Besides his legal acumen, he was well versed in Avestan, Pahlavi, and Persian, having studied these subjects at the Sir Jamshedji Jijibhoy Zarthoshti Madrasa while he was a law student. He was a zealous worker in the field of Iranian literature, translating the poems of Sa’di and Hafez. With his great love for Iran, he had the opportunity to visit the country in 1932 in the company of the poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, when he was invited by Reza Shah Pahlavi. Recognizing his merits as a scholar of repute and a devoted friend of Persia, the shah conferred on him the Medal of Sciences (nešān-e ‘elmī) of the First Order. The last three or four years of his life form a tragic period with ill-health stalking his steps and loosening his hold upon his various activities. His declining health compelled him to decline courteously the second invitation to visit Persia extended by Reza Shah in 1934 in order to participate in the millenary jubilee celebration (jaπn-e haz˝ra) of Ferdowsi (q.v.). He had a fairly short life but it was useful, rich, and beneficial to his community. His patronage of the Persian scholar Ebr˝him Pur(-e) D˝wud (see HISTORIOGRAPHY ix) during the latter’s sojourn in India and his effort to have the latter’s translations of Avestan texts printed in India are fondly acknowledged by him in several of his works (e.g., 1928, I, pp. 11-12; idem, 1952, pp. vâv-za, ka).


(KAIKHOSROO M. JAMASP ASA)

IRANIAN IDENTITY. a collective feeling by Iranian peoples of belonging to the historic lands of Iran. This sense of identity, defined both historically and territorially, evolved from a common historical experience and cultural tradition among the peoples who lived in Iran, and shared in Iranian mythologies and legends as well as in its history (see IRAN iii. TRADITIONAL HISTORY). It was further defined and made distinctive by drawing boundaries between Iranians (the in-group) and the ‘others’ (out-groups), e.g., Iran vs. Anˇr˝n (q.v.; Sasanid notion), Iran vs. Tur˝n (mythical and historical notion, later the lands of Turkic people), Iran vs. Rum (mythical and factual notions applied to Greece, Rome, Byzantium, and Ottoman empires), ‘Ajam (primarily Persian) vs. Arab, Tâjk/Tâzîk (Persian) vs. Turk, Iran vs. Hind (India, particularly during the Safavid period), and Iran vs. Farang (i.e., Europe). This mode of identity was elaborated, transmitted, and continuously reconstructed by Iranian literati.

In Iran, similar to other societies, kinship and tribal bounds, ethnic and linguistic affiliations, religious and cultural affinities, local and provincial ties, and other communal allegiances have often competed with an overarching Iranian identity. Yet, a deep feeling of pride in Iran’s cultural heritage with Persian literature as its core element, and a consciousness of continuity in a long and distinctive history of the country—particularly, a belief in the ability of the Iranian peoples to survive recurrent periods of upheavals—have served as a cohesive force to resist and ultimately overcome divisive currents.

Since the long and eventful history of Iran has seen recurrent constructions, transformations, and resurgences of Iranian identity—interpreted on the basis of a number of contentious notions of ethnic and national identities—a brief conceptual treatment of perspectives on Iranian identity is in order. Iranian identity will, therefore, be treated under the following five separate entries:

i. Perspectives on Iranian identity.
   ii. Pre-Islamic period.
   iii. Medieval Islamic period.
   iv. In the 19th and 20th centuries.
   v. In the post-revolutionary era. See Supplement online.

i. PERSPECTIVES ON IRANIAN IDENTITY

Perspectives on Iranian identity have been influenced by competing views on the origins of nations. Three main perspectives, as ideal types or pure types, may be distinguished as answers to the question, “what are the origins of nations?” The first perspective reflects the romantic nationalist view that nations are natural and essential elements in history since time ‘immortal.’ The second perspective, which may be described as modernist or post-modernist, rejects the romantic, primordial idea of the origins of nations and views the concept of ‘nation’ as a modern construct. The third, which may be called the historicizing perspective, recognizes that “civic nation” is the product of modernity and as such could not be applied retrospectively to pre-modern times, but it strongly rejects the modernist and post-modernist contention of a radical discontinuity between a modern nation and its historical past. These different perspectives have influenced, to
varying degrees, the Iranists’ scholarship on the origins of Iranian nationhood and Iranian national identity. The same perspectives have also influenced the perceptions of the ruling elites and political groups in 20th-century Iran.

Since the 19th century the construction of the modern concepts of Iran and Iranian identity have been particularly influenced by the romantic, nationalist perspective. It evolved with the help of a colorful repertoire of Iranian mythological and legendary traditions as well as Iran’s factual history. Various forms of this perspective first emerged in the mid-19th century, and the seed grew with the literature of the Constitutional Revolution (see CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION i and iii; and iv, below), ultimately serving as the ideological foundation of the Pahlavi state and helping the development of a modern nation-state in Iran. The writings of both Western and Iranian scholars played an important part in the emergence of this perspective in the field of Iranian studies and served as an ideological springboard for Iranian nationalist groups (see iv, below).

Refuting the romantic, nationalist concept of “national identity,” with its proclivity towards “retrospective nationalism,” a group of social scientists and historians have relocated the origin of the discourse on nations from time immemorial to modern times, to no earlier than the 18th century. According to this perspective, nations are modern constructs that are either ‘invented’ or ‘imagined.’ They maintain that nations are artificial constructs or inventions that were deliberately engineered by the ruling classes (Hobsbawm, 1990, pp. 9-10; Idem and Ranger, 1983). It may be noted that Ehsan Yarshater (1971, 1983, 1984) had already described a similar arrangement and codification of tradition for Iran in his analysis of the arrangement of Iran’s traditional history during the Sasanid period, 1971, pp. 129-30, 139-40, 172, 144, 186-90, 341). His useful paradigm, however, seems to conflate the role of Persian hegemony in the identity formation of non-Iranian Islamic regions with its role on the Iranian plateau. It was in the lands of Iran where Persian language was deeply rooted, where the New Persian developed, where Persian culture prevailed, where Persian literati, as a dominant ethnic core with historical consciousness, were present, and where they laid the foundation for recurrent construction of pre-modern Iranian identity until modern times. Fragner’s universal paradigm, therefore, is applicable primarily to the Ottoman empire, Central Asia, Mughal empire, and South-East Asia, and not to the Iranian plateau and the realm of its political community. The land of Iran was distinctively identified as “Iran” or (Mid. Pers.) ˇrˇnπahr during the Sasanid period and, after a period of lapses and ups and downs during the early Islamic era, has again been identified by the same name since the 13th century (see iii, below).

Another popular, modernist approach views nations as “imagined communities,” arguing that the idea of communion in communities beyond primary groups with face-to-face relations, such as villages or tribal clans or neighborhoods, lives only in the mind of their members (Anderson, 1983, 1991). The metaphorical idiom of “imagined communities” has attracted the attention of a number of Iranian writers in their treatment of the origins of Iranian identity. The metaphorical reach of the concept of imagined communities (as used by Benedict Anderson) “exceeds its historical grasp,” and it has been applied to the Iranian case without any reference to the rest of Anderson’s theory (1991, p. 12). Thus is ignored the role played by the administrative language as an important element in promoting “proto-national cohesion” in pre-modern dynastic realms (for a skewed application of Anderson’s theory to Iranian national identity with selective references to some historical sources, see Vaziri, 1993; for a historicizing review of this work, see Matin Askari, 1995; see also Karimi-Hakkak). These modernist concepts of national identity are based on the ideal types of modern, civic-territorial experiences of nationhood of European societies. Pre-modern, non-Western nations do not fit seamlessly into this model. The idea of national identity in societies of Asia is often derived from fictive genealogical and territorial origins and vernacular culture and religion (Smith, 2004, pp. 132-34).

Rejecting the essentialist tenet of the romantic, primordial conception of national identity as well as the modernist and postmodernist contention of a radical historical disjuncture in the origins of nations, the historicizing perspective emphasizes the role of historical forces in the formation of modern nations. It focuses on the historical origins of ethno-cultural communities and postulates that modern nations and nationalisms are products of long-term, historical processes. The historicizing quality of the “nation” is sought in myths,
memories, values, and symbols. The proponents of the historicizing perspective see ethnic communities and nations as historical phenomena that are subject to “flux and change” (Smith, 1991, 2004; Duara, 1996). Among the Iranists who have favored different versions of the historicizing perspective, one may include Ehsan Yarshater, Gherardo Gnoli (1989 and ii, below), Ann Lambton, Alessandro Bausani, Roy Mottahedeh, David Morgan, Faridun Adamiyat, Shahrokh Meskoob, Mohammad Reza Šafí-i-Kadkani, and Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi.

For Yarshater, the arrangement and codification of traditional history of Iran by the Sasanids and the “Persian presence” in the formative period of the Islamic civilization represent two intertwined historical processes that have helped shape the historicized characteristic of Iranian identity. The combined impact of these two processes provided the Iranian people with a distinct identity in the Islamic world (Yarshater, 1971, 1983, 1984, 1998; see also iii, below). Ann Lambton, too, seems to favor the historicizing perspective in rejecting the notion of a retrospective nationalism, while recognizing the existence of a “consciousness of a distinct identity . . . ‘iráníyat,’ (‘being a Persian’) in medieval Persia (Lambton, 1978, p. 786). According to Lambton, this identity, defined historically and geographically, was formed by a common historical experience and the sharing of a common cultural and literary medium. In his discussion of the historical antecedents to the nationalist ideology in Iran, Adamiyat (1967, pp. 246-68), a prolific author of the intellectual history of modern Iran, shows a tendency towards the historicizing approach to Iranian identity, though with a romantic orientation. He contends that basic elements of modern nationalism, such as the idea of Iranian lands and peoples, a common language and culture, and above all national pride and common historical consciousness, were all present in Iran even before the emergence of nationalism in modern Europe. Yet he recognizes that a reaction to increasing Western domination in 19th-century Iran, new discoveries of the ancient history of the country by Western scholars, and the spread of emerging European nationalism in Asia following the French Revolution, all helped initiate the development of a modern national consciousness and a nationalistic ethos in Iran beginning in the latter half of the 19th century. Finally, a conscious adherent of the historicizing approach is Mottahedeh, who—in answering the question of “in what sense did the Iranians have a common agreement as to the ties which made them a people?”—suggests that the educated Iranians “saw themselves as a people joined by their shared tie to Irán-zamin.” This collective feeling of the Iranians of the medieval period, he emphasizes, is hardly “a mirror image” of the early modern European nationalistic consciousness (Mottahedeh, 1971, pp. 181-82).

Conceptions of Iranian identity in terms of an Irano-Islamic cultural heritage have also found advocates among scholars and religious intellectuals. While critical of the romantic perspective on Iranian identity, Alessandro Bausani recognized the significance of Iran’s medieval heritage as a background to the formation of modern Iranian national identity. In the concluding chapter of his book I Persiani (Florence, 1962) and its revised version (Wiesbaden, 1975), Bausani contended that the foundation of Iranian culture should be relocated from a pre-Islamic Achaemenid image to the medieval Iranian Islamic culture (Bausani, 1975, p. 47). Hamid Ahmadi (2005, pp. 23-45) contends that Iranian national identity has survived a functional blending of the legacy of the ancient political heritage of kingship, Persian language and literature, and Iranian religions, i.e., Zoroastrianism and Sh’ism. Ahmadi’s view of Iranian religions as enduring pillars of Iranian identity may have been influenced by the ideas of Henry Corbin and Sayyed Hossein Nasr, who, by interpreting Islamic philosophy mainly along the lines of the Gnostic tenets of Shi’ism, believed that the latter has been deeply rooted in ancient Iranian religion (see Corbin, 1946 and 1964; Nasr, 1964 and 1968). This hybrid idea of grounding Iranian identity in Iranian Islamic culture has also found currency with the Iranian promoters of liberal Islam in the last few decades, including Ayatollah Mortazá Mošţahhari, Mehdí Bázargán, ‘Ali Šar’ati, and ‘Abd-al-Karim Šorú (see iv, below).

The main development of Iranian identity, from its literary foundation during the Sasanid era to the present time, may be divided into the following phases: the foundation phase of arranging a pre-modern ethno-national identity with a sense of ancient ethno-nationalism during the late Sasanid era; the dormant phase following the Arab conquest of Persia; the revival phase of Iranian cultural identity under the Iranian regional dynasties during the 9th-11th centuries; a complex phase of Iranian identity during the Seljuk era; the resurgence phase during the Mongol and Timurid periods; the formation of a hybrid Iranian-Shi’ite identity during the Safavid era; and, finally, the national phase of the formation of a modern Iranian “national identity” during the last two centuries. These phases will be discussed in the following three sub-entries. The current debates on Iranian identity since the 1979 revolution will be discussed in a supplementary entry online.


(AHMAD ASHRAF)

ii. PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD

The idea of Iran as a religious, cultural, and ethnic reality goes back as far as the end of the 6th century B.C.E. As a political idea, we first catch sight of it in the twenties of the 3rd century C.E. as an essential feature of Sasanian propaganda (Gnoli, 1989; 1993; 1998), since it does not seem possible to trace it back any further than the reign of Ardašîr (see ARDASîR i). In actual fact we cannot say that the political idea of an *arîyânân xûd-ta*- had ever existed before the advent of the Sasanian dynasty, though this claim has been made on several occasions (von Gutschmidt, p. 123; Markwart, 1895, p. 629; Herzfeld, 1932, pp. 36-37; 1935, p. 9; 1941, p. 192; 1947, p. 700; and recently, Shahbazi, 2005, p. 105).

The inscriptions of Darius I (see DARIUS iii) and Xerxes, in which the different provinces of the empire are listed, make it clear that, between the end of the 6th century and the middle of the 5th century B.C.E., the Persians were already aware of belonging to the arîya “Iranian” nation (see ARYA and ARYANS). Darius and Xerxes boast of belonging to a stock which they call “Iranian”: they proclaim themselves “Iranian” and “of Iranian stock,” arîya and arîya ˇciça respectively, in inscriptions in which the Iranian countries come first in a list that is arranged in a new hierarchical and ethno-geographical order, compared for instance with the list of countries in Darius’s inscription at Behistun (see BISOJTO; Gnoli, 1989, pp. 22-23; 1994, pp. 153-54). We also know, thanks to this very same inscription, that Ahura Mazdâ was considered the “god of the Iranians” in passages of the Elamite version corresponding to DB IV 60 and 62 in the Old Persian version, whose language was called “Iranian” or arîya (DB IV, 88-89). Then again, the Avesta clearly uses arîya as an ethnic name (Vd. 1; Fr. 13.143-44, etc.), where it appears in expressions as arîya dãjîhâvî “Iranian lands, peoples,” arîya sayanom “land inhabited by Iranians,” and arîyanom wajî vâpjcess dâityay “Iranian stretch of the good Dâitya,” the river Oxus, the modern Amû Daryâ (q.v.; see ERÂN-WEZ). There can be no doubt about the ethnic value of Old Iran. arîya (Beneveniste, 1969, I, pp. 369 ff.; Szemerényi; Kellens.

The Old Persian and Avestan evidence is confirmed by the Greek sources: Herodotus (7.62) mentions that the Medes once called themselves Arioi; Eratosthenes apud Strabo (15.2.8) speaks of Arianë as being between Persia and India; Eudemus of Rhodes apud Damascius (Düb- tatares et solutiones in Platonis Parmenideum 125 bis) refers to “the Magi and all those of Iranian (areion) lineage”; Diodorus Siculus (1.94.2) considers Zoroaster (Zathraustês) as one of the Arianoi. The ethnic, linguistic, and religious import of terms connected with Old Pers. arîya and Av. ariya is therefore borne out by a lot of different evidence, over a span of time that goes from the Achaemenid to the Seleucid and Parthian periods and in Iranian and non-Iranian sources. Besides Greek, the non-Iranian sources include Armenian, as in the expression ari Avmaz “Ahura Mazdâ, the Iranian” in The History of the Armenians (sec. 127) by Agathangelas (de Liberteria, p. 243; Schmitt, 1991; Gnoli, 1993, p. 19). An Iranian source, the Rabatak inscription (I. 3 f.) in the Bactrian language, has ariao, meaning “in Iranian (language)” (Sims-Williams, 1995-96, p. 83; 1997, p. 5; Gnoli, 2002). All this evidence shows that the name
arya "Iranian" was a collective definition, denoting peoples (Geiger, pp. 167 f.; Schmitt, 1978, p. 31) who were aware of belonging to the one ethnic stock, speaking a common language, and having a religious tradition that centered on the cult of Ahura Mazda.

