tradition to pass under the Koran before going on a trip for safety and well-being while traveling. Besides keeping the travelers safe, Koran Gate is a beautifully arched structure well worth a visit.



*The Pavilion at Bagh-e-Eram  
(Garden of Eden)*

Shiraz is also known for its beautiful gardens, among them **Bagh-e Eram** (Garden of Eden), built in the 19th century, known for its majestic cypress trees and its variety of roses. Also worth visiting are

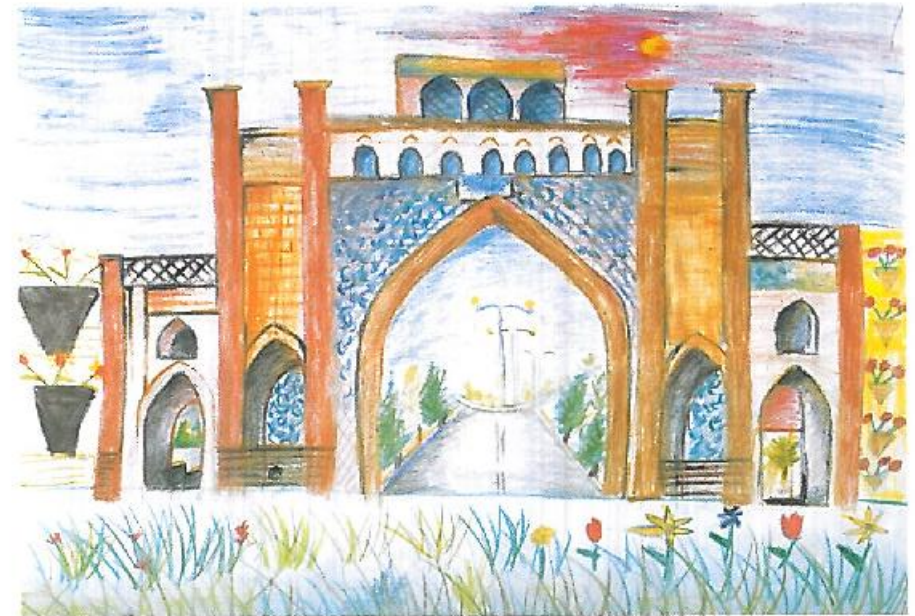
**Narenjestan and Afif**

**Abaad**. Most gardens have elaborately decorated central pavilions. The pavilion in Narenjestan displays most forms of Persian artistry, including mosaic, plaster molding, brickwork, woodwork, bas relief, mirror work, and fresco.

The next destination should be the heart of the city to visit the 18th century monuments and sites remaining from the Karim Khan Zand period. **Vakil Mosque**, next to the **Vakil Bazaar**, is decorated with the seven-color mosaic and the flower and nightingale theme.



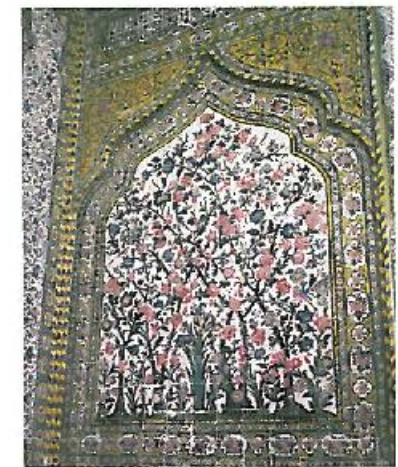
*Majestic Cypress Trees  
of the Eram Garden*



*Koran Gate  
by Yasaman Behshad  
age 10, from Shiraz*



*Vakil Mosque*



*Detail of the Mosaic  
from Vakil Mosque*



Other buildings of this period are the fortress-like **Ark-e Karim Khan**, which was Karim Khan's residence, and the **Pars Muscum**, an octagonal pavilion surrounded by a garden. Pars museum was originally Karim Khan's reception hall and later his burial place. However, Karim Khan's successor, and founder of the Qajar Dynasty, Agha Mohammad Khan, who detested Karim Khan, ordered his grave moved to the grounds of Golestan Palace in Tehran so Agha Mohammad Khan could step on it every day in disdain!

A tour of Shiraz will only be complete after paying respect to the mausoleums of its two well-known literary masters **Sa'di** and **Hafez**. The tombstones for both were built by Karim Khan, and the mausoleums were built in the early 20th century. The dome-shaped building above Hafez's tomb was designed by the French architect André Godard.



*Ark-e Karim Khan*



*Hafezieh*

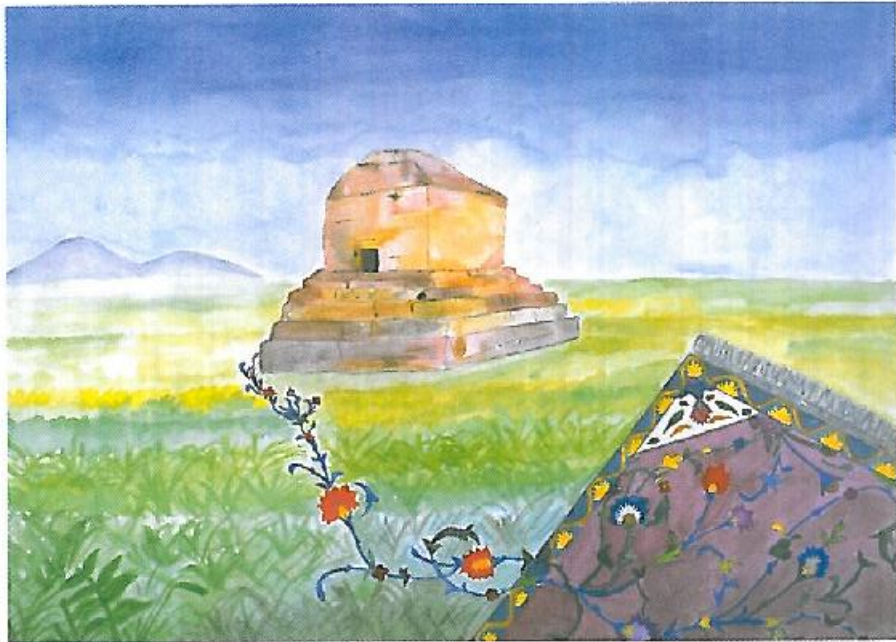


*Sa'di's Mausoleum*



*Ark-e Karim Khan. Detail of mosaic showing the mythological hero Rostam killing the White Giant*





*Pasargadae and the Persian Rug*  
by Sarvin Hajivandi  
age 16, from Shiraz

### ■ Pre-Islamic Period Monuments Near Shiraz

**Pasargadae:** Located in Dasht-e Morghab, about 110 miles north of Shiraz, Pasargadae was the capital of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenian Dynasty. It was built on the site where in 550 B.C., Cyrus won the battle with his grandfather, Astyages, king of the Medes.

The most important structure remaining in this area is Cyrus' simple but majestic tomb in the shape of a ziggurat, with six receding steps upon which rests the gabled tomb chamber.

**Persepolis (Takht-e Jamshid):** The building of Persepolis was initiated around 522 B.C., by Darius I, the great Achaemenian king known as Darius The Great. After Darius I, his successors, Xerxes (Khashayar Shah), Artaxerxes

(Ardeshir) and other kings, continued expanding the Persepolis palace complex over a period of 200 years.

Most of the important buildings in the complex were built on a high rocky platform next to the mountain behind it. There were 15 main buildings including the **Apadana**, the **Hall of Hundred Columns (Sad-Sotoon)**, **The Gate House of Xerxes**, **The Treasury**, **The Harem**, and the **Palaces of Darius the Great, Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, and Artaxerxes III.**



*Persepolis columns and capitals*

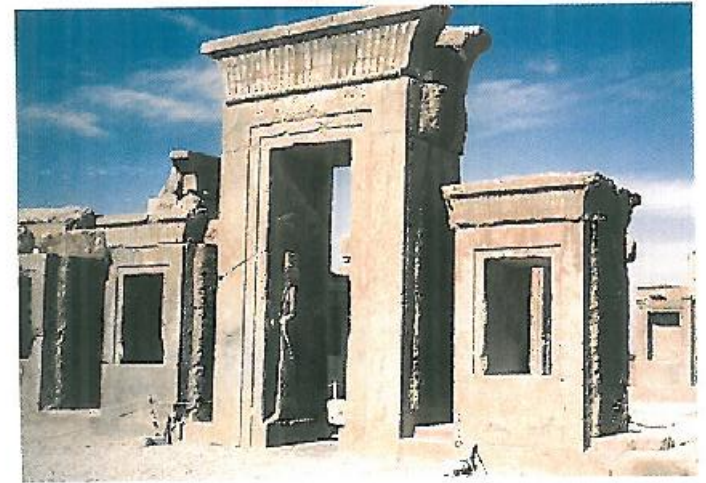


*Persepolis  
column head*



Persepolis was usually the spring and fall residence of the Achaemenid kings. In summer they stayed in Hegmataneh (Hamadan) and in winter in Susa (Shoosh). The kings also celebrated the Persian New Year (Noe-Rooz) at Persepolis and received representatives of the many territories under the Persian Empire who brought Noe-Rooz presents to the king. The ritual of representatives bringing gifts to the kings has been well-depicted on several of the bas-reliefs. Persepolis was also the religious and spiritual retreat for the kings.

The name Persepolis (City of Persians) was first given to Takht-e Jamshid by Alexander of Macedonia (Alexander the Great), who burnt it to the ground in 330 B.C. Today the remains mostly consist of stone columns, elaborately decorated capitals and bases, gates, window jambs, staircases and facades, most with elaborate bas-reliefs.



*Persepolis*



*King on the throne receiving visitors*

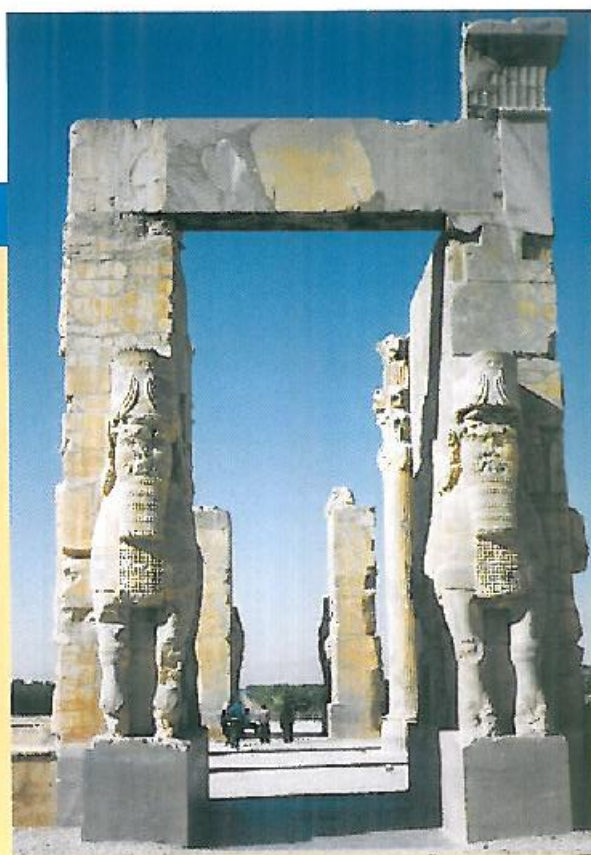


*Representatives bringing gifts to the King at Persepolis*



In addition to the historic information these remains provide us today, equally or more important are the written records carved in stone or on clay tablets. These are among the very few records of this period that exist today. Most writings are in the three languages of the time: Elamite, Old Persian, and Babylonian. The only other known source of information about ancient Persia is from the writings of Greek historians and writers, such as Xenophon, Aristotle, Herodotus, and Plutarch.

One of the remaining structures is the elaborate entrance gate called **The Gate of Nations (Darvaze-ye Mellal)** built by Xerxes. It is the gate all visitors, including the representatives and delegates of the 28 nations under the Persian kings, passed through to be received by the king. Darius the Great had divided his vast empire into 28 countries, each with its own king. The Persian king, therefore, was called the King of Kings (Shah-an-Shah).



Gate of Nations  
at Persepolis

## ایران رسایهای ایران رسام

On the entrance wall of The Gate of Nations, there are three tablets in three languages, first praising the Zoroasterian God, Ahura Mazda, and then describing the building of the palace:

*"He is a Great God, Ahura Mazda  
Who created the sky  
Who created the water and the earth  
Who created the Heaven  
Who created mankind  
Who created joy and peace of mind for mankind  
Who made me the King  
King of Kings  
I am Xerxes, son of Darius  
I have built this Pars-e\*  
I built this Gate with Ahura Mazda's assistance."*

\* Pars-e means "place" or "hometown" in old Persian.



**Naqsh-e Rostam (The Image of Rostam):** A short drive from Persepolis, Naqsh-e Rostam is the site of a Zoroastrian fire temple called Ka'be-e Zardosht. Behind it is a great vertical cliff that houses the tombs of four Achaemenian kings. The tombs belong to four generations, starting with Darius I, his son Xerxes, his son Artaxerxes, and his son Darius II. Images carved on the tomb depict Ahura Mazda at the top, then the king carrying two braziers, below him the representatives of the 28 nations, and finally the tomb itself flanked by columns and capitals. Alexander of Macedonia called Naqsh-e Rostam "Necropolis", meaning "the City of the Dead".

Below the tombs, on the lower levels of the cliff, are several rock-reliefs from the Sassanid period. They depict the Sassanid kings, including Shahpoor I, sitting on his horse. Since this image is similar to that of the mythological hero, Rostam and his famous horse, Rakhsh, the place was later named after Rostam's image.



*Naqsh-e Rostam tomb from Achaemenian period*



*Naqsh-e Rostam rock-relief from Sassanid period*

The Fire Temple in Naqsh-e Rostam was the home of the holy Zoroastrian fire and possibly where they mummified the kings. Zoroastrians did not bury their dead as they considered the earth to be sacred. The kings were mummified and placed in their tomb. The bodies of nobility and high ranking officials were placed on a high mountain for a period of time and the bones were then kept in a "bone holder". Ordinary people's bodies were also placed on high mountains to deteriorate and the bones were transferred to what was called "The Tower of Silence".



## Major Industries

Iran's major industries are oil, petrochemicals, cement, sugar refining, and carpets. It is among the world's greatest oil producing countries. Several refineries have been built in major cities along with petrochemical and other oil-related plants. Iran produces close to 2 billion barrels of oil a year, of which almost 70% is exported.

Iran is also one of the richest sources of natural gas in the world. Its annual production of gas is over 55 billion cubic meters. Electricity is generated primarily with steam, water, gas or diesel fuel. Eleven out of nineteen major dams in Iran produce electricity.



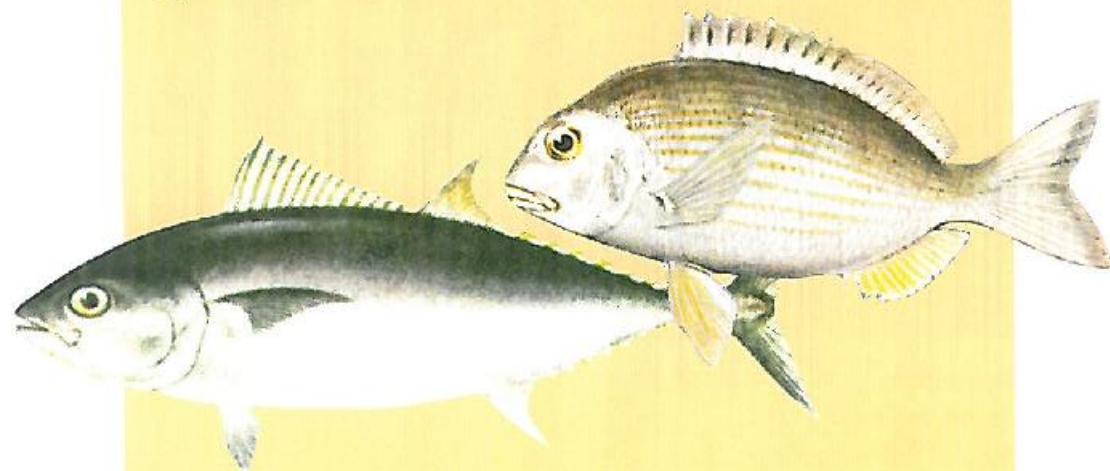
*Tehran Refinery on the route to Qom*

Iran also has a thriving fishing industry. The Caspian Sea in the north and the Persian Gulf and Orman Sea in the south provide a large variety of fish. Fish caught from the Caspian Sea include sturgeon (from which the best caviar in the world is obtained) and salmon, while the warmer southern seas yield a variety of fish, shrimp and prawns.

Iran is expanding a number of other industries, primarily for internal consumption. Among them are several car manufacturing plants, light metal manufacturing, textile, plastics, and many food production plants.

## سماهی ایران / سمکهای ایران

There are several canning and sardine factories in Iran and the fishing industry produces some 270 tons of caviar, over 9,000 tons of shrimp and lobster, and almost 320,000 tons of other types of fish.

