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NOTES ON THE FOLKLORE OF IRAN

The definition „folklore“ is used here in a narrower sense: it comprises the popular „literary“ productivity — songs of all kind, ballads, proverbs, legends and traditions. Folklore in a wider sense of the word, concerning customs, habits, ritual, music, dances and costumes is not taken into consideration. We therefore limit ourselves in the present work to only a part of the folklore, to popular poetry in the strict sense of the word.

Study on the abundant and genuine folklore of the Iranian peoples (Persians of pure descent, Tadjiks, Kurds, Bakhtiaris, Ossetinians, Afghans etc.) is one of the youngest branches of the Persian history of literature. Although its origin can be traced to about the middle of the last century, its growth and development starts from the twenties of the present age, and especially from the years following the Second World War.

The first more important work in this domain, entitled *Specimens of the Popular Poetry of Persia*, written by Aleksander Chodźko, Polish diplomat and orientalist, was published in English in London, in 1842. Out of later works of other European orientalists, *Persian Folklore* by Ella Sykes („Folklore“, vol. XII, 1901), *Some Notes on the Arabian and Persian Folklor* by O. Nicholson („Folklore“, 1930), *Recueil de chansons rustiques iraniennes* (Téhéran 1948) and *Cinq chansons rustiques iraniennes* (Téhéran 1949) by Roubik Grigorian are worth mentioning.

The interest of European scientists in Iranian folklore aroused finally the attention of the Iranians and Tadjiks themselves. They had not, till now, sufficiently appreciated the popular poetry and

did not consider it as worthy of the name of literature. This point of view is shared, even in present, by the majority of educated Iranians.

The actual protagonist of the study of Iranian folklore is a famous Persian writer, Šādeḡ Hedāyat (dec. 1951). He is the author of a series of pioneer works in this domain, which he began by publishing, in 1931, a little book entitled *Osāneh* (*Fairy-tale*). It is a collection of productions of the so-called popular literature. In the introduction the author indicates the necessity of gathering Iranian folklore, considering it with reason as an important domain of national culture. The collection contains: 1. children's songs, 2. lullabies, sung by nurses to lull children to sleep, 3. rhymed plays for children, 4. rhymed riddles and finally, 5. songs of the common people describing the events of life in the country or, less frequently, in a town.

Šādeḡ Hedāyat also wrote an article *Tarānehā-ye 'āmiyāneh* (*Popular Songs*) printed in the journal „Maḡalleh-ye Mūsikī“ („Musical Review“), Vol. I. Nos. 6—7. His interest in Iranian customs, ritual, sayings etc. found its expression in the work entitled *Neirangestān* (*The Land of Wonders*), published in 1933 and in the article *Folklor yā farhang-e tūdeh* (*Folklore, the popular culture*) printed in the periodical „Soḡan“ („The Word“), Vol. II, Nos. 3—6. We must add that he had an eminent predecessor in this domain in the person of the French iranologist Henri Massé, whom an Iranian named with some reason „the father of Iranian folklore“.

Kūhī Kermānī published, a little later, two collections: *Čahārdeh afsāneh az afsānehā-ye rūstāi-ye Īrān* (*Fourteen Iranian popular fairy-tales*) in 1935, and *Haftšad tarānehā-ye rūstāi-ye Īrān* (*Seven hundred Iranian folk songs*) in 1948. The second collection is composed, in the first place, of popular songs from Kirman and its neighbourhood. It also contains songs from Isfahan, Yazd and Shiraz and from their environment and from several other provincial towns. We find here circumstantial songs, mostly in the form of quatrains (*do-baytīhā*) and folk ballads called *tašnīf*. Different dialects and jargons are represented here as, for instance, the Baḡtiyārī dialect, enhancing thus the philological value of the collection. It also contains several me-

lodies written in European notes. Their primitiveness and the beauty of their tonality are charming.

Finally, several years ago, about 1960 (the exact date is not mentioned) appeared the most abundant hitherto published collection of different songs and popular sayings from Shiraz and its neighbourhood — *Tarānehā-ye ḡanūb* (*Songs from the South*). The author of this collection, edited with great care and containing a literary version of the songs in Shiraz dialect, is Šādeḡ Homāyūnī, a Shiraz citizen himself¹.

