

Persian Marvel Lost for Millennia (Part II)



Persia's King Xerxes, seated on the chair, stares over the Dardanelles Strait (then known as Hellespont) prior to launching his invasion in a 19th-century painting by Jean-Adrien Guignet.

ATHENS (National Geographic) -- The storm off Mount Athos Peninsula that devastated the fleet of Xerxes' father, Darius I, in 492 B.C., appeared to influence Xerxes' decision to create a canal.

Nevertheless, the colossal financial and logistical burden of excavating a canal might not have been justified simply to avoid passing around the same cape. The peninsula could be rounded by sea in only a few days. With the benefit of the experience and cooperation of locals who knew how to read the weather, it would have been possible to avoid meeting another major storm. So why did Xerxes opt to build the canal? A superstitious fear of the sea may have played a part. Then, of course, there was the element of propaganda. Such an audacious feat of engineering would surely have sent a powerful message to the Greeks: the Persian invasion was unstoppable and surrender was the only option. Herodotus offers his own plausible theories as to the king's motivations: "As far as I can judge by conjecture, Xerxes gave the command for this digging out of pride, wishing to display his power and leave a memorial; with no trouble they could have drawn their ships across the peninsula, yet he ordered them to dig a canal from sea to sea." The canal

therefore carried an element of grandstanding. Xerxes, like other Persian sovereigns, bore the title "King of Kings." Like many who had come before him, he seems to have shared the compulsion to leave his mark on the world. The Mount Athos Peninsula is the eastern-most of three finger-like promontories that stretch out from the Chalkidiki Peninsula in what is now mainland Greece. At its tip rises the 6,670-foot Mount Athos, regarded as a holy mountain in Orthodox Christianity and today home to a monastic community. As in the time of Darius and Xerxes, the seas around the mountainous headland of the peninsula can often be hazardous. Motivated by the catastrophic storm that devastated his father's navy more than a decade before, Xerxes planned a way to avoid the treacherous waters. On arrival, the Persian navy found an even greater engineering project than the pontoon bridge that had enabled them to cross the Dardanelles: As part of his long preparations for the renewed invasion of Greece, gangs of laborers had hacked out a canal, over one mile long, from one side of the peninsula to the other. Through this channel, Persia's navy would eventually pass in its relentless advance westward.

'Count to 10' Nominated for Award at UK Festival

TEHRAN -- Iranian feature film 'Count to 10' has been nominated for an award at the Playback International Film Festival (PIFF) in the UK.

The film's director, Farid Valizadeh was named as a candidate to receive the Best Director award at the 4th edition of the British fest.

'Count to 10' narrates the events that happen few hours into the life story of a couple with a significant age difference. The two enter a race-like marathon to the number 10 on a path with a discourse challenge, and the loser in the marathon must accept the other party's conditions, whatever they may be. The cast list of the film includes Manouchehr Zandehdel, Ghazal Nazar, Elnaz Bateni, Mania Babae, Bahram Husseini and Amir Nazar.

The film has already taken part in the Route 66 Film Festival in the U.S., the Cannes World Film Festival in France and the Lift-Off Film Festival in the UK.



The PIFF is set to promote films from around the world and to bring creators together. It is to find, cultivate and celebrate the very best in international and home grown talent across all departments of independent film makers. This year's edition of the event is set to be held on June 10-12, 2023.

Tehran Book Fair Draws Multitudes of Visitors

TEHRAN -- The 34th edition of the annual Tehran International Book Fair is underway here, bringing together thousands of Iranian and foreign publishers.

The widely-popular book fair — known to be the largest cultural event in the Middle East — officially opened on Wednesday and will run until May 20, with the motto of "The Future Is Readable."

Turkish Ambassador to Tehran Hicabi Kirlangic said that the Tehran International Book Fair is comparable with prominent book fairs in Frankfurt and Cairo.

Kirlangic said the Iranian book fair is a big one, noting that he made speeches at the book fair.

Kirlangic, who has also translated the Divan of Hafez, the poems written by prominent Iranian poet Hafez Shirazi (1325–1390), also noted that the book fair was held in other places in past years, but it is now being held at Imam Khomeini Mosque, which is appreciable.

The ambassador pointed to the translation project of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkiye, noting that the international project helps introduce Turkish authors in Iran.

The 34th Tehran International Book Fair is underway in the Iranian capital from 20 to 30 May 2023. It is also being held online at the address <https://ketab.ir/>.

Recai Duman, the director of Turkish Diyanet Publishing, said the book fair provides a great opportunity to establish communication with Iranian publishers.



The 34th edition of the annual Tehran International Book Fair is underway at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla.

The venue, he said, is one of the largest book exhibitions he has ever seen in comparison to other countries.

"Everything is well-organized in this exhibition, and there is a great cultural atmosphere in the book fair environment.

"Establishing numerous stands from publishers of different countries paves the way for interactions between publishers from different countries, which is considered a significant cultural event among countries. As we are in the early days of the 34th Tehran Book Fair, we are delighted that we have received an unprecedented response from people for the Diyanet Publishing.

This motivates us to participate in such cultural events held by Iran and Turkey in the coming years," he said.

According to Duman, Diyanet Publishing has over 40 bookstores throughout Turkey, each containing between 10,000 to 15,000 books.

"Our priority remains the promotion of religious issues... Due to the religious affiliations we have with Iran, we are interested in having more interactions with Iranian publishers regarding religious issues," he said.

Diyanet Publishing has released 1,500 books and presented 200 titles at this year's Tehran Book Fair.

German Scholar of Iranian Studies Passes Away

TEHRAN -- Noted German-American writer and scholar of Islamic history and Iranian studies Wilferd Ferdinand Madelung has passed away at the age of 92.

He had been granted the Farabi International Award by Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in 2013 for his significant contributions to Islamic and Iranian studies.

Born in Stuttgart on December 26, 1930, Madelung accompanied his parents to the U.S. where his father, Georg Hans Madelung, continued his career as an aeronautic engineer specializing in rockets after World War II.

Wilferd Madelung enrolled at Georgetown University in Washington DC before going to Cairo in 1951 to study Arabic literature and Islamic history. From 1958 to 1960, he served as cultural attaché at the West German Embassy in Baghdad, before starting his scientific career.

Madelung received his doctorate and habilitation at the University of Hamburg in Germany (lecturer for Islamic studies 1963–1966). His PhD thesis was titled "The Qarmatians and the Fatimids. Their mutual relations and their teachings on the Imamate."

He was a visiting professor at the University of Texas at Austin in 1963, and assistant professor (1964–65), associ-

ate professor (1966–68) and professor of Islamic History from 1969 until 1978 at the University of Chicago. He was the Laudian Professor of Arabic at the University of Oxford from 1978 to 1998.

Madelung wrote academic journal articles and lectures about Ibadism. He was a member of the British Academy since 1999 and a senior research fellow at the Institute for Ismaili Studies in London.



Picture of the Day



Iranian pop music singer Hussein Zaman was laid to rest at the Artists Cemetery of Behesht-e Zahra in Tehran on Friday. Zaman died on Thursday at the age of 63 after losing his battle with cancer.

Photo by Mehr