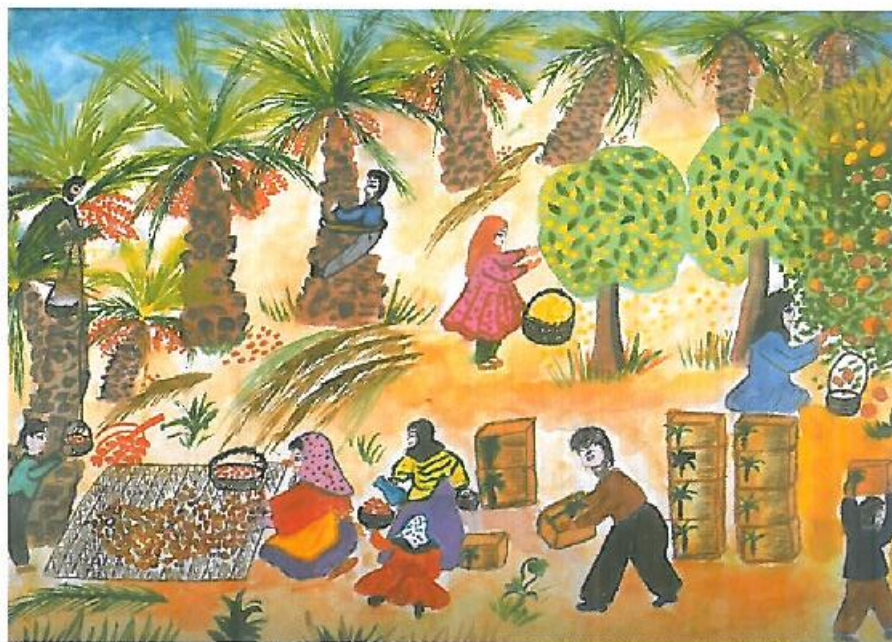




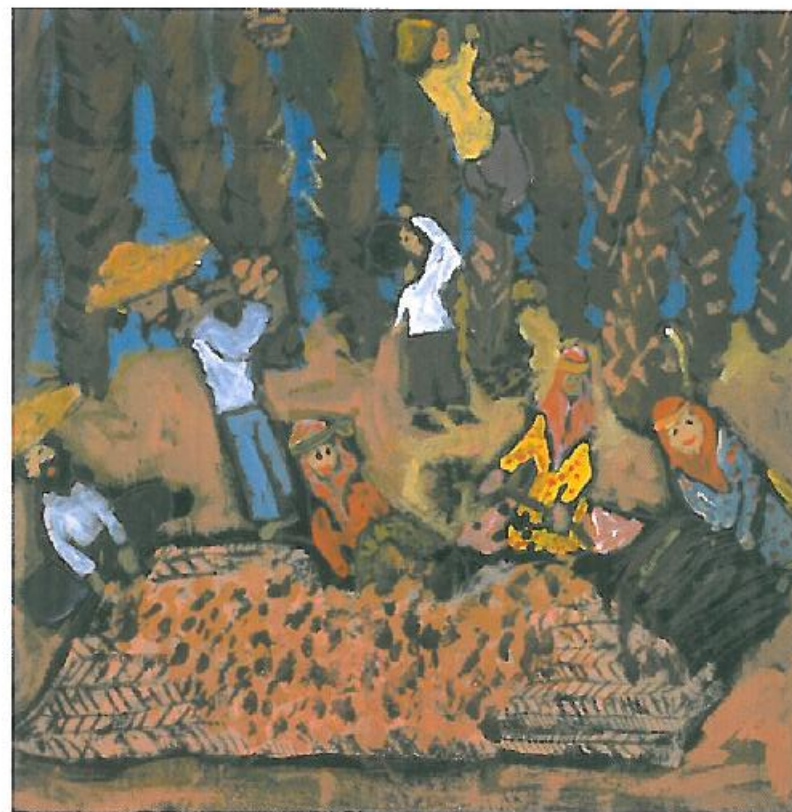
## Agricultural Products

The major crops grown in the various climates of Iran are grains, rice, fruits, nuts, sugar beets, and cotton. Many types of citrus fruits, including the two specialties of Iran, sweet lemon and sour orange, are grown in the fertile Caspian Sea region. Good quality rice is also grown in the wetlands near the Caspian Sea. The northwestern region of Azarbaijan is known for its crops including many types of grapes.

Tobacco, corn, dates, olives, fine spices such as saffron, and tea are among other major agricultural products.



*Fruit Pickers*  
by Alireza Delpasand  
age 12, from Jahrom



*Date Pickers*  
by Shabnam Panahi  
age 10, from Borazjan



## Forests

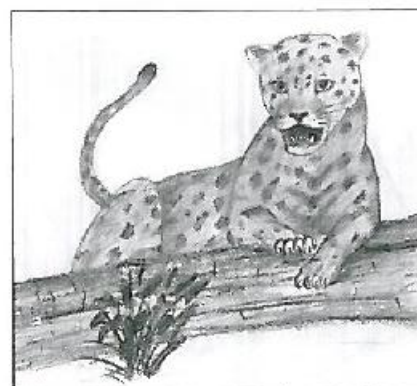
Due to a primarily dry climate, only 11% of Iran, or a total of 70,000 sq miles (180,200 sq kms) is covered with forests. The most extensive forest growth area is located on the northern slopes of the Alborz mountains that face the Caspian Sea. The most common trees in these regions are oak, ash, elm, cypress, and pine.



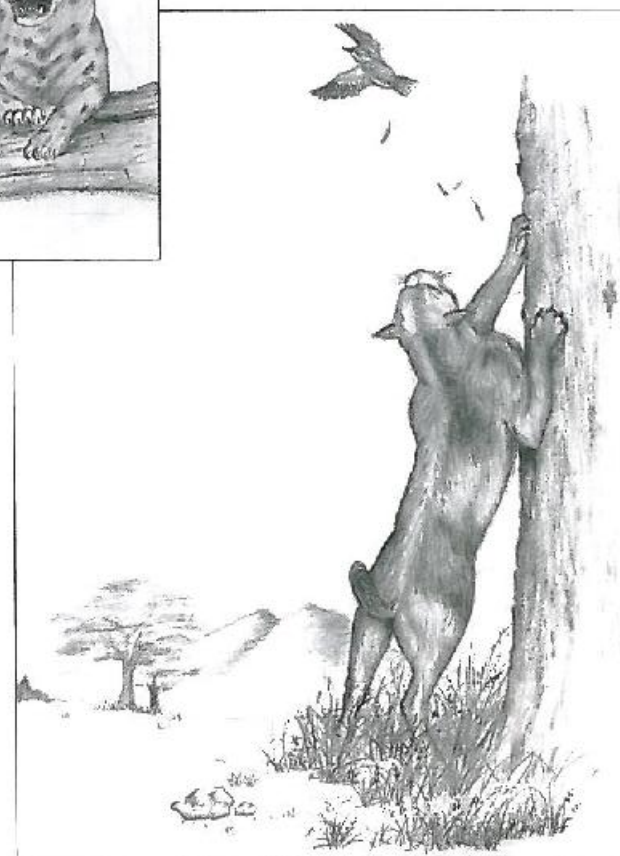
*Forests of the Northern Iran*  
by Fatemeh Naqsh-pour  
age 16, from Rasht

## Wildlife

Among the native animals of Iran are bears (in the mountains), wild sheep and goats, gazelles, wild horses, wild boar, wildcats, and some panthers and foxes. Iran also has a wide variety of birds including pheasants, partridges, storks, and falcons.



*Iranian Wildlife*  
by Mehrdad Issvandi  
age 14, from Karaj





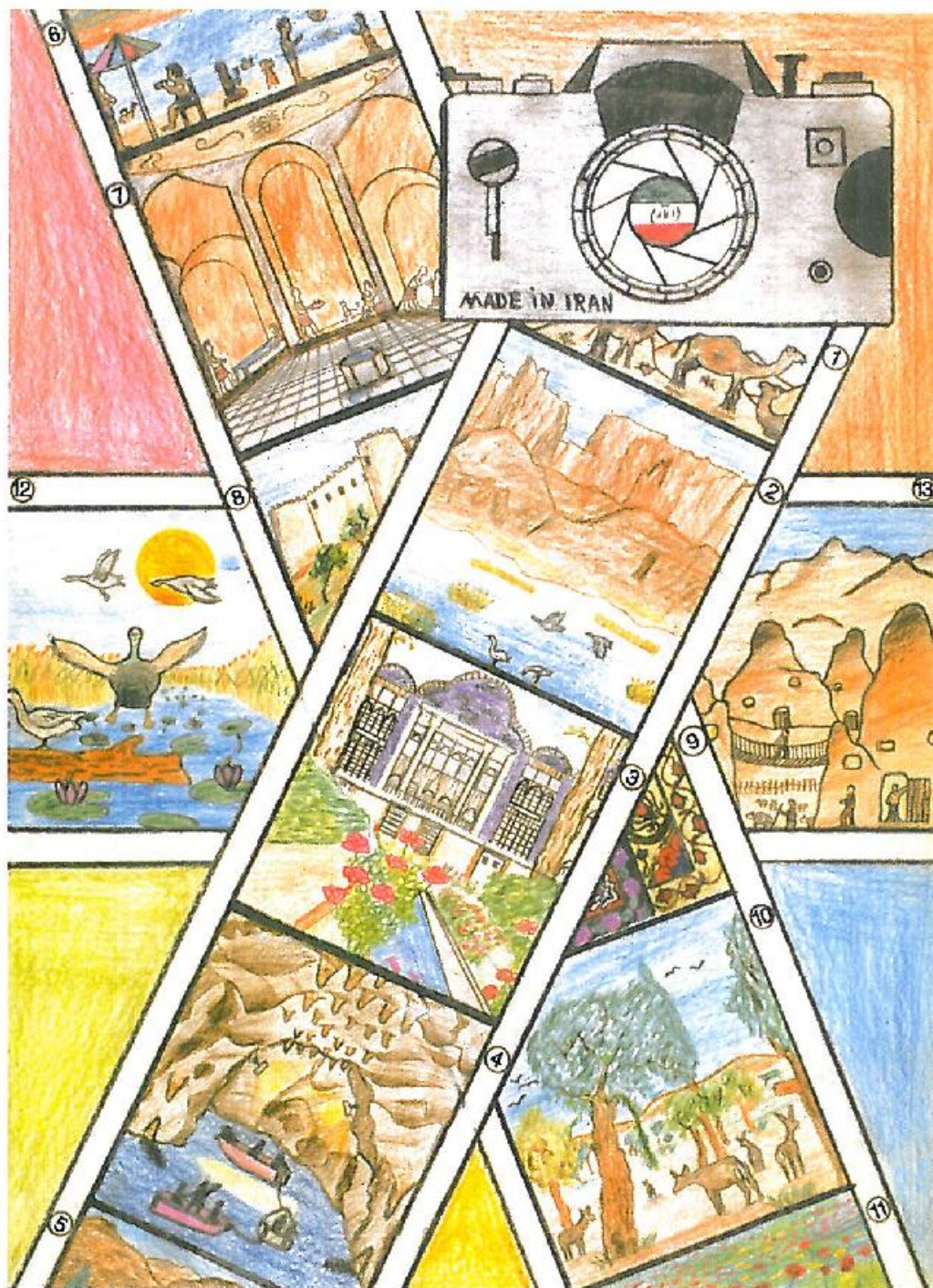
## Scenes of Iran from a Camera

- 1) Lute Desert
- 2) Parishan Lake, Kazeroon
- 3) Eram Gardens, Shiraz
- 4) Ali-Sadr Cave, Hamedan
- 5) Oak and Almond Forests, Kohkilooyeh & Boyer-Ahmad
- 6) The Beaches of Gilan and Mazandaran
- 7) Ganjali-Khan Bathhouse, Kerman
- 8) Falak-Aflak Castle, Lorestan
- 9) Rug Museum, Tehran
- 10) Golestan Forest Park
- 11) Tulip and Narcissus Field
- 12) Anzali Lagoon
- 13) Kandovan Village, Zanjan

"We take pictures of every beautiful thing, so I am showing some of the beauties of Iran from the point of view of a camera."

Mohammad Boushehri

Scenes of Persia from a Camera  
by Mohammad Boushehri  
age 12, from Shiraz







2

# Highlights of Persian History



## Persian History

Ancient Persia was settled 3500 to 4000 years ago by groups of Indo-Europeans from the southern steppes in Russia who migrated south from the Aral Sea region in today's Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. They wanted to get away from the wild animals and tribes and the bitter cold of the climate. They divided into several groups, settling in different lands. The two best known of these settlers were the Medes, who settled in Hamadan, north-west of Iran, and the Persians, who settled further south in Pars. They are the ancestors of Persians and forefathers of the founders of the Persian Empire.



*Ancient Pitcher and Bowl  
by Babak Mohammad-Nejad  
age 11, from Isfahan*

*Clay Vases from 4000 B.C.  
by Saeed Delshad-Sani  
age 19, from Jajrood*

### سازمانهای ایران

The written and known history of Persia dates back 2500 years. These have been glorious as well as turbulent years. Politically, the history of Persia can be divided into eight major periods:

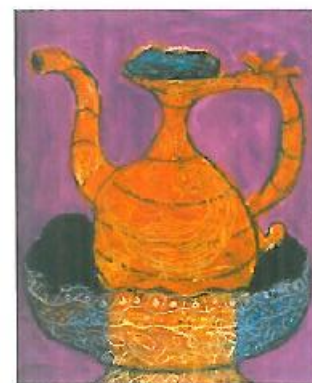
1. Achaemenian Empire
2. Parthian Dynasty
3. Sassanid Empire
4. The Islamic Caliphate
5. Safavid Dynasty
6. Qajar Dynasty
7. Pahlavi Dynasty
8. The Islamic Republic

### 1. Achaemenian Empire: 559 – 330 B.C.

Sometime around the sixth century B.C., the Persian king Cambyses married Princess Mandana, daughter of Astyages, the king of Medes. Mandana gave birth to Cyrus (Koorosh), who became the founder of the Persian Empire.

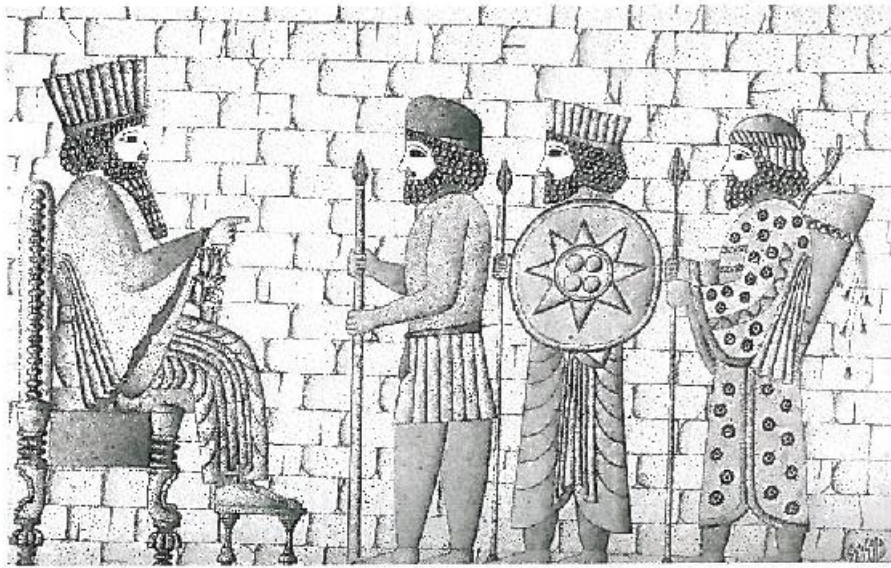
The story of Cyrus' life, as recorded by ancient historians, is in itself amazing. According to the Greek historian, Herodotus', Astyages had a dream one night that a vine grew from his daughter's womb and overshadowed the whole of Asia. His magi interpreted the dream to mean that Mandana's child would take over the king's territory. Outraged, Astyages ordered Mandana, who was pregnant at the time, to be brought in to his court from Persia.

When Mandana's baby, a boy named Cyrus, was born, the king ordered his most faithful servant, Harpagus, to dispose of the baby. Harpagus did not have the heart to carry out the king's order himself. He called upon the king's herdsman to take the baby to a mountain and expose it to the wildest animals for three days and bring back the body. The herdsman took the baby home to his wife, who had just given birth to a still-born boy. They decided to take back their own baby's body to Harpagus and bring up Cyrus as their child.



When Cyrus was ten years old, he was playing in the village one day with other boys his own age. They selected him to be their king. Cyrus proceeded to order them about—some to build houses, others he made his guards, one was to be the king's eye, another had the office of carrying his messages—all had a task to do. There was one boy, the son of a distinguished Mede and a courtesan, who disobeyed Cyrus and was pun-





*Achaemenian King and His Soldiers*  
by Shadi Zandi  
age 18, from Malayer

ished by him. The boy reported Cyrus' action to his father, who went to the King to complain about the herdsman's son. Cyrus and his father were brought in front of the king, who noticed the boy's resemblance to himself and his daughter. The herdsman had to confess and the truth of Cyrus' royal lineage was uncovered.

Cyrus later took over his maternal grandfather's lands, combined them with Persia and, in 549 B.C., founded the Achaemenian Dynasty (named after his great ancestor, Achaemenes or Hakhamanesh). He also conquered Lydia in 546 B.C., and Babylonia in 538 B.C., restoring Jerusalem to the Jews.

Cyrus was a down-to-earth and gentle king who was known as "father" by his own people, but to history as Cyrus the Great. When he took over a new territory, he would respect the idols the people of that land worshipped,

even though he himself was a Zoroastrian and a monotheist who believed in one God only.

It is said that Daniel the prophet, who was a contemporary of Cyrus the Great and had displayed a flair for visions and interpreting dreams, had a dream about Cyrus. He saw Cyrus in the shape of a male sheep or ram with two horns crowned with an Egyptian crown, two Assyrian wings and covered with an Elamite robe. When Daniel told Cyrus of his dream, the King was pleased and ordered the described image to be carved on stone.



*Prophet Daniel's vision of Cyrus*



*Persian King and His Soldiers at Damavand Mountain*  
by Hooman Gandjipour  
age 8, from Tehran



It was during the same time that Cyrus the Great issued the world's first declaration of human rights, written on a clay cylinder in Babylon in 539 B.C. The cylinder is now on display in the United Nations building in New York City.

