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Manuchehr Moshtagh Khorasani [Review of: M.M. Khorasani (2006) Arms and armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the end of the Qajar period]

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finding a sense of belonging. “Tales Left Untold,” a poem by Aphrodite Désirée Navab, is divided into seven stanzas, each expressing her frustration at finding a sense of belonging. Esther Kamkar in her poem, “Because of Hands and Bread,” examines the plight of exile. Mehri Yalfani’s short story, “Soleiman’s Silence,” which tells the story of a man by the name of Soleiman who chooses to be quiet, is the author’s way of looking into how silence can be just as liberating as speaking of one’s background and ethnicity. Through this story, Yalfani shows how people feel safe within the boundaries of labels, and Soleiman, not commenting on his own background, leaves those around him to question who and what he is. Kandi Tayebi’s poem, “A Return,” reminisces about her experience returning to Iran, which is a similar theme shared in the short story, “Blood,” by Azin Arefi regarding her sister and brother-in-law’s return from Russia to Iran.

The authors mentioned are a part of a remarkable collection of mostly recreational writers and poets. However, Karim includes excerpts from well-known Iranian-American writers, including Gelareh Asayesh, Tara Bahrapour, Firoozeh Dumas, and Azadeh Moaveni. It would have been better if these excerpts, despite their relevance, were not used. The talents of many of these novice writers contained a rawness that was far more interesting than re-reading excerpts from those authors mentioned, which have been read by a much larger audience. It would be interesting to see whether Karim will address the woeful lack of writings by diasporic Iranian men in the future. Nevertheless, Karim deserves recognition and praise for encouraging Iranian diasporic literature to grow and blossom so that others can understand the experiences of this diaspora. Karim’s book is ideal for those in Diaspora Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, and Gender Studies.

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Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period, Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani, Tübingen: Legat Verlag 2006, ISBN 978–3932942228, 780 pp., over 2,800 color images, over 600 black-and-white images.

Arms and Armor from Iran: The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period is the title of a great book which deserves the name and fame of an Encyclopedia. Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani, the author of *Arms and Armor from Iran*, has created a valuable and time-consuming work by cataloguing and describing the artifacts in ten Iranian museum collections. The author gives extensive descriptions of the artifacts, provides us with sketches and pictures, and gives references to the location and the number of artifacts in different museums’ collections, where one can easily find the artifacts. Therefore, there is reason to believe the reliability and validity of the given information.

The author gives a historical description of consecutive periods in the Iranian history, from the Bronze Age until the end of the Qajar period. He does this accurately and refers to many sources. He also discusses many issues by providing arguments both for and against each position. By this, he places the discussion and description of artifacts in a broader social and historical context, which is helpful for both experts on weapons and historians. This book can indeed be regarded as an educative source too. It teaches the lay person a lot about the art of weapon production in a vast time span and a large territory. The specialist and expert terms can be consulted in the book itself.

Very interesting is Khorasani's effort to identify the origins of types of weapons. He correctly (and based on sound evidence) attributes *Qame* to the Caucasus. It is clearly similar to the Georgian Kindjali. He traces the origins of this weapon in the Caucasus and notably to the Armenian, Georgian, and Circassian seventeenth-century Safavid subjects. He cites Zeller and Roher (1955, p. 284) who attribute the origins of this weapon to Circassians (p. 214). This latter assumption might evoke the question of how it has been possible when the land of Circassia was never under the Iranian political sovereignty. Often, this kind of rejection is politically motivated and tries to downplay the historical legacy of one country in a broader region, without any regard to the factual state of affairs in a certain period of time.

We should bear in mind that the exchange of goods has been a reality even before the age of globalization, and that was a process which was not necessarily bound to the political boundaries. The Silk Road is an excellent example of how goods and products that originated in different cultures have been introduced to others. If the process of exchange of goods and imitation in production could take place during the medieval times, it is only logical to assume that it could have also been the case during the seventeenth century. If no one questions the introduction of production of 'China' porcelains in Europe, then it is logical to assume that the art of production of certain kinds of weapons was introduced from the (Northern) Caucasus to Iran in the seventeenth century.

Second, there is factual evidence, which makes Khorasani's assumption very plausible. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a large portion of the Iranian army consisted of Caucasians—notably Georgians. The author mentions this group and Circassians as the introducers of *Qame* into the mainstream Iranian weaponry. He also mentions the reports that *Dash Akol* and his rival *Kaka Rostam* were using this weapon in fights in the early twentieth-century Tehran (p. 214). This is interesting as the Iranian sovereignty over the territories in the Caucasus had ended already in the first half of the nineteenth century (1828). Nevertheless, as the historical accounts show, the interaction between the Caucasus and Iran had still been strong until the first half of the twentieth century. Many revolutionaries, not only Moslems but also Georgians and Armenians from the Caucasus, took part in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. The famous revolutionary, Yephrem Khan, for example, was an Armenian from Ganja and was even imprisoned first by the Tsarist Russia before he moved to Tabriz and Tehran.

Third, the imitation in production of weapons is not necessarily dependent on the direct contacts between the geographical regions. As earlier stated, Circassia proper has never been part of Iran and the author nowhere makes such a claim. Nevertheless, there exists much historical evidence, which confirms that aside from Georgians and Armenians, the Deghestanis and Circassians also lived in the seventeenth-century Iran (see, e.g., Engelbert Kaempfer's *Am Hofe des persischen Großkönigs 1684–1685*, p. 204). Still, a village near Asopas town of Fars is called the *Qale-ye Cberkes* [the Circassian Castle]. The interview of the village chief by Oberling (1963, p. 141–2) resulted in the confirmation of awareness of the inhabitants' Caucasian roots.

