

## UNDER WESTERN EYES



## Bavanat, summer home of the Qashqai nomads

By Jimsim  
(Part 2)

The second nomad visit felt a little more authentic (although still probably over visited by Mr. Abbas' tourist entourage). The family here were so striking in their looks, I was glued to their captivating faces and my fingers itched to take their photo.

The mother had 8 girls and each of them held their own unique beauty. A number of girls had emerald green eyes that shone from their olive complexion and they darted shy smiles at us as we walked with them through the camp in the glowing evening light.

Some of the young men in the family arrived back to the tents with dogs in tow and sheep safely grazing in a nearby field. We sat in the main tent and drank more tea but this time they offered us a little addition.

It looked like a glass of yogurt, which James and I took willingly, nodding with appreciation at their hospitality. As we took a sip, the pungent taste of goat hit us with a jolt.

The yogurt drink, served at room temperature had coagulated lumps in it, as well as little bits of green herbs. James and I looked at each other quizzically – it would be rude not to finish it but to us the taste and texture was vile.

We each managed to finish our glasses and kindly refused a refill. Thankfully, there was a distraction outside and everyone raced out to see what the commotion was about.



Fresh bread

A wolf had come over the hill and was eyeing up the sheep for dinner. Fortunately, the dogs guarding the flock chased it back over the hill. It was all quite exciting and we had a real feel for nomadic life here.

Apparently, the nomads spend 5 months here in the valley and 5 months down on the southern coast (i.e. in the winter). The months between, they walk around 500 kms with all of their belongings and animals from north to south or vice versa. After seeing the belongings of the camp and the range of ages between the children, it made us realize what hardy people the nomads are – survival of their animals is paramount to their livelihood.

After a quick stop back in town for rose water ice cream, we headed to Mr. Abbas' for dinner. Mr. Abbas had told us how his business started with a lost German tourist who Mr. Abbas let stay at his then modest home.

The German loved the home stay experience so much he sent seven Germans a few weeks later that were passing through the area. Over the years, the home stay continued to grow and Mr. Abbas has won a number of tourist awards from the government and has grand plans for eco development.

Although it was a pleasant experience, we did feel it was all a bit too contrived and that we were just going through the motions of what he had done so many times before. This rang particularly true when we told us we had to catch the 7 am bus to Shiraz – the only bus leaving (apparently).

We had arrived at 5 pm and had paid a lot (in Iranian terms) to stay, also we had travelled a long way to get there so for us leaving at 7 am just wouldn't cut it. We spent a lot of time trying to find another way to Shiraz but it was not until the next day that we found out that there were a number of buses to Shiraz each day!

We ate a delicious dinner in the garden. Mrs. Abbas is a wonderful cook and made us a vegetarian feast, much to my delight. Later in the evening, Mr. Abbas smoked some hookah as we sat under a million stars and we drank yet more tea. It was a very pleasant evening.

After a long night of constant dog barking we rose early to a hive of activity in the Abbas household. The chickens and ducks were being fed and the kids were cutting grass for the sheep and goats. Mrs. Abbas was in the goat pen trying to milk a goat (as one of the tourist attractions).

We spent the morning visiting a crumbling old Mongol-era fort, down the road from the Abbas house. After that Mr. Abbas reluctantly took us to the walnut forest - I think he was still wishing we were on the 7 am bus. The fields of walnut trees were so peaceful and the long green grass was dappled with sunlight falling through the ancient branches.

It was lovely to walk silently through the endless forest. We headed back with Mr. Abbas and we were bundled into a taxi (about 2 hours early) to catch the bus.

Just before we climbed on the bus, we stopped to watch some huge flat breads being pulled out of a stone oven on the main street. Before we knew it, one of the breads was given to us with a huge smile from the baker – this was the true hospitality we felt so fortunate to be part of in Iran. It is said that in the west we divide our loaves of bread and share half with our guests. In Iran the entire loaf is given to the guest. The generosity of the Iranians never ceased to amaze us.

(Source: Tourists' personal blog)  
(To be Contd.)

# Unique taste and aroma of Iranian Saffron



Compiled by our staff writers

Saffron is the flower known scientifically as *crocus sativus* L. The Encyclopaedia Americana states that this word derives from the Greek *corycus*, the name of an area in Cilicia in the eastern Mediterranean.

Saffron fibers are commonly used in Iranian cuisine to give scrumptious flavor and appetizing color and smell to different Iranian dishes including cooked rice.

Some believe that saffron have originated in the Media of ancient Iran (7th century BC); others believe it has its origins in a wider area of the earth including Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Iran.