Although, up until the end of the Parthian period, Iranian identity had an ethnic, linguistic, and religious value, it did not yet have a political import. The idea of an "Iranian" empire or kingdom is a purely Sasanian one.

It was the result of a convergence of interests between the new dynasty and the Zoroastrian clergy, as we can deduce from the available evidence. This convergence gave rise to the idea of an Ėran-šahr (see Ėrân, Ėrânšahr) "Kingdom of the Iranians," which was both īr (Middle Pers. equivalent of Old Pers. ariya and Av. ārya) and mazdéšn "Mazdean" (see Ėr, Ėr Mazdešn), as is evident from the formula ēr mazdész (Gnoli, 1987) placed before the name of Narseh, one of the sons of Sābūr I, in the Ka’be-ye Zardōšt inscription (SKZ, Mid. Pers. 24, Parth. 19, Greek 42-43) or before the name of Bahram II on some of his coins (Lukonin, 1969, pp. 104, 177; 1979, pp. 39, 92 note 4, 116). Mid. Pers. ēr (plur. ārōn), just like Old Pers. ariya and Av. ārya, has an evident ethnic value, which is also present in the abstract term ērīh, "Iranian character, Iraniness" (Gnoli, 1986; 1989, pp. 147-48).

The singular and plural forms, ār and ārōn, in Middle Persian were widely used in the Sasanian period. We have examples in the royal titles (sāhān-sāh Ėrān [ud Anērān], literally "King of Kings of the Iranians [and non-Iranians]") and in the titles of the civil and military administration: senior officers, dignitaries, and top-grade civil servants have titles such as Ėrān-āmārgar, a sort of paymaster general, Ėrān-hambārāgbed, the superintendent of the warehouses, Ėrān-dīhrāb, the head of the bureaucracy, Ėrān-drustbed, the court surgeon, Ėrān-spāmbēd, the marshal of the empire. These titles have no precedent in the Arsacid period; and even the Parthian royal title sāhān-sāh Ārōn, "King of Kings of the Iranians," which occurs, for instance, in the Ka’be-ye Zardōšt inscription, is no more than the Parthian version of the Sasanian title, just like the Greek version basileús basileōn Ariánōn.

It is clear that the name Ėrān in the official titles of the new state and its administration was a typically Sasanian usage that came into being in the 3rd century C.E. with the advent of Ardašīr I. In an ideological context where some traditional values were given new life, Ėrān also appeared in toponyms, in the naming of cities that were renamed or refounded or in the case of newly founded ones. From this point of view some significant place-names are Ėrān-šahr Sābūhr, Ėrān-sādān-kerd-Kawwād (q.v.), Ėrān-sādān-Kawwād (q.v.), Ėrān-wīn(n)bard-Kawwād (q.v.), Ėrān-xwarrah-Sābūhr (q.v.) or Ėrān-xwarrah-Yazdgerd (q.v.; Gyselen, 1989). These last two names are particularly important because they contain the concept of Ėrān xwarrah, which recalls the Avestan concept of aironam or aironam x’aron (see FARR/AHA), the ‘Iranian’ Glory or Glory ‘of the Iranians,’ so as to form a link between Sasanian royal ideology and archaic myth and epos, in other words, between the Kayanid tradition and the new dynasty of the Iranian kingdom in the 3rd century C.E. (Gnoli, 1989, pp. 148-51).

A situation fairly similar to the one involving Ėrān xwarrah must also have existed in the case of Ėrān-wēz (q.v.), a Middle Persian expression that reflected that Avestan āryanam vaējō (see above). In both cases there is evidence of an uninterrupted link with the religious tradition, on account of the Middle Persian ēr, which is connected not so much with Old Pers. ariya- as with an older form with epenthesis, which is documented by the Av. ārya- in Old Iranian (Eilers, 1974, p. 283; 1982, p. 8; Gnoli, 1986, p. 115). Furthermore it should be noted that, besides the royal titles, civil and military administrative titles, and place-names, also the personal proper names such as Ėrān duxt, Ėrān-Gusnasp, Ėrān-xrad (Gignoux, 1986, pp. 79-80) show how widespread the use of the name Ėrān was in the Sasanian period. All these factors can only be explained by the pronounced sense of national identity that had begun to emerge from the 3rd century onwards.

Third-century Iran was shaken by a conflict between universalism and nationalism that was most clearly manifest in the religious and cultural sphere. The outcome of this conflict is well known: the traditionalistic and nationalistic impulses gained the upper hand, and Manichean universalism succumbed to the nationalism of the Zoroastrian Magi. Iranian identity, which up to that point had been essentially a cultural and religious nature, assumed a definite political value, placing Persia and the Persians at the center of the Ėrān-šahr, in other words, at the center of a state based on the twin powers of throne and altar and sustained by an antiquarian and archaizing ideology. This ideology became more and more accentuated during the Sasanian period, reaching its height in the long reign of Xusrw/Kosrow I (531-79 C.E.). Of course, economic and social factors favored the victory of the stronger classes in a society that was based mainly on a rural economy, namely the aristocratic landed and warrior classes and the Magian clergy.

All this largely fitted in with the spirit of the times. Indeed, the formation of national cultures was a typical feature of the third century, marking the transition to Late Antiquity. The idea of a strong national identity, a hallmark of the Sasanian dynasty’s rise to power in Iran, must therefore be considered in the light of a phenomenon that was far more widespread, involving on the one hand the Roman empire from East to West and on the other the exumene that Alexander of Macedon had united six centuries earlier with his conquest of the Persian empire (Gnoli, 1989, pp. 162-64; 1998, pp. 119-22).

In Iran the claim to Achaemenid origins, the identification of the Sasanian dynasty with the dynasty of the Kayanans, the setting up of a traditional heritage that met the requirements of the new dynasty and the social forces that were its mainstay are just so many aspects of a single political and cultural process that was vigorously upheld by the Sasanian propaganda. The tradition of Ėrān-šahr, which was supposed to have its roots in remote antiquity, though in actual fact at that time there survived only a
vague and scanty knowledge of it (Yarshater, 1971), only goes as far back as the 3rd century C.E. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the Iranian national history is a mirror of Sasanian conditions. Both the Pishdadian and Kayanian periods are treated in a Sasanian way (Yarshater, 1983, pp. 402-11).

The fact is that the advent of the Sasanians gave a national or even nationalistic sense to the various aspects of Iranian culture, which managed to survive the fall of the monarchy and the decline of Zoroastrianism (Spuler). In Sasanian Iran there began to take shape a national culture, fully aware of being “Iranian,” that was motivated by the restoration and the revival of the wisdom of the “sages of old,” dāndān pêšênîgân, as well as by the glorification of a great heroic past, and was imbued with an omnipresent antiquarian taste and an archaizing spirit. This process developed steadily in the course of time and took on a definite shape especially in the 6th century, but its roots were nonetheless in the 3rd century, in the transition of power from the Arsacids (q.v.) to the Sasanians and in the Zoroastrian church’s gaining of political recognition.

Pahlavi works, which have also come down to us in Arabic or in Persian, reflect the process of formation of an Iranian identity that was based on (1) the combination and revision of various features connected with the epic-legendary tradition—as seen, for instance, in the brief mention of the foundation of each and every “provincial capital” in the Šahrêstânîhâ i Ėrân (Markwart, 1931; Daryaeæ, 2002)—and (2) the royal ideology of the new dynasty and the view of history in the religious tradition of the hērbeds and mobeds. The latter is expressed in the Testament of Ardašîr (Grignaschi; Abbâs, de Fouchécour, pp. 87-89) and in the Letter of Tansar (Darmesteter; Minovi; Eqblî; Boyce, 1968; de Fouchécour, pp. 89-93).

As regards the geographical concepts connected with the imperial propaganda in ancient Iran, we must point out that the Sasanian inscriptions, from Šâbuhr to Kerdir, give a list of the Iranian and non-Iranian provinces that came to coincide with that central region, the Xânrîbâ (Daryaeæ, 2002).

It was in the Sasanian period, then, that the pre-Islamic Iranian identity reached the height of its fulfilment in every aspect: political, religious, cultural, and linguistic (with the growing diffusion of Middle Persian). Its main ingredients were the appeal to a heroic past that was identified or confused with little-known Achaemenid origins (Yarshater, 1971; Daryaeæ, 1995), and the religious tradition, for which the Avestan was the chief source. Both these ingredients were amalgamated in the Sasanian Xwâdây-nâmâg, whose heroic and legendary character was combined with the “later accretions and elaborations of a non-heroic and religious nature” (Yarshater, 1983, p. 394). This work, which is the main source for Iranian national history, was translated into Arabic by Šbn al-Moqaffa‘ (q.v.) and, although the original Middle Persian version and the Arabic or Persian translations or adaptations have not survived, it widely influenced Islamic historians, men of letters and poets, as is clearly evidenced by the Annals of Tabâri and the Sûh-nâmâ of Ferdowsî (q.v.).


(GHERARDO GNOLI)

iii. MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PERIOD

Following the cultural shock and the crisis of identity that occurred in the first century after the fall of the Sasanids, the urban literati of Persian origin began to reconstruct the cultural idea of Iran within the Islamic society. A modified version of the pre-modern, Sasanid ethno-national identity, this new cultural identity does not bear much resemblance to the modern notions of political and “civic-national identity” (for definitions, see i, above; for the Sasanid period, see ii, above). The emergence of a new form of Persian as the literary language of Iran, as well as a gradual revival of Iranian traditional history, helped buttress the new Iranian cultural identity. The Persian cultural revival, beginning in the early Abbasid Caliphate, accelerated during the reign of Iranian regional dynasties and laid the foundation of Iranian cultural identity for centuries to come (see IRAN iii. TRADITIONAL HISTORY).

This manner of revival and reconstruction of the Iranian identity was unparalleled among the other ancient cultural areas that were incorporated into the Islamic world. Thus, while Syria and Egypt lost their languages under the hegemony of Arabic, Iran survived as the main cultural area in the emerging Islamic empire that maintained its
distinct linguistic and cultural identity (see, e.g., Frye, pp. 1-6). A number of authors have recently questioned the revival and reconstruction of Iranian identity in the Islamic period. They contend that the idea of Iran and the continuity of its dynastic history is a modern construct, ‘invented’ by western Orientalists in the 18th and 19th centuries. Even the name “Iran,” they argue, had been rarely used in classical Persian literature, and its frequent use in the Sâh-nâma referred to the pre-Islamic era and not to its contemporary existence (Vaziri, 1993; Fragner, 1999). Such interpretations of Iranian identity seem to have been influenced by Eurocentric notions of national identity, drawn from Western civic-territorial experiences of nationhood and nationalism. Pre-modern, non-Western nations do not fit easily into this ethnocentric Western paradigm. The idea of nationhood in societies of Asia is often derived from fictive genealogical and territorial origins and vernacular culture and religion, whereas Western ideas of nationhood have been historically based on the specific boundaries, the development of legal-rational communities, and civic cultures (see Smith, 2004, pp. 132-34; see also i, above).

The present entry examines the revival of Iranian identity and repeated construction in Persian literature of its pre-modern ethno-national historiography from the 9th to the 18th century, long before the emergence of Western nationalism or ‘Orientalism.’ Iranian identity and the pattern of the use of the term “Iran” in Persian literature evolved in four main phases in the medieval Islamic era: a revival phase under the Persian regional dynasties; a rather complex phase under the Seljuqs, a resurgence phase under the Mongols and Timurids; and finally, the formation of a hybrid Iranian-Shi’ite identity under the Safavids.

IRANIAN IDENTITY III. MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PERIOD

The resistance movements. The initial Persian response to the Arab domination seems to have manifested itself in various sectarian movements against the Umayyad rule either through participating in the Kharejet revolt or in the Shi’ite movements (see IRAN ix/2.1. The Advent of Islam in Iran). Influenced by pre-Islamic religious ideas, specially Mazdakism, Persian peasants and artisans took part in a series of rebellions against the Arab domination during the early Abbasid era, including those of Behâfarîd (q.v.), Sonbâd the Magian, O斯塔́dîsîs, Moqamna’, Babak, and Mâzîr (see Sadighi, 1937; Yarshater, 1983b). There is some uncertainty, however, regarding the extent to which “national,” or more accurately “ethnic” sentiments, were involved in these revolts. According to some historians, a strong “national” sentiment or even resurrection (rastâkîz) was at the core of these rebellious movements (see, e.g., Zarrinkub, 1957, pp. 207-66). On the other hand, M. Rekaya sees these movements as last-ditch efforts by members of the old elite to hold on to their privileges and devoid of any “national” sentiments (Rekaya, 1973, 1974). Taking a historicizing perspective, H. A. R. Gibb, sees these anti-Arab and anti-Islamic movements as manifestations of Persian resistance “if nationalism is too strong or misleading a term” (Gibb, p. 66; see also Minorsky, 1955, p. 243). Regardless of motivations, it is plausible to assume that the participants in these movements were inspired by various elements of pre-Islamic Persian cultural heritage. The revival of the cultural idea of Iran in the context of the Islamic civilization, however, occurred primarily through the efforts of the Persian literati in the early part of the Abbasid Caliphate and under the rule of Persian regional dynasties.

Iranian dynastic movements. The rise of the Abbasid Caliphate in the mid-8th century—with strong Persian support—helped to bring about the downfall of the Umayyad rule with its policy of Arab supremacy (see Agha, 2003). The shift of the center of the Islamic empire from Syria to Iraq, the central province of the Sasanid empire bearing the rich legacy of Persian and Persianized Aramaean cultures, contributed further to the revival of Iranian identity (see Yarshater, 1998, pp. 54-74; see also Mohammadi Malayeri). Furthermore, the rise of de facto autonomous Iranian dynasties during the 9th and 10th centuries—in Khorasan (Tahirids, 820-872, and Saffarids, 868-903), Central Asia (Samanids, 914-999), and the Caspian region, central, southern, and western Iran (Ziyarids, Kakuyids, and Buyids [q.v.], 932-1056)—contributed significantly to the revival of Persian cultural heritage (see Frye, pp. 186-212). The desire of these dynasties to identify themselves as “Iranians” was manifested in their invented genealogies, which described them as descendants of pre-Islamic kings, and legends as well as the use of the title of šâhanshâh by the Buyid rulers (Tûrāk-e Sistân, pp. 200-202; Minorsky, 1955, pp. 244-45; Amedroz, 1905, pp. 393-99; Stern, 1971, p. 538; Bosworth, 1973, pp. 51-62; Madelung, 1969, pp. 168-83). These dynasties provided the Persian literati with the opportunity to revive the idea of Iran.

Persian literati. As an influential stratum in Iran’s social hierarchy in the Islamic society, the Persian literati or the “men of the pen” (ahl-e qalam), consisted of bureaucrats—including viziers, scribes (dabirs), and accountants (mostawfs)—men of letters and poets, historians and geographers, philosophers and Islamic theologians, jurists, and scholars of traditional sciences. Dabirs (q.v.), who had survived as a distinct social class after the Arab conquest of Persia, constituted the core of the emerging Persian literati and civilian administration (see Dîvân iv). They played a significant role in the transmission of pre-Islamic bureaucratic skills and lifestyles under the Arab caliphate and later under Iranian local dynasties and the Turkish potentates. In effect, they provided the social base for the institution of the vizierate. The vizier was the head of the supreme divan, and as such was the head of the government’s bureaucracy. A common feature of medieval society was the existence of influential bureaucratic families of Persian origin, such as the Jeyhânis, the Bal’amis (q.v.) and ‘Obtis under the Samanids, the family of Nezâm-al-Molk in the Saljuq period, and, the Jovaynis (q.v.) and the family of Raśid-al-Din Fazl-Allâh under the Il-khanids (see DABIR ii;
Klausner, pp. 37-81). The dehqāns (q.v.) also helped the reconstruction of Persian culture from pre-Islamic to the Islamic period. As regional landed gentry, dehqāns administered local affairs and collected taxes during the late Sasanid era. In the early Islamic period, dehqāns played a significant part in the transmission of stories from the Iranian epic, Sāh-nāma, Iranian traditional history, and romances of pre-Islamic Iran (see also Tafazolli, 2000).

