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Telling Iran's History

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Arms and Armor from Iran, the new book by Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani, is truly an unbelievable piece of literature about weaponry in Iran. What is great about this book is the immense depth and range with which it covers the swords, daggers, knives, and other equipments used by Persians throughout history. From that point of view, the book is a very interesting historical read, with chapters dating back to the Median and Achaemenian Empires and covering among others the Parthian, Sassanian, and Muslim periods. There are also chapters on roots and usage of Bronze, the zereh and joshan (armor), tir va kaman (bow and arrow) and an introduction into Persian wrestling and other martial arts practices.

The book is very educational and speaks to all audiences, with more than 350 pages of written text. The print, binding and presentation are extremely high quality and worthy of any coffee table. I recommend it to anyone who is interested in the history of Iran. The book also contains another 400 pages of brilliant color photographs of weaponry, which were carefully taken and collated in this epic collection.

For me, one chapter stood out on the shape and origin of the sword of Hazrat-eh Ali. The "Zolfaghar", Ali's famous sword, was said to be bifurcated or have two points and therefore be a very powerful sword. Khorasani goes on to explore the evidence (or lack thereof) behind the theory that Ali's sword had two distinct points. In his lexicon, Dekhoda* explains that Dhulfaghar means "the owner of spine," reasoning that the spine consisted of different vertebra, meaning scratches and notches on its spine. It is said that the Prophet Mohammad gave this sword to Hazrat Ali. Therefore Dekhoda argues that the sword did not have two points but it was straight and had notches or scratches on its back. Further, Pur Rahnama** claims that the legendary figure Rostam also wielded a powerful sword with two points, but he does not provide any exact reference for his statement. The parallels between the two swords are obvious. It is mentioned in the book that there is a lot of commonality between the Shiite religion and ancient Iranian traditions. One has to wonder which came first and why. Perhaps in the quest for keeping Iranian identity separate and distinct from the Arabs, the Persians have always created their own versions of history.



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And in ours, Ali's sword has two points. Why not.

Kudos to Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani, who has now, with the publication of this book, become the foremost expert on the military history in Iran.

* Dekhoda is the most famous Iranian scholar and lexicographer who wrote the most extensive Logatname on Persian words in Farsi.

** Pur Rahnama is an Iranian military historian residing in Poland who wrote this an article entitled "Persian's view of Polish-Persian cultural relations and militaria".

For more on the book, please visit www.arms-and-armor-from-iran.de.

Book: Arms and Armor from Iran
Author: Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani
Publisher: Legat



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She was born in Tehran, and grew up in Vienna.

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She loves culture and languages and hopes to make a difference with PersianMirror.

This article was contributed by **SHABNAM REZAEI**, **Senior Contributor** for PersianMirror.



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