Saffron is a perennial grass plant with a round sub-soil corm of 3-5 cm diameter. Each corm produces 6 to 8 leaves similar to grass weeds. The short sprinkle roots grow at the base and circumference of the corm.

The first part to appear in early autumn is the flower. However, in the first year after planting, because the corms are too weak and not properly established in the deep soil yet, the flower buds are not strong enough to develop and even the leaves come out later than usual.

The flower consists of three sepals and three petals of the same lilac color, which makes them hardly distinguishable.

There are three stamens, and filaments are twice as long as the anthers. Out of the single-ovule ovary in the center of the flower grows a long thin style of a light yellow color, which ends in a triple stigma of 2-3 cm length, and bright orange red color.

Saffron the spice consists of the dried stigmas. The stigmas of the saffron flower contain many chemical substances. There are carbohydrates, minerals, mucilage, vitamins (especially riboflavin and thiamin) and pigments including crocin, anthocyanin, carotene, lycopene and zizantoin.

There is also an aromatic essence turpene (safranal), and picrocrocin which

gives saffron its distinctive flavor.

Saffron flowers are normally harvested in mid autumn. The flowers are picked by hand. The flowers begin to grow after the first irrigation and the blooming period in southern Khorasan is usually late October to late November, and of course, this depends on environmental and farming conditions. Harvest is completed in at most twenty days.

In the food-processing industry, saffron is used as a colorant in sausages, margarine, butter, cheese, and non-alcoholic beverages. It is also used for coloring and flavor in ice cream and sauces and dressings.

It has also been used in the treatment of ailments such as dysentery, measles, enlargement of the liver and gall bladder and urological infections.

The saffron stigma, which is what basically forms commercial saffron, has a distinct and unique color, flavor and aroma and some of the groups of chemical compounds responsible for each of these properties have now been identified.

Saffron coloring power is mainly produced by crocin, which is one of the few naturally occurring carotenoids easily soluble in water.

This water solubility is one of the reasons for its widely preferred application as a colorant in food and medicine.

In addition to crocin saffron contains aglicon crocetin as a free agent and small amounts of the pigment anthocyanin. There are also oil soluble pigments including alphacarotene, betacarotene and zexanthin. One of the most important parameters in evaluating the quality of saffron is its coloring power, which is determined by measuring by spectrophotometry the amount of coloring factors present at 443 nanometers.

The principal element giving saffron its special flavor is the glycosid picrocrocin. This bitter tasting substance can be crystallized and produces glucose and the aldehyde safranal by hydrolysis.

Saffron has a strong aroma, which is

produced by certain special volatile oils and essences. The main aroma factor in saffron is safranal, which comprises about 60% of the volatile components of saffron. In fresh saffron, this substance exists as stable picrocrocin but because of heat and the passage of time, it decomposes releasing the volatile aldehyde safranal.

Safranal is a volatile liquid oil which produces a light yellow spot in water vapor and is readily soluble in ethanol, methanol and petroleum ether.

In order to extract the ethereal oils of saffron it is dissolved in pure water and distilled in a CO2 current. The distillate is separated with ether, which is then removed by heat. The oil obtained is a yellow liquid with a strong aroma of saffron. This substance is a terpen, which is highly susceptible to oxidization and must be stored under special conditions.

### Properties, applications, and uses

Because of its chemical composition, saffron has unique qualities and properties. It is a rich source of the B group of vitamins, especially riboflavin. However, more important perhaps are its properties of color, aroma, and taste. The coloring agent is readily soluble in water and it is this water solubility that makes it preferred to other carotenoids as a colorant in food industries.

Since ancient times saffron has been considered to have a number of therapeutic properties. It has been used as a sedative, a tonic, a stimulant of the stomach and an expectorant.

The effects of the compounds in saffron on certain types of cancer are being studied and positive results have been obtained in experiments on lab animals.

With the continuing trend of preferring natural to synthetic and chemical substances as an ingredient in food processing, medical, sanitary, cosmetic products, perfumes, etc, the future for the growing use of saffron in these industries looks good.

## Boragh, recurrent motif in Islamic art



By our staff writer

Boragh in the Islamic traditions is the name of a celestial horse-like creature with the human head. Holy prophet of Islam Mohammad (SAW) rode Boragh in his trip by night between Masjid-al haram in Mecca and Masjid-al Aqsa in Al Quds where he started his heavenward ascent.

In the oldest narrations of Mohammad's heavenward ascent, the name of this creature has been mentioned. However, the narrators have described the details of this event and the physical appearance of this creature differently.