Persian literati performed their task by contributing to the formation of the administrative apparatus of the Abbasid empire on the Sasanid model, translation of major works of traditional history and ethics from Middle Persian into Arabic and production of Persian recension of them, reconstruction of Persian genealogies for the Iranian regional dynasties, and initiation and promotion of the ʃoʻubiya literary movement.

The ʃoʻubiya movement. Those members of Persian literati and a number of Arab poets and prose writers, who were active in the ʃoʻubiya controversy during the 9th and 10th centuries, contributed significantly to the rise of Persian literature and the revival of Iranian cultural identity. Over time, the key term of the Qur’anic verse 49:13, characterized as the divine order for the equality of all peoples (ʃoʻub) within Islam, was used to refer to a diffuse literary movement known as ʃoʻubiya. The Persian literati used the verse to claim equality with, or supremacy to, the Arab aristocracy. The contrast between the glorious, pre-Islamic Persian civilization and the primitive and unsophisticated tribal lifestyle of the Arab Bedouins is the main theme of the ʃoʻubi literary, which generally satirizes Arabs for their diet of snakes, mice, lizards, and camel milk. Some of the ʃoʻubis went so far as to deny any virtue in the Arab culture or even in Islam. A vivid example of the claim for Persian superiority may be seen in a poem by Ebr˝him b. Mamπ˝d˚ a panegyric written for the Saffarid, Ya¿qub b. Layt¯: “I am the son of the noble descendants of Jam, and the inheritance of the kings of Persia has fallen to my lot. . . . I am reviving their glory, which has been lost and effaced by the length of time. . . . Say then to all sons of Hashem: Return to your country in the Hejaz, to eat lizards and to graze your sheep. . . . For I shall mount the throne of kings, by the help of the edge of my sword and the point of my pen” (cited in Yaqut, Erkād al-arib, pp. 322-23; English tr. from Stern, 1971, pp. 541-42). The ʃoʻubiya controversy may have been a motive for the Persian literati to promote a written literature in the late Sasanid period as well as New Persian literature in the early Islamic era. It was in these critical periods that the construction of Iranian identity by rearrangement of Persian mythologies, legendry narratives, and factual history took place: “A clear concept of Persian identity permeates the traditional history—a concept that may have originated in the Achaemenid period, but was definitely embraced by the Sasanids, who by calling themselves ‘kings of Iran and non-Iran (an-éran)’ clearly distinguished their own nation from the rest” (IRAN iii. TRADITIONAL HISTORY, p. 300). The arranged “nationalistic spirit of Sasanid tradition,” as Ehsan Yarshater has noted, intended to promote ethnic pride leading to a sense of pre-modern “national identity” for Iranian people. He makes a clear distinction between a belief in the ‘primordial’ origin of Iranian people and Iran’s factual history. What is implied by his analysis is that it was the primordial feature of these myths and symbols, rather than the meaning of ʃaʻb in many Persian commentaries, and other sources, does not refer to a large confederacy of genealogically arranged tribes or qabā’el, but to the territorial identification of non-Arab social groups. In this reading of the text, ʃoʻub clearly refers to Persians and other non-Arabs, who were for the most part sedentary peoples, identifying themselves with a locality. Iranian identity was, therefore, reconstructed mainly on the basis of a territorially oriented view of the origin of the Iranian peoples: those who lived in any part of the Iranian territory (Irānzanīn or Irānšahr) and thus had presumably descended from fictive Iranian ancestors and shared a common Persian culture. This broad basis for the post-Islamic construction of Iranian identity seems to have survived until modern times, providing the foundation for the construction of a distinct Iranian “national identity.”

The ʃoʻubiya literary movement not only signified the revival of Iranian ethnic pride, but also became a motivating force for preservation and dissemination of Iran’s traditional history and cultural heritage with the aid of the emerging Persian literary language.

Persian literature and the revival of Iranian identity. It is widely acknowledged that the rise of the Persian literature during the 9th-11th centuries significantly helped the reconstruction of a distinct Iranian cultural identity during the medieval Islamic era. Evolved from dari (q.v.), a vernacular of the eastern regions, the new literature soon developed from a simple, popular folk poetry to the language of the court and the bureaucracy, producing a stylistically refined and sophisticated poetry. Iran, for the first time in her long history, had a cultivated, standardized literary language that became a medium of communication widely accepted by all peoples within its boundaries. It expanded from Khorasan and Transoxania to the central, southern, and western regions and eventually became the ʃangua franca of the chancery and literati of most Islamic dynasties (see IRAN viii. PERSIAN LITERATURE; see also Lazard; Wickens; Richter-Bernburg).

The desire to preserve the ethno-national history of Iran, as depicted in ʃaʻad-e-nāmaqs, may have been a motive for the Persian literati to promote a written literature in the late Sasanid period as well as New Persian literature in the early Islamic era. It was in these critical periods that the construction of Iranian identity by rearrangement of Persian mythologies, legendry narratives, and factual history took place: “A clear concept of Persian identity permeates the traditional history—a concept that may have originated in the Achaemenid period, but was definitely embraced by the Sasanids, who by calling themselves ‘kings of Iran and non-Iran (an-éran)’ clearly distinguished their own nation from the rest” (IRAN iii. TRADITIONAL HISTORY, p. 300). The arranged “nationalistic spirit of Sasanid tradition,” as Ehsan Yarshater has noted, intended to promote ethnic pride leading to a sense of pre-modern “national identity” for Iranian people. He makes a clear distinction between a belief in the ‘primordial’ origin of Iranian people and Iran’s factual history. What is implied by his analysis is that it was the primordial feature of these myths and symbols, rather than the
truth of their historical narratives, that provided the Iranian people with a sense of common origin as a pre-modern “nation.” These symbols and myths had long been used as “border guardians” for preserving the cultural identity of Iranians against the inroads of non-Iranians (anērān), including the Turanians, and the Hephthalites (q.v.). Preserved and disseminated by the säh-nāmas, these historical memories laid the foundation of Iranian cultural identity as preserved in classical Persian literature.

The first part of Ferdowsi’s (q.v.) Sāh-nāma reveals the roots of Iranian identity in ancient mythology. Ahura Mazda created the first man and the first king who laid the foundation of Iranian origin. It was the Kayanid Faridun (see FARE DUN) who divided the world into three parts with peoples of distinct ethnic characters and identities. Examining the basic characters of his three sons, Faridun assigned them to rule over the people of similar characters. Iran, occupying the middle clime, the best part of the world, was assigned to Iraj (q.v.), while Rum (Greece and Rome), on Iran’s western flank, was assigned to Salm, and Turān and China, on the eastern flank, were assigned to Tur. Salm, the king of Rum, is the prototype of the wise, patient ruler. Tur, the king of “Turān and Čīn” (i.e., Central Asia) is characterized as being impatient, courageous, and passionate. Iraj, the king of Iran, partakes of both these traits in his character. He is wise, patient, and prudent yet able to act swiftly and boldly if warranted (Sāh-nāma, ed. Khaleghi I, pp. 104-55; for further discussion of Iranian ethnic character, see Ashraf, 1994).

Rooted deeply in Persian cosmology and cosmogony (q.v.), an important element of Iranian identity is the notion that Iran is destined to be buffeted forever by its external enemies, who, out of jealousy and fear, conspire continually against the kingdom and its people. The enemies of Iran, be they the wise Westerners or the fearless people of the East, are linked to the evil forces of Ahriman. Iran itself, came into being at the same time as anērān (“non-Iran” or “anti-Iran”). During the reign of the Kayanids a war breaks out among the three parts of the world, with the conflict between Iran and Turān reaching a new height. Alexander invades Iran, overthrowing the Kayanids, and on the advice of his mentor, Aristotle, concocts the second major conspiracy against Iran by dividing the country into several regions, leading to the role of local princes and governors (molak al-τawādyyef). This is done in the hope of obviating the Persian threat against the West (Greek and Roman world; for Aristotle’s letter to Alexander, see Stern, 1970, pp. 25-34). Even worse is his pillaging of Persian cultural treasures of sacred knowledge, philosophy, science, and technology, some of which are translated while the original versions are destroyed. As a result, the translation of Greek works to Persian during the late Sasanid era and to Arabic during the early Islamic period may be seen as returning the Persian repertoire of knowledge back into the hands of their original possessors (see Bailey, p. 155; Ebn al-Nadim, p. 300; Mojmal al-tawārīḵ waʾl-=qeṣas, p. 10; see also Gutas, pp. 34-52).

Many of the myths surrounding these events, as they appear in the Sāh-nāma, were of Sasanid origin, during whose reign political and religious authority became fused and the comprehensive idea of Iran was constructed (see IRAN III. TRADITIONAL HISTORY; see also Gnoli, 1988; and ii, above).

The idea of fusing Zoroastrian and Abrahamic traditions through creating genealogical links between Persian kings and Biblical prophets, or even merging them into one as reflections of the same entity, as conceived, inter alia, by Tabari (d. 923), Balkamī (q.v.; d. 963), and Gardizi (q.v.; d. 1050) led to legitimizing the roots of Iranian identity in Islamic society. The motivation behind forming this idea may be attributed to a scholarly obsession to forge a symbiosis of fecund and powerful systems of beliefs that happened to co-exist at the same time in the same cultural milieu, or to the lack of knowledge of pre-Parthian factual history, or to a genuine desire for legitimization of Persian roots—which seems to be the case for Gardizi and the translators of Tabari’s Tafi-er—or an amalgam of all these factors. Yet, regardless of motivation, the dissemination of this idea helped to legitimate the roots of Iranian identity for the devout Persian Muslims for the later centuries.

Treating the history of children of Abraham and ancient Persians synchronously, Tabari suggests that the Persians believe Kayomart (see GAYOMARD) was Adam and Hušang-Pišdād (see HOŠANG), Kayomart’s grandson and successor, was the first man to rule over the seven regions of the earth. In fact, according to some Persian legends, Hušang was the son of Adam and Eve. The story of Solomon is followed by the story of mythical Persian kings. In his rendition of Tabari’s history, Balkamī quotes contradictory legends and beliefs about the creation of man and society in order to demonstrate the evolution of the Iranian and Arab wings of the Islamic civilization. Iranian and Abrahamic myths are brought together to form a unified body of mythology (Tabari, I, pp. 100 ff.; Balkami, pp. 112-17). Other Islamic historians, including Maqdesi (Maqaddasī; d. 1004) and Masʿudi (d. ca. 956), also attempted to reconcile and synchronize the Persian and Abrahamic traditions.

In the course of the intermingling of “Arab and Persian” aristocracy, one may note the emergence of a Persianized Islamic geographical notion that the region comprising the land of Persia and Arabia was selected by God as the center of the three climes (q.v.; kešvars) of the earth and were inhabited by the noblest of peoples. Thus, genealogies of both Persian and Arab nobility were honored in the new territory. In Gardizi’s words, “And God created different peoples as the land including Mecca, Medina, Hejaz, Yemen, Iraq, Khorasan, Nimruz and parts of Šam (Syria) are known in Persian as Iran.” He further adds, that “from the beginning of the world until now [its] people have been respected and have been masters of all around them and none has been taken as slave by other lands. . . . the people of this mid-clime of the world are wiser, more courageous and more generous than others and their neighbors are inferior to them in all these respects” (see
Gardizi, Zayn al-‘ajbār, p. 255). Also implied in Gardizi’s conception of identity is the notion that territorial ties represent genealogical origins (for an informative survey of traditional cartography and the conception of borders and partitions in Islamic societies, see Hartley and Woodward, I, 1).

Still a novel idea to unify the Persian and Abrahamic traditions was conceived by translators of Ţabarî’s Tafsîr (exegesis of the Qur’ân) from Arabic to Persian. In an introduction to the translation they noted, “He [The Almighty God] said, ‘I have never sent a messenger except one conversant in the language of his people and a language comprehensible to them.’ Furthermore, the Persian language was known from the earliest times and from the time of Adam until the era of Ishmael the prophet all divine messengers and all rulers on earth spoke in Persian. The first person to speak in the Arabic tongue was Ishmael the prophet: and our Prophet came from amongst the Arabs and the Qur’ân was sent down to him in Arabic; but here in this region the language is Persian, and the rulers here are of Persian descent” (tr. Ţabarî’s Tafsîr, 1960, p. 5).

The existence of a distinct cultural conception of being Iranian (Irâniyât) is most dramatically demonstrated in the trial of Afşin (q.v.) in 840. He was the hereditary ruler of Ohrusana and the commander who defeated Bâbak’s (q.v.) 20-year-long rebellion to save the Abbasids. Afşin, who was accused of propagating Iranian ethno-national sentiment, said, “Didn’t I communicate to you [i.e., those who testified against him] my inner secrets and tell you about the concept of Persian national consciousness (al a’jamiyya) and my sympathies for it and for its exponents?” (Ţabarî, tr., XXXIII, p. 189). This episode clearly reveals not only the presence of a distinct awareness of Iranian cultural identity and the people who actively propagated it, but also of the existence of a concept (al-a’jamiya or Irânîyât) to convey it.

To examine some of the ways in which the idea of Iran and its pre-modern ethno-national history has found expression in Persian literature, we shall briefly survey in the following sections the territorial and ethnic vocabulary of the concept of “Iran” and its related terms, as well as the frequency and pattern of its usage in Persian literature during several periods of Iran’s history over a millennium, stretching from the 9th-10th to the 19th century.

**Territorial and ethnic vocabulary for Iran.** Territorial notions of “Iran,” are reflected in such terms as irânsâh, irânzâmin, or Fors, the arabicized form of Pârs/Pârs (Persia). The ethnic notion of “Iranian” is denoted by the Persian words Pârsi or Irâni, and the Arabic term abîl al-fors (inhabitants of Persia) or ‘Ajam, referring to non-Arabs, but primarily to Persians as in molk-e ‘Ajam (Persian kingdom) or molâk-e ‘Ajam (Persian kings). The term Tâzik/Tajik found currency as a term referring to Persian people during the period of Turkic domination. The Persian term keşvâr (country) was used in pre-modern times to denote both the clime (e.g., haft keşvâr [q.v.] “seven climes”) and the dynastic realm or kingdom. The latter usage of the term only rarely conveyed the meaning of “country” in medieval historiography. The most common equivalent of keşvâr was the Arabic mamlâkât from the root m-ll-k, meaning “to own or to rule” (e.g., mulek “king” and mulek “owner”). Mamlâkât was often used in Persian historiography for territorially defined kingdoms or dynastic realms and its constituent provinces, e.g., mamlâkât-e Iran or mamlâkât-e Iran or mâmâlîk-e mabrusa-ye Iran “protected kingdom of Iran” (during the Mongol era and thereafter), mamlâkât-e Kûrâsân or Fârs or Kermân (see below). The Arabic terms wâlîyat and eyâlat until recently referred to provinces. The old terms wâtan (Ar.) or mîhan (Pers.) were used in classical Persian literature to refer predominantly to a person’s place of birth and habitation. One’s place of birth and residence was considered as the object of one’s love, admiration, and devotion (see Ashraf, 1993, pp. 159-64, 1994, pp. 521-50; Lambton, 1978, pp. 785-90). The term “Iran,” has stood for the kingdom of Iranian dynasties and the homeland of the Iranian people since the mythical foundation of the country by Farîdun. Irânîahr (see ERANSAHR), a Sasanid concept, conveys the meaning of the kingdom of the rulers of Iran. These territorial conceptions of Iran were, in particular, significant for identification of Iranian people, who were more concerned with their territorial ties, than Arabs, who were primarily identified with their lineage.

It is important to note that the term “Iran” constitutes only one of the elements that define Iranian identity in its ethnic, cultural, and territorial totality. This may be seen in such monumental works as Bayhaqi’s History, ‘Osmor-al-Ma‘ālî’s Qûbas-nâmâ, Nezâm-al-Molk’s Sîlîsât-nâmâ, Nezâmî’s Haft peškar and Ėsrav o Sîrîn, Hafez’s (q.v.) Divvân, and Sa’dî’s Bastân and Goletân. These works, while rarely mentioning “Iran,” present the various aspects of Persian cultural heritage and historical memories, including myths and legends, worldviews and moral values, mores and norms of social behavior, principles of political legitimacy and social relations, as well as imagined genealogical origins of the Iranian people. Yet, the survey of the frequency and pattern of the usage of “Iran” and its derivatives in Persian literature must be taken into account in the context of claims by those authors who base much of their argument on the rarity of the occurrence of the usage of the word “Iran” in Persian literature in contradistinction to its frequent application in modern times, a radical innovation that they attribute to the writings of 18th and 19th century Orientalists who passed this legacy to the Pahlavi state, which in turn bolstered and institutionalized it through legislation in 1935 by changing the official name of the country from Persia to Iran (Vaziri, 1993; Frainger, 1999). These frequencies are driven from the indexes of selected historical writings. In interpreting them, however, caution must be exercised, since the criteria used by various indexers and the precision of their efforts may vary considerably from work to work. They are, nevertheless, suggestive of the pattern of the usage of the terms in each period. To simplify the findings of the survey the frequency of the use of the term “Iran” in each period is pre-
sent in terms of the average number of terms appeared in each of the historical works of that era.

The remaining part of this section will describe the frequency and pattern of usage of the term “Iran” in Persian literature under the Iranian regional dynasties, during whose rule the pre-modern ethno-national history of Iran was revived and the foundation of Iranian cultural identity was reconfirmed. These same frequencies and patterns of usage in literatures of the Saljuqid, Il-khanid, Timurid, and Safavid eras will be treated in the sections that follow.

**The usage of the term “Iran” in the early Persian literature.** The period between the birth of literary Persian poetry in the late 9th century and the composition of the Sâh-nâma by Ferdowsi in the late 10th century marks the flourishing of the usage of “Iran” in the emerging Persian prose and poetry. A unique feature of this period is the creation of a corpus of Iranian epic literature and romances dealing with pre-Islamic Iran, using the pre-Islamic notion of Iran and its related terms (see Şâfî, 1984, pp. 160-342). References to Irân and Irânizâmin, its myths and legends, its kings and notables (gozin-e Irân) begin to appear in a number of books of kings, including Mas’udi Marvazi’s Sâh-nâma (ca. 912), Abu Mansuri’ Sâh-nâma (ca. 960; although we only have fragments in the form of a preface), and Daqiqi’s (q.v.; d. 976) 1,000 lines narrating the reign of Goštasp that were used by Ferdowsi (see Qazvini, 1953, pp. 5-90). It is, however, in Ferdowsi’s Sâh-nâma (d. 1019 or 1025), that the Iranian worldview and its mythological and legendary history, as well as its later factual history (Parthian and Sasanid periods) is presented with utmost eloquence; in it the name “Iran” and its related terms are used 720 times and “Iranians” 350 times.

A group of Persian literati, who wrote in Arabic during the formative period of Islamic historiography, began to introduce specifically Persian themes and frequently referred to “Iran” and “Iranian” (or in its Arabicized form, Fors or ¿Ajam) in the context of Iranian traditional history. Beginning with the pioneering and influential translation of the K’addû-nâmâg from Pahlavi into Arabic by Ebn al-Moqaffa’ (q.v.; d. 757; as well as a number of other translations), Persian literati continued to elaborate on the pre-Islamic traditional history of Iran. Notable among them were Ebn Qotayba’s (q.v.; d. 889) various works, including Oyun al-aqûbûr, referring on various occasions to the Persian history and cultural heritage; Dinavari (d. 895), who dedicates a large part of his Aqûbûr al-sêwâtî to the narratives of pre-Islamic Iran; Ŕabar (d. 927), who devotes a book of his monumental History to similar topics; Şâmza Esfahânî (d. 962), who, with deep pride and passion for Iran (ta’âssob al-fors), dedicates a large part of his Seni moluk al-ärz to the narratives of pre-Islamic Iranian kings. Other historical works of the same category include Ebn Meskawî’s (q.v.; d. 1030) Tajûreb al-omam and Tahdîb al-aqûbûr, Ŕa’alebi’s (d. 1038) Gorar aqûbûr moluk al-fors, and Bîrûni’s (d. 1048) Aqûbûr al-hâq-iya. It was within this tradition that a number of prominent Arab historians too, wrote extensively on Iran’s history, including Maqdesi’s (d. 945) Ketûb al-bad’ wa’l-ta’rîf, Mas’udi’s (d. 956) Moruj al-ghâbûh and Ketûb al-tanbîh wa’l-âsirf, and Ya’qubî’s (d. 987) Ta’rîf. Mention must also be made of such influential works in Persian as Bal-’ami’s (d. 962) redaction of Tabâri’s history, which marks the beginning of Persian historiography, and Gardizi’s (d. 1050) Zayn al-aqûbûr, whose concentration on Iran was extensive (for discussion on Persian historiography of this period, see Daniel, 1990, pp. 282-321; and Meisami, 2000, pp. 348-74). On average, on 76 occasions the term Irân and related concepts were used in each of the above historical works (including Tabâri’s Târîf with 292 cases, and an average of 55 references without counting his work).

The significance of these works lies, not only in their frequent use of the terms Irân and Irânshâr, or Fors and ‘Ajam but in the institutionalization in Islamic historiography of the traditional history of Iran as a major chapter in the history of the ancient world. Their narrative of Iran’s ancient history was repeatedly copied and presented in the later periods. As noted, the term “Iran” in these works refers to various aspects of Iran’s traditional history in the pre-Islamic era. Such references, however, helped establish the idea of the territorial and genealogical origin of the Iranian people, which provided the foundation of Iranian cultural identity in the subsequent centuries. Another factor in the survival of Iran’s ethno-national history may be the widespread reading and reciting of the Sâh-nâmâ by storytellers whose audiences included individuals from all walks of life. The focus of the Persian epic literature and historical writings of this period was mainly on pre-Islamic Iran, referring for the most part to the historical notion of Iran in the pre-Islamic era rather than to the contemporary living reality of Iran after the Islamic conquest.

Contemporary notions of “Iran” began to emerge in this period when the pioneers of Persian poetry started to use the term in reference, albeit symbolically, to contemporary events. Such references to the contemporary Iranian kings, kingdoms, rulers, commanders, sages, and lands are found in several divûns of Persian poetry from this period. For example, Rudaki (d. 941), calls a Safarid governor of Sistân a nobleman of the Sasanid stock and “pride of Iran” (maqûvar-e Irân), which implies a sense of continuity in Iranian identity from the Sasanid to the Samanid era (Târik-e Sistân, pp. 319-20). Abu Şakur Balki (in Afarin-nâmâ [1947]; cited by Sajjadi, p. 751), refers to the “sage of Iran.” Furthermore, reference to the contemporary conception of “Iran” flourished under the early Ghaznavids.

**The Ghaznavid transitional phase.** During the early Ghaznavid period, which marks the beginnings of Turkic domination, the cultural life and literary tradition of the Samanids continued. The early Ghaznavids were raised as slave soldiers in the Samanid military institution and spent a period of their character formation within the rich cultural ambience of the Persian court (Bosworth, p. 61). It was in this atmosphere that Persian literati invented genealogies to connect the Ghaznavids to the Sasanids.
According to a genealogy cited by Juzjāni, Sebūltigin, through six generation from his father, was the descendant of Yazdgerd III’s daughter (see Bosworth, p. 61). This genealogical invention is similar to the efforts by Persians to cast the fourth Shi’ite Imam as the maternal grandson of the last Sasanid king Yazdgerd III by supportive genealogical references to “Iranian king” (šah-e Irān) and kšosrow-e Irān, and also makes references to irānšahr and irānzamin (Divān, ed. Dabirsiāqi, index); Onšori (d. 1040), refers to the “Iranian king” (šah-e Irān, kšosrow-e Irān), “Iranian kingdom” (kšâvar-e Irān), and “Iranian lands” (irānzamin and ūzâmī-e irānšahr; Divān, ed. Dabirsiāqi, Index); Manuchehr (d. 1041), refers to “Iran” and “Turān” and kšosrow-e Irān. References to “Iran” are also found in the divāns of Abu Hanifa Eskāfi (d. 1041) as well as in Asādi Tusī’s Divān (d. 1073). As’ad Gorgānī’s Vis o Rūmīn (ca. 1072, Index) refers to “Iran” on 25 occasions (for surveys of references to “Iran” in Persian classical poetry, see Sajjadi, pp. 749-59; Matini, pp. 243-68; Safī’i Kadkanī, pp. 1-26).

Two novel developments under Sultan Mahmūd significantly helped the foundation of Persian hegemony. The first was the converting of all chancery records and correspondences from Arabic to Persian by the order of Mahmūd’s first vizier, Abū l-Ḥasan Esfarā’ī (q.v.). Although his successor, Ahmad b. Ḥasan Maymandi (q.v.), restored Arabic, Esfarā’ī’s practice marked the beginning of the establishment of Persian as the literary language of the chancery in the courts of the Turkish and Mongol dynasties in Iran, Central Asia, Muslim India, and Anatolia in the coming centuries. Furthermore, Sultan Mahmūd’s conquest of India marked the beginning of Persian influence in the subcontinent (see India ii). Although the hierarchical notion of “Turk and Tāzik,” which became prevalent under the Ghaznavids, dealt a blow to the use of the term “Iran,” the increasing hegemony of Persian language helped elevate Iran’s cultural heritage and its expression in the Persian literature of this period. Bayhaqi, for example, identified himself as a “Tāzik,” but used the term very rarely; his matchless History contains a wealth of Persian cultural memories, descriptions of the festivals of nowruz and mohregān, court grandeur and etiquette, as well as the Persian modes of social and political relations. In a telling passage on the occasion of the coronation of the Saljuqid, Sultan Toğrul, Bayhaqi states that when “the audience hall appeared devoid of all splendor and glitter,” Judge Ša’ed addresses the Sultan, “May the lord’s life be long! Take note that this is Sultan Mas’ud’s throne that you are sitting on. . . . Such unforeseeable events do happen and one cannot know what further happenings will emerge from the Unseen.” The Sultan replies, “We are new to this land, and as strangers, unacquainted with the manners and customs of the Tāzik’s [Persian]” (cited from, History of Bayhaqi, annotated tr. with introd. by C. E. Bosworth and M. Ashtiany, forthcoming). This passage shows how the Ghaznavids were known for their familiarity, as well as sympathy, with Persian customs and how the rising Saljuq sultans were ignorant of Persian cultural heritage. It also signifies how a member of the religious ranks of Persian literati was concerned with the Persian style of court etiquette and ceremony.

**Iranian Identity During the Saljuqids**

Iranian identity underwent a period of complex mutations with mixed consequences under the Saljuqids. In this period, the decline of Persian epic and the less frequent usage of the term “Iran” in Persian poetry and historiography coincided with the flourishing of Persian literature and spread of Persian hegemony in Islamic societies.

Turkic dynasties were for the most part military states bent on war and conquest and imposed an exogenous rule over their Persian subjects. However, the Persian literati took control over many organs of the state administration and from such positions of influence reintroduced their Persian cultural heritage. With the Turkic rise to power, the ‘sword’ and the ‘pen,’ which had been reuniﬁed in the Persian hands during the Iranian regional dynasties, were once again separated. The sword and the pen symbolically represented two pillars of the sovereignty of the ruling classes: “military class” and “administrative class” respectively (it should be noted here that the military contingents of Persian origin continued to function, but as a secondary force on command). Thus, the rise of the Turkic slaves and tribes to power in the 11th-12th centuries led to a new binary division of “Turk and Tāzik/Tājik” and less frequent usage of “Iran” in Persian historical and literary works of this period (for a useful survey of the usage of Tāzik/Tājik in Persian literature, see Dabirsīkāi, 1991).

The long period of Turkish rule in Iran could itself be divided into a number of distinct periods in terms of Iranian identity: the Ghaznavid transitional period with the continuity of Samanid tradition (see above); the Saljuq period, marking a complex situation for Iranian identity; the Mongol and Timurid phase, during which the name “Iran” was used for the dynastic realm and a pre-modern ethno-national history of Iranian dynasties was arranged; and the period from the Safavids to the end of the Qajars, when a clear Iranian-Shi’ite identity, based on an amalgamation of Turk and Fars elements, emerged. It is interesting to note that the Persian literati invented complete genealogies to connect both the first and the last Turkic dynasties that ruled Iran to the pre-Islamic dynasties: the Ghaznavids and the Qajars (see below).

**The complex phase under the Saljuqs.** Although the great Saljuq reuniﬁed Iran for the ﬁrst time since the Arab conquest of Persia, the use of the term “Iran” to denote the dynastic realm was not encouraged. This can be attributed to further Islamization of Iranian society and institutionalization of the Islamic state with a universalistic outlook. In fact, the Saljuqs founded a religio-political system by combining the temporal authority of the sultan with the symbolic religious authority of the caliph.
Nezām-al-Molk played a pivotal role in the establishment of Islamic orthodoxy and universalism as an integral part of the Saljuqid state (Bondārī Ģazāfahānī, pp. 66-67). The Nezāmiya schools, which were created at his behest, contributed to the interconnection between the state and religious establishments and helped strengthen the status of civil administration and men of the pen vis-à-vis the men of the sword in the Islamic state. The literati of Persian origin, who were trained in both Persian literary tradition and Islamic law at these schools, continued to serve as bureaucratic agents in various Islamic governments in the ensuing centuries and were responsible for spreading the Persian language and culture throughout the Islamic world (see also Klausner, 1973; Lambton, 1980, pp. 203-82).

There was a decline in the usage of “Iran” in Persian historiography (see, Şağa, 1984, pp. 154-59; 1977, pp. 126-44, 158-60), with only few references, made to “Iran” or even “Tāzik” in the works of such historians of this period as Bondārī Ģazāfahānī’s (d. 1100) Tāรก-e selselaye Saljuqi, and Nasāvi’s (d. 1253) Sirāt-e Jalāl-al-Din Minkobernī. The latter (pp. 47, 75) refers to “Iran” on two occasions: the first regarding Gōstasp (q.v.), king of Iran, and the second regarding Nezām-al-Molk, the grand vizier (das-tur) of Iran and Turān. Esfāzānī’s Rawzat al-jannat fi aważāf mādīnāt al-Herēt (p. 162) also has one reference to Nezām-al-Molk as the grand vizier of mamālek-e Irān.

The decline of Persian epic literature and its eventual replacement by Islamic epics or a synthesis of Iranian and Islamic myths and legends must be considered as another distinct feature of this period. This synthesis prefigures post-Mongol and Safavid developments. Thus, although the ‘Ali-nāma contains both an implicit and explicit rejection of purely Iranian epics, the genre of pand-nāma anthologies, which quoted didactic lines from the Şāh-nāma side by side with moral dicta from Imam ‘Abbās, are emblematic of this forthcoming fusion.

The decline in the number of references to “Iran” in this period is also evident in Persian poetry, as seen in the divāns of Sanā’i and Anvari. An illustration of the zealous, anti-Iranian Islamic attitude may be seen in the poems of Amir-Mo’ezzī (d. 1147) and Sayf-al-Dīn Ḥāfżī (q.v.; d. early 14th century). Unaware of the meaning and cultural significance of myths and legends, Amir-Mo’ezzī accuses Ferdowsī of lying and wild exaggerations in his treatment of Rostam (Divān-e Amir Mo’ezzī, p. 286). By contrast, the poet Ṣā’ī, quite conscious of the social functions of myths, wrote: “The exploits of the champion Rostam and the brazen-bodied Esfandīār are narrated in fable in order to make rulers and kings realize that this world itself is a memento and a legacy derived from many people from the past” (Kollivāšt, p. 724). Ḥāfżī, went so far, on the other hand, as to say that the soil and water of Iran are not suitable for a Muslim’s prayer, because the Sasānid kings had rendered it nājes, i.e. ritually impure (Divān, p. 31).

Yet, even in this period, one finds works of Persian epic, such as Irānšāh’s Kūl-nāma and Bahman-nāma (ca. 1117), that make frequent references to “Iran,” nearly 160 times in the former case and over 100 times in the latter. Although overt references to “Iran” are relatively rare in this period, abundant mention of its manifestations can be seen in Persian literature. ‘Onsor-al-Ma’ālī, well versed in Persian cultural heritage, authored Qūbūs-nāma, a rare handbook of cultural values and norms of social behavior in almost all major aspects of Persian everyday life. There is, however, no mention of “Iran” or “Tāzik” in this book, making merely six references to “Ājam” instead. Nezām-al-Molk (d. 1092) in his influential work Rāhk-e takhrīst, referring to “Iran” on six occasions, and to Tāzik on 11 occasions.

Accounting, for spreading the Persian language and culture throughout East Asia (for the notion of “Persian hegemony,” see i, ‘Perian hegemony’ established itself in the Ottoman empire, Central Asia, the Mughal empire in India, and South- East Asia (for the notion of “Persian hegemony,” see i, above).

The Idea of “Iran” Under the Mongols and Timurids

The fall of the Abbāsid Caliphate, the symbolic guardians of Islamic universalism, in the 13th century, accompanied by a shift from religious orthodoxy to relative religious tolerance and the unification of the Iranian plateau under the Il-khānids, signaled a new era in the history of Iranian identity. These developments
the Persian literati with a new opportunity to rearrange the ethno-national history of Iran and reinstate—for the first time since the fall of the Sasanid empire—the usage of Iran and Irānzanīm as appellation for their dynastic realm. Also contributing to the new concept of Iran, its global location, and its place in history was the emergence of genuinely “universal” and “world” histories with divisions into different regions describing the mores and manners of the different civilizations, such as the Indians or the Franks (Europeans). It is in this vein that Rašīd-al-Dīn’s Jāme’ al-tawārīḵ is often referred to as the first “world history,” reflecting the Mongol conception of universal rule and world domination. This new historical outlook was prompted by the Mongols’ sweeping advances, east and west, into Europe and elsewhere, combined with their own innate curiosity about different religions.

The prominent historians of this period frequently referred to Iran and Irānzanīm both as historical notions and as contemporaneous entities. Rašīd-al-Dīn Fażl-Allāh (d. 1318) refers repeatedly to “Iran” in his monumental work Jāme’ al-tawārīḵ, as well as in his Tāriḵ-e mobārak-e Gāzānī and Sawāneh al-afkār. He also makes a number of references to the country of Iran (kešvar-e Iran). This appears to be one of the first instances of the usage of the concept of country (kešvar) to denote the contemporary kingdom of Iran. On another occasion, he refers to the borders of Iran as extending from the Amūyā river to the Jhelum river in northern India (Ab-e Javn) in the east, and from Byzantium (Rum) to Egypt in the west (pp. 46, 73, 147). Other references to Iran include “Peoples of Iran” (nahāti-e or kalāyeq-e Irānzanīm), “provinces of Iran” (manālek-e Irānzanīm), “Khan of Irānzanīm,” and “sovereigns of Iran” (moluk-e Iran). Influenced by the new conception of the “world,” Rašīd-al-Dīn, like many other historians and geographers, mentions Iran, Turān, Farang, Egypt and Morocco (Māġreb), Byzantium (Rum), India, and China in referring to the kingdoms of the time, signifying a distinct identity for Iran among major countries of the world (for a pioneering survey of resurgence of the use of the term “Iran” during the Mongol period, see Krawulski, 1978, pp. 11-17).

Other historical works, including Banāḵtā’i’s (q.v.; d. 1330) Tāriḵ-e Banāḵtā’i, Sābānḵā’ārī’s Majma’ al-ansāb (1333), Naḵjavānī’s (d. 1336) Dastūr al-kāṯeb, Hamd-Allāh Mostawfī’s (d. 1349) Tāriḵ-e gozūda; and ‘Abd-al-Razzāq Sāmarqandi’s (d. 1371) Maṭla’-e sa’dān wa majma’-e bahārūn make frequent references to Iran and its related terms. Describing a battle in which Sultan Ujjeytu barely defeats his adversaries, Sāmarqandi explains that “if it were not due to God’s benevolence nothing would have remained of the kingdom of Iran but name” (p. 43); On another occasion he outlines the borders of the Abu Sa’īd kingdom from Oxsus to Euphrates and underlines that “Iranāzahr consists of the cities lying between the two borders” (p. 121). Other historical works that make numerous references to “Iran” include Ḥāfez-e Abru’s (d. 1417) Zohdat al-tawārīḵ and Joḡrāfā’ā, Tāj-al-Dīn Ḥasan Yazdī’s (d. 1453) Jāme’ al-tawārīḵ-e Ḥasanī, and Mir Mohammad b. Sayyed Borchān-al-Dīn Kázāvand-Sāhī’s (Mirḵᵛānd; d. 1497), Rawzat al-safā. Finally, it is noteworthy that, in a surviving collection of chancery correspondence between rulers of Iran and neighboring kingdoms from the early Timurid to the early Safavid periods, 19 references can be found to the contemporary notions of Iran, Irānzanīm, kešvar-e Iran (country of Iran, p. 690), Sāhmānāb-e Irān (king of kings of Iran), abwāl-e Irān (conditions of Iran), moluk-e Iran (rulers of Iran), manālek-e Irān (provinces of Iran), sāhrār-e diār-e Ḵān (the ruler of Iran), sepahsādār-e Irān (military commander of Iran), and Ḵūn o Turān (see Navā’ī, 1977, Index). On average, on 42 occasions the term Iran and related concepts were used in each of the above historical works of this period, referring to both pre-Islamic and Islamic eras.

Reconstruction of pre-modern national history. The significance of the historiography and historical geography of this era is not limited to the frequent usage of “Iran” and related terms or even the reinstatement of the term Irānzanīm. It extends to the reconstruction of new conceptions of Iran’s “pre-modern ethno-national history” in terms of a continuum of dynastic histories from the primordial mythological era to the Mongol period. This mode of presentation of Iran’s history, linking the traditional history of Iran, as reconstructed by the Sasanid literati, to the early Safavid period was a novel phenomenon. This sequence of the dynastic history of Irānzanīm was constructed for the first time by Ḵāzī Ṣāḥer-al-Dīn ʿOmar Bayāzīwī (q.v.; d. 1316) in his concise (95 pages), yet significant and influential, history of Iran, Neẓām al-tawārīḵ (The arrangement of history). Bayāzīwī was a prominent figure in the religious wing of the Persian literati, who served as the chief justice (qāzī al-qoẓūr) of Fārs province in the early Il-khānīd era and made a number of well-known contributions in Arabic to Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic philosophy, and Arabic grammar. His only work in Persian was his arrangement of the ethno-national history of Iran. In his own words, “I have connected the sequence of governors and kings of Iran—which extends from the Euphrates to the Oxsus, or rather from the Arab lands to the borders of Khojand—from Adam to the present day. I have divided it into four parts and written it in Persian so that its benefits might be more widespread” (tr. in Melville, p. 76). As Charles Melville (p. 70) has suggested, Bayāzīwī’s rearrangement of Iran’s history from ancient times to the Mongol era “had a rather clear political agenda” and that “he was supported by people at the highest level of the court.”

Although a number of later historians, including Rašīd-al-Dīn and Banāḵtā’i, frequently cited Neẓām al-tawārīḵ and adopted its reordering of Iran’s history, it appears that Bayāzīwī’s rearrangement of Iran’s ethno-national history into “four periods” was followed in a more systematic and substantively expanded version by Hamd-Allāh Mostawfī (q.v.; d. 1349) in his influential work Tāriḵ-e gozūda. Mostawfī elaborates on the dynasties that ruled Iran in four sections (bābās): first, the pre-Islamic dynasties of the PiŠdādīs, the Kayāṅdīs, the Moluk
The influence and popularity of both Bayzawi’s and Mostawfi’s rearrangement of the history of Iran is indicated by the large number of surviving manuscripts of their works from the 13th to the 19th centuries, 58 and 95 respectively (compared to other popular works such as Barakati’s with 31, Juzjani’s with 23, and Sabankhara’i’s with 13 surviving manuscripts). Of Bayzawi’s work, 27 copies were produced in the Safavid period and 14 during the Qajar era (see Melville, Tables 1 and 2, pp. 73-74). It seems plausible, therefore, that a proportionately large number of manuscripts of Mostawfi’s work may also have been produced during the Safavid and Qajar periods. Indeed, Mostawfi’s influence seems to have surpassed that of Bayzawi’s, as he is cited in later historical works more frequently. For example, Mirk’and in Tariq-e rawsat al-tawik refers to Mostawfi on 16 occasions and to Bayzawi in only 8 cases, and K’andamir in Habib al-star refers to Mostawfi on 56 occasions and to Bayzawi on only 3 occasions.

It was through the popularity of these works that the new, fourfold paradigm of Iran’s history, which displays a more ethno-nationalistic spirit, enjoyed a prolonged success in Persian historiography in the ensuing centuries. Another important feature of this mode of reconstruction of the dynastic history of Iran is a clear geographical awareness of Iran or Iranzamin both in its totality and its constituent parts, combining the historical depth of the idea of “Iran” with its geographical breadth.

Mostawfi’s significant contribution to the pre-modern “ethno-national history of Iran” is supplemented by his geography, Nozhat al-qolub. The latter work’s importance derives from its treatment of the contemporary geographical notion of Iran, as well as its boundaries and provinces. Prefacing his work with a description of the two holy sites of Mecca and Medina, outside of Iran’s boundaries, Mostawfi begins his treatment of Iran by discussing different views on the foundation of Iran by Iraq (q.v.) and its place in the world’s seven climes. He suggests that all commentators (Greeks, Indians, and Persians) agree that Iran, located at the center of the inhabited world, is its best part, harking back to the old Sasanid notion of Iransahr. According to Mostawfi, the boundaries of Iranzamin stretch from the Sind river (in India) to Karazm and Transoxania in the east to Byzantium and Syria in the west. Being aware of the depth and breadth of the historical geography of Iran, Mostawfi reiterates that he is treating only those outer lands that are located on the frontiers of the kingdom of Iran, although “some, at times, have been under the sway of the sovereigns of Iran, and even in these parts some cities have been in fact founded by the sovereigns of Iran” (tr. Le Strange, pp. 23-24). Mostawfi describes the provinces of Iran in 20 chapters, beginning with Iraqi (Iraq-i Arab) or “the heart of Iransahr,” and Iraq-i Ajam (western provinces), followed by Arran and Mugan, Servat, Romania, Armenia, Rabi’i, Kurdistan, Khozestan, Fars and the Persian Gulf, Sabankara, Kermand, Mokran and Hormuz, the province between Kermand and Qohestan (present day Baluchistan), Nimruz, Khorasan, Mizandaran, Qumes and Tabarestan, and finally, Jilannat (Gilani). This mode of conceptualizing Iran’s history and geography has been followed by other historians since the 13th century.

The rise of “Iranian-Shi’ite” identity under the Safavids

Iran regained its political unity and was given a new distinct religious identity under the Safavids. Shi’ism became the official state religion and henceforth played an important role in the reconstruction of a new ethno-religious identity for the Iranian people. Furthermore, the rise of the Safavid empire coincided with the rise of the Ottoman empire in West Asia and North Africa,
the Mughal empire in India, and the Uzbek empire in Central Asia, all adhering to Sunnite Islam. The formation of these political entities helped create a distinct Iranian-Shi’ite political identity among these polities. It also helped to expand the hegemony of Persian language in much of the Islamic world. Persian literature was produced from Anatolia to Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent (see Golčin-Ma’ani, Bâ kârvân-e Hend).

Under the Safavids, a number of important measures were taken to blend religious and ethno-national traditions, while closely following the historiography of the Mongol-Timurid era (for a survey of Safavid historiography and its connection with Timurids, see Quinn, 2000, pp. 28, 49-50, 52).

“Iran” in Safavid historiography, Ghič-al-Din Kāndamir (d. 1524), the first prominent Safavid historian, was one of the last historians of the Il-khanid-Timurid era and the grandson of Mir Mohamamd Mirkând, author of the influential history, Rawzat al-safā. In preparing his general history, Ḥabīb al-siār fī ākhtār āfrād al-bašār, Kāndamir followed the style of Rawzat al-safā and that of such popular historical works as Nezām al-tawāriḵ and Tāriḵ-e gozida (see above). The frequency of the usage of Iran, Irān zamīn and related terms in the three volumes of Ḥabīb al-siār (completed in 1524) reveals the evolution in the usage of these terms in the Islamic era. The frequency is relatively high in volume I, with 28 references to events of the pre-Islamic period; it drops sharply to 12 in volume II, treating the history of the Islamic period up to the Mongol era; and it leaps to 69 references in volume III, dealing with the Il-khanid-Timurid, and early Safavid periods. Other representative works of this period also make frequent references to “Iran,” including ʿĀlāmārā-ye Sāh Esmaʿāl, ʿĀlāmārā-ye Sāh Ṭāhmāsp, Hasan Beg Rumlu’s (d. 1577) Aḥsan al-tawāriḵ, Ebn Karbālāʾi’s (d. 1589) Rawzāt al-jennān, Malekšāh Hoš̄ayn Sīstānī’s (d. 1619) Ekhāʾ al-molak, Mollā ‘Ab-ul-Nabi Fakr-al-Zamānī’s Tāḏkera-ye meyḵānā (1619); Eskander Beg Rumlu’s (d. 1629) Aḥsan al-tawāriḵ; Wāleḥ Esfahānī’s (d. 1648) Gold-e barin, Naṣīrī’s (d. 1698) Dastur-e šahrīārān.

Finally, Mohammad Mofid Bāfqi (d. 1679), in addition to making numerous references to “Iran” and “ʿAjam” in his Jāmeʿe Mofidi (q.v.), refers to distinct borders of Iran and its neighbors, India, Turān, and Byzantium as well as the influx of people from those lands to Iran. In a number of cases, he describes the nostalgia of those Iranians who migrated to the West and the kingdoms of the Safavids, using the term Iran and related concepts in each of the above historical works of the Safavid era.

It is also noteworthy that, from the beginnings of relations between Iran and the West in this period, the Iranian officials tended to consider their distinctive culture and civilization to be unique and superior to all others, including the Western countries (for a survey of the superiority trait among Iranians of the Safavid era, see Matthee, 1998).

Religion and ethno-national identity. Contrary to the views of those who deny the role of religion in the formation of ethno-national identities, it may be noted that in most European societies local churches played an important part in creating and maintaining a sense of national identity, particularly at times of social and political crisis. Eric Hobsbawm argues that, although religion may appear as a rival to nationalism in attracting people’s loyalties, in actual fact it has acted as a catalyst for nationalism both in pre-modern and modern times. As examples of this process he cites the contributions made by Zoroastrianism in the formation of the Iranian ethno-national identification in the Sasanid era and the role played by Shi’ism at the time of the Safavids (Hobsbawm, pp. 69, 137). The evidence pointing to the symbiosis of Persian and Shi’ite traditions includes the use of combined Shi’ite and Iranian titles by the Safavids shahs, the dissemination of the genealogy for the Imams as maternal descendants of the last Sasanid king, invention of the tradition of Ḥobb al-watān menaʿl-imān, and dissemination of various traditions attributed to the Imams providing religious legitimacy to the observance of the Persian New Year and its accompanying rites.

The Safavid kings called themselves, among other appellations, the “dog of the shrine of ‘Ali” (kahb-e āstān-e ‘Ali), while assuming the title of Sāhānsāh (the king of kings) of Iran. It must be remembered that the title of the king of Iran was also used by Āq Quyunlu rulers (the direct predecessors of the Safavids) who presented themselves as successors to the glorious mythical kings of ancient Persia (Faridun, Jamšid, and Kaykāvus). Even Ottoman sultans, when addressing the Āq Quyunlu and Safavid kings, used such titles as the “king of Iranian lands” or the “sultan of the lands of Iran” or “the king of kings of Iran, the lord of the Persians” or the “holders of the glory of Jamshid and the vision of Faridun and the wisdom of Dārā.” They addressed Shah Emām-i as: “the king of Persian lands and the heir to Jamshid and Kaykōsrō” (Navāʿī, pp. 578, 700-702, 707). During Shah ‘Abbās’s reign (q.v.) the transformation is complete and Shi’ite Iran comes to face the two adjacent Sunni powers: the Ottoman Empire to the west and the Kingdom of Uzbeks to the east.

The maternal Iranian origin of the Imams. With the spread of Shi’ism in Iran, the idea of the maternal linkage of the Imams with Sasanid stock (real or imagined) was
disseminated. The Persian Shi’ites are proud of the lineage of the Imams as maternal descendants of Yazdegerd III, the last Sasanid king. According to tradition, the fourth Shi’ite Imam (‘Ali b. Husayn, Hazrat-e Sajjad), is reported to have said: “I am proud to descend from the lineage of my father, Imam Hosayn, coming from Qoraysh, the noblest of Arab tribes, as I am of the lineage of my mother, princess Sahrابänū, descended from Persian stock, whom the Prophet himself called the noblest of non-Arab peoples” (Dehšodā, III, p. 1537; Qomi, p. 196; Ebn al-Balḳi, p. 4). The marriage of the Persian princess with the third Imam has been described as having taken place at a dramatic audience of ‘Omar, the second caliph, at which a princess, the daughter of Yazdegerd III, is presented among the booties of the Arab army. At the critical moment when ‘Omar orders the selling of the princess into the slave market, Imam ‘Ali appears on the scene and opposes the verdict on the grounds of a Prophetic tradition that forbids “the sale of the royal offspring in Islam.” When Imam ‘Ali prevails, he leaves her to the patronage of Salmān Farsī (a legendary Persian companion of the Prophet) to arrange for her marriage to a man of her choice. Sahrabānū chooses to marry Imam Hoṣayn and gives birth to the fourth Shi’ite Imam. In this imaginary narrative, all Imams from the fourth to the twelfth (the Mahdi, the Lord of the Age) are maternal descendants of the last Sasanid king (see, ‘Onṣor-al-Ma’āli, Qābus-nāma, pp. 137-38). Considering that the Safavids had also invented a genealogy linking their lineage to the Imams, belief in this narrative also signifies the Persian genealogical roots of the Safavids.

The love of homeland. On a number of occasions in the Safavid period—apparently for the first time—the notion of waṭan and the love for it were extended from the love of birthplace and residence to Iran. Saﬁ’ī Kadkānī argues, for example, that the Hadith of ḥobb al-waṭan mena’l-imān might have been invented by Persians, who were more concerned with territorial ties, than Arabs, who were primarily identified with their lineage. Saﬁ’ī argues that Jāhez did not refer to the tradition in his comprehensive treatment of the subject, al-Hanīn ela’l-awtān; it is rarely found in Sunni Hadith collections; and the main references to it could be found in Muḥammad Bāqer Maǰlesi’s Behār al-anwār and Shaikh ‘Abbās Qomi’s Saḥīn at al-bebār (Saﬁ’ī Kadkānī, p. 12). Muḥammad Moﬁd Bāfqi, a contemporary of Maǰlesi, in his Jāme’-e Moﬁdī reports that when a prominent statesman, Mīrzā Muḥammad Amin, had been serving as the vizier of the Qutbshahīds of Deccan (q.v.), he became nostalgic and returned to Iran for the love of his homeland (ḥobb-e waṭan and ārezu-e āmanan-e be Irān). Other examples include a certain Mīrzā Eshq Beg and Captain Āqā Ahmad, who migrated to India and later returned to Iran, or that of Moﬁd himself, who decided to return to Iran from India in accordance with the Hadith of ḥobb al-waṭan mena’l-imān, in spite of the comfort and hospitality extended to him in Sāh Jahanābād (Jāme’-e . . . III, I, pp. 92, 453, 475, 804). Still another case is the poet, Naw’ī Kābulshānī (d. 1610), who, becoming nostalgic during his long residence in the court of the Indian king, Akbar, laments in a moving poem that “my tears flow to cleanse the land of Iran” (cited in Saﬁ Kadkānī, p. 5).

Commemorations of Nowruz and ‘Aṣūrā. Commemorations of historic events in pre-modern societies served as the central vehicle for connecting collective memory with ethnic or ethno-national identification. Placing commemorations of seminal cultural events in their historical setting is an indication that the two distinct yet related ethno-national and religious events, Nowruz and ‘Aṣūrā (celebrations of New Year’s day for 13 days and the martyrdom of Imam Hoṣayn, the third Shi’ite Imam, for 10 days), are of utmost significance in the reconstruction of Iranian identity under the Safavids. Initiated in Baghdad in the year 963 by order of the Buyid ruler, Mo‘ezz-al-Dawla, the commemoration of ‘Aṣūrā (q.v.) was added to the celebrations of Nowruz and Mehraḵūn. When Aṣūrā coincided with the other two celebrations, the ethno-national festivals were observed on the next day; this scenario occurred in the year 398/1008, when Aṣūrā coincided with Mehraḵūn (see Faqīhī, pp. 466-67). These dual commemorations became well established under the Safavids and together laid the foundations for the “Iranian-Shi’ite” identity for over 500 years.

The commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hoṣayn has many similarities to that of the martyrdom of Siːvūs (Sug-e Siːvūs) in pre-Islamic Persian mythology, which was commemorated in Soghdiana and Chorasmia until the early Islamic era and in some villages in Kuhgiluya even until recent times. Given that the two rites display a number of basic common features, some writers have suggested that ‘Aṣūrā may have gradually substituted the mourning for Siːvūs over time (see Meskoob, Sug-e Siːvūs, pp. 80-89). In fact, the similarities of the two commemorations may partially explain the pervasive popularity of Aṣūr among Persians. As Yarshater (1979, pp. 88-94) concludes in his comparison of the two rituals: “The martyrdom of Hussein and his kin found a ready ground in Persian tradition in order to develop into an inspiring and elaborate mourning drama. It inherited the major feature of a long-standing practice which had deep roots in the Persian soul.” While Aṣūrah inherited basic features of the ritual of Siːvūs, Nowruz found religious legitimation by invention of a number of traditions attributed to Shi’ite Imams from the Buyid to the Safavid periods. The historical narratives concerning the celebration of Nowruz indicate that, despite the objection of zealous Islamic universalists, Persians at large continued to celebrate Nowruz from the advent of Islam to the present time. The length, the joyful collective mood, and the grandeur of Nowruz celebrations in Iran and many parts of Central Asia is unparalleled in comparison to all of the religious and ethno-national festivals in other Islamic societies (see Čahāršābanbūsī, Haftsin: Nowruz ii; Islamic Period).

The contested, yet mutually supportive nature of the two distinct commemorations of Nowruz and ‘Aṣūrā has made observance of the Persian New Year the subject of
The significance of Nowruz is further indicated by its special place in the chronicles of Safavid historians, featuring detailed descriptions of the grandeur of Nowruz festivities, even when it coincided with ʿĀsurā. Nowruz festivities on 21 March 1611 occurred on Friday, 6 Muharram 1020, the day on which Shiʿites commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hosayn. Shah ʿAbbās honored both days, mourning on the day of ʿĀsurā and celebrating Nowruz on the following day. The grandeur of the celebration of Nowruz 1611 is well illustrated in the chronicle Ažmārā-ye ʿAbbāsī: “The Shah then ordered a great feast to be prepared in the Bāg-e Naqī-e Jahān to which all classes of society were invited. . . . Each group was allotted its own particular place in the park, and gold tents and canopies of silk and Chinese brocade were set up. Booths, embellished in curious remarkable ways and illuminated with lamps, were erected in front of each group. Pages plied the assembled gathering with cheering draughts, and the merrymaking went on for several days” (tr. Savory, 1978, p. 1037).

CONCLUSION

Transcending local, regional, as well as kinship and tribal horizons, a relatively coherent historical and cultural conception of Iranian identity was developed in the long pre-modern history of Iran. The identity of Iranians was largely drawn from their territorial ties. They were identified, for the most part, with their places of birth or residence, which were in turn located in the lands of Iran or kingdom of Iran (Iranshahr, Iranzamin, molk-e Iran, mamlakat-e Irān, kesvar-e Irān). They assumed that their ties to the historical conception of the lands of Iran were also manifestations of their common imagined ancestry, deeply rooted in Persian mythologies and traditional history. Even the Persianized ruling Turkic and Mongol men of the sword presented themselves as the heirs of Persian kings and amirs in a continuum from primordial times to the end of the Qajar period, and as such they were considered to be Iranian. Belief in Iran’s cultural distinctiveness, commemoration of the national festival of Nowruz, dissemination of the idea of “Iran” through naqqālī and Šāh-nāma fāءātī to the masses, and the popularity of Persian poetry among people from all walks of life continued to serve as the foundation of Iranian cultural identity in modern times.

It is interesting to note that the glorification of pre-Islamic Iranian history and culture recurred in the Safavid period, with many imaginative linguistic inventions, with the ʿĀdār Keyvān religious and literary movement (q.v.), a pseudo-Zoroastrian sect (see also DABESTĀN-E Maḏāheb; Daṣāṭīr; for its influence during the 19th century, see Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001, pp. 86-95). Following this movement in the 19th century, a Qajar prince, Jalāl-al-Din Mirzā, identifying himself as being of Persian stock, prepared the first textbook of Iran’s pre-modern ethno-national history from the time of creation to the mid-19th century. It was within this broad framework of historical awareness and cultural consciousness that Iranian identity entered the age of nationalism of the 19th and 20th centuries (see iv, below).


(AHMAD ASHRAF)

iv. IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Iran entered the age of nation-building and nationalism of the 19th century with the legacy of a longstanding historical awareness and cultural consciousness of its identity. The new Western ideas (which had been spread in the West since the late 18th century) received a new impetus with adaptations and reconstructions of a pre-existing concept of Iranian identity that had evolved over many centuries (see i, ii, and iii, above). Comparative historians of nationalism acknowledge that Iran was among the few nations that experienced the era of nationalism with a deep historical root and experience of recurrent construction of its own pre-modern identity (see, e.g., Seton-Watson, 1977, pp. 243-48, 251-55; Hobbsbawm, 1990, pp. 69, 137; Smith, 2004, pp. 218-19, 229, 130, 186). The modern ideas of nation, nationalism, and national identity—as a set of sentiments about the nation and the modern nation-state, conveying the ideals of the autonomy, unity, and prosperity of the nation—came to reinforce the rich historical repertoire of Iranian identity. These new ideas also brought about a transformation of people’s identity from subjects (ra’dây) to citizens (with a recently coined term, šahrvand-dân). Furthermore, with such changes in political consciousness and identity, the sense of patriotism became separated from religious feelings, and loyalty to the nation became a new political value.
When the Iranian pre-modern society encountered the modern age of nationalism, it sought to create a new Iranian national identity on the basis of its own pre-existing ethnic and territorial ties, historical memories, and commemorations of historical events. In this new encounter with the outside world, the enlightened members of Persian literati—whose predecessors had helped create and transmit the idea of Iranian identity since the late Sasanid era—came to form a nucleus of intellectuals (rowlanfe-khrān, i.e., the creators and reproducers of modern cultural ideas) with an expanding audience of intelligentsia (the educated people who are the consumers of those ideas). The new literati promoted the modern conceptions of nationalism and Iranian national identity based on the rich, centuries-old Persian cultural heritage (see iii, above; and IRAN iii. TRADITIONAL HISTORY). A telling example of Persian pre-existing historical memories that helped the construction of modern ideas of nation and nationalism was the frequent printing of an influential book on the history of ancient Kings of Persia (Fazl-Allah Hoşayni Qazvini, Tārīḵ al-noʾjam fī ālpār-e moluk-e ‘Ajam). Written in the 14th century with some 50 surviving manuscripts, this book was printed seven times between 1831 and 1891 in Tabriz, Tehran, and Isfahan and three in the early 20th century (see Story, I/1, 1970, pp. 243–44; Monzawi, VI, pp. 4386-89; and Mošār, I, cols. 3046-47). It was one of the most frequently reprinted works among a small number of popular reprinted titles in this period. Although the wide circulation of the book was due to its use as a textbook of the difficult Persian epistolary style, its use by a large group of students helped disseminate the information on the roots of Iranian “ethno-national” identity.

The new ideas of nation and nationalism in this period were reconstructed and disseminated mainly by those members of literati who had political, commercial, and cultural contacts with the West. Appearing sporadically in the 19th century, the ideas of popular, liberal nationalism flourished in the course of the 1905-11 Constitutional Revolution (q.v.), and later they were transformed into a state-sponsored form of ethno-nationalism during the Pahlavi period (1925-78). This particular mode of Iranian nationalism and its related conception of Iranian identity was, however, later challenged by the popular nationalist movement that began in the mid-20th century. After a brief survey of the emerging national vocabulary in Persian literature, this entry will examine the above three phases in the development of Iranian identity in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**The emerging national vocabulary of Iran.** The term “nation,” in its modern usage—which is derived from Latin natio (a group related by birth or place of origin)—emerged in various European languages predominantly in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Persian, the term mellat found currency as the equivalent of the term “nation” in the 19th century. The term mellat was, until then, used to denote any religious community, and more specifically, followers of a faith in possession of a holy book (a scripture; ahl-e ketāb: Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians). The modern concept of “nation” originated from the concept of religious community (mellat) in two phases: first was the construction of the notion of “Iranian Muslim nation” by addition of “Iran” to the traditional notion of Muslim religious community (mellat-e Mosalmān) to signify the Iranian component of the religious community (mellat-e Mosalmān-e Irān). Soon thereafter, by the dropping of the religious designation, the concept became simply the “Iranian nation” (mellat-e Irān). This conceptual metamorphosis of the term led to the new reading of mellat in the modern sense of the term, conveying the meaning of the “nation” (see below). Yet the term continued to be used with two different connotations: one, the traditional reading with a religious connotation, and the other, the modern reading with a purely national connotation. This may be seen in the reaction of Fath-‘Alī Akhundzāda to the name and logo of Ruz-nāma-ye mellat-e sanavi-ye Iran, published from 1866-70. The logo of the newspaper shows the picture of the Shah Mosque of Tehran (Masjed-e Sāh) as the symbol conveying the meaning of “the Iranian Muslim nation.” In his satirical criticism of the logo, Akhundzāda argues that, if the name of the paper refers to the nation of Iran, the chosen symbol of the mosque is not exclusively Iranian but belongs to all Muslim peoples. The symbol of Iranian people during the pre-Islamic era, he argues, was the monuments of Persian kings, such as Persepolis and Estakr, and in the Islamic period the monuments of the Safavids, who unified Iran with Shi‘ism as its state religion (cited in AÚryanpur I, pp. 239-40). A number of other terms related to the concepts of mellat also entered the contemporary political lexicon in the same period, e.g., melliyat (nationality), waḥdat-e mellī (national unity or integrity), mellī (national, and nationalist, pl. mellī-yun), mellī-gerā‘ī (nationalism), howiyat-e mellī (national identity). Yet, it should be noted that the antecedents of the new term mellat-e Irān were not only its pre-modern religious connotation, but also a longstanding terminology referring to the Iranian people, including Irānī (plur. irānīān), Pārsī (plur. Pārsīān), ahāl-e Irān (Ar. ahb al-fors; meaning inhabitants of Persia; see iii, above).

The old terms watān (Ar.) or mihan (Pers.), which have found currency in modern times to mean “national homeland” (motherland or fatherland), were used in classical Persian literature to refer predominantly to a person’s place of birth and habitation. One’s place of birth and residence was the object of one’s love, admiration, and devotion. Persians have often referred to the dictum, attributed to the Prophet, that “love of homeland is an article of faith” (ḥobb al-watān maw al-imām). The terms watān and mihan have also found currency in modern times to convey the meaning of “patriotism” (Ar. ḥobb al-watān, Pers. mihan-parasti or Pers.-Ar. watān-parasti) or love and loyalty to the homeland and the nation-state. Understandably, the tradition of ḥobb al-watān menal’-imān has often been taken, retrospectively, to imply love for the “national homeland” of the Iranian people in classical Persian literature. Even the mystical, pantheistic notion of the dictum, meaning love for the “heavenly
kingdom,” has been interpreted as love for the “national homeland” (see, e.g., Kşbruy-e Pák, p. 17). It is interesting to note that, on a few occasions in the late Safavid period (probably for the first time), the Hadith of ḥubb al-watān was extended beyond its local implication (place of birth or residence) to the whole country of Iran (see iii, above). An attempt to transform the usage of watān from birthplace to the national homeland was made in 1876, when a bilingual newspaper Watān began publication in Persian and French on 5 February. Explaining the title of the newspaper, the main article stated: “We have chosen ωatān (patrīe) for the title of the paper because patriotism (watān-parasti) is the highest virtue, but in Iran it means primarily love of birthplace, whereas in its comprehensive usage it conveys the meaning of affection for the king, respect of laws and institutions of the nation, and obedience to the government rules” (cited in Yādgdār, 1945, pp. 16-17; for an account of the beginning of the usage of fatherland and motherland leading to “patriotic” and “matriotic” nationalisms, see Najmobdī, 2004, pp. 97-130; and Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001, pp. 113-34).

The territorial conception of Iran as a kingdom with a succession of dynasties has existed since the beginnings of Iranian traditional history including irānsahr and irāncamin, or al-Fors (Persia). The Persian term kešvar, which has entered the political lexicon of modern Iran as the equivalent of “country” (e.g., kešvar-e Irān), had been used to denote the dynastic realm or kingdom in pre-Islamic traditional history. The first usage of the term to denote a contemporary Iranian kingdom appears to have occurred in the Il-khanid era. It was used very rarely in medieval historiography (see iii, above; for a detailed account of the territorial origin of Iranian identity in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Kashani-Sabet).

National identity in reform movements and revolution

National identity and reform movements. Persia’s reform movement, which was primarily a response of the reforming Persian literati to the challenges of Western powers, was instrumental in promoting new ideas of nation and national homeland. They were aspiring to modernize the archaic government offices and adopt modern technology and political structure in order to develop Persia’s capability to resist Western encroachment. Initiated by the Crown Prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā (q.v.) with his reforming vizier, Mīrzā Abu’l-Qāsim Qe’em-maqām, during the early decades of the 19th century, the reform movement was substantively promoted under Amir Kabīr (q.v.) in the period 1848-52. Amir Kabīr, who had traveled to Russia and the Ottoman empire, became acquainted with modern institutions and used the new terms of “the zeal of nation and homeland,” and “patriotism” (gayrat-e mellat o ḵāk o watānparasti). He was primarily concerned with infrastructural development of the government to safeguard Persia’s integrity and self-determination; “we find him as the representative of Iranian nationalism against European political and economic colonial penetration” (see ʿĀdamiyat, 1977, p. 215; idem, 1969, pp. 159, 464).

The ideas of nationalism, constitutionalism, and progress further elaborated by such Western-educated literati and statesmen as Hosayn Khan Sepahsālār (Moṣīr-al-Dawla; 1828-81), who served as representative of Persia in Bombay, Tblisi, and Istanbul, and also served as head of certain ministries, as well as in the grand vizierate (1971). Sepahsālār and his close associates, Malkam Khan Nāẓem-al-Dawla (1833-1908), Yusuf Khan Moṣtaṣār-al-Dawla (d. 1895), and Majd-al-Molk Sīnāki (1809-81), among others, advocated the formation of modern political institutions, as well as the new idea of popular nationalism as the prerequisite for progress. Sepahsālār was among the first to use the term ʿ melliyat to refer to the concept of nationality and nationalism, when he said “the foundation of nationality (asās-e melliyat) that was offered by the French Emperor, saying that each nation (mellat) should be governed by its own people” (cited in ʿĀdamiyat, 1972, p. 131). His idea was the sovereignty of the nation and the changing of the status of the inhabitants from subjects (raʾāyā; the flocks) to citizens.

Modern schools and the printing press. The closing decades of the 19th century saw the introduction of modern education and the printing press. It is widely acknowledged that the spread of modern idea of nationalism in the West as well as in Asia and Africa was the byproduct of the development of the printing press and expansion of modern schools (symbolically called “press nationalism” and “school nationalism”; see, e.g., Anderson, 1991; Hobbsbaun, 1983). As a result, thousands of Iranians became aware of modern political ideas and institutions (see EDUCATION). The introduction of Western education in Iran by missionary schools and, more importantly, the foundation of a polytechnic institute (Dār-al-Fonun; q.v.) in 1852 and the Faculty of Political Science (Madrasa-ye ‘olum-e sāsī) in 1899 (offering courses with textbooks on the history of Iran) significantly helped the spread of the new political ideas of nation and nationalism among the emerging intelligentsia. The foundation of printing houses in Tabriz, Tehran, Isfahan, and other major cities led to the publication of a score of books and newspapers. About one-fifth of these books (including reprints) were devoted to pre-Islamic Iran, including some ten reprints of an influential textbook on the history of pre-Islamic Persian kings (Hoṣayni Ṭeʿzīvī, Tārīḵ al-moʾjam fi āḏār-e molk-e ʿAjam), a book on ʿAsāsī history (Tārīḵ-e ʿAsāsīn), a book on the Parthian roots of the Qajars (Etemad-al-Saltane, 1891-93), the Šāh-nāma of Ferdowsi, an influential book representing the nationalistic ideas of a Neo-Zoroastrian movement (see Dabestān al-madjābēh), and a book on Persian ethics (Javīdīdīn leraḍ). Furthermore, the import of Persian books published in India, as well as a number of Persian newspapers published in Calcutta, Istanbul, Cairo, London, and Paris, helped further the dissemination of the critical political ideas as well as a nationalistic ideology among the Persian intelligentsia.

Romantic nationalism. Identification with the glorious past through imagined places and golden ages helps
people to go beyond the miserable and deplorable present. It was natural then for the early proponents of nationalism in Iran to search for Iran’s national spirit and glory, the primordial soul of an organic entity with its own distinct culture. There developed a belief in the idea that there had been continuity in Iran’s history from the immemorial past to modern times with a romantic view of a pre-Islamic golden age. The intellectual forerunners of romantic nationalism included Mirzâ Fath-‘Alî Akundzâda, Jalâl-ad-Dîn Mirzâ Qâjûr, and Mirzâ Âgh Khan Kermâni (q.v.). They introduced the basic ideals of the autonomy, the unity, and the prosperity of the Iranian nation with patriotic devotion. Their works are devoted to cultivation of the love of national homeland (hobb-e watân) as a spiritual need of the people. The recurrent theme in their works is their distaste for the Arab conquest of Iran and comparison and contrast of the deplorable conditions of the country with its glorious pre-Islamic past, on the one hand, and with the developed nations of the West, on the other. In search of root causes of the decline of the nation and the means for its resurrection, they blame the absolutism of the corrupt and incompetent members of the ruling classes; the political as well as the clerical elements. As a major requirement for the country’s development, they craved for liberation from the alien Islamic past through a purification of the Persian language from Arabic words and the embracing of Western civilization (for a survey of the merging nationalist ideas in the latter half of the 19th century, see Cole, 1996, pp. 35-56).

Mirzâ Fath-‘Alî Akundzâda (1812-78), from Azerbaijan, proudly identified as being of Persian stock (nezâd-e Irân), belonging to the nation of Iran (mellat-e Irân) and to the Iranian homeland (watân; cited in Adamiyat, 1970, p. 9). Akundzâda influenced Jalâl-ad-Dîn Mirzâ through friendship and correspondence as well as Mirzâ Âgh Khan Kermâni (ibid., pp. 108-36). Jalâl-ad-Dîn Mirzâ (1826-70), a Qajar prince, initiated the reconstruction of Iranian national history in his Nâm-e-ye korsâvân (Book of the Monarchs), the first history textbook for Dâr-al-Fonûn in simple Persian, purified of Arabic words. His fourfold Persian dynastic history is arranged from the first man to the Qajars. The first part from Mahâbâdîn to Sasanid, shows the influence of the neo-Zoroastrian mythologized Dastâ’r movement (q.v.; see Amanat, 1997; for the influence of this movement on romantic nationalism of this period, see Tavakoli-Tarqu, 1991, pp. 86-95). Mirzâ Âgh Khan Kermâni (1854-96) followed Jalâl-ad-Dîn Mirzâ in producing a national history of Iran, Âîna-ye sekundari, extending from the mythological past to the Qajar era, to compare and contrast Iran’s glorious past with its present plight (see Adamiyat, 1978, pp. 149-211). Influenced by these ideas, the Persian litterati even invented an “Iranian origin” for the last Turkic dynasty of Iran, connecting the Qajars to the Parthian dynasty (see Ťemâd-al-Saltâna, 1891-93).

Dissemination of the romantic nationalism of these intellectual figures and the nationalistic ideas of the reforming ministers contributed significantly to the intellectual ferment and ideological orientation of the Constitutional Revolution. Constitutional Revolution and national identity. The intellectual ideas of the constitutional movement was primarily oriented toward two fundamental goals: creating a ‘modern nation-state’ in order to develop the resources of the country and protect its autonomy vis-à-vis foreign powers, and forming a nation by transforming the people from “subjects” (ra‘âyâ) to citizens, with a greater participation in the political life of the country. Furthermore, this national idea of mellat-e Irân encompassed all peoples of Iran regardless of their religious affiliation, ethnic origin, spoken language, or socio-economic status. It was in terms of these principles that the Constitutional Revolution became a patriotic, nationalistic movement. Thus from its inception the idea of “national sovereignty of Iranian people” became the slogan of those who advocated constitutionalism, secularism, progress, and equality.

The appearance of scores of newspapers and journals in the course of the revolution helped spread the ideas of nationhood and national sovereignty among the urban population. Derived from the term nation (mellat), the concept of national (melli) gained increasing popularity. It was used, for example, to refer to the National Consultative Assembly (Majles-e šurâ-e mellî), the National Bank (Bânk-e mellî), the epiphanies of national heroes: national commander (sardâr-e mellî) for Sattâr Khan, and national leader (sâlār-e mellî) for Bûqer Khan (q.v.)—the commanders of the prolonged armed resistance of the constitutionalist forces in Tabriz (see CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION I). In this period a new generation of Persian litterati, influenced by the forerunners of nationalism in Iran, appeared on the scene. These included Forsat Sîrêkî (q.v.; 1855-1921), the author of Âjûr-e ‘Ajâm, the first Persian work introducing the ancient monuments and archeological sites of Fârs. In his political papers, Forsat attributes the deplorable conditions of Persia to the ignorance of its people and the tyranny of its rulers, calling for drastic reforms (Forsat-al-Dawla, 1904). Other influential figures include Malek-al-Motakallimîn (1860-1907), who, impressed by the Japanese model of progress, advocated a more rational use of natural resources for industrialization of the country (Malekzâda, 1946, pp. 91-98). Also influential were two Azerbaijani authors, ‘Abd-al-Rahîm Tâlebî (1835-1910) and Zayn-al-‘Abîdîn Mârâghî (1839-1910). The former advocated a scientific and political awakening of Persia, while the latter deplored the miserable life of the people and cried for love of the nation and its salvation.

The disillusionment of nationalists supporters of the Constitutional Revolution with the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement (q.v.), which divided Iran into two zones of influence, led to resurgence of the romantic nationalism, anti-imperialism, and ideas of socialism. Thus, for example, the poets of the Constitutional Revolution may be divided into three distinct types: (1) Those who consider the national homeland in its Islamic or even its Shi‘ite form, such as Adîb Pişâvari (q.v.; 1844-1930) and Sayyed Âsraf-al-Dîn Gilânî (1870-1933). (2) Those poets who
were influenced by modern, Western conception of homeland such as Abu’l-Qāsem Āref (1883-1933) and Mīr-Zādeh ‘Eṣgī (q.q.v.; 1893-1924) and wrote on the themes of patriotism, freedom, and anti-colonialism. Also belonging to this group was Mūḥammad-Ebūrāhīm Farroḵī Yazdí (1888-1939), who espoused patriotic socialism and called for love, devotion, and sacrifice for Iran and its working peoples. (3) Those who followed a hybrid religio-national response, such as Māleḵ-āl-Ṣa’rā’ Bahār (q.v.); 1866-1951), who wrote powerful poems glorifying pre-Islamic Iran while at the same time looking at the Islamic heritage of Iran with respect (see Šāfi’ī Kadkanī, pp. 22-23). In contrast, Ahmad Kasrawi (1888-1945), a prolific author, published scores of political pamphlets combining nationalistic and anti-religious (including Shi’ism, Sufism, and Bahā’ism) sentiments and advocated a radical approach toward purification of Persian from Arabic words (see Kasrawi, 1978).

The post-Constitutional period saw a nationalist reaction to the country’s political decay, which was best manifested in three influential journals during the period of 1916-28: Kāva, edited and published in Berlin by Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizādeh (q.q.v.), a leading veteran of the Constitutional Revolution and the leader of Iran’s nationalist committee in Berlin (Komīta-yī mellīyīn-e Īrān); Irānšahr, also published in Berlin by Ḥosayn Kāzem’zādeh Irānšahr (q.q.v.); and Āyanda (q.q.v.), published in Tehran by Māḥmūd Afḡār (q.q.v.). Kāzem’zādeh Irānšahr, an ardent nationalist, set forth his views in a number of essays in his journal (1922-26), and more specifically in his Tajālīliyat-e ruh-e Īrānī (The Manifestation of Iranian spirit). He had maintained a clear romantic and primordialist notion of the Aryan race and the superior character of the Iranian peoples, which has manifested itself throughout the history of the nation. In various articles in his journal Āyanda (1925-27, 1944-45, 1955), Afḡār, a political scientist, pioneered a systematic scholarly treatment of various aspects of Iranian national identity, territorial integrity, and national unity. An influential nationalist, he also displayed a strong belief in the nationalist character of Iranian people throughout the country’s long history. He was the first to propose the idea of Pan-Iranism to safeguard the unity and territorial integrity of the nation against the onslaught of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Arabism (Afḡār, p. 187).

The late Qajar and early Pahlavi period saw the emergence, also, of a number of historical novels and plays, combining the historical facts and fictional imagination to portray the period’s nostalgia for Persia’s glorious past; these included Sādeq Hedayat’s (q.v.) Parvin doḵtar-e Sāsān (see FICTION 7b).

THE RISE OF STATE NATIONALISM IN THE PAHLAVI ERA

Similar to the common pattern of the early 20th century, the Pahlavi nation-state was founded on self-glorification. Celebration and commemoration of the collective historical memory through symbols and myths, rituals and ceremonies, museums and archeological sites, Achaemenid architectural design for public edifices, nationalistic music, and a national dress code became its hallmarks. In this period, the emerging nationalist historical writings shifted from the emphasis on the continuity with “the traditional history” to the continuity with “factual history” by emphasizing the Achaemenid period as the political origin of the state (see HISTORIOGRAPHY viii and ix). This historical restoration of the Achaemenid era with the help of Western scholars is often misinterpreted by those who, influenced by Eurocentric, modernist orthodoxy, tend to portray the whole of Iran’s traditional history as an invention or imagination of “Orientalists” (see Vaziri, 1993; for the neglect of the Median and Achaemenid history, see Yarshater, 1984; for the recurrent updating of Iran’s factual history from the Sasanid to the contemporary dynasties, see iii, above).

It was during this early period of the Pahlavi rule that scholarly historical writings began to develop. Ḥosayn Pīrū’s pioneering work on the history of ancient Iran (3 vols., Tehran, 1931-33) and ‘Abbās Eqbūl-Āštānī’s textbook on history of Iran from the advent of Islam to the fall of the Qajars (Tehran, 1939), and ‘Abd-Allāh Rāżī’s work on Iran’s history from the ancient times to the year 1937 (Tehran, 1938) constituted textbooks of factual history of Iran from ancient to modern times. These texts helped develop a new historical consciousness for the reading public. Meanwhile a number of Iranian scholars began to see a cultural continuity between pre-Islamic and medieval Islamic Iran. In this context, Ebūrāhīm Pur-Dāwud, the pioneer of Avestan studies in Persia and an ardent advocate of Iranian nationalism, examined the influence of Zoroastrianism and pre-Islamic culture on the emerging Islamic civilization in Iran. He suggested that “our land, our race, and our language have remained the same for several thousand years” (in Mo’in, 1947, pp. 1-4). Mūḥammad Mūḥammad Malāyīyārī (1944, 1975, revised ed., 1995) elaborated on Persian influence in Mesopotamia, the central province of both the Sasanid and the Islamic empires, during the Abbasid caliphate. Mūḥammad Mo’in (1947), too, wrote on the influence of Mazdean ideas on recurrent motifs in classical Persian literature and mysticism. Dabīb-Allāh Šafā in his influential work on the history of epic writing and legendary Iran (1st ed., 1942; 4th ed., 1984) and in his history of literature in Iran (1953-83), as well as the summary of political, social, and cultural history of Iran from the beginning to the end of the Safavid period (1977), also promoted the new, nationalist view of Iran’s history. A new, ultra-nationalist trend in Persian historical writings of this period was initiated by Dabīb Behruz (q.v.) and his disciples (see HISTORIOGRAPHY ix).

Western scholars of pre-Islamic and medieval Islamic periods also helped the promotion of scholarship on Iran’s history. These include important contributions of Ignaz Goldziher, Ernst Herzfeld, Vladimir Minorsky, Bertold Spuler, Samuel Stern; they used the “nationalist scheme” and its related key concepts of “national character” and “national sentiment” to demonstrate the formation of the Iranian nation with a vivid “national identity” during
The well-known slogan of “God, Shah, Homeland” (homeland was seen as the love of the kingdom of Iran. The formation of the Persian empire by Cyrus the Great (see Herzfeld, 1935; for a recent support for his idea, see Shahbazi, 2001; for a critical analysis, see Gholi, 1968, pp. 1-27).

This emphasis on 25 centuries of Persian empire as the main pillar of Iranian identity was drawn from the notion of loyalty to the kingdom of Iran, whose custodian is the king. Accordingly, Iranian identity derived from the king’s divinely ordained sovereignty, a glory bestowed upon him as a gift of grace (farr-e Izadi; see FARR), and the love of homeland was seen as the love of the kingdom of Iran. The well-known slogan of “God, Shah, Homeland” (šodā, šāh, mihan), which was adopted by the Pahlavi dynasty as an expression of the Iranians’ loyalty to the shah and his kingdom, did not leave much room for the concept of the “sovereignty of the nation.” Such a notion of sovereignty could not be reconciled, furthermore, with the basic principle of the Constitutional Revolution which declared: “Kingship is a gift that with divine will is bestowed upon the person of the king by the nation” (article thirty-five: Šaltanat wā’idāt ke be munehbat-e elāhi az ūraf-e mellat be šaḵ-e pādāšāh moftawwaz šodeh).

The Pahlavi era saw not only the emergence and growth of a nation-state with a clear national policy, but also the rise of a national consciousness that attempted to promote a feeling of belonging to a modern nation with a glorious history spanning more than 25 centuries. This was aided by a vigorous dissemination of the idea of “Iran” as a part of a broad campaign to raise literacy levels, the rapid growth of urbanization and communications, the emergence of a middle class and an educated urban group, and the formation of a national market.

History and language were two important bases for the formation of the new “state nationalism” under the Pahlavis. The historical agenda included an emphasis on the Achaemenid period (Herzfeld, 1936) and its revival during the 9th-11th centuries and later (see, e.g., Goldzieher, 1908-99, 1951; Minorsky, 1932, 1956; Spuler, 1952 and 1955; Stern, 1971). Herzfeld’s (q.v.) idea of Achaemenid Iran as a geo-political concept, as “the empire of the Aryans,” as well as his idea that the Iranian “nation” in its combined geographical and political sense emerged during the Achaemenid period, were adopted as the formal ideological framework of the Pahlavi state. These ideas laid the foundation of what Alessandro Bausani (1975, p. 46) calls “Aryan and Neo-Achaemenid nationalism.” They led to four historical innovations: the change, in Western languages, of the country’s name from Persia to Iran in 1935, signifying the primordial Aryan origin of the nation; the assumption of the title Āryāmehr (the Sun of the Aryans) by Mohammad Reza Shah in 1965; celebration of the 2,500 years of Persian empire in 1971; and finally, the change of the national calendar from the Islamic Hejri to the invented šīhānšāhī—the time of the formation of the Persian empire by Cyrus the Great (see Herzfeld, 1935; for a recent support for his idea, see Shahbazi, 2001; for a critical analysis, see Gholi, 1968, pp. 1-27).

Furthermore, a nationalist current in Persian music was encouraged in this period. The main figures in this movement were ‘Ali-Naqi Waziri and Sayyed Jawād Bādi’zāda. Waziri composed a number of marches to mobilize the younger generation to serve the nation. His “Toward the Throne” (Besu-ye taq̄t) was composed during the coronation of Reza Shah (see Ḳāleqi, II, pp. 103-7, 222-23). Bādi’zāda, a popular vocalist and prolific singer and composer, wrote national hymns glorifying Iran’s past and present. Recorded in Berlin, these hymns were widely disseminated among the growing middle classes, who had access to “His Master’s Voice” gramophones. He was a genuine romantic nationalist with records whose motifs included glorifying the Persian flag, calling Iran the country of Darius (Irān ey kēšvar-e Dāryūš), praising the unveiling of women, and celebrating the completion of the Iranian trans-national railway system, and the national anthem (see Bādi’zāda, pp. sizdah, 126-27, 154, 221). Later, during the occupation of Iran by allied forces, in the early and mid-1940s, Gol-golāb (q.v.) wrote two national songs, with music composed by Ruḥ-Allāḥ Ṭāleqān: “Aḏarābāḏegān,” during the Azerbaijani secessionist movement of 1945-46 and “Ey Irān” (O Iran); the latter has achieved great popularity among Iranians of different backgrounds and political persuasions.

The state language policy sought to purge Arabic and other “foreign” words from Persian. The idea of purification of Persian from Arabic had been started in the latter half of the 19th century by a small group of romantic nationalist intellectuals (see above). The first systematic attempt to find Persian words for new technical terms, but with no intention for purification of Persian, took place on the eve of the Constitutional Revolution and involved the formation of a forum, “The Academic Assembly” (Majles-e ˝k˝demi), that met on a monthly basis in 1903 (Āryanpur, III, p. 16). Several other short-lived organizations, formed during the period 1924-35, continued the search for Persian words, particularly in new military and technical arenas. This led to many imprecise coinages and to heated arguments for and against the purification movement. These attempts gathered momentum when Reza Shah visited Turkey in 1934, where he learned of Kemal Atatürk’s promotion of a similar project (for a comparison of language reform in Turkey and Iran, see Perry, 1985, pp. 295-311). It was under these circumstances that the Iranian Academy of Language (Farhangestân-e Zabān-e Irān; q.v.), was established in 1935 on the initiative of prime minister M.-A. Forūḡi (q.v.); it aimed at replacing Arabic words with carefully chosen Persian equivalents (see Forūḡi, “My Message to the Academy” [Payām-e man be Farhangestân]; and H. Taqizādeh, “The National Literary Movement” [Naḥżat-e mellī-e adabī]). During its six years of activity until 1941, the first Farhangestân adopted over 3,500 words, including place-names (see Bayāt). Follow-
ing a long dormant phase which began with Reza Shah’s abdication in 1941, the Academy of Languages was reactivated in 1970 with Sadeq Kii, as its president. A disciple of Dabih-Allah Behruz, Kii was an ardent advocate of the purification of Persian words from Arabic. By the 1979 Revolution, the second Farhangestan had collected and approved Persian equivalents for 1,470 technical terms and loanwords from Arabic and European languages (see Farhangestan).

The politics of Iranian identity. Drawn to different ideological agendas for reconstructing modern Iran, the Persian intelligentsia has been divided among a number of contesting groups since the middle of the 20th century. The main controversy derived from two fundamental objectives of the Constitutional Revolution: the foundation of a nation-state and the development of a civil society that can transform people from subjects (ra‘ya) to citizens with the right to participate in national affairs. The Pahlavi state focused on the former at the expense of the latter. The Pahlavi shahs believed that the country’s modernization would pave the way for the creation of a civil society. A large group of intelligentsia, too, came to adopt the idea of 25 centuries of Persian empire as the foundation of Iranian national identity. Two prominent examples in the early period, were members of the Radical Party (Hezb-e Radikal), which was founded by Ali-Akbar Davar (q.v.), who was an architect of the formation of the Pahlavi state and modernization of the country, and a group of Western-educated Iranians who formed the Iran Javan Club (q.v.) under the leadership of Ali-Akbar Sii. A group of Western-educated technocrats who were also dedicated to the cause of the progress and prosperity of Iran became involved in the drive towards rapid economic growth and modernization of the country during the 1960s, with the Plan Organization, Central Bank, and Ministry of Economy as their base of activities (see ‘Ali-khini, 2002, pp. 73-74). However, the main organs of propaganda advocating “Achaemenid nationalism,” were the state-sponsored political parties, Melliyun, Irann-e Novin, Mardom, and Rastakiz, all formed in the period from mid-1950s to mid-1970s (for the positive nationalism of the shah, see Cottam, pp. 286-311).

A second group of intelligentsia envisioned the development of a civil society as a prerequisite to national formation; they underscored liberal nationalist ideas and as such were identified with popular nationalism. The main proponents of this mode of national identity in the mid-20th century included the National Front (Jebha-ye Melli), a loose coalition of various organizations (under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddej) with different persuasions from the right to the left of the political spectrum (see Cottam, pp. 243-85).

The third group, challenging the state-sponsored notion of national identity included the supporters of leftist ideologies who championed the cause of Iranian peoples. These groups often tend to shift the question of Iranian collective identity from its ‘national’ perspective to its component peoples; they speak not of Iranian nation but of Iranian peoples (kalghaye Iran) who are made up of different nationalities. To them, Iran is a multinational country where, by definition, the right of ethnic minorities to self-rule should be recognized. The leftist view was influenced by the establishment of the Union of Soviet Republics and shaped by the collective identities of the peoples of the southern republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the period from the early 1920s to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. While the internal policy of the Soviet Union consistently suppressed national sentiments in its socialist republics, its propaganda machine encouraged separatist movements in other countries (see Connor, 1984). A manifestation of this policy in practice was the formation of the republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan with the help of Red Army in 1945-46 (see Cottam, pp. 65-74, 118-33; for an analytical survey of various political movements with national aspirations among Kurdish, A’zari, and Baluchi peoples, see Ahmadi, 2000; see further Iran v. Peoples of Iran (1); Iranian Identity IV. In Post-Revolutionary Period in Supplement online forthcoming).

The fourth notion of Iranian national identity is a religious one. Ayatollah Mortaz Mohammad, ‘Ali Shar’ati, and Mehdi Bazargan were among the main proponents of the Iranian religio-national identity. For Motahhari a moderate and peaceful nationalism leading to cooperation and social ties among people is compatible with the Iranian-Islamic national identity (Motahhari, pp. 62-67). Shar’ati defines nation and nationality in relation to culture and, therefore, sees a close relationship between these terms and religion. Following this line, it is maintained that during the last 14 centuries the two histories of Islam and Iran have become so intermingled that it is impossible to search for Iranian identity without Islam or for Islamic identity without a strong Iranian presence within it. In Shar’atis view, these two elements of Iran-e Eslami constitute Iranian identity. He believes cultural and national alienation can only be overcome by relying on the Iranian nation while supporting its Shi’ite culture (Shar’ati, pp. 72-73). Bazargan, in his talk during the critical transitional moment between the fall of the shah and the rise of the Islamic Republic, notes that “to oppose Islam to Iranian nationalism is tantamount to destroying ourselves. To deny Iranian identity and consider nationalism irreligious is part and parcel of the anti-Iranian movement and is the work of the anti-revolutionaries” (Bazargan, cited by Mahmud Afsar, 1959, p. 655; for detail, see Chehabi, 1990).

The findings of a recent cross-cultural survey comparing Iran, Egypt, and Jordan, which was carried out in 2000-01, may be relevant to the question of the relationship between nationality and religiosity. The survey showed a lower level of religiosity among Iranian respondents compared to their Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts, but a much higher level of national sentiment. While in Jordan and Egypt only 14 percent and 10 percent of the respondents, respectively, indicated that they are “Jordanian” or “Egyptian” above all,” 34 percent of Iranians identified themselves as “Iranian above all” (see M. Moaddel and T. Azadamaki, p. 302).
CONCLUSION

In the Iran of the late 20th century, similar to many other societies, ethno-linguistic affiliations and provincial and tribal ties, often compete with national identity. Yet, in spite of these multiple identities, a deeply rooted cultural awareness and a historical consciousness of continuity in a long and distinctive history of the country have served as a strong cohesive force to help overcome various divisive currents. The findings of a national survey, conducted in provincial capitals of 28 provinces in 2001, shows people’s strong ties to their “Iranian” identity. In answering the question, “to what extent are you proud of being an Iranian?” 68 percent of respondents indicated that they highly value their Iranian identity, including 35 percent who answered “fully” (kâmelen) and 33 percent who answered “very high” (kâyî zîd). Furthermore, 27 percent of respondents valued their Iranian identity moderately to highly, with 19 percent at the higher level (zi’d), and 8 percent at the medium level (motevasset). The lower levels accounted for only 5 percent of respondents. When the sample was divided according to the educational level of respondents, those with lower levels of education showed the higher levels of feeling of national identity: 92 percent of those with higher education, compared to 86 percent of those with secondary education and 80 percent of those with no education or with primary education.

Determined greater feeling of national identity, compared to 80 percent of those with secondary education and 80 percent of those with higher education (Wez˝rat-e erπ˝d-e Esl˝mî, pp. 249-50).

Finally, a conscious belief in “Iran’s cultural distinctive-ness” served as the foundation and common denominator of Iranian identity and the binding force among Iranians for centuries, with Persian literature, and more specifically, Persian poetry, as its core element. Furthermore, with a strong tradition of oral literature, particularly poetry, the idea of “Iran” and its elements in Persian cultural heritage have been widely disseminated through naqqâlî and Sâh-nâmâ kânî, to the masses in urban, rural, and tribal areas. There are many illiterate people who know verses from the Divâns of Hafez and Sa’dî and the Sâh-nâmâ of Ferdowsi by heart and often refer to them in their daily social discourse.


IRANIAN STUDIES. See Supplement online.

IRANIAN STUDIES. See SOCIETY FOR IRANIAN STUDIES.

IRAN-NAMEH. a journal of Oriental Studies, founded in Yerevan, Armenia, in May 1993 by Garnik S. Asatryan as a scholarly monthly publication in Armenian language, dealing with various issues of the Oriental world in general, Persia in particular. As the first academic publication of such a character, not only in the Caucasian region, but also in the republics of the former Soviet Union, Iran-nameh was welcomed and duly appreciated by the academic circles in the West as well. Thirty-eight issues have been published since then. The first thirteen issues were in 20 to 24 pages, but the following ones appeared as joint quarterly volumes with 100 to 120 pages each until 1999. Then Iran-nameh became an annual journal and contained also contributions in Russian in a separate section named “Russian Pages.” In 1996 the annual journal and contained also contributions in Russian in a separate section named “Russian Pages.” This journal was welcomed and duly appreciated by the academic circles in the West as well. Thirty-eight issues have been published since then. The first thirteen issues were in 20 to 24 pages, but the following ones appeared as joint quarterly volumes with 100 to 120 pages each until 1999. Then Iran-nameh became an annual journal and contained also contributions in Russian in a separate section named “Russian Pages.” This journal was welcomed and duly appreciated by the academic circles in the West as well. Thirty-eight issues have been published since then. The first thirteen issues were in 20 to 24 pages, but the following ones appeared as joint quarterly volumes with 100 to 120 pages each until 1999. Then Iran-nameh became an annual journal and contained also contributions in Russian in a separate section named “Russian Pages.”