Cyrus was killed during the war with the Scythians of southern Russia. He was apparently killed by their female commander, Tamaris. His tomb in Pasargadae remains in good condition to this day and is a big tourist attraction. After Cyrus, his son Cambyses (Kamboojich) became the king and conquered Egypt and expanded the empire. After Cambyses, Darius I, or Darius the Great, who was Cyrus'

cousin, ascended to the throne and married Cyrus' daughter, Atossa, in order to become a member of Cyrus' direct lineage.



Persian Empire at the time of Darius I



*Cyrus the Great usually allowed the existing king to continue ruling his country under the sovereignty of the Persian King. He is mentioned in the Old Testament as the king who freed the Jews from Babylonian captivity (see below).*

### Old Testament: Ezra 1

**1** Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

**2** Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

**3** Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

**4** And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.

**5** Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.

**6** And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

**7** Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Neb-u-chad-nez-zar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

**8** Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mith-re-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-baz'-zar, the prince of Judah.

**9** And this is the number of them: thirty charges of gold, a thousand charges of silver, nine and twenty knives,

**10** Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

**11** All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shesh-baz'-zar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem."<sup>3</sup>



# ایران رسامهای ایران رسامهای ایران

## The World's First Declaration of Human Rights

*"I am Cyrus, King of Kings, Great King, Powerful King, King of Babylon, King of Sumer and Akkad, King of four countries, son of Kambujieh The Great King, King of Shahr Enshan, Grandson of Cyrus the Great King from the eternal dynasty whose descendants*



*are covered by the affection of Ahura Mazda and whose government is close to the hearts of the people.*

*When I entered Babylon in peace and friendship, I sat on the Throne at the Palace*

*of Babylon Kings, among joy*

*and happiness of all the people. Marduk (God of Babylonians) whose exaltation I always sought, turned the hearts of the noble people of this land towards me.*

*My grand army moved peacefully in the city of Babylon and I did not permit any harm be done to the people of this city or the land of Sumer and Akkad. The thought of the internal affairs and religious shrines of Babylon shook my heart. I commanded that all*

*people be free in worshipping their own God and atheists not harm them. I commanded that none of the houses be destroyed and none of the citizens be deprived of their livelihood.*

*I commanded all the Temples of the cities of Babylon, Ashur, Shush, Addad and all lands beyond Dejeleh (Tigris) River erected in ancient times and closed down, to be opened. I returned all the Gods of these Temples to their respective places to be stationed there forever. I also returned the gods of Sumer and Akkad, which were brought to Babylon by Nebonid and caused anger, harmlessly to their Palace called "Happiness of Heart"*

*All the kings living in all the countries of the world, from upper sea to lower sea, and kings of the west who lived in tents, brought their precious gifts to Babylon and presented to me.*

*I gathered the inhabitants of these lands, rebuilt their houses that were destroyed and granted peace and tranquility to all. The Great God was pleased with me and bestowed his blessings on me, Cyrus, and my son, Kambujieh, and all my armies."*

During the reign of Darius I (521-485 B.C.), the Persian Empire reached its peak of sovereignty and power. During this period, the empire extended from the Nile River in Egypt to the Indus Valley in India. Under the Achaemenian rule, Persia became one of the most advanced civilizations in the world. Among the achievements and innovations of the time were:

- Building paved roads for horse-drawn transportation from the Mediterranean region to India

- Establishing rest-houses and stables on these roads for travelers and their horses
- Establishing the world's first courier service to dispatch mail throughout the vast empire
- Building a canal from the Red Sea to the Nile River to facilitate water transportation
- Establishing industries such as mining, agriculture, chemistry, cloth weaving, embroidery, and carpet weaving



Also under the patronage of the Achaemenian kings, the religious doctrines of Zoroaster (c. 628-c. 551 B.C.) spread throughout the vast empire. Zoroaster taught a dualist doctrine, the cosmic struggle between the god Ahura Mazda, the good god of light, truth, and peace, and Ahriman, the evil god of darkness, lies, and discord. It would prove to be one of the most profoundly influential teachings in the history of the world.<sup>4</sup> The Achaemenian Empire ended when the Greeks under Alexander of Macedonia defeated the Persians in 330 B.C.

## 2. Parthian (Ashkanian) Dynasty: 247 B.C. to 224 A.D.

The Parthians freed Persia from Greek rule in the second century B.C. and reunited the country under their own rule. They considered themselves heirs to the Achaemenids, re-established the Persian Empire and adopted Zoroasterianism as the official religion. Parthians ruled Iran for almost 500 years. Their capitals were: The City of A Hundred Gates near Damghan, then Rey near Tehran, and later Hamedan and, in winter, Ctesiphon near Baghdad.

The frontiers of Iran at the time of the Parthians were: Transcaucasia in the north, India in the east, and the Tigris river in the west. The Parthians were defeated by the Sassanids.



*Zartoshi (Zoroaster)*  
by Keyvan Vafadari  
age 14, from Tehran

## 3. Sassanid Empire: 225 A.D. to 640 A.D.

The Sassanids started to rebuild the Persian Empire and conquer new territories under the rule of Ardashir I (founder of Sassanids), Shahpur I, Shahpur II, Khosrow I (or Anushirvan the Just) and Khosrow Parviz.

Anushirvan the Just, one of the most illustrious Persian monarchs, ascended the throne in 531. He made peace with the Romans, defeated the White Huns and divided up their territories with his ally, Ilkhan of the Turks. His administrative achievements, however, outweighed his fame as a soldier:

- Established a graded tax system payable in cash or trade
- Created an army better trained and disciplined than any army before
- Reformed laws and kept careful watch on their implementation
- Made the caravan routes safer



*Shahpour Sassanid's Statue in Neyshapour Cave*  
by Azizeh Shakarami  
age 15, from Kazeroon

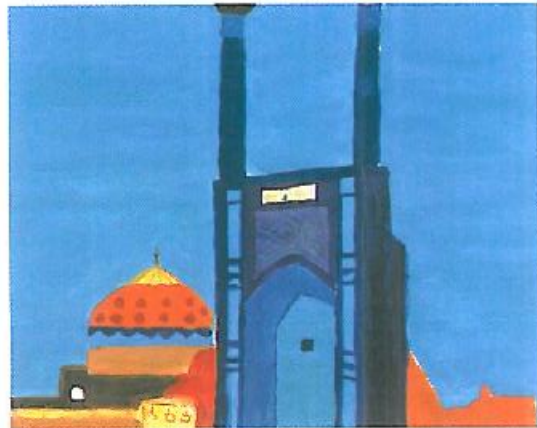


Because of Anushirvan's patronage of learned men of many countries and his interest in history and philosophy, Iran became the center for the exchange of ideas during this period, which stands out as one of the most glorious periods in Iranian history. The language of this period was Pahlavi.

With the overthrow of the Sassanid dynasty in 640 A.D., through the Arab conquest of Persia and Islamisation of Iran, 1200 years of Persian Empire came to an end.

#### 4. Islamic Caliphate: 640 A.D. to 1501 A.D.

This period started with the Arab conquest and ended with the Mongol invasion. The Arab conquest, which lasted several centuries, gradually influenced every aspect of Persian



*Jame' Mosque in Yazd*  
by Maryam-sadat Mohtashami  
age 13, from Garmsar

civilization. It introduced the country to a new religion, Islam, which replaced the indigenous Zoroasterianism as the principal faith of the Persians. During this period, a new script was established for the Persian language, which is still used today. The Persian language was also influenced by Arabic and reached new perfection,

thanks to the creations of famous literary masters of this period. Above all, the Islamisation of Persia gradually revolutionized the arts and the architecture.

Following the introduction of Islam to Persia and over a period of five centuries (1000-1500), the Persian people witnessed several waves of invaders. Among them were the

Mongols and the Tartars, who plundered Iran's cities and destroyed many of the treasures representing the artistic and literary heritage of Persia.

However, by the ninth century, Persian political and cultural autonomy was reasserted and the arts and sciences began to flourish.

Among the great thinkers of this period is Abu Ali Sina, or Ibn Sina (Avicenna), who was born in 980 near the city of Bukhara (in today's Afghanistan). During his relatively short life of 58 years, Avicenna produced over 200 books on mathematics, music, geology, and treatises on problems of light, gravity, heat, motion, philosophy, and medicine.

One of the greatest scientists and philosophers of the Islamic world, Abu Ali Sina is known as the Muslim successor of Aristotle. Like



*Abu Ali Sina's Mausoleum in Hamadan*



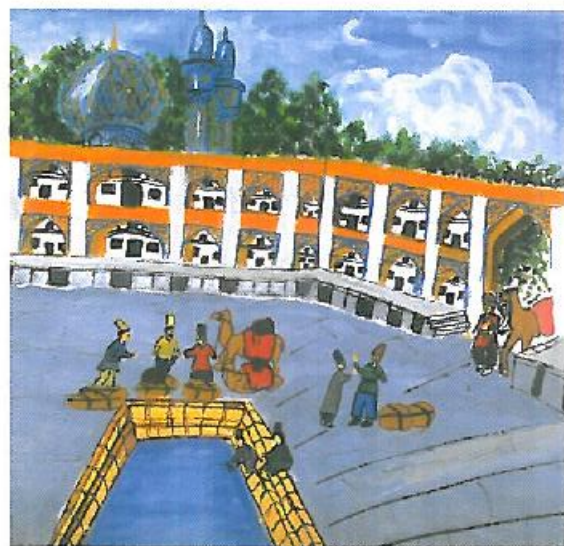
*Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna)*  
by Kusra Naftchi  
age 11, from Ardebil

Aristotle, he opted to master the various subjects and sciences of his time. Abu Ali Sina died in 1037 and was buried in Hamadan. Today an imposing mausoleum has been constructed over his grave, including a large library.



## 5. Safavid Dynasty: 1502 to 1722

The Safavid Dynasty marked the beginning of the new Iranian state in an area with boundaries that are similar to those of present-day Iran. Its founder, Shah Ismail, restored internal order and established the Shiite sect of Islam as the official



*Caravansary  
by Shahbaz Nekou-zadeh  
age 12, from Tehran*

state religion. The Safavid Dynasty reached its glory during the reign of Shah Abbas I, known as Shah Abbas the Great. He defeated the Uzbeks and Turks and regained the western provinces of Iran. He also drove out the Portuguese from the colonies they had established in the Persian Gulf in the early 16th century. But his greatest achievement was in the art of peace.

He moved the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, established trade with Europe, and reorganized the army. He also encouraged trade and travel by restoring safety to caravan routes and built bridges and caravansaries.

The caravansary was the ancestor to today's roadside motels and inns. Travelers ate and slept overnight and the camels and horses rested and recuperated from the long journey. They were usually built beside an oasis to allow the animals to drink water. In fact, there was once a prosperous

chain of caravansaries on the silk road from Europe to the Far East. These thriving establishments served travelers and traders throughout the centuries until the opening of sea routes made it easier to travel by ship, and the caravansary business slowly died out.

During the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, Isfahan was made into an architectural and artistic marvel with the magnificent Royal Square (now Imam Square) and its beautiful surrounding buildings. His long reign is considered the Iranian Renaissance, the rebirth of its past glory. Unfortunately, the Safavid Dynasty was brought down in 1722, after an invasion by the Afghans. It was followed by a period of anarchy which lasted until 1790, when the Qajar Dynasty emerged.

## سجای ایران رس سجای ایران

The one remarkable, but brief, period of Iran's military power during this time was under Nadir Shah Afshar, who ruled Iran from 1736 to 1747. Nader Shah is known as the Napoleon of Iran. Under Nadir Shah's military leadership, Persian armies conquered Afghanistan and reached as far as Delhi in India.



*Nader Shah's Mausoleum in Mashad*



## 6. Qajar Dynasty: 1790 to 1925

The Qajar Dynasty started a more modern era in Iran. Although the founder, Agha Mohammad Khan, was among the most brutal and hated of all Iranian monarchs, he managed to end the 70-year period of anarchy that had begun with the Afghan invasion. He succeeded in ridding the country of external enemies and recapturing the large state of Khorasan, bordering Afghanistan. He reinstituted the Shiite faith as the state religion and moved the capital to Tehran, where it has remained to the present day. In 1797, he was murdered by his personal attendants.

During the reign of the succeeding Qajar rulers (1798-1925), from Fath Ali Shah to Ahmad Shah, Iran emerged from the middle ages into modern times, thanks to great men like Amir Kabir. Amir Kabir (meaning "The Great Ruler") was a prime minister during the reign of Naser-od-Din Shah and is believed to be one of the greatest politicians in Iranian history. His real name was Mirza Taghi Khan, and he grew up in the household of Chaem-Magham, Mohammad Shah's prime minister. His father was the prime minister's cook and later, the butler. Mirza Taghi Khan became a very wise and learned young man and served in the court of Naser-od-Din Mirza, Mohammad Shah's son and the crown prince. Mirza Taghi Khan later married Naser-od-Din Mirza's only sister.



Fath Ali Shah



Naser-od-Din Shah



Amir Kabir  
by Naseem Delshad-Sani  
age 17, from Jaajrood

After Mohammad Shah's death, Amir Kabir helped Naser-od-Din Mirza claim his throne despite many other claims. The young Shah was very fond of Amir Kabir and made him the prime minister. Amir Kabir began many improvement projects that included:

- Eliminating the use of excessive titles and compliments in the official correspondence
- Forbidding government employees from receiving bribes
- Establishing regular salary and pay for the government workers
- Eliminating the pension many courtesans received from the national treasury
- Establishing a system of fair taxation
- Sending many students abroad to study the latest advancements in the fields of science, commerce, industry and technology



- Establishing the first European-style school in Iran, called Dar-ol Fonoon
- Publishing the first weekly paper, called *Events and Happenings*

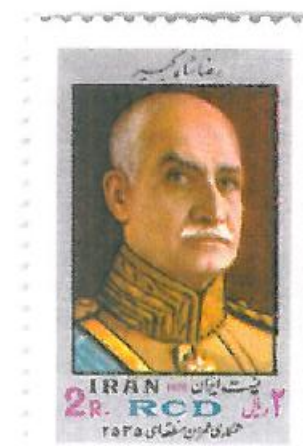
Amir Kabir also tried to minimize the foreign influence in Iran, from the Ottoman Empire to the British and the Russian governments. His actions resulted in many internal and external enemies. In an effort to get back their power, these enemies began a series of conspiracies to change the young Naser-od-Din Shah's affection and trust to suspicion and doubt about the loyalty of his prime minister. They finally succeeded in having Amir Kabir removed from power, exiled to a village in Kashan and later killed in the bathhouse. Thus, Iran lost one of its most able politicians of modern times and the chance to advance more rapidly towards modernization.

During the Qajar rule some of the Iranian territories were lost to neighboring countries due to foreign interference. For example, Afghanistan was severed from Iran by Britain in 1857. Despite all the interferences, however, Iranians struggled to keep their general independence as a country. In 1890, Naser-od-Din Shah gave an English company complete monopoly over the production, sale and export of tobacco. People, including his own wives, boycotted tobacco and refused to smoke. Naser-od-Din Shah was forced to cancel the monopoly and the people realized their power. This event marked the start of the revolution that led to the establishment of major internal reforms. In 1906, Mozaffar-od-Din Shah was forced to adopt and rule by a constitution.

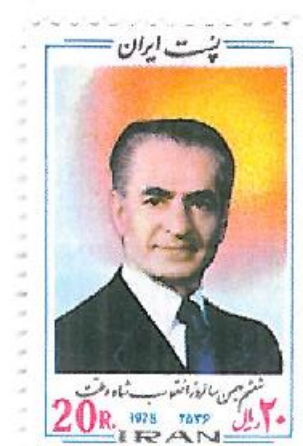
By the time of the last Qajar monarch, Ahmad Shah, constitutional monarchy had been established, with a parliament (Majlis) consisting of the representatives elected from all the provinces. The Qajar dynasty ruled Iran until after World War I.

## 7. Pahlavi Dynasty: 1925 to 1979

Reza Khan, a Qajar army officer of humble origins, founded a new dynasty and adopted the ancient name Pahlavi. He was a reformer who greatly modernized the country during his 15-year rule. He established Western style schools, including the University of Tehran, banned women from wearing the veil (but later they had the option to wear it or not), and built the country's first railroad from north to south.



Reza Shah



Mohammad Reza Shah

In 1941, during World War II, Reza Shah was forced by foreign powers to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah.

In 1951, Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, a nationalist leader and a well educated nobleman, succeeded in nationalizing the oil industry and minimizing foreign influence. However, in 1953 Mossadegh was deposed with the help of British and American oil interests. The young Mohammad Reza Shah, who had replaced his father, granted oil-drilling rights in Iran to a consortium of eight foreign oil companies.



Mohammad Reza Shah's desire was to modernize Iran using the increasing revenues from soaring petroleum prices. In 1963, voters endorsed the Shah's **White Revolution**, which called for the following principals:

- Land Reform: agricultural lands were taken away from the landlords and given to the peasants
- Nationalization of the forests
- Sale of state-owned industries to the public
- Profit sharing for industrial workers
- Voting rights for all citizens, including women
- Forming a new corps, called the Education Army, to fight illiteracy in remote villages
- A health corps, called the Health Army, to educate villagers about basic health care
- An agricultural extension corps
- Establishment of water resources
- Urban and rural reconstruction
- Modernization of the government

The Shah's reforms, however, did not produce the expected results. Untrained peasants, deprived of their managing landlords, were unable to farm on their land and started a mass migration to the cities in search of jobs. The gap between the educated elite technocrats and the illiterate majority (60% of the population) widened. The Shah spent billions on modernizing the armed forces and brought in thousands of foreigners to train his soldiers and help modernize Iran. By 1977, discontent led to widespread demonstrations against the Shah's policies. In 1978, the Shah imposed martial law. In the meantime, Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been in exile since 1964 and was at the time living in Paris, was calling for the Shah's abdication. Finally on January 16, 1979, Mohammad Reza Shah left the country and the Pahlavi dynasty came to an end.