It should be noted that by the reference to "Circassian," ethnic groups other than Circassian proper might also be meant. It is no exceptional case that ethnic groups are known by different ethnonyms in different historical periods by outsiders. Circassian dress, weaponry, and image were not restricted to Circassians proper, but all Caucasian mountain dwellers (e.g. their kinsfolk the Abkhaz, the Ossteians, the Chechens, and Ingushetians, end even the Georgian highlanders, etc.) might have been named as such, using an umbrella term. The case of Abkhazians is especially noteworthy. Abkhazians, whose living areas in many cases overlap with those of Georgians, are ethnically related to Circassians and, in many countries (e.g., Turkey) are put under the umbrella ethnonym of Circassian (*Çerkez*). Moreover, according to many sources (see, e.g., Khintibidze, 1998, pp. 72–4), the toponym, "Abkhazia," in the historical accounts does not necessarily refer to the contemporary Abkhazia, but was also used as a toponym for Georgia in general. He gives an example of the poet Khaghani from Shirvan (in the contemporary Republic of Azerbaijan territory) "who had close contacts with the Georgian Royal Court of Queen Tamar and writes in a letter penned in Persian: 'I fell in love with a pretty woman so much that I settled in Abkhazia and began to speak Georgian'" (Khintibidze, 1998, p. 73).

It is also very possible and logical that the Circassians proper, as well as the other peoples of the northern Caucasus, were present in the territory under the Iranian sovereignty in the South Caucasus. Labor migration has been a phenomenon of all times, and it is only logical that these warriors were much in demand for their military skills. All-in-all, Khorasani highlights a forgotten Caucasian aspect of Iran, which is rarely stressed nowadays as it should.

One of the issues discussed in the book (Chapter Twenty-Two, especially pp. 320–1) is that of the national Iranian symbol, "The Lion and the Sun" (*Shir-o Khorshid*). Although there is evidence that this symbol has a pre-Islamic origin, the lion and the sun (as a unitary symbol and emblem) had been used widely from the Saljuq era onwards. As the zodiac lion rests upon the sun in astrology, it raises the question: "Why should there be a double emphasis on sun"? It is my own hypothesis that sun represented a female entity, and the male lion clearly symbolized the male counterpart. This claim can be supported by two arguments. First, as the ancient Iranian philosophy has been dualistic in nature, it is very well possible that the coinage of this sign has had a dualistic connotation too. Second, although the modern Persian does not recognize gender in

nouns, it is obvious that the sun is regarded as a female entity, in contrast to its pre-Islamic male gender. In the pre-Islamic Iranian mythology, the sun was a male; the angel/deity of Sun, Mithra was male after all! *Kborshid* [sun] is clearly referred to as *Kborshid Khanum* [the Lady Sun] in the colloquial Persian language, and the names Mithra and Mehr of the male deity are now used as girl names as Mitra and Mehri. However, the exact date of the sun's gender transformation is unknown; it seems to have a long history because the sun is represented as female in many older Persian stories. This hypothesis could clearly be in accordance with the claim that the (female) sun was added to the lion because a Saljuq king wanted to portray his wife, but it was not possible to do so according to religious beliefs, so he chose to portray instead a sun.

Another assumption which is very popular to date in Iran is that the Lion represents Ali, the first Shi'ite saint after the prophet Mohammed. Ali is known by Shi'ite Moslems as Asad-Ullah, which in Arabic means the "Lion of God." We should, however, bear in mind that the Saljuq rulers were Sunni, and although Ali is recognized by Sunnis as the fourth successor of the prophet Mohammed, it is not very likely that a Sunni ruler would introduce a prominent Shi'ite symbol. Nevertheless, the extensive use of this symbol since the Safavid times onwards could be placed within the context of its Shi'ite connotation with Asad-Ullah. Indeed, the book is an exemplary work, which shows that certain symbols are used in certain periods of time, although with different meanings. This book also shows that the history of weaponry in Iran reflects the Iranian history in general. Likewise, in the Iranian history, in general, there is a continuity that is visible in the history of Iranian arts and certain old elements (from both the Islamic and pre-Islamic periods) return and come back to the fore, though with a new meaning and in a different context.

This book is not only restricted to arms and armor, but it also has chapters on martial arts and the art of recitation of epics and performative arts such as *Ta'ziye*. My suggestion is that the author should add a chapter on martial music in a new edition: Iranian music is known as both *Bazmi* [festive] and *Razmi* [martial]. It will not be a big surprise that further research, indeed, shows a connection between certain Razmi musical styles from Iran and those in the Caucasus. The martial musical connection could implicitly support the Caucasian aspects of the Iranian martial and military arts, in general, and is in accordance with the author's aforementioned assumption about the origin of *Qame*.

Arms and Armour from Iran is a masterwork which has been brought about by extensive research. The book is recommended not only to the experts and collectors of arms and armor, and to the archaeologists and historians, but also to the regional experts on this part of the world, geographers, and social scientists. The nice pictorial collection in the book is another reason that invites this book to the personal and professional bookshelves.

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