In most versions, it has been described as a white-colored animal with a body sized between a camel and a donkey. Two wings were set close to its thighs. With each step, it covered a distance as far as its eyes could see.

Reportedly, other prophets such as Ibrahim (AS) also have used Boragh.

Moreover, in some texts such as Ibn Sina's Meraj Nameh, Boragh have been interpreted as a symbolic and mystical word.

As of 14 A.D., Boragh have been illustrated in Islamic arts especially in Iranian miniatures. Western wall of the Masjid-al Aqsa is also called Boragh.

## Historic battle of Culloden



Compiled by our staff writer

On April 16, 1746, the highland claim died on the battlefield at Culloden Moor in one of the greatest battles of history. Bonnie Prince Charlie fled to France via the Isle of Skye, marking the beginning of a great change to the Scottish highlands.

The Battle of Culloden was the final clash between the French-supported Jacobites and the Hanoverian British government in the 1745 Jacobite Rising. Culloden dealt the Jacobite cause—to restore the House of Stuart to the throne of the Kingdom of Great Britain—a decisive defeat. It was the last battle ever to be fought on British soil.

The Jacobites, largely Highland Scots, supported the claim of James Francis Edward Stuart (the "Old Pretender") to the throne. The government army, under the Duke of Cumberland, younger son of the Hanoverian sovereign, King George II, supported his father's cause. It too included Highland Scots, as well as Scottish Lowlanders and English troops.

The aftermath of the battle was brutal and earned the victorious general the nickname "Butcher" Cumberland. Charles Edward Stuart eventually left Britain and went to Rome, never to attempt to take the throne again. Civil penalties were severe with new laws that attacked the Highlanders' clan system.



## CELEBRITY

## Zarrinkelk, all-around artist

compiled by our staff writers

Noureddin Zarrinkelk (born 1937 in Mashhad) is a renowned Iranian animator, concept artist, editor, graphic designer, illustrator, layout artist, photographer, scriptwriter, director, university professor, art critic, special effects director, and sculptor.

He studied pharmacy at Tehran University and holds a Ph.D. in this field. Then he studied animation film in the Belgium Royal Academy of Fine Arts (Raoul Servais) from 1969 to 1972.

Zarrinkelk is currently a Professor at the faculty of fine art, Tehran University. Since 1971, he has been Jury member of various international animation festivals and illustration biennials.

Zarrinkelk was elected as the president of ASIFA (Association International du Film d'Animation) by his peers in 2003.

The art of animation as practiced in modern day Iran started in 1950s. Iran's animation owes largely to Noureddin Zarrinkelk. Zarrinkelk was instrumental in founding the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IID-CYA) in Tehran in collaboration with the late father of Iranian graphics Morteza Momayez and other fellow artists like Farshid Mesghali, Ali Akbar Sadeghi and Arapik Baghdasarian, among others.



### Other Activities

Member of the board of directors of ASIFA International, 1988-2000

Founder and President of ASIFA Iran since 1986

Founder and Teacher of Animation, Post Graduate School, "Farabi" Art University, Tehran 1977-1996

Founder and Teacher of the first Animation School, Tehran 1974-1977

Member of ASIFA International since 1971

Jury Member of various international animation festival and illustration Biennales since 1975

### Publications

"Rumi's Stories" Illustrations (under Publication)

"Prince Arsalan" Illustrations (2005)

"Mullah Nasruddi" Illustrations (2005)

"The Elephant and the Ant" Text & illustration (2005)

"In the U.N." Text & Illustration (2005)

"From the waters" Text & Illustration (1996)

"Multi-Job Factory" Text & Illustration (1988)

"A-B-Zoo" Text & Illustration (1986)

### Films

"In the U.N." (Under Production)

"Pood" (2000)

"Identity" (1999)

"Moscow" (Mouse & Cow) (1998)

"Sinbad" (Full length animated feature) (1987-1991) (Hollywood)

"Super Powers" (1982)

"A Way to Neighbor" (1978)

"Prince Amir-Hamzeh" (1977)

"The Mad, Mad, Mad World" (1975)

"Atal-Matal" (1974)

"Philipo and a Train from Hong Kong" (1971) (Belgium)

"A Playground for Baboush" (1971) (Belgium)

"Duty, First" (1970) (Belgium)

### Awards

Permanent resident, Association International du Film d'Animation.

Hans Christian Andersen Life Achievement for children books

Jewell of the Century, Anney International Film Festival, France 2000, for "The Mad, Mad, Mad World"