## 8. The Islamic Republic: 1979 to Present

Shortly after the Shah's departure, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran. On April 1, 1979 he proclaimed Iran an Islamic Republic. By December 1979, a new constitution was established and the first general election took place on May 28, 1980. The first Parliament was convened following the election.

In September 1980, Iran's western frontiers were attacked by Iraqi armed forces and the Iran-Iraq War lasted until mid-1988. In 1988, the country began its first and second **Five Year Development Plans** and gradual repair of the wartime damages. Due to a sudden boom in the population (almost doubled since the 1979 Revolution), a top priority has been to increase agricultural production and modernize the under-developed rural economy.



*Ayatollah Khomeini*



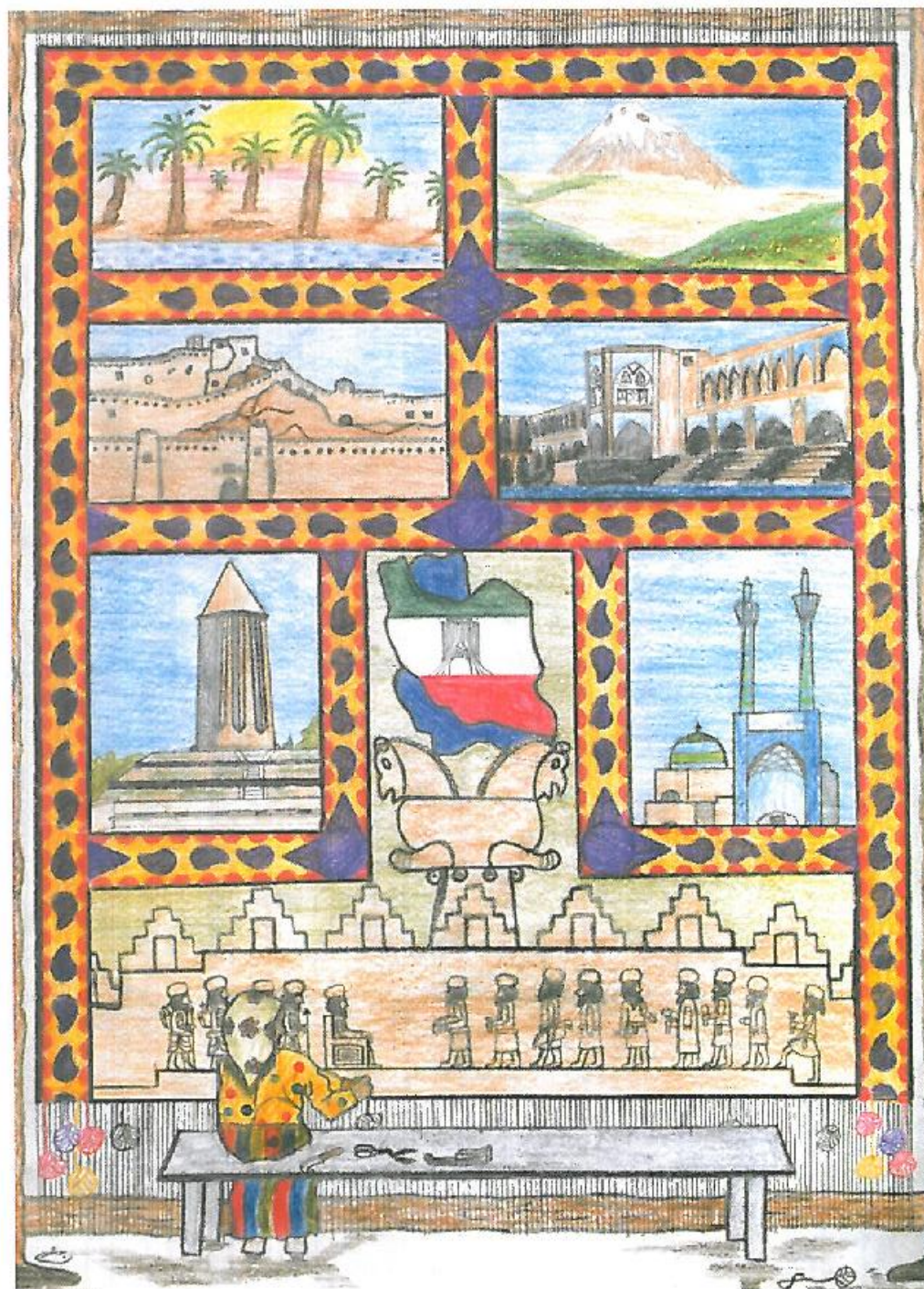
## Scenes of Persia on a Rug

- 1) Palm Groves by Karoon River (Khoozestan)
- 2) Damavand Mountain, height 5670 meters (18,603 feet)
- 3) Ark-e Bam, Bam
- 4) Khajoo Bridge, Isfahan
- 5) Tomb of Ghabooss, Gonbad Ghabooss
- 6) Map of Iran and Freedom Square Tower in the center
- 7) Jame' Mosque, Yazd
- 8) Takhte-Jamshid (Persepolis), Shiraz

*"As I wanted to show some beautiful scenes of Persia in one picture, I have used the design of a rug which is one of Iran's most noble and original forms of art."*

*Mohammad Boushehri*

*Scenes of Persia on a Rug  
by Mohammad Boushehri  
age 12, from Shiraz*





The background features a split design with a blue left half and a maroon right half. Overlaid on this is a white rectangular area containing the text. Faint, light gray Persian calligraphy is visible in the background, and several small, bright yellow decorative shapes are scattered around the white area.

3

# Persian Heritage



## Masterpieces of Persian Literature

Persian literature is one of the richest in the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that the poetic spirit is the one consistent element in the history of this country. Persian poetry and prose have played a very important role in transferring moral and spiritual values and philosophies through the generations. Even today, Persian newspapers, magazines, radio and TV programs are filled with contemporary and classical poetry.

Iranians love their rich literary heritage and revere their great poets, who have helped this nation through many hardships with the beauty and the strength of their writings.

In the words of Professor Peter Chelkowski of the Middle Eastern Studies Department at New York University:

*"It has been said that every Iranian is a poet. This exaggeration is probably due to the fact that every Iranian is familiar with the great poetical tradition of his country to a degree that is rare among peoples of other cultures...Poets are given the highest titles like Hakim, Sheikh, Moulana... The contribution made by Iran to the treasury of world literature is unique; and in Iran the poetic heritage is not a buried treasure, but one enjoyed daily, by young and old, educated and uneducated, people of every class and walk of life, each in his own way."*

There have been many masterpieces over the centuries contributing to the richness of the Persian literary treasure and going through the list requires volumes and volumes. Here we will just touch upon a few that are among the most popular and the best known, not only by Persians, but by many lovers of literature.

### Shahnameh of Ferdowsi (10th and 11th century)

Hakim Abu-al-Qasem Mansur (935 – 1020), who wrote under the name Ferdowsi, is known to be the greatest Persian epic poet. He revived Persian history and mythology as well as the Persian language. His Shah-Nameh, or Book of Kings, is a masterpiece of epic poetry containing 60,000 couplets, or "beyts", that depict stories of Persian mythology about war, patriotism, heroism and love. It glorifies mythological heroes such as Rostam and Sohrab, as well as giving true historic accounts of the Persian

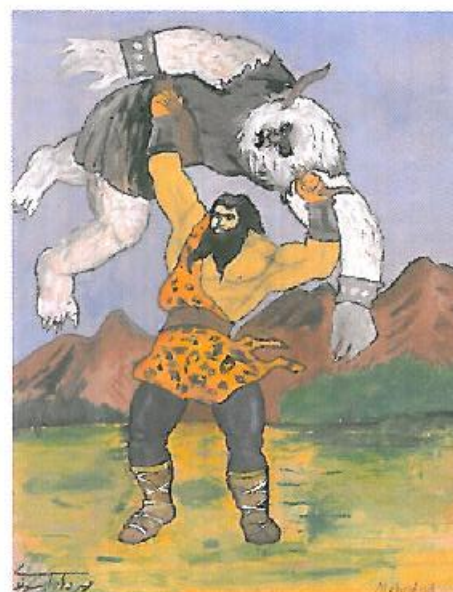


Ferdowsi

empire before the Arab invasion of Persia. In a description of Rostam, the Hercules of Persia and the legendary hero of old Persian mythology, Ferdowsi says:

*"In beauty and  
vigor of limb  
No mortal was ever  
equal to him."*

The Book of Kings remains one of the most popular and widely read pieces of Persian literature today. It is easily understood by modern Iranians because the language it was



Rostam Killing the White Giant  
by Mehrdad Issvandi  
Age 14, from Karaj





*The Tea House in Gonbad  
by Mehdi Mazloom Moghaddam  
age 8, from Mashad*

written in is similar to modern Persian. The poetry is pure and simple, yet musical and rhythmic, so it could be easily memorized by generations of Persians.

Ferdowsi is said to have done for the Persian language what Shakespeare did for the English language. His work was so popular and so widely read and memorized that, since Ferdowsi, for over a millennium, the Persian language has stayed largely the same. His epic poetry, telling the story of Iran's legendary heroes, is still read aloud today in the traditional tea rooms and coffee houses around the country as Ferdowsi himself had predicted:

*"I built a lofty castle out of verse  
that shall withstand the ravages of wind and rain  
I shall not die from now on  
For I have spread the seeds of eloquent words"*

(Translated by Goli Farrell)

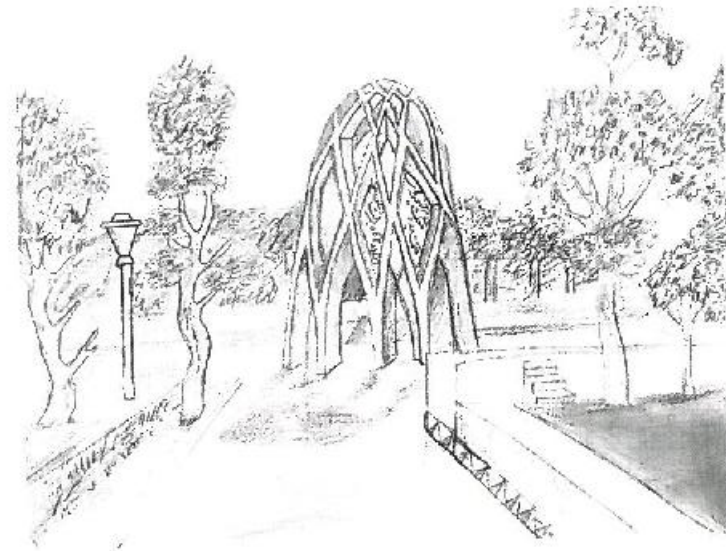
### Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: (11th and 12th centuries)

Hakim Omar Khayyam (1048 – 1122), a brilliant scholar who mastered mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, law, medicine, and history, is best known for his collection of beautifully composed poetry, the Rubaiyat. Roba'i in Persian means quatrains or a form of poetry consisting of two couplets that contain a philosophical message.

Khayyam is the best known Persian poet and philosopher in the Western world and his poetry has been translated into 40 languages. His Rubaiyat is especially well-known in English due to the immortal translation by the 19th century English poet Edward Fitzgerald. Examples of his translation are the following two roba'i:



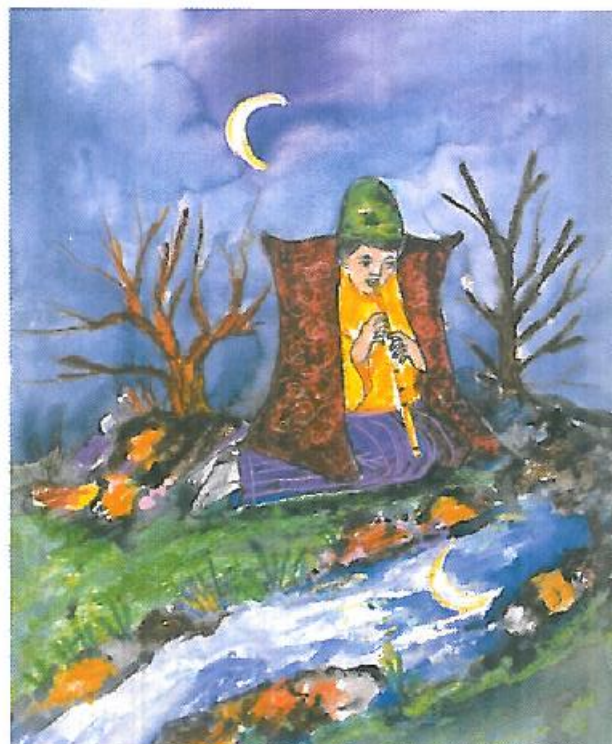
*Omar Khayyam*



*Khayyam's Tomb  
by Kasra Naftchi  
age 12, from Ardebil*



*One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,  
One Moment, of the Well of Life to taste—  
The Stars are setting and the Caravan  
Draws to the Dawn of Nothing—Oh, make haste!*



*Piper in the Night*  
by Mojtaba Danail  
age 18, from Semnan

*And this delightful Herb whose living Green  
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean  
Ah, lean upon it lightly! For who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen.<sup>2</sup>*

## Panj-Ganj of Nezami Ganjavi (13th century)

Nezami (1141 – 1209) was born in Ganjeh in Northern Azerbaijan and lived and died there. He is known as the leading master of story-telling in Persian literature. He spent 30 years of his life creating the Panj-Ganj, or "Five Treasures". Each book is composed in a different rhythm and style.

**1. Makhzan-ol-Asrar**, or "Treasure-House of Secrets", is a collection of 20 articles and thoughts on piety, spiritualism, creation of man and the universe, the transient life, welcoming the afterlife, and many other philosophical issues. Nezami's moral teachings are effectively passed on to the reader through engaging short stories written in strong and beautiful poetry.

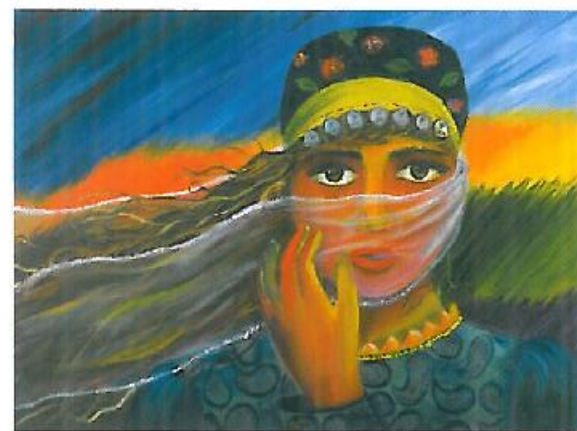
**2. Khosrow va Shirin**, is the story of the eventful love

between Khosrow, a Persian prince from the Sassanid period, and Shirin, the Queen of Armenia's niece. They fall in love before meeting each other through descriptions given by Khosrow's companion, Shahpur. The lovers begin looking for each other under Shahpur's

## پنج گنجای ایران

The Five Treasures are:

1. Makhzan-ol-Asrar
2. Khosrow va Shirin
3. Leyli va Majnoon
4. Haft-Paykar
5. Eskandar-Nameh



*Golereaze*  
by Yassi Rafia  
age 14, from Los Gatos, California



guidance. After much strain and effort, they are finally united. But a tragic end awaits the lovers. Khosrow, lying next to Shirin in bed, is killed by his son by another wife, a rival for Shirin's love. Khosrow dies painfully, drenched in his own blood, but keeps quiet in order not to awaken his beloved Shirin from her sweet sleep. The next day, Shirin lies next to Khosrow in his death chamber and, with amazing loyalty, wounds herself in the exact same place as Khosrow and dies beside him.

**3. Leyli va Majnoon** is another poetic romance with a tragic ending, similar to Romeo and Juliet, between two young lovers from rival tribes. The love begins at school between Ghase (Majnoon) and his young classmate Leyli. But the ani-

mosity and prejudices between their tribes keep the innocent lovers forever apart. Leyli is married off to an unloved husband, Ibn-e-Salam, and Ghase turns insane or "Majnoon". He seeks refuge in the wilderness and desert creatures become his companions. Nothing brings back Majnoon's sanity, not the news of his parents' death, not even the news of Ibn-e-



*Tribal Girl*  
by Fatemeh Zoobin-Paran  
age 9, from Garmsar



*Six Girl's Castle in Kerman*  
by Nona Esmaeli  
age 11, from Kerman

Salam's death. Leyli dies in despair and Majnoon, visiting her grave, sighs "Oh, my beloved" and dies.

**4. Haft-Paykar**, or "Seven-Bodies", also called Haft-Gonbad, meaning "Seven-Coupolas", is the story of the Persian King, Bahram, who was known for his pursuit of pleasure. His father, Yazdgerd, after losing all his other sons, sent Bahram



to Yemen to be brought up safely by Na'man, King of Yemen. Bahram grew up to be a pleasure-seeking young man with a passion for hunting. He particularly enjoyed hunting wild horses, called "goor-khar", and was known as Bahram-e-Goor. After Yazdgerd's death, Bahram came back to Iran to claim the throne. Legend has it that the royal crown was placed between two lions and Bahram bravely killed them both and took the crown.

He married seven princesses from seven lands and built a castle for each one. Each castle was a different color to match the colors of the day of the week. He spent each night with one princess and asked her to tell him a story. Nezami has composed seven stories in his eloquent poetry, each told by one of the princesses.

**5. Eskandar-Nameh**, or the "Book of Alexander", is the story of Alexander the Great, written in two volumes: Sharaf-Nameh, with over 6,600 verses, and Eghbal-Nameh, containing over 3,500 verses. Nezami's Alexander is not the conqueror who brought down the Persian Empire, married the Persian princess, burnt down the palaces and killed many people. Nezami's Alexander is an epic hero and a pious man who makes a pilgrimage to Mecca, speaks with religious leaders, and is an avid reader and translator. The Alexander Nezami creates is an amazing mixture of the scholar who was tutored by Aristotle and the triumphant warrior who conquered many lands.

### **Masnavi-e Ma'navi and Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi of Mowlana (Rumi) (13th century)**

Jalal-od-Din Mohammad (1207 - 1273), known as Mowlana, Mowlavi or Rumī, was born in Balkh, a town in the north-east of Iran (now in Afghanistan). He lived during a time of turmoil throughout this region. Genghis Khan and his savage Mongol armies were destroying the civilized cities of the time. Mowlavi's father, Baha-od-Din Walad, a famous theologian and spiritual leader, foreseeing the Mongol destruction, took his family to the west. He finally settled in Iconium in Asia Minor, or Rum, as it was known. This is where Mowlavi received the title "Rumi", meaning "from Rum".

On the long journey from Balkh to Rum and while in Nishapur, the 12 year old Jalal-od-Din met the great Persian Sufi poet Attar, who recognized Jalal-od-Din's greatness and predicted: "This boy will open a gate in the heart of Love". Rumi, in turn, never forgot his meeting with the author of "Mantegh-o Tair" or "The Conference of the Birds" and, in a tribute to the old master, later said of him:

*"Attar has traveled through all the seven cities of Love,  
while I live still in the corner of a narrow street"*

After his father's death, Jalal-od-Din, then 24, succeeded him as the spiritual and religious leader while continuing with his own spiritual and intellectual education. He mastered mathematics, physics, law, astronomy, Arabic and Persian languages, as well as Sufi philosophy and the study of the Koran.

Mowlavi's life changed completely, however, when he met Shams-ud-Din, or "The Sun of Religion" known as Shams-e Tabrizi. Shams was a mysteriously majestic dervish



*Mowlana (Rumi)*





Portrait of Shams-e Tabrizi  
by the master miniature  
painter, Hossein Behzad  
(1894-1968)

from Tabriz whose splendid soul shone through his shabby clothes like the sun. Meeting Shams and falling in love with his wisdom transformed Mowlavi, who in turn transformed the history of human spirituality. Mowlavi later wrote:

*"Haasel-e omram se sokhan beesh nist: khaam bodam, pokhteh shodam, sookhtam," meaning: "The gist of my life is no more than three words: I was raw, then I cooked, then I burnt."*

The result of this burning and divine love was the creation of two of the greatest masterpieces of spiritual literature, *Masnavi-e Ma'navi* and *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*.

Mowlavi created *Masnavi* over many years, whenever he got a chance and whenever he was inspired, at home, in the mosque, in the public bath, while walking, dancing or singing, during the day or night. He wrote story after story and poem after poem. The massive collection was thus created with no particular order and without any previous plan.

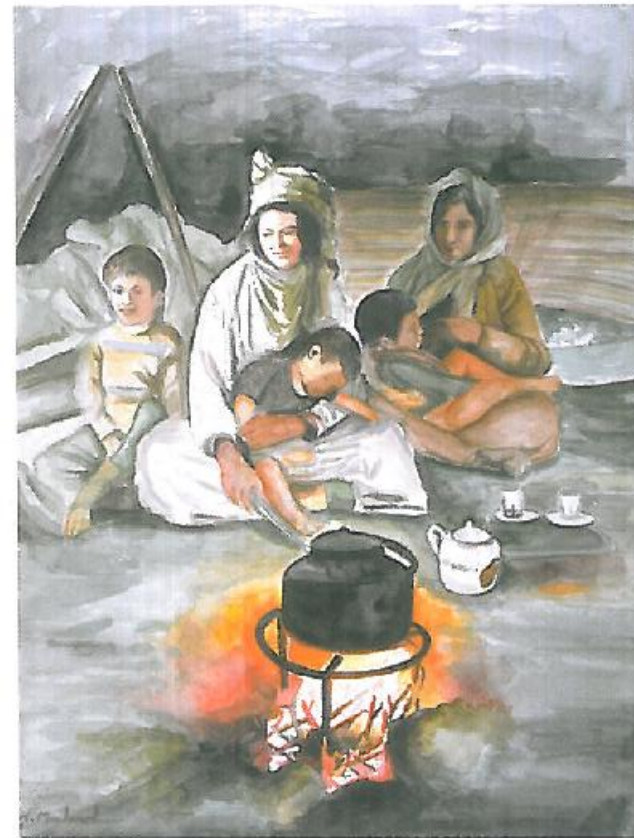
His love for nature is apparent in his poems about spring and fall, water and air, soil and seed, birds and beasts. Mowlavi sees nature as God's platform, who is apparent everywhere.

*"Come to the Spring garden," they said,  
"Its air is song; you can hear the crow."  
In my soul there lives a marvelous painter  
Who paints on each crow feather a thousand gardens."<sup>10</sup>*

His view of the soul being eternally alive comes through in this verse:

*"I burn away; laugh, my ashes are alive!  
I die a thousand times:  
My ashes dance back— A thousand new faces."<sup>11</sup>*

Mowlavi had also a high opinion of women, saying, "Woman is a ray of God, not a mere creature".



Kurdish Tribes in Western Azarbaijan  
by Amin Mardaneh  
age 17, from Ardebil

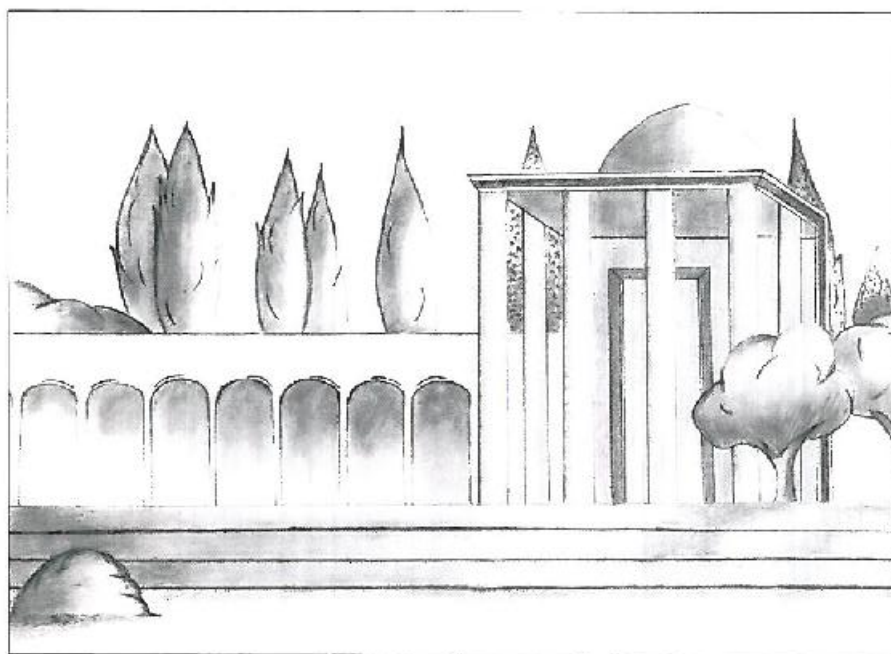


## Golestan and Boostan of Sa'di (12th and 13th Centuries)

Shaikh Sa'di (1213 – 1291), as he is called, was born in Shiraz and is known as the absolute master of the Persian language. Unlike Hafez, who hardly ever left Shiraz, Sa'di traveled most of his life through Europe, Africa, and Asia, even as far as India. However, he returned to his beloved Shiraz and died there after a long life. Although he is the author of many works, the most popular are *The Boostan*, or "The Fruit Garden", and *The Golestan*, or "The Rose Garden".



Sa'di



Sa'di's Mausoleum  
by Forough Fallahi  
age 17, from Khoozestan

The *Boostan* consists of 10 chapters of didactic verse, teaching lessons of morality and prudence in the form of poetic fables. A good example is this poem called "The Pearl":

*From the cloud there descended a droplet of rain,  
'Twas ashamed when it saw the expanse of the main,  
Saying, "Who may I be, where the sea has its run?  
If the sea has existence, I, truly, have none!"  
Since in its own eyes the drop humble appeared,  
The sky brought the work with success to a close  
And a famed royal pearl from the raindrop arose.  
Because it was humble it excellence gained;  
Patiently waiting till success was obtained."*

The *Golestan* is the best of Sa'di's works and one of the most popular of Persian classics. It is a collection of stories, each intended to illustrate some cardinal principle.

However, Sa'di is most admired for his passionate love poems, or ghazals. When Erica Jong says that "Persians invented love"<sup>3</sup> this is precisely where the invention of love starts: with the ghazals of Sa'di.



A garden in Shiraz



## Divan of Hafez (14th century)

Shams od-Din Mohammad (1320 – 1390), known as Hafez, meaning “the one who knows the Koran by heart”, is the most popular and most read poet in the history of Persian literature. He lived during a very turbulent time right after the Mongol invasion of Iran. Ironically, poetry flourished under Mongol rulers and it was this period that gave birth to masters like Hafez.

Hafez was in Shiraz when the Mongols under Tamerlane (Timur) took over the Fars province and killed Shah Mansur. The story has it that Hafez was once ordered into the presence of the new ruler and severely scolded for writing such a verse as the following:

*“For the black mole on thy  
cheek, I would give  
The cities of Samarcand  
and Bokhara.”<sup>14</sup>*

Tamerlane angrily said to Hafez, “I have gone through much trouble and, with my sword, I have destroyed the greatest kingdom on earth to add splendor to my native land and to the cities of Samarcand and Bokhara; and you would dispose of both at once for the black mole on the cheek of your beloved?” Rather than being dismayed by Tamerlane’s anger, Hafez



Hafez



Hafezieh  
by Niloufar-sadat Fasih-Zamani  
age 10, from Isafan



Reading Hafez  
by Parinaz Faghihi  
age 14, from Karaj

calmly replied, “Yes, sire, and it is by such acts of generosity that I am reduced, as you can see, to my present state of poverty!” Tamerlane smiled and blessed Hafez with royal gifts.<sup>15</sup>

His collection of over 500 pieces of “ghazal”, or lyric and love poems, known as “Divan of Hafez”, is found in almost every Iranian household. Each ghazal consists of a minimum of seven and a maximum of 15 verses or “beyts”. Hafez is popularly known as the “Tongue of the Invisible”, or “Lessan ol-ghaib”, and young and old believe he can,

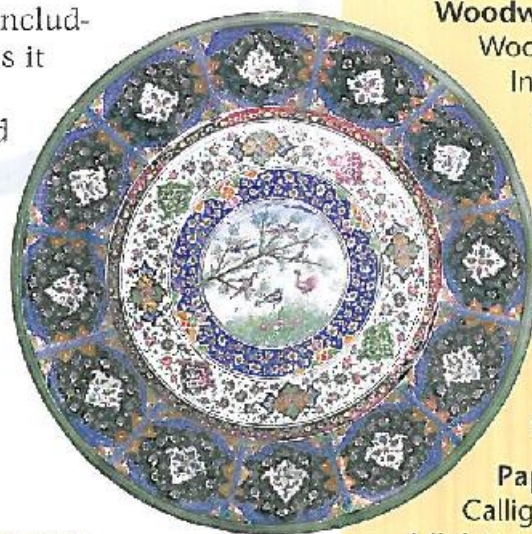
through his ghazals, give them advice on what to do about a certain situation and what to expect of the future. They often make a wish and open a page of the Divan and read the ghazal in hand to see what the “great bard of Shiraz” recommends them to do. Amazingly, many of Hafez’s poems, written over 600 years ago, still hold very true, breaking the barriers of time and history. Today, one of the most popular forms of music in Iran is listening to the poetry of Hafez sung by well known singers accompanied by classical Persian music.



## Fine Art and Handicrafts

Iranians are an art loving and artistic people. Everyday life is surrounded with works of art and handicrafts of all kinds. Beautifully combined colors and intricate designs appear on almost everything. From rugs and floor coverings to the mosaics on the walls, from teacups and saucers and table coverings to the calligraphy on book covers, all represent the love of art in everyday life.

Architecture is not included in these categories as it is a major category in itself and is represented by the grandeur of the historic monuments.



## هنرهای زیبای ایران

There are so many types of arts and crafts in Iran that to write about all of them would require a book in itself. The most visible and most popular ones, however, can be divided into five major categories based on the type of material used for their creation. You will notice in the Persian translation of these works the repetition of the word "kari", which means workmanship. These categories are:

### Metal work

Jewelry, gold (tala-kari) and silversmithing (noghreh-kari)  
Engraving and carving and fretwork (monabbat-kari) on metals  
Enamel (mina-kari)

### Woodwork

Wood carvings (kandeh-kari)  
Inlay (khatam kari)  
Fretwork (monabbat kari)

### Stonework, ceramic, and pottery

Stone carvings (sang-tarashi)  
Ceramic tiles (kashi-kari)  
Pottery (sefal-kari)

### Textiles and Weaving

Printed textiles (ghalam-kari)  
Needlepoint (suzan-doozi)  
Carpet weaving (ghali-bafi)

### Paper art

Calligraphy (khattati)  
Miniature painting (minyator)





## Metal work

Persian artisans are expert in working with metal. They use gold, silver, copper, brass and other metals to make a wide variety of items for everyday use or as decorative objects.



*Enamel Workshop*  
by Massoud Molavi  
age 11, from Isfahan

They use very simple and basic tools, such as a chisel, to create delicate engravings, or fretwork (known as *monabbat-kari*), on jewelry, lamps, candleholders, trays, boxes, cup holders, plates, flower vases, and many more items. Each is a beautiful work of art.

Another type of metalwork is the enamel painting on metal created mostly in the south, especially in Isfahan, since the time of Shah Abbas, the Safavid ruler of the early 16th century.

## Woodwork

Artisans working with wood display their art of carving, laying inlay and wood engraving on large surfaces such as room partitions, doors and windows, or on small and delicate objects such as picture frames, cigarette boxes and pens. The finest of them is the inlay work (*khatam-kari*) that demonstrates the artist's patience and dedication. *Khatam-kari* was used for centuries by Persian artisans for decorative purposes, but was further revived in the earlier part of the 20th century by the late Reza Shah Pahlavi. He hired 70 expert artisans for 3 years to finish a magnificent work of *khatam-kari* on one of the walls of the palace he was building.



*Khatam-kari Workshop*  
by Maryam Zahedi-Nejad  
age 12, from Isfahan

The tiny pieces used in *khatam-kari* are from colorful wood, bone, metal, and sometimes ivory. These are cut into very tiny triangles, which are then arranged together into sets of six contrasting colors. Each set of six is called a "shesh", which means "six" in Persian. Many sets of "shesh" are put together to create the colorful and fine design on many objects of *khatam-kari*.

Another form of woodcraft is wood carving, or "*kandeh-kari*", which is another ancient craft popular throughout the country, especially in Isfahan and Shiraz. Among objects decorated with this form of art are spoons, boxes, chess boards and chess pieces,



*The artist examining his Khatam-kari*



backgammon boards, and the "kashkool", which is a large cup suspended by a chain and carried by a dervish.

Monabat-kari, or fretwork on wood, is also used for creating intricate doors, windows, and mirror frames. Many fretwork artists still use the ancient tools of their craft. The most interesting of these tools is a combination of a metal file and a saw called "marpa." The artist first uses a drill to make a hole in the wood and then, with the larger "marpa", gets rid of the other parts of the wood according to the design he has, and finally shapes the piece with the finer "marpa".

Due to the perishable nature of wood, we do not have much evidence of this art form by the ancient Persian artisans and know about it mostly through the books that have mentioned this art form.

### **Stonework, ceramic and pottery**

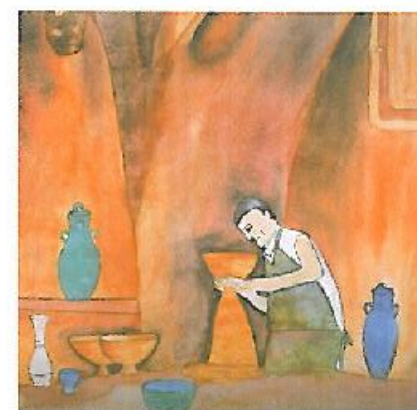
These three forms of art have, thanks to the durability of the material used, come down to us in many forms from very ancient times. The best samples of stonework are the magnificent carvings and column heads in Persepolis showing human and animal figures. Stone carving is of particular importance in bringing us some of the historic inscriptions from great kings and are the only "written" depiction of ancient times and events. Today, stone work is dedicated mostly to creating decorative vases, pots and plates, and the most important center for it is Mashad and its vicinity.



*Ceramic and Glass Works*  
by Mahboobeh Dehghani-Nejad  
age 18, from Zahedan



*Pottery Workshop in Na'in*  
by Samaneh Aboutalebi  
age 12, from Na'in



*The Art of Pottery*  
by Parissa Al-e Karam  
age 12, from Dezfool



## Weaving and Textiles

The art of weaving can be claimed as the most developed form of Persian art, as is evident from the unique beauty of the world famous Persian rugs. Ancient Persians benefited from their geographic location in the perfecting of their weaving and textile industry. The Chinese had expertise in weaving delicate silk fabric, central Asian herdsmen used wool from their herds to make carpets and floor covers, the Assyrians had knowledge and experience in making wool and linen textiles, and India cultivated cotton and used it in textiles. Centrally located in the midst of these ancient civilizations, Persians adapted the best methods from each and perfected the art.



*Sistani Women Making Thread*  
by Ommol-banin Jahantigh  
age 16, from Zahedan

Making textiles in Persia dates back as far as the stone age. Pieces of woven woolen material dating back to 6500 B.C. were found during excavations in a cave near the Caspian Sea in the 1950's. Spindles of spinning wheels dating back to 5000 B.C. have been found in primitive home sites in different parts of the Persian plateau. Carpet weaving, which later became an important industry, started in the western part of Persia in the second millenium B.C.



*Ghلام-kari Workshop*  
by Maryam Zahedi-Nejad  
age 12, from Istahan



*Ghلام-kari paints and tools*



Weaving fabric with designs on it also evolved in the western part of the country during the first millenium B.C. Later developments included using precious metals, such as gold and silver, in making clothing for the royalty and high positioned clergy.

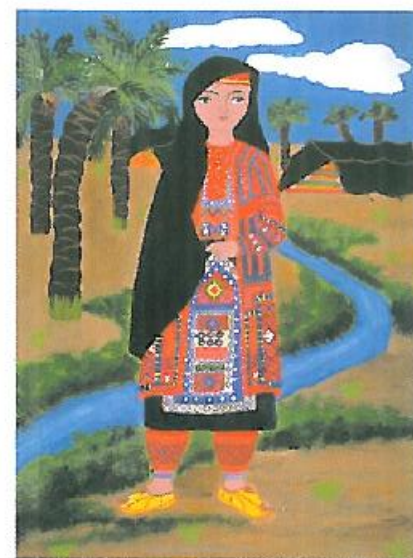
Printing on fabric, or Ghalam-kari, is another speciality of Isfahan. Needlepoint is also an example of colorful and fine handmade material that is used in many forms, from tribal robes and jackets to wallets and table covers.



*Mother Teaching her Daughter the Art of Needlepoint*  
by Sina Abili  
age 14, from Isfahan



*Turkman Girl Playing the Do-tar*  
by Mariyeh Sayyadchi  
age 14, from Gorgan



*Baluchi Woman*  
by Haniyeh Zeydabadi  
age 15, from Zahedan



*Ghalam-kari workshop in Isfahan*



## Persian Rugs and Carpets

Over the centuries, Persian carpets and rugs have developed into one of the most important and world-renowned artistic creations of Iran. Rugs and carpets are made in almost every part of the country, but certain regions and cities are better known for the beauty of their designs and the fine quality of the carpets and rugs.

### سجای ایران رستههای ایران

The four main regions of carpet making are:

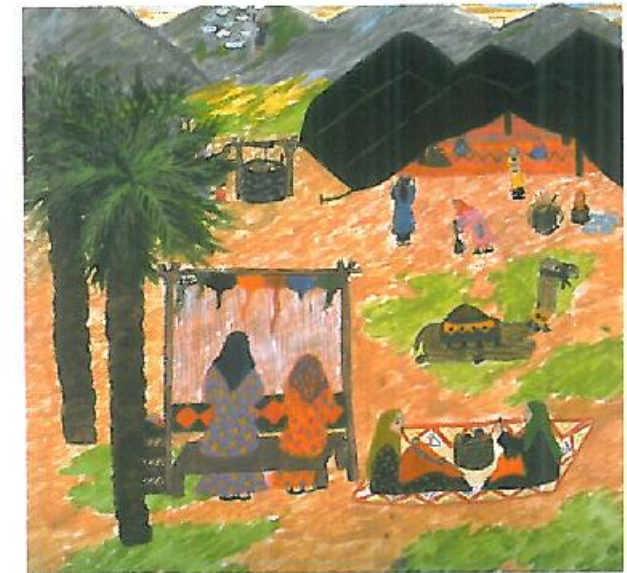
1. **Northwest** (Azarbaijan region) boasting such well-known names as **Tabriz**, **Heriz**, **Bakhshaish**.

2. **Northeast** (Khorassan region) well-known for its **Mashad** and **Birjand** rugs and the colorful tribal rugs of **Turkman**, **Baluch**, and **Quchan**.

3. **Central** region famous for its **Qom**, **Isfahan**, **Kashan**, and the **Bakhtiari** tribal rugs.

4. **Southeast** region that includes **Kerman** and the **Qashqai** tribal rugs.

*Introducing Iran  
by Azadeh Samiei  
age 10, from Fasa*



*Carpet Weaving Baluchi Tribal Women  
by Shadi Rohani  
age 13, from Zabol*



# ایران ریسامهای ایران ریسامهای ایران

As for the shape and designs of the carpets, most of them are rectangular and are designed with a main body of design inside a border. There are many designs for Persian carpets and rugs, but a few well-known ones that can be distinguished by most carpet lovers are the following:

1. **Shah-Abbasi:** consisting of curved branches and flowers in both the body and the border
2. **Afshan:** meaning "scattered", in which all the branches and flowers seem to be scattered throughout the body of the carpet. This is unlike most of the traditional designs where everything seems to be connected as if the designer never took his pen off the paper while drawing it.



3. **Botteyi:** or "paisley design", that is the curved design popular in Persia and also in India

4. **Derakhti:** meaning "tree design". Even though trees, flowers and leaves are the main theme of most Persian carpets, in case of the Derakhti design, the designer tries to keep the design as close to nature as possible.

5. **Shekar-Gah:** or "hunting field", showing wild animals being hunted by the hunters

6. **Goldani:** meaning "flower-vase design", usually shows flower vases in different sizes, and sometimes one large vase full of flowers covers the whole carpet.

7. **Mehrabi:** meaning "the Altar", where the clergy sit and say the prayers in the mosque, usually shows the decorative items of an altar such as the columns and column heads, the lamps, and the decorative flowers and leaves.

8. **Hendessi:** or "geometric design", which uses different geometric shapes with angles

9. **Ealaty:** meaning "tribal design", which is the oldest and the most genuine of the rug designs in Persia. This design is usually created by the weaver's imagination as the rug is woven and often shows daily tribal life and events. Among the most famous of these types of rugs is "Gabbeh". The story of making a Gabbeh by a young tribal girl was made into a beautiful movie of the same name around 1996, by the famous and popular Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

*Carpet Weavers  
by Anita Azizi  
age 11, from Isfahan*





1. Shah Abbasi



2. Afshan



3. Botteyi



4. Derakhti



5. Shekar-Gah



6. Goldani



7. Mehrabi



8. Hendessi



9. Ealaty



The exquisite and luxurious Persian carpets we see today have evolved over the centuries from their humble beginnings. Originally they were created by the nomadic tribes to keep them warm from the bitter cold in winter. Gradually, they began to express their lives and their surroundings through the colors and designs of the carpets. This is skillfully described by the young Iranian artist, Zahra Khoshnood, age 16, of Dezfool, in her painting called "Girl Weaving Persian Rug":

*"Persian rug and Persian carpet weavers have a great role in the history of Iran. In this painting the reason I have selected a girl weaving a rug is to show the innocence, purity, and tenderness of the soul of Persian carpet weavers. If you pay attention, you will see that the colors of her dress also exist in the colors of the rug she is weaving. I wanted to show that the Persian carpet weavers knot a piece of their soul, their happiness and their sorrow into every warp and woof of the carpet. In this image, the dark green is a symbol of the green forests of Iran; light green is taken from the fresh fields of Iran; dark blue symbolizes the roaring seas of Iran; light blue is a reflection of the turquoise blue skies of Iran; light and dark pink depict the enchanting flower gardens of Iran; yellow is the symbol of the bright sunny skies of Iran; and at the end I have tried to show, with the color purple, all the oppressions, slaps and whips this country has received throughout its long history. I think one can see all the characteristics and beauties of Iran reflected on a hand made Persian rug. I have therefore painted the image of a Persian carpet weaver hoping I could reflect a piece of my country in it."*

The ancient carpet weavers also improved their skills in making natural dyes to color the wool, created more intricate designs and improved the quality of the rugs. These skills were passed on and further developed through the generations. Gradually, the master carpet weavers began to create carpets fit for the royal palaces of Persian kings. Due to

the perishable nature of the materials used in making carpets, very few of the earlier carpets exist today.

The earliest Persian carpet remaining today dates back to the fifth century B.C., and is kept in the Hermitage Museum of Leningrad.<sup>16</sup> It was discovered by the Russian professor Rudenko in 1949, during excavations of burial mounds in Siberia. The carpet had been preserved by the ice surrounding it.

During the Sassanid Dynasty, between the third and the sixth centuries, Persian carpets reached their glory and were exported to distant lands. Arab and Mongol invasions, and the devastation that followed, brought decline in the artistic spirit of the country, including carpet weaving.



*Girl Weaving Persian Rug*  
by Zahra Khoshnood  
age 16, from Dezfool



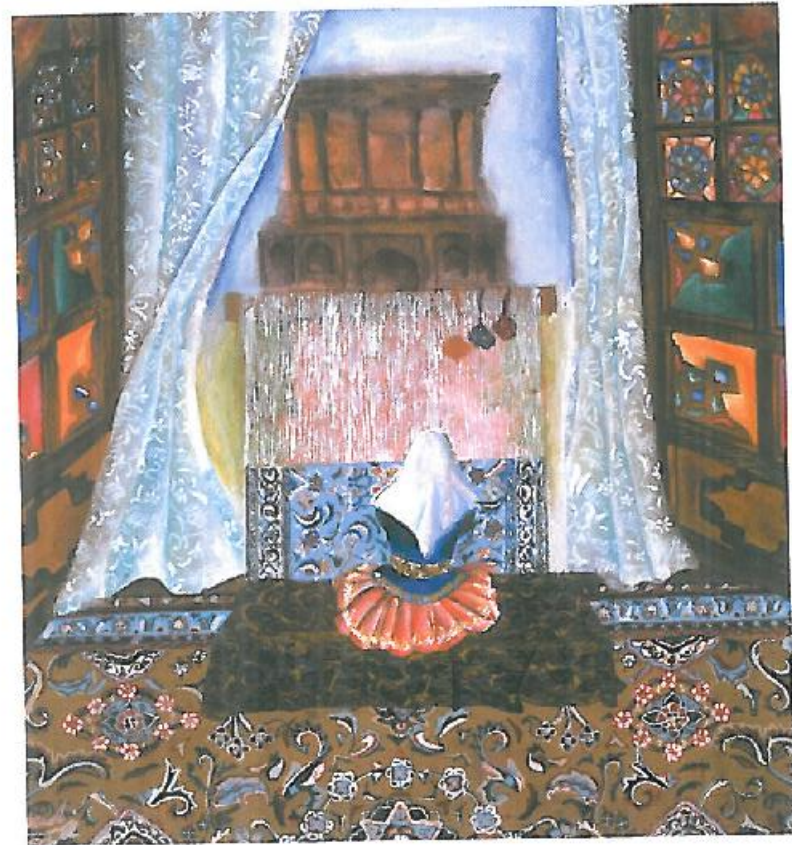


*Carpet Shop in Orumiyeh Bazaar*  
by Neda Mohabbatian  
age 14, from Orumiyeh

Fortunately, the Mongol ruler, Tamerlane, spared some artisans and sent them to his court to continue their work. Under his successors, skilled Persian artisans began to create outstanding carpets again, using the finest material money could buy.

The highest point in the history of Persian carpets came during the Safavid period in the 16th century. Art-loving Safavid kings turned this art into a national industry and brought it out of the nomadic tents into the towns and cities.

Shah Abbas established a royal carpet factory in his capital city of Isfahan and hired artisans to prepare designs to be made by master craftsmen. He also re-established the use of gold and silver threads in carpet weaving.



*Ali Ghapoo Palace and the Carpet Weaver*  
by Marziyeh Kian-Afraz  
age 17, from Isfahan





*Carpet Weaving Process*  
by Amir-Reza Samiei  
age 11, from Fasa

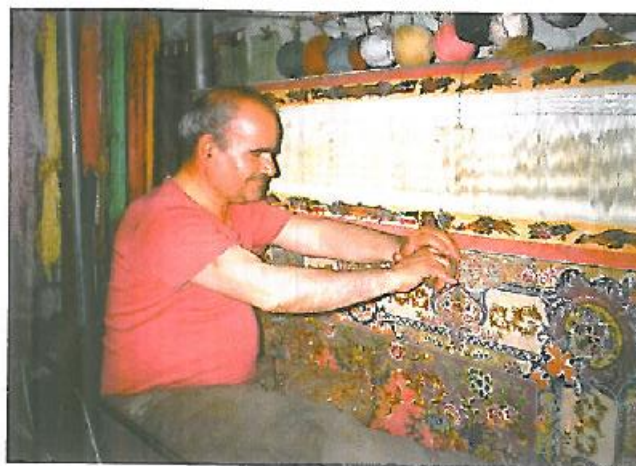
The two best-known carpets from this period date back to 1539, and come from the mosque of Ardebil in Azerbaijan. One is kept in London's Victoria and Albert Museum, and the other is at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.<sup>12</sup>

Another masterpiece is the famous coronation carpet now in the Rosenberg Castle in Copenhagen. It has gold and silver threads that give a gleaming background to the velvet-like carpet. European kings were so attracted to these gold and silver threaded carpets that they sent merchants to

acquire them. Louis XIV of France even sent his own craftsmen to Persia to learn the trade.<sup>13</sup>

During the 17th and 18th centuries, another period of decline began for the art of Persian carpets with the termination of Safavid rule. Once again, carpet weaving fell back into the hands of nomadic tribes, who had continued to weave their rather primitive carpets through the centuries.

Fortunately, in the 19th century, the government began to regulate the quality of the materials and dyes used in carpet making, and somewhat revived the craft. Today, there are still masters in Kerman, Tabriz, Kashan, Isfahan, Qom, and many other corners of Iran, who spend most of their lives creating the beautiful Persian carpets that grace our rooms.



*Tabrizi carpet weaver trimming threads  
to give the carpet a velvet-like finish*



## Paper Art

The two major types of Persian art that are presented primarily on paper are calligraphy or *khattati*, and miniature painting or *minyator*. Both art forms have been widely used in manuscripts and books. The visual appeal of a wonderful poem or a fascinating story is definitely enhanced when the text is written in calligraphy and the



A sample of Persian calligraphy, Omar Khayyam's Poem in four languages, by the master calligrapher, Maghbooleh Ganjei of Tabriz.

message is depicted through colorful and fine miniature paintings.

## Calligraphy

The art of Persian calligraphy is known to have started in about the 12th century. Later on, a new type of script was formed

from combining Naskh and Taliq scripts, and was called Naskh-Taliq, which was later shortened to Nastaliq.

Historians mention Mir-Ali Tabrizi as the founder

of Nastaliq, or at least the one who regulated this art and was the first artist to be well known for it.

Calligraphers were highly regarded and respected people and often were well-educated scholars who spent their lives recording masterpieces of Persian poetry and prose. Well-known calligraphers were often hired as court calligraphers by kings and rulers to record and decorate important documents.

Among Persians, having beautiful hand-writing is felt to be wealth for the poor, beauty for the rich and perfection for the scholar.

## Miniature Painting

Traditionally, Persian miniature painting has been used as a way to bring to life the stories of famous heroes, lovers, and kings by depicting scenes of their wars, hunting, romances, royal courts, and other events.

In older miniature paintings, the importance of the subjects in the scene was considered more important than the perspective. The artist drew the main heroes of the scene larger than the rest. For example, the king was usually painted larger than others to show his status, regardless of where in the scene he appeared. In a war scene from

Shahnameh, the hero Rostam and his famous horse, Rakhsh, appear bigger than everyone else, even though they are in the background of the scene.

In more recent miniature paintings, however, perspective is observed but the subjects are more imaginary and dream-like. This is quite apparent in the paintings of the contemporary masters such as Behzad and Farshchian.



The Shepherd  
by Arghavan Samadian  
age 17, from Tehran



## Highlights of Museums in Iran

### Tehran

#### **National Museum of Iran** (Muze-ye Iran-e Bastan):

Perhaps the most important museum to be visited in Iran, the museum houses prehistoric artifacts dating back 6000 years. The Museum building itself, completed in 1937, with an impressive entrance in the Sassanid palace style is worth the visit. The collection covers pre-Islamic and Islamic periods of Iranian civilization. Visiting hours: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1-4 p.m. everyday except Tuesdays. Address: Tehran, Imam Khomeini Ave., 30 Tir Street

**Decorative Arts Museum of Iran** (Muze-ye Honarha-ye Tazyini): Established in 1961, the collection consists of textile, inlay work, wood carving, lattice making, lacquer painting, metal work, glassware, paintings, calligraphy, and book art. Visiting hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. everyday except Mondays. Address: Tehran, Karim-Khan-e Zand Avenue.

**Glassware and Ceramic Museum** (Muze-ye Abgineh va Sofalineh): The building housing the museum is itself a beautiful example of Persian architecture and decorative art. It was built about 1913 by the then prime minister Ahmad

Qavam (Qavam-ol Saltaneh) as his private residence. He lived there until 1953, when it was sold to the Egyptian Embassy, and later was bought by Bank of Commerce and was turned into a museum in 1976.



*Abgineh Museum, Tehran*

## سجای ایران و سجای ایران

Being an ancient and vast country, every part of Iran offers objects worth seeing and studying. There are numerous museums that house collections of historic and artistic objects. A few of the museums located in some of Iran's major cities are described below. More information about these, and other museums, can be found in the book called *Iranian Museums*,<sup>19</sup> which was the source for most of the following information.

Visiting hours: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. everyday except Mondays. Address: Tehran, Jomhuri Avenue, 30th of Tir Street, No. 50.

**Museum of National Arts** (Muze-ye Honarha-ye Melli-ye Iran): The museum building dates back from the Qajar period (previously known as Howz-Khaneh, or "Fountain-Hall", of the Negarestan garden). In 1930, under Reza Shah's orders, it was turned into a museum to preserve the artistic traditions of Iran. Some of the most precious and valuable Iranian handicrafts are now preserved here. Visiting hours: 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. everyday except Fridays. Address: Tehran, Baharestan Square, Kamal-ol Molk Avenue, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

**Carpet Museum of Iran** (Muze-ye Farsh): This modern building was designed and finished in 1979 to preserve and exhibit some of the finest Persian rugs and carpets. Visiting hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. everyday except Mondays. Address: Tehran, Kargar-e Shomali Avenue, next to Laleh Park.