In the monthly magazine „Payām-e Nou“ („The New Mission“) we find (in Vol. VI, No. 4, 1954), ten short songs *Dobaytīhā-ye Šīrāz* (*Quatrains of Shiraz*) collected by 'Abdol'ali Dastghaib. Besides, the Persian press presents, time and again, contributions to this problem in the shape of new samples of poetic folklore.

Mirzo Tursunzoda, a Tadjik poet and writer, and A. N. Boldyrev, professor at the Leningrad University, are both interested in the abundant folklore of the Iranian Tadjik nation. In 1956, they published in common an anthology of popular poetry entitled *Folklor-i toḡik* (*The Tadjik folklore*), the fruit of many years of labour of the first of these authors.

Stig Wikander, a Swedish iranologist, published in 1959 in Uppsala a collection of folkloristic texts in the Kurd language — *Recueil de textes kourmandji*. This collection contains fairy-tales and anecdotes, narratives and the Kurd popular poetry. Also Jan M. Weryho, a Polish orientalist, is concerned with Iranian folklore in Sistani dialect. He is the author of *Sistani-Persian folklore* (in „Indo-Iranian Journal“, 1962, No. 5).

The extensive study of the Czechoslovak iranologist Jiří Cejpek, *Íránská lidová slovesnost* (*Iranian Popular Literature*), published in the collective work *Dějiny perské a tádžické literatury* (*History of Persian and Tadjik Literature*) by the late professor Jan Rypka and collaborators (first Czech edition in 1956, second edition in 1963, German version in 1959, English version in 1967, Polish version in 1970) is the first attempt at a monographic elaboration of Persian literary folklore.

¹ This same Šādeḡ Homāyūnī published in journal „Kāveh“ (München 1970 No. 28) an article on the characteristic features of Iranian popular songs (*Važegīhā-ye tarānehā-ye 'āmiyāne-ye Īrān*).

The work of Jiří Cejpek discusses the popular productivity of Iran in the most extensive meaning of this word. In many cases serious doubts arise whether this productivity is popular or artistic, especially in relation to distant epochs (the times of the Achaemenians or of the Sassanids). The author reaches far back, nearly to the prehistoric times, when the most ancient narratives arose (called *dāstān*'s later) and epic cycles were formed (Chap. I). He then handles the question of Iranian entertaining poetry to which, in his opinion, belong fairy-tales of the type *Kalila and Dimna*, the narratives of *Alf laila va laila* (*Thousand Nights and a Night*) etc. (Chap. II), and the popular literary output in the form bazaar books, fantastic novels, tales and fairy-tales, books explaining dreams etc. (Chap. III). Further chapters concern the influence of popular literature upon the new Persian and Tadjik literatures (Chap. IV), the regional popular literature (Chap. V) and popular dramaturgy in Iran (Chap. VI), among which the author includes production intended for the religious theatre, the so-called *ta'ziyeh*, for the theatre of shadows, puppet-show, satirical texts for jesters and jugglers etc. Here also the drawing of a definite line of demarcation between the folklore proper and artistic literature encounters difficulties. Finally, the two last chapters (VII and VIII) are dedicated to the folklore in the proper sense of the word, to folk poetry (popular *robāiyāts*, lyrical and epic songs etc.) and to the enigmas and proverbs of the Persian people.

In spite of all possible restrictions and doubts as to whether all the domains of literary production discussed by Jiří Cejpek can be included in the conception of folklore, his work is a valuable contribution to the history of folklor literature in Iran.

The articles of Professor J. P. Asmussen, *Remarks on some Iranian folk-tales treating of magic objects* (in „Acta Orientalia“, Vol. XXVIII, No 3—4, 1965), and of L. P. Elwell-Sutton, *The Unfortunate Heroine in Persian Folk-literature*, Tehran 1969, reprinted from *Yād-Nāme-ye Īrānī-ye Minorsky*, are also worth mentioning as valuable additions to the Iranian folkloristic.

In recent years several new books of Iranian authors concerning the folklore of their country, have been published. However, a detailed bibliography of this subject is not the aim of the present outline.

The abundant material collected by Šādeḡ Homāyūnī in his already mentioned collection derives mostly from illiterate persons, whose names, sex and age are listed by the author in his annotations.

From the statistical point of view this material contains about 2300 verses or, using the Persian method of determination, about 1150 *bayt*'s (couplets). It is composed of 80 couplets (*takbaytīhā*), 445 quatrains (*dobaytīhā* or *robāi'yāt*), 5 sixaines (*sebaytīhā*) and 2 stanzas with a greater number of lines (*čandbaytīhā*). 225 folk nuptial songs, the so-called *vāsūnakhā*, in the form of couplets (*masnavī*), with a greater number of syllables than in the preceding ones, form a separate group.

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Iranian folk songs demonstrate a great similarity in their form and content with songs of other oriental and even European peoples. This is an enticing field for comparative investigation. Dr Maḥmūd Tafaḍḍolī has already indicated this resemblance with European folk songs in his short article *Peyvand-e tarānahā-ye 'āmiyāneh* (*Resemblance of the folklore of different nations*) published in the Persian periodical „Kāveh“ (München 1968, No. 20).

Folklore had and continues to have a constant and distinct influence on the artistic production of Persian, Tadjik and Kurd poets, as well as on the works of poets of other Iranian nations. It is a vivid and abundant source of poetic beauty, supplying and vivifying the literature of educated circles. Poets of the classic era and contemporary ones as, for instance, the Tadjik poet Mīrsayid Mīršakar (born 1912) have, consciously or not, availed themselves of this source.

Iranian folk songs, the *tarānehā*, are mostly based on the principle of syllabism and are usually monorhyme. The simplest form of such a song is a couplet (*yekbaytī*) with a single rhyme (a a) as, for instance:

nakon bā ḥūbrūyūn āšenāi
betars az meḥnat-e rūz-e ḡedāi

De not become acquainted with beautiful (girls),
Fear the sadness in the day of separation.

Or:

doto sīb-o doto nārīm har do
doto yār-e bafādārīm har do

We are both like two apples and two pomegranates,
we are both lovers true to each other.

And one example more:

deli dārom por az dard-o por az ḵam
por az barf-o por az bārūn-o šabnam

My heart is full of pain and of sorrow,
full of snow, full of rain and full of dew.

These smallest poetical forms, which we could call mini-poems in modern fashion, are perhaps fragments of quatrains, of which two verses became lost or were forgotten. Šādeḵ Homāyūnī, author of the *Songs of the South*, was the first to advance such an opinion. This could have happened in certain cases but, in our opinion, these couplets are the oldest and most primitive forms of popular poetry — not only in Iran. Songs of that kind, of two verses only, are also found in the Polish folklore as, for instance:

Kukułka kukła a ja jeszcze spała,
ja się obudziła, kukułka przestała.

The cuckoo sang its song and I was still sleeping,
I awoke and the cuckoo sung no more².

However, the most widespread and favourite form of the popular poetry in Iran is the quatrain (*dobayti*), used for centuries in artistic poetry in the shape of *robā'i*. This monorhyme quatrain with a disposition of rhymes a a b a or a a a a and, more seldom, with two rhymes only a b a b or a a b b, became a wonderful success in oriental literatures — the Persian, Arabian, Turkish, Tartar and others. The origin of this form remains doubtful, in

² Let us remark the astonishing likeness of rhythm and rhyme (verse of 12 syllables, system of rhymes aa!)

spite of the efforts undertaken to elucidate it; it requires more comparative studies in the range of the folklore of oriental peoples in general. The form of the Persian quatrain (*dobayti*), as well as that of the couplet (*yakbayti*), are most probably of a popular origin. At any rate, this form is very ancient. The oldest Persian monorhyme quatrain, preserved till the present times, and ascribed to the Sassanid king Bahram V (fifth century of the Christian era), reads as follows:

man-am ān šir i šala,
manam ān babr i yala,
man-am ān Bahrām Gor,
man-am ān bū-ḡabala.

I am that blood-thirsty lion,
