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## Viewpoint\ Editorial

# An Introduction to the Rethinking of Iran in the Orient and Orientalism

Iranian studies, as a branch of orientalism, in the past two centuries that have passed since its emergence and development in the West, have always been stated on the basis of concepts that do not have Iranian origin. Of these concepts, the historical-cultural borders of Iran should be noted which Western Orientalism draws it not on the basis of Iranian historical resources, but on the modern political borderlines, particularly the 20th century (e.g. Matthew, 2000, 2007; Barr, 2012). In such politicized historical-cultural boundaries that the West has determined for Iran, the Iranian art, literature, history and cultural heritage are not beyond its current political borderlines. While the historical existence of Iran is presented in discrete and scrappy ways. For example, in such a show of cultural-historical discontinuity of Iran, the two Elamite and Sumerian civilizations, which are separated from each other only by the natural border of Arvandrud River, are two different worlds; and Sumer is noted that as the cultural heritage of a newly emerged nation-state so-called as Iraq, which, according to European and exclusively British archaeologists and orientalists, is the aftermath of the WWI. Of course, a new history is also required for every recently emerged nation-state that must be built for it (Matthews, 2007; Barr, 2012). Western Orientalism has not even paid attention to the paradox raised between linguistics and ethnography in one hand and historical-cultural geography and anthro-geography on the other hand: for instance, the Zagros Mountains, which stretches from the south of Lake Van - in present-day Turkey - to the northern shore of the Strait of Hormuz, in the past two millennia, has been the homeland of various Iranian-descended peoples and chiefdoms, which, according to Sharaf al-Din Badlisi, in his book of *Scheref-Nameh: Histoire des Kourdes* (1596), are all branches of the great Kurdish people. According to Badlisi's writing, these people seek their background from Ferdowsi's Persian masterwork of *Shahnameh* and regard themselves to be the survivors of the youth who fled from the grip of Zahhāk the devil to the mountains; even Bidlisi, who was the grand chiefdom of Kurdistan, traces his lineage back to the Sasanian kings (Bidlisi, 1860, 8-12). However, the Western Orientalism studies and presents the cultural heritage of Kurdistan, which is a part of the western territory of Iranian world from Erbil and Sulaymaniyah to Diyarbakir, Bidlis, Urfa and Mardin (Bidlisi, 1860), apart from the history of Iranian civilization (e.g. Matthews, 2000, 2007). As if Medes and Urartu are two separate historical entities from Iran, Western Orientalism has faked an ancient background for the new emerging Caucasian states of Azerbaijan and Armenia; both of them isolated from the history and archeology of Iran. Of course, on the order of the former USSR Academy of Sciences, they must justify the historical existence of the newly established republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia as the inheritors of Medes and Urartu (e.g. Дьяконов, 1956; Пиотровский, 1959). Therefore, the first step in this rethinking is to understand the historical-cultural boundaries of Iran. For example, in the writings of Iranian Ilkhanid-Safavid historians and authors such as *Nuzhat al-Qulub* composed by Hamdallah Mustawfi Qazwini (1340) and *Ahsan-al-Tawārikh* by Hasan Beig Romeloo (1576) its borders are clearly familiar. Even Friedrich Sarre (1910, 120-160), the famous German Turkologist, by categorizing the architectural works of the 12th to 15th centuries from the cities of Nakhichevan, Samarkand, Bukhara, Konya and Akshahar into the category of the works of Iranian art and architecture, confirms such an opinion. According to the present author, Iran's history, archeology and cultural heritage cannot be discussed and studied within the framework of current political borderlines; for the reason that its historical-cultural scope is far beyond current politics. Therefore, for example, terms such as the Bronze Age culture of Kura-Araxes and ETC -coined by Russian B. A. Kuftin and British C. A. Burney- are meaningless. While the Sumerian civilization, which interacted with the Bronze Age cultures of Kerman and Sistān and Baluchistan for nearly two millennia (Majidzadeh, 2003, 5-19), is an inseparable part of Iran's past. Even more, from its sunrise to sunset, Urartu has spent its history within the lands that Iranian historians and geographers of the Ilkhanid-Qajar periods know them by the historical names of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan.

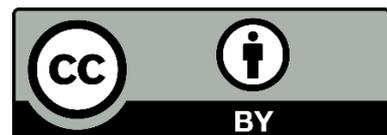
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Editor-in-Chief  
Bahram Ajorloo  
ajorloo@tabriziau.ac.ir

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