**Reza Abbasi Museum** (Muze-ye Reza Abbasi): Named after the famous painter of the Safavid period, Reza Abbasi, the collection in this museum covers Iranian art and history from 6000 B.C. to the 20th century. Visiting hours: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 to 4 p.m. everyday except Mondays. Address: Tehran, Shari'ati Avenue, Pol-e (Bridge) Seyyed Khandan.



**Golestan Palace Museum** (Muze-ye Kakh Golestan): The palace building, an important example of Iranian architecture, dates back to the time of Safavid Shah Abbas I. It consists of a museum, an elaborate entrance hall, a grand mirror hall and a crystal hall. On display are a few examples of paintings by the well-known Qajar period painter, Kamal-ol Molk. Address: Tehran, 15 Khordad Square.

**Ethnological Museum:** Built in 1937 by order of Reza Shah, and now located at the Golestan Palace complex, this museum offers excellent insight into the life and customs of the early Persian people. Visiting hours: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. everyday except Thursdays and Fridays. Address: Tehran, 15-Khordad Square, Golestan Palace complex.

**Niavaran Palace Museum** (Muze-ye Kakh-e Niavaran): This complex of palaces was previously the residence of Qajar and Pahlavi kings. Some date back a 100 years and some were built more recently during the Pahlavi period. They were all turned into museums after the Islamic Revolution. Visiting hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. everyday. Address: Niavaran, Niavaran Palace.

**Sahebqaraniyeh Palace Museum** (Muze-ye Kakh-e Sahebqaraniyeh): Located within the Niavaran Palace complex, this palace was built during the Qajar period and dates back to the 19th century. It has unique architectural features, including the Korsi-khaneh (the Throne Hall) and the Howz-khaneh (the Pond Hall) and several halls decorated with paintings and precious objects. The most famous halls are the Jahan-Nama Hall and the Mirror Hall. Address: Niavaran, next to Kakh-e Niavaran.

**Sa'd-Abad Palace Museum** (Muze-ye Kakh-e Sa'd-Abad): This complex, built on 1,012 acres of land north of Tehran, has 18 palaces which were used as the summer houses of the late Shah and his relatives. After the revolution, seven of the palaces were turned into public museums. Among these are the White Palace, The Queen Mother's Palace, Shahvand Palace, Shahram Palace, Shahnaz Palace, and the Fine Arts

Museum. Visiting hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. everyday. Address: Tajrish Square, Sa'd Abad.

**Museum of National Jewels** (Muze-ye Javaherat-e Melli): This precious collection of crown jewels with unmatched beauty and value was transferred to the Central Bank in Tehran and is part of the national treasure. Visiting hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3 to 5 p.m. Address: Tehran, Ferdowsi Avenue.

## Tabriz

**Tabriz Museum:** built in 1957, this museum has three interesting sections:

1. **Ethnological section**, representing people of Iran, their characteristics and their costumes.
2. **Archeological section**, showing objects dating back to the fourth millennium B.C. There are coins, weapons, decorative objects, domestic utensils and tile works that were excavated in different parts of Azarbaijan.
3. **History of the Constitution section**, containing photographs and documents from the Constitutional Revolution of Iran, in the early 20th Century, under Sattar-Khan and Bagher-Khan, the revolutionary heroes of Azarbaijan. Visiting hours: 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. everyday. Address: Tabriz, Imam Khomeini Avenue, next to the Blue Mosque.

## Isfahan

**Chehel-Sotun Palace Museum:** The name Chehel-Sotun means "40 Columns", which comes from the 20 columns of the portico that are reflected in the large pool in front of the building. The palace dates back to the 16th century, during the reigns of Shah Abbas I and II of the Safavid Dynasty. The architecture is an excellent example of the Safavid period and the halls are decorated with frescoes, mirror mosaics, golden ceilings, and plaster moldings.



**Armenian Museum**

(Muze-ye Aramanch): Vank Church, the Armenian church in the Jolfa area of Isfahan, was built in 1605 on the ruins of the previous church. In 1905, a two-story museum was also built to preserve the historic objects belonging to the Armenian population. The architecture of the building is a combination of Eastern and Western influences. The exterior building has distinct Persian characteristics while the interior murals, depicting the life of Jesus Christ, reflects the Italian Renaissance influence.



*Vank Church, Jolfa, Isfahan*

**Shiraz**

**Persepolis Museum** (Muze-ye Takht-e Jamshid): Persepolis Museum, once Xerxes' main harem, is the oldest structure in the country dedicated to housing a museum. It was restored to its original state in 1932, and opened as a museum in 1937. The museum exhibits prehistoric, Achaemenian, and Islamic period artifacts that were mostly excavated on the site of Persepolis and in the ancient city of Estakhr. Visiting hours: 7:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 to 7:00 p.m. every day. Address: Marvdasht, Takht-e Jamshid.

**Pars Museum** (Muze-ye Pars): This small, octagonal-shaped, graceful building was originally built as a residence for Karim-Khan Zand of the Zandiyeh dynasty, where he received guests and foreign visitors. Visiting hours: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. everyday except Fridays. Address: Pars Museum, Shiraz.

**Mashad**

**Naderi Garden Museum** (Muze-ye Naderi): This monument, located next to Nader Shah's mausoleum, was built around 1960, in memory of the great king, Nader Shah-e Afshar. Born in 1688, Nader Shah, known as the Napoleon of Persia, was the most successful warrior Persia has ever produced. He first served the declining Safavid kings, but in 1736, crowned himself as the shah. He succeeded in defeating the Afghans and the Ottomans, besieging Baghdad, and conquering Transcaucasia. Visiting hours: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. everyday except Fridays. Address: Mashad, Naderi Crossroad.

**Ferdowsi Museum:** Located in the town of Toos, near Mashad, the museum is a part of the Ferdowsi Mausoleum. There are many famous verses of Shahnameh, Ferdowsi's masterpiece, carved on the walls of the mausoleum. The museum houses archeological and ethnological collections from different regions of Khorasan state.

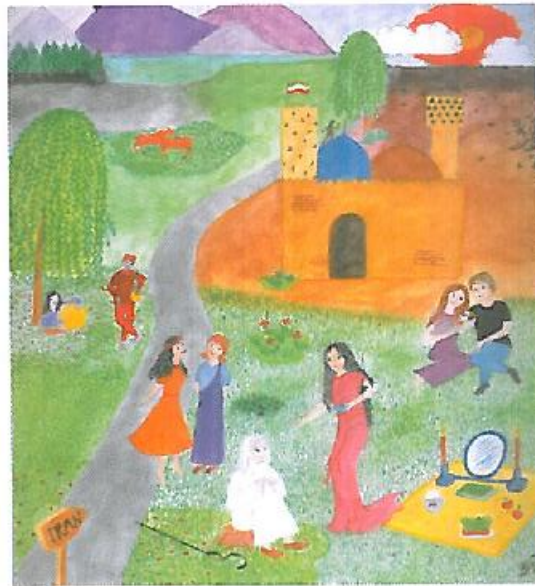
**Hamadan**

**Avicenna Museum** (Muze-ye Bu-Ali Sina): Built in 1941, on the former site of the Avicenna Mausoleum, this tower-shaped tomb honors Avicenna, the great scientist, philosopher, mathematician, and writer. Besides archaeological and ethnological items, Avicenna's books are on display in the museum. Aref Qazvini, the great Iranian poet, is also buried here. Visiting hours: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. everyday. Address: Hamadan, Bu-Ali Avenue.



## Traditions, Festivities and Ceremonies

Ancient Persians, primarily farmers and herdsmen, had several festivities throughout the year to celebrate different aspects of nature. The most important of these festivities was the Persian New Year or Noe-Rooz. Still celebrated today, Noe-Rooz which means "New Day", starts with the first day of spring in celebration of nature's rebirth.



*Beauties of Iran*  
Shervin Ostovar  
age 15, from Karaj

### Noc-Rooz or the Persian New Year

Noe-Rooz is by far the biggest Persian festivity and is celebrated during the last five days of the old year and the first 13 days of the new year. As it is a national event, and not a religious occasion, Noe-Rooz is observed by all Iranians, regardless of their background or religious beliefs. Noe-Rooz has been celebrated throughout Iran's history. Each generation has tried to keep it alive and authentic, to celebrate it with more splendor, and to pass on to the next generation the secrets and mysteries of this cultural heritage.

Ancient Persians counted the year to be 360 days and each month had 30 days. The last 5 extra days were counted as part of the Noe-Rooz festival. They believed that their ancestors

descended to earth during this time to celebrate nature's rebirth and to bring happiness to their living families. It was with this belief that every Iranian household went through a complete spring cleaning starting almost a month prior to Noe-Rooz. All the silverware was polished, rugs and curtains were washed, windows were cleaned and colorful violets, pansies, and hyacinths were planted in the garden. Ladies of the house prepared a variety of delicious sweets. Everyone got brand new clothes from head to toe to complete the sense of freshness in the air and revival of life everywhere, and above all, to prepare for the welcoming of the ancestors.



*Dezfooli Women Making Kaloocheh for Noe-Rooz*  
by Nadjmeh Sheykh  
age 18, from Zahedan



### ■ Noe-Rooz Table

Persians welcome Noe-Rooz each spring by preparing the traditional Noe-Rooz table that includes the Haft Seen, or the "Seven S's". Haft Seen consists of at least seven items starting with the letter "S" in Persian. They symbolize life, health, happiness, and prosperity.

The Persian New Year begins with the very moment of the spring equinox, or Tahveel-e-Saal, meaning "the delivery of the year". A few hours before Tahveel, regardless of the time of day or night it may be, all members of the family wash up thoroughly and put on their brand new clothes and sit around the Noe-Rooz table waiting for the Tahveel and arrival of the New Year. These days radio and television stations broadcast special programs that include pre-Tahveel prayers by religious leaders and lectures by dignitaries right after the Tahveel. Children are encouraged to smile and be happy and think good thoughts as the ancient belief is that "What ever you do and think at these moments will remain with you for the rest of the year!" Candles burn on the Noe-Rooz table to brighten the beautiful arrangement.



*Shopping for Noe-Rooz at Bazaar-e Behjat Abad,  
Tehran's famous produce market*



*Haft Seen  
by Zahra Khoshnood  
age 16, from Dezfool*

In addition to the Haft Seen arrangement, the Noe-Rooz table is decorated with live gold fish (samak) swimming in a bowl of water and giving a "lively" feeling to the arrangement, one or more potted hyacinths (sonbol) giving out a sweet fragrance, coin (sekkeh) usually in gold or silver to bring wealth and prosperity to the family, and wild rue (seband) traditionally burned on fire in many Iranian households to keep out mishaps or the bad eye.

The Noe-Rooz table is further beautified with a large mirror, burning candles, colorful flowers, fresh fruits, home made sweets such as baklava, colored eggs, the blossoms and leaves of bitter orange (narenj) floating on water in a beautiful bowl, and last but not least, a volume of the holy Koran in Moslem households. These days, some people include framed pictures of absent family members to feel their presence during Tahveel.



## Other Noe-Rooz Related Traditions

### ■ Haji Firooz

Haji Firooz is the official announcer of the approaching Noe-Rooz. About a month before the new year, small musical bands of three or four men, accompanied by a singing and dancing Haji Firooz start going around neighborhoods every-day to announce the imminent arrival of Noe-Rooz. Haji Firooz is dressed in a red satin outfit with a cone shaped red hat and funny shoes similar to those of Aladdin's. He paints his face and hands charcoal black to disguise his identity, and dances to

the music, singing songs about Noe-Rooz, and then goes around with a bowl to gather donations from the audience.

The appearance of Haji Firooz before Noe-Rooz has its roots in the ancient Persian tradition of the Mir-e-Noe-Rooz, or "the Commander of Noe-Rooz", who was selected by the king, and went around announcing the approaching Noe-Rooz and the time of festivity.

*Haji Firooz*



## Haft Seen, or the Seven S's

**Seeb** (apple): symbolizing health and nature's beauty and fresh aroma

**Sabzeh** (sprouted wheat or lentil seeds): as a symbol of growth and prosperity visible through the fields beginning to turn green where seeds germinate and grow

**Samanu** (a naturally sweet paste, similar to halvah, made from wheat sprouts): A symbol of birth and reproduction, samanu is one of the most famous food items on the Haft Seen table and has acquired an almost holy status. It takes a long time to prepare and some people vow to make and distribute it every Noe-Rooz if an illness in the family is cured. "Samanu Pazan", or "samanu cooking ceremony", is in itself a very



*Noe-Rooz table*

interesting ritual. Several people gather around the large pot boiling slowly over a fire, taking turns to mix the combination of water and germinated wheat, and saying prayers for several hours until all the liquid is evaporated and the mixture turns into a sweet paste.

**Senjed** (dry and slightly sweet berry of the sorb tree): believed to symbolize the protection and the shade a tree provides in nature

**Serkeh** (vinegar): a common seasoning for food, and a popular preservative for relishes made with vegetables and fruits, vinegar is believed to have replaced wine on the Noe-Rooz table after Islam was introduced to Iran, since alcohol is prohibited in Islam

**Sumagh** (a spice): a tangy and sour tasting, grainy spice of a dark red color used to flavor Kabob and other meat preparations, sumagh symbolizes good flavor and taste

**Seer** (garlic): to eliminate illnesses of the old year and bring health to the family



### ■ Deed-o-Bazdeed

After celebrating the Tahveel at home with the immediate family and giving gifts of cash or coins to the children and



*Deed-o-Bazdeed on First Day of Noe-Rooz*  
by Niloufar Shams-Talati  
age 11, from Tehran

youngsters, the essence of the New Year celebration begins. This is called Deed-o-Bazdeed, meaning "visiting and revisiting". On the first day of Noe-Rooz, all of the older relatives and friends are visited by younger ones. Then from the second day until the 12th day,

everyone else begins visiting each other until all the relatives and friends have been to each other's houses. During the visiting, which sometimes is very brief, visitors are served tea, sweets, a mixture of dry fruits and nuts, and fresh fruits of the season.

The Noe-Rooz holiday is a time of joy and happiness, particularly for children. They have two weeks off from school, are proudly wearing their brand new clothes and shiny shoes, receive gifts (usually fresh bills with denominations depending on their age), go everywhere with the adults for Deed-o-Bazdeed, and get to eat a lot of sweets and candy. It is because of this atmosphere of joy in the air and the renewal of family ties and old friendships that every Iranian child grows up to love and cherish the Noe-Rooz holiday. It is the one strong bonding string that has kept together hundreds of generations of Persians like the pearls on a necklace.

### ■ Chahar Shanbeh Souri

*Chahar Shanbeh* means "Wednesday", and *Souri* means "feasting". On the eve of the last Wednesday of the year (Tuesday night), Chahar Shanbeh Souri is celebrated. Several events take place from early evening until long after dark, and are somewhat similar to Halloween.

**Ajil Chahar Shanbeh Souri:** A mixture of dried fruits and nuts, including raisins, dried mulberries, white figs, apricots, roasted chick peas, pistachios, almonds, hazelnuts, and walnuts. This mixture is also called Ajil Moshkel Gosha, meaning "problem solving nuts", and is given away, hoping that problems go away and good wishes come true. The Ajil is later placed on the Noe-Rooz table and then served to all the guests who come for Deed-o-Bazdeed.

**Gashogh Zani, or "Sounding of the Spoon":** A fun tradition similar to trick-or-treating on Halloween. Usually the younger boys in the neighborhood wear a long veil (or chador) covering their face and body pretending to be a woman, and carry a metal bowl and a spoon (Gashogh). They then go door to door and start beating the spoon against the bowl in the hopes of getting some Ajil, and if very lucky, to get a glimpse of the neighborhood girls, and perhaps select their future brides!

**Jumping Over Fire:** This is the highlight of the Chahar Shanbeh Souri festivity. In each neighborhood, bundles of dry brush and thistle



*Chahar-Shanbeh Souri*  
by Mina Rezaii  
age 10, from Boraazjan



are gathered from nearby hills (or bought from street peddlers) to make small piles on the street or in the front yards. After night-fall, people light them up and start jumping over the small fires singing:

*Zardi-ye man az toe      Sorkhi-ye toe az man*

meaning "take from me my yellow and pale complexion and give me your red and healthy glow". In the background, you hear the sound of fire crackers everywhere that continue well into the night.

### ■ Sizdah Bedar

Sizdah-Bedar, meaning "Away With Thirteen", is the last part of the Noe-Rooz celebration and the official ending of the holidays. The thirteenth day of the new year is considered unlucky, and to get rid of the bad fortune it may bring, everyone goes outdoors for a picnic and to spend the day outside their homes. All the fields and parks outside of



*Sizdah-bedar*  
by Zeynab Naemi  
age 13, from Tehran

towns and villages are filled with families who prepare elaborate food and picnic outdoors. They play music, sing and dance and children run around and play games.

Another tradition on this day is to take along, from the Haft Seen table, the Sabzeh or the sprouted wheat and lentil (which by now have grown quite tall) and throw them in the fields. And a secret tradition observed by unmarried young girls is to tie grass together, wishing to be married soon, and singing silently:

*Saleh degar      Khoone-ye shohar      Bacheh Baghal*

meaning "Next year, in my husband's house, with a baby in my arms!".



*Wedding in Jahrom*  
by Fatemeh Aghili  
age 14, from Jahrom



## Wedding and Marriage Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is basically celebrated the same way among all the traditional families, but the details are different depending on the part of the country, religious and ethnic background, age and situation of the bride and groom, and the family wealth. In general, the marriage of two people takes place in two to four stages:

1. *Marriage Proposal (Khastegari)*
2. *Engagement (Namzadi)*
3. *Wedding Ceremony (Aghd Konan)*
4. *Wedding Reception (Jashn-e Aroossi)*

Details of each ceremony can be quite different. For example, tribal weddings are very different from those in

towns and villages, and each tribe's traditions can be unique and different from other tribes. The following description is an overview of the ceremonies observed by most city dwelling Iranians.

### ■ Marriage Proposal (Khastegari):

The whole process begins with Khastegari, which is when the parents of the future groom, together with other elders, such as the groom's uncle and aunt, visit the future bride's parents and elders to officially propose to her.

In more traditional families, girls and boys do not date or go out together alone. Most of the time, they would see each other in family gatherings or parties at friends' houses while accompanied by other family members. If a boy likes a girl, he asks his parents for permission to propose to her parents. If they feel it is a good match, they contact the girl's family to ask for an appointment for Khastegari.

During this initial meeting, if the two families already know each other well and agree on the marriage, they start discussing the details right away. If, on the other hand, the bride and groom's families are not familiar with each other, they basically get acquainted, and use a second session to "talk shop" and get into details. If the initial discussions are successful, they make arrangements for a second meeting to decide who does what and set the wedding date.

Traditionally, it was at this point that they would discuss what the groom would commit to as Mahriyeh, which was usually a valuable asset such as cash, gold coins, or a piece of property, depending on the groom's financial status. Today, Mahriyeh is symbolic and generally consists of a volume of the Koran and some crystal sugar. Mahriyeh is payable by the groom to the bride at any time during the marriage that she chooses to ask for it.

The two families will also talk about what the bride's parents will give the couple in Jahiziyeh, or dowry, which ranges from furniture, rugs and appliances to china sets and linen, depending on what the girl's family can afford.



*Baluchi Wedding*  
by Somayeh Ghaljaji  
Age 12, from Zahedan



## سجای ایران رسای سهای ایران

The main item on the Sofreh-ye Aghd is a large free standing mirror placed at the top of the Sofreh, flanked by two large candle stands. The mirror, with the reflection of the image of the bride and groom in it, symbolizes the transformation of two bodies into one soul. The candles represent warm love and brightness in their new life. In the background, there are one or more baskets of beautiful flower arrangements. In front of the mirror are the following items, each in a decorative container:

**Sepand** (wild rue, a woody herb with strong scent when burnt) which is burning on hot coal inside a small brazier to keep away bad omens.

**Nabaat** (crystal sugar often made in the shape of a bowl) to bring sweetness to the couple's life.

**Noghl** (small white candies similar to sugar-plum) offered to all the guests after the ceremony to bring sweetness to them. Also, as soon as the ceremony is over, the guests shower the bride and groom with the Noghl, together with gold or silver coins, wishing them a sweet and prosperous life.

**Assal** (honey) for the bride and groom to feed each other (with their fingers!) after the ceremony for a sweet beginning for their new life together.

**Sangak** a flat dark bread about half an inch thick and shaped as a long triangle decorated with calligraphy writing of "Mobarak Baad", meaning "congratulations".

**Naan-o-Panear-o-Sabzi** (bread, cheese, and fresh herbs) to be served to the guests after the ceremony.

**Tokhmeh Morgh** (colored eggs) to bring fertility to the couple.

**The Holy Koran**, usually a beautiful volume placed in front of the bride and groom to read during the ceremony and to keep in their new home. In the olden days, before the time of birth certificates, names and birth dates of all the children born to the couple were noted inside the back cover of this Koran by their father, so it had extra family value.



*Sofreh-ye Aghd*

The idea of Khastegari is to take the burden of important lifelong decisions from the shoulders of the young, inexperienced, and often blinded-by-love boys and girls. It allows the more experienced and impartial adults to discuss and decide on the terms that are in the best interest of both sides. In the olden days, the bride and groom never met until the wedding ceremony. Sometimes, the only knowledge of each other they had was through the description of an intermediary, such as an aunt who had seen the girl in the public bath house and could describe her to the groom, or an uncle who had seen the boy at the mosque and could describe him to the future bride.

### ■ Engagement (Namzadi):

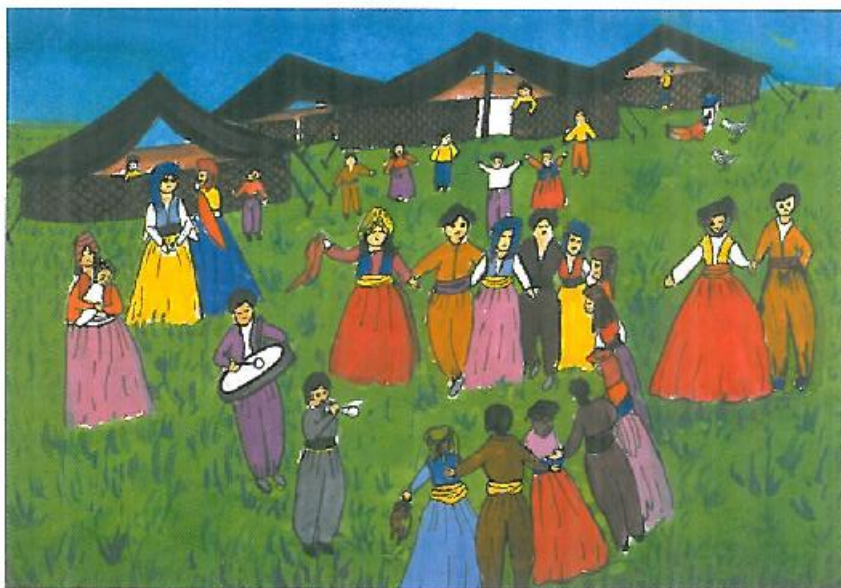
Once the terms are agreed upon, the boy and girl are engaged during the Namzadi ceremony that usually takes place at the house of the bride's parents. Today, this is the time when the engaged couple is permitted to "date", or go out alone, and get to know each other better. However, no coupling should take place until after the wedding is complete. Otherwise, it will bring disgrace to the girl, especially if the engagement breaks up. During the Namzadi period, adults in both families get busy with preparations for the wedding ceremony, or Aghd Konan, and the reception, or Jashn-e Aroosi. Usually, the bride's family is respon-

sible for the Aghd Konan ceremony, which takes place in their house, and the groom's family takes care of the reception, which can be at a hotel, club or in a large house.

### ■ Wedding Ceremony (Aghd Konan):

The highlight of the ceremonies is the Aghd Konan, which is usually held in the afternoon before sunset. The bride's mother and family prepare the Sofreh-ye Aghd, which is an arrangement of symbolic items laid on a piece of large white





*Tribal Wedding*  
by Parham Sohli  
age 12, from Bandar Dair

satin or similar material (the Sofreh) spread on the floor. During the wedding ceremony and the exchange of vows the bride and groom sit at the head of the Sofreh, on the floor or on a low bench. All the guests surround the Sofreh-ye Aghd and the bride and groom while the religious person, who conducts the ceremony, sits nearby facing the bride and the groom.

During the ceremony, several happily married women stand behind the bride and groom and hold a rectangular piece of white satin or other fine material above their heads while one of them rubs two pieces of sugar cones together, showering the new couple with sweetness for the life ahead of them. The idea is to also transfer the happiness of the married women to the new bride. As soon as the Aghd Konan is finished, the bride and groom receive

gifts such as jewelry, watches, gold coins, and money from close family and friends.

#### ■ Wedding Reception (Jashn-e Aroossi):

The wedding reception takes place either in the evening after the wedding day, or on another evening. It is similar to any western-style party with many guests, lots of food, good music and dancing all night! The new couple is taken to the Hejleh, or the bridal chamber, at the end of the night.



*Baluchi Wedding in Zabol*  
by Samaneh Moezzi  
age 15, from Zahedan



## Persian Eating

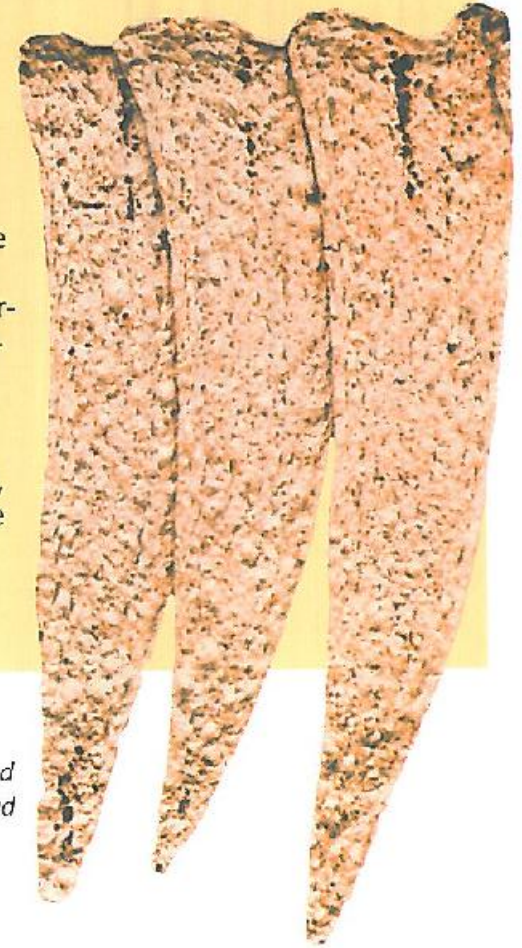
Persians are a food-loving nation and spend a good deal of time preparing delicious recipes. The main drink is black tea served hot in small see-through glasses in cup holders or on saucers with sugar cubes on the side (Iranians generally like to put the sugar cube in their mouth and drink the tea through it, rather than sweetening their tea with it). In most houses, the "samavar" is boiling all day long and the tea is ready whenever a guest walks in for a visit.



*Sangak Bread Bakery  
by Mahsa Varzandeh  
age 7, from Tehran*

## سنگاهی ایران

A specialty in Iran is fresh bread that comes in a variety of flavors and textures, but mostly flat, like the lavash bread. The soft, flat bread is often used to roll different food into it to make a "loghmeh", similar to a small burrito. There are several bakeries in each neighborhood and people often buy their bread fresh out of the oven two or three times a day. Lunch is the main meal, and breakfast and dinner are usually the lighter meals, unless there is a dinner party.



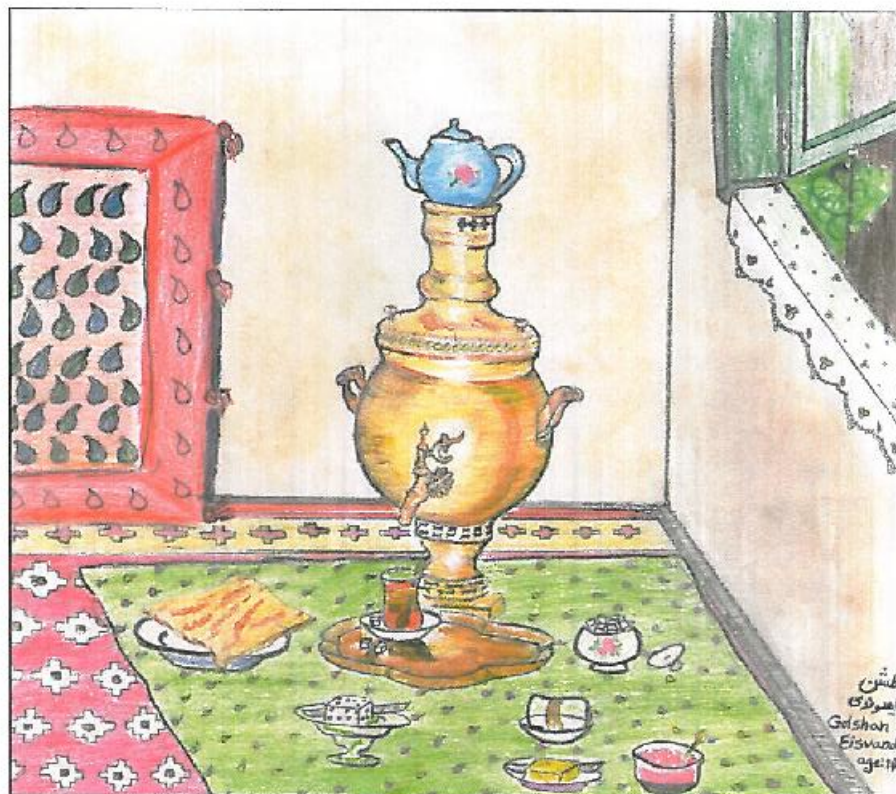
*Freshly baked  
sangak bread*





**Breakfast (Sobhaneh):**

Sobhaneh typically consists of hot tea with sugar, fresh bread, and white Feta cheese. For growing children, or for a fancier breakfast, they would serve also butter, jam, honey, boiled eggs and hot milk.



*Breakfast in Iran*  
by Golshan Issvandi  
age 17, from Karaj

**Lunch (Nahar):**

Nahar is usually a rice dish served with a meat and vegetable combination. The rice may be served white, called Chelo, with just a little saffron on top to add color, flavor and aroma. Chelo is usually accompanied with a Khoresh, a meat and vegetable combination in a sauce. There are many varieties of Khoresh prepared with different types of meats and vegetables, depending on the season and the availability of fresh vegetables needed for the recipe.

Another type of rice preparation is called Pollo, which is meat, vegetables and spices mixed inside rice in a special order. Saffron is added to almost every Pollo dish. Other fine spices commonly used in Persian cooking are cinnamon, cumin, cardamom, turmeric, ginger, and sumagh.

**Dinner (Shaam):**

Shaam is usually light and often is a form of vegetable soup called Aash. Many varieties of Aash are prepared with meat or chicken broth and vegetables and herbs such as parsley, spinach, Persian chives called Tareh, cilantro, green onions, and depending on the type of Aash, basil or tarragon. The Aash is thickened a little by adding rice or other cereals and further energized with a variety of beans.

Two items that accompany Persian food almost daily are Sabzi Khordan (or fresh herbs) and Maast (yogurt). Sabzi Khordan is a combination of radishes and green onions plus a variety of fresh herbs such as basil, mint, tarragon, and Shahi (similar to water cross). Yogurt is served plain, to be added to different dishes as seasoning or to be taken with some jam or honey as dessert.



## Persian Calendar

The Persian year is based on a solar calendar and changes of the earth in relation to the sun. It is a very well organized and easy-to-follow calendar. The four seasons, Bahar (spring), Tabestan (summer), Pa'ease (autumn), and Zemestan (winter), mark the main divisions of the year. The first six months of the year are 31 days each, the next five months are 30 days each, and the last month is 29 days, except for leap years, when it is 30 days. Although Persian history goes back over 25 centuries, the calendar year is now only 1380. This is due to the change that was made when Islam came to Iran. The

Islamic calendar dates back 14 centuries and its origin is the year of prophet Mohammad's emigration (or hijrat) from Mecca to Medina.

Ancient Persians had a name for each day of the year as well. Sometimes the name of the day was the same as the name of one of the months. The fifth day of each month was called Esfand, the sixth day was Khordad, and the thirteenth day was named Tir. The months are still called by their ancient names that have roots in Zoroastrian divinities.

### Spring (Bahar)

بهار

Farvardin	فردین	(March 21-April 21)
Ordibehesht	اردیبهشت	(April 21-May 21)
Khordad	خرداد	(May 21-June 21)

### Summer (Tabestan)

تابستان

Tir	تیر	(June 21-July 21)
Mordad	مرداد	(July 21-August 21)
Shahrivar	شهریور	(August 21-September 21)

### Autumn (Pa'ease)

پاییز

Mehr	مهر	(September 21-October 21)
Aban	آبان	(October 21-November 21)
Azar	آذر	(November 21-December 21)

### Winter (Zemestan)

زمستان

Dey	دی	(December 21-January 21)
Bahman	بهمن	(January 21-February 21)
Esfand	اسفند	(February 21-March 21)



## Spring (Bahar) بهار



*Birds on a Tree*  
by Roham Salehi-pour  
age 9, from Tehran

## Autumn (Pa'ease) پاییز



*Waterfall in Shahr-e-Kord*  
by Mehrdad Issvandi  
age 14, from Karaj

## Summer (Tabestan) تابستان



*The Sunflower Farm*  
by Mehdi Zeydabadi  
age 13, from Zahedan

## Winter (Zemestan) زمستان



*Shahsavan Tribes Migrating*  
by Amin Mardaneh  
age 17, from Ardebil



## Notes

### Page      Endnotes

- 19      1. *The Inteliquet Historical Biography Series, The World's 100 Greatest People*, Audiocassette Collection, Volume One, No. 13, California, 1995.
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# WONDERS of PERSIA



## Pasargadae & The Persian Rug

by Sarvin Hajivandi,  
age 16, from Shiraz

*"Reason for selection of this subject: to show the connection between the ancient and modern culture, history and art in Iran and also the close tie that has existed between the natural beauty of this land and Persian art and civilization throughout its 2500 year history."*

Sarvin Hajivandi



## The Shepherd

by Arghavan Samadian,  
age 17, from Tehran

*"I love nature, something that we can't see in cities now, and I love the old genuine Persian arts that have come to us as a gift from great masters. So I chose miniature painting because it is an old Persian art and I chose this particular subject called 'choopan' or shepherd depicted from the works of grand master Reza Abbassi to always remember the beautiful nature in Iran."*

Arghavan Samadian

# زیبایتهای ایران



## Ali-Ghapoo Palace, Isfahan

by Kamran Khajavi,  
age 14, from Tehran

*"Iran of course has an abundance of beauties and one cannot illustrate them all. I have painted one of the masterpieces of art in the city of Isfahan. My goal in painting this monument is to show the grandeur and beauty of Persian art and architecture for the world to see what treasures we have hidden in our country. Ali-Ghapoo is one of the historic monuments from Safavid period that is over 300 years old."*

Kamran Khajavi

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