



Conference “The Rise of the Persian Renaissance”

14-15 July 2008
Faculty of Oriental Studies/Wadham College
University of Oxford

Introduction

The conference under the title “The Rise of the Persian Renaissance” is a part of a joint programme between three European universities of Leiden, Cambridge and Oxford on the history of Persian literature and culture. The programme was discussed and developed at the inaugural meeting of the European League of Non-Western Studies (ELNWS), which was established in Leiden in July 2006. The first conference of this programme “[Traditions in Persian Linguistics and Literature](#)”, scheduled for five years (2007-2011) was successfully organized jointly by the Leiden and Oxford Universities in Leiden in July 2007.

The main aim of the two day conference is to investigate the phenomenon of the “sudden” revival of Persian culture in the 9-10th centuries after a chronological gap of two centuries. This period in the scholarly literature dedicated to the Iranian studies is usually called “two centuries of silence” due to the lack of almost any evidences of written monuments between the Arab invasion in Sasanian Iran in 7th century A.D. and the earliest surviving literary examples in the New Persian language of the period of the Samanid dynasty (819-999) with their capital in Bukhara.

Historically Central Asian Transoxania, being for many centuries before Islam a melting pot of many cultures from Buddhism to Hellenism, by the 9-10th centuries found itself on the periphery of the Arab Caliphate, more independent from the Islamic centre and more productive in creating their own state, based on the pre-Arab traditions, than any other parts of the Islamized Iran.

The scholars, whose expertise focus on different fields of Iranian studies: philology (both linguistics and literature), history, art, archaeology, religion, socio-anthropology, and folklore will attempt to explore the preconditions and the main trends of the rise of the Persian cultural revival from different angles and in different aspects of scholarship: why and how the glorious Golden Age of Persian literature and culture, which lasted for not less that six centuries started in the historical Mawarannahr (Transoxiana).

This will allow to discuss a rather representative period of the development of the Iranian culture from pre-Islamic Iran to the times of Rudaki (9-10 cc.) – the most famous poet of the court of the Tajik dynasty of the Samanids, and the poetic circle at the court of Sultan Mahmud in Ghazna (10-11 cc.), modern Afghanistan.

This will be the first attempt of scholars whose interests have been divided by this chronological and cultural border of two silent centuries into two separated worlds of Iranian studies – Ancient and pre-Modern: pre-Islamic and Islamic ones – to combine their knowledge in explanation of the Persian Renaissance phenomenon from both sides of this border.

The main idea of all the papers, announced for participation in the conference is to show the continuity of the Iranian cultural tradition through several transitional periods of their history, and reshaping of the existed

religious and cultural milieu of the societies, rather than violent replacement of one religion by another, for example, of Zoroastrianism, and other beliefs of the pre-Islamic Iran by the Islam in its Semitic version.

All abstracts (300-500 words) should be received no later than 1 April 2008. Please address all enquiries and proposals via email to Dr Firuza Abdullaeva at: firuza.abdullaeva@orinst.ox.ac.uk

Conference organised by The Faculty of Oriental Studies, the British Academy, the Soudavar Memorial Fund, and the Iran Heritage Foundation



Programme

Day One, Monday 14 July

9.10-9.20 – Welcome Firuza Abdullaeva (University of Oxford) and Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (University of Leiden)

Session 1: Before the Silence **Chair:** Elizabeth Tucker

9.20-10.00 – Olga Yastrebova (NLR, St Petersburg)
On the Early Persian version of the Arday Viraf Nama

10.00-10.40 – Nicholas and Ursula Sims-Williams (SOAS, London)
The Man with the Panther's skin: Rustam before Firdousi

10.40-11.20 – Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis (British Museum, London)
Continuity and cultural identity in ancient Persia

11.30-11.40 – refreshments served in the HMR

Session 2 On the edge **Chair:** Robert Skelton

11.40-12.20 – Victoria Kryukova (Kunstkamera Museum, St Petersburg)
Cult niches in Central Asia: before and under Islam

12.20-1.00 – Abolala Soudavar (independent scholar, New York)
Mithraic Societies: A Lasting Structure for Iranian Brotherhoods

1.00-2.00 – lunch in the Old Refectory

Session 3 Still on the edge **Chair:** Nicholas Sims-Williams

2.00-2.40 – Ali Kolesnikov (Institute of Oriental Studies, St Petersburg)
On Arabo-Muslim cliches in late Zoroastrian scriptures

2.40-3.20 – Oleg Grabar (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton)
Origins of Persian painting

3.20-3.40 – refreshments served in HMR

Session 4 On another edge

3.40-4.20 – Anton Pritula (Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg)
Syriac poetry with Persian approach

4.20-5.00 – Francois de Blois (SOAS, London)
Middle Persian literature and New Persian literature: Continuity or discontinuity

5.30 – **Garden party** (Fellows' private garden, Wadham College)

7.15 – **High table dinner in Hall**

Day Two, Tuesday 15 July 2008

Session 5 Hedonistic Renaissance in poetry **Chair:** Leonard Lewisohn

9.10-9.50 – Ali Miransari (Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, Teheran)
Aesthetics of the Early Persian Wine Odes

9.50-10.30 – Natalia Chalisova (Russian University of Humanities, Moscow)
Wine is a Great Healer: a New Persian topos in retrospection

10.30-11.10 – Kamran Talattof (University of Arizona, Tucson)
Sparkling and Ravishing: Wine in Rudaki's Poetry

11.10-11.30 – refreshments served in HMR

Session 6 After the Silence, first attempts of revival **Chair:** Homa Katouzian

11.30-12.10 – Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (University of Leiden)
The tradition of the genre of riddle in Persian literature before Islam and after the Arab conquest

12.10-12.50 – Firuza Abdullaeva (University of Oxford)
Pre-Islamic in Islamic: the feast of sada in early Persian poetry

1.00-2.00 – lunch in the Old Refectory

Session 7 The Rise of the Renaissance **Chair:** Charles Melville

2.00-2.40 – Andrew Peacock (BIPS, Ankara)
Gardizi, the Seljuks and the Persian Renaissance

2.40-3.20 – Sunil Sharma (University of Boston)
Retrieving Women's Voices in Early Persian Poetry

3.20-3.40 – refreshments served in the HMR

Session 8 Revival in prose **Chair:** Edmund Borthworth

3.40-4.20 Edmund Herzig (University of Oxford)
The 'Persian Revival' in Narratives of Iranian Nationalism"

4.20-5.00 – Ali Dehbashi (Bukhara journal, Teheran)
Publishing Scholarly Classics on Persian literary Classics: pros and contras of the new project

5.00-5.10 Closing remarks by Firuza Abdullaeva and Asghar Seyed-Gohrab

5.40-6.40 Punting on the Thames (optional)

7.15 **Private Dinner in the Old Library**

The conference is free to attend, but all participants must pre-register in order to guarantee entry to the conference and to help catering. Otherwise participants must make their own arrangements for accommodation and refreshments/meals.

If you would like to stay for refreshments the fee is £ 7.50 per day or/and the White wine Garden party at Wadham is £ 8.00 to be paid at the registration desk.

To pre-register please complete the form and send it to William Stockland at:
william.stockland@wolfson.ox.ac.uk, or to Firuza Abdullaeva at Firuza.abdullaeva@orinst.ox.ac.uk
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Registration form: http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/nme/rise_persian_renaissance_registration.pdf

The convenors Firuza Abdullaeva (University of Oxford) and Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (University of Leiden) acknowledge with gratitude the generous support of the University of Oxford, the British Academy, the Soudavar Memorial Foundation and the Iran Heritage Foundation



The British Academy
Research funding