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-

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-

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[Local Events](#)

-

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## THE Magnificent MANOUCHEHR

Very few of us have the patience, and endurance of writing great epics or large novels. Fewer of us could ever consider accomplishing what Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani has done over the last eight years, writing a historical book about ancient weaponry from Iran. In his book "*Arms and Armor from Iran - The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period*", Manouchehr explores the unique facets of all kinds of arms which were used throughout Persian history.

Having set an awesome goal of reviving historical Iranian swordsmanship, like the Europeans, who successfully revived their local history, Manouchehr sets out on this dream with a well-documented book, and a lot of passion.

Here, our interview with him:

**PersianMirror:** *What is your new book about?*

**Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani:** My book analyzes the development of Iranian arms and armor through the centuries. I start with the era of Luristan and Marlik until the end of the Qajar period. I analyze swords, daggers, knives, shields, maces, axes, armor, bows, and other weapons. It is important to take into consideration that I did not analyze any firearms in my study.

This is due to the fact that even up to the time of Shah Ismail Safavid, Iranian warriors looked down upon the usage of firearms as it was not in line with the principles of "jawanmardi."

Of course, from a strategic and military point of view, this led to the devastating defeat of the Safavid Iranians against the Ottomans in the Chaldaran battle, but it is nevertheless heroic and romantic.

One can see lots of similarities between the Japanese "Bushido" (the code of the samurai) and the principles of jawanmardi in Iran. My book starts with two chapters on Iranian history in general and military history in particular, and gives a thorough insight into the perception and understanding of Iranian dynasties. Then it analyzes different types of weapons and how they were made. I was very interested in analyzing Iranian arms and armor through the centuries and deliberately did not separate between the ancient and Islamic eras.

***"...up to the time of Shah Ismail Safavid, Iranian warriors looked down upon the usage of firearms as it was not in line with the principles of 'jawanmardi.'" - Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani***

**PM:** *Sounds like you talk about what the heroes used. Where did you get the idea and why are you writing about this topic?*

**MMK:** I am a martial arts instructor and a researcher. I think this is the best combination to have for writing such a book. I hold a masters degree in English and Business Administration and a minor in Spanish. Due to my studies, I spent many years in different countries such as the USA, Germany and Spain, and was very interested in studying history and also different cultures. As a martial artist I fought in different competitions worldwide and then I ended up practicing iaido and kenjutsu.



I was so fascinated by the Japanese warrior ethos and as well with martial training. As an iaido practitioner, I was mesmerized from day to day with the grace of the Japanese sword, a deadly beauty frozen in steel. The Japanese steel has different patterns such as hamon (temper line). One can look at a Japanese sword for hours and appreciate its beauty. It was a couple of years ago that I became aware that Iranian wootz steel ( *pulad-e jawhardar* ) had the same beauty and intricacy as its Japanese counterpart. As a matter of fact, Iranian swords have been appreciated through the centuries by the Ottomans, the Indians, the Arabs and later on by the Europeans. It was astonishing for me to see that beside some sporadic articles here and there in some books, there is no comprehensive book on the history of Iranian weapons.

This is of course different with the Japanese sword. You can find a hundred scientific books on their analysis. Regarding Iranian arms and armor, my intention is to close this gap and to offer a comprehensive analysis on them. I consulted different Iranian and international sources, as a matter of fact more than 500 sources. The research is really thorough and I have also analyzed the way these weapons were made and used.

**PM:** *Share with our readers your views on modern Iran - and those Iranians that are outside of the country.*

**MMK:** Iran is a lovely country. We have a very interesting history with lots of ups and downs. Iran's sovereignty and national integrity have been defended by the swords of these warriors. I truly respect those warriors. Regarding the Iranians who live abroad, I would like to ask them to be proud of their heritage and culture as they are the successors of Savaran (the Sassanian mounted warriors).

**PM:** *Tell us a little about your background, and where you grew up?*

**MMK:** I was born in Mashad and when I was four years old my parents moved to Tehran due to the job of my father. Thus, I went to school in Tehran. So my background goes back to Khorasan, a region, which provided lots of mounted warriors in the history of Iran and to be honest that is what I am a bit proud of. My maternal grandmother was Azeri and from Tabriz and I can also say that I am also happy about this as many Iranian Azeris were true warriors and defended the national integrity of Iran. Later on I moved to the USA, and then Germany and Spain to study and finish my academic degrees.

**PM:** *Where do you live now and what made you decide to live there?*

**MMK:** At the moment, I am living in Germany and that is due to my present job position. Actually I am an international person and have studied and worked in different countries. So I am open to working in any country, provided I find a good position there.

**PM:** *Can you tell us a little about how you got started to write and how you pick the topics you write about?*

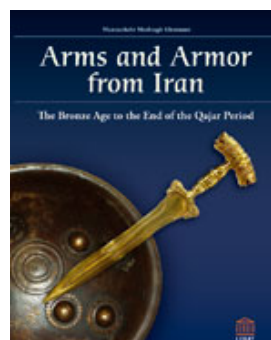
**MMK:** I have been working on this book for the last eight years. Just writing it took two years as it contains over 700 pages. I needed to read 500 books and cross reference them. Additionally, I spent several weeks of my vacation in Iranian museums, taking pictures and measuring the pieces of arms and armor. I think it was after 6 years of doing research that my father urged me to sit down and start writing. Well that is what I did; I just started to write, and honestly, I wrote in the evenings after I came back from work and weekends and during my vacation, non-stop, until I finished the draft.

**PM:** *Who were some of the biggest influence of your work, past or present?*

**MMK:** This is actually my first book and I am planning to continue my research. The biggest influence of my work in the field of history is the works of Dr. Parsadust and Professor Zarinkhub. Of course, I also love literature and reading. I was heavily influenced by my father. I think I was very influenced by Hemingway, Sartre, Hedayat, and Mishima. There are many more, but these four have really influenced me. As you see all four are different to each other and have different styles. At the moment I have been really influenced by the works of the Spanish author Javier Cercas.

**PM:** *Who do you admire most and why?*

**MMK:** A very hard question. In modern times, I truly admire Sensei Mas Oyama, the founder of Kyokoshinkai Karate. He was a man of discipline who trained everyday to overcome his weakness and to reach a level of perfection. His motto was never to stop and always keep going. In history, I have always admired Miamoto Musashi, the best Japanese swordsman, who had reached the harmony between the body and mind. I also have deep respect for Kurosh, the first Achaemenian king, Shah Ismail I, Nader Shah and Karim Khan Zand.



**PM:** *Desert Island: Three things. What will you take?*

I would take a picture of my wife, the book "The Kyokoshin Way" by Oyama, and a practice sword.

*To find out more about Manouchehr Moshtagh Khorasani and order his book "Arms and Armor from Iran - The Bronze Age to the End of the Qajar Period" (available May 2006), please visit*

[http://www.legat-verlag.de/\\_e/programm\\_e.html](http://www.legat-verlag.de/_e/programm_e.html) and

[http://www.legat-verlag.de/\\_e/Swords1.html](http://www.legat-verlag.de/_e/Swords1.html)

*Manouchehr is also the moderator of the American organization of Swordforum International, where he answers questions on Middle Eastern Swords. He is considered the specialist on Middle Eastern Arms and Armor and responsible for the forum Edged Weapon from the Middle East, Asia and Africa. This site can be found at:*

<http://forums.swordforum.com/index.php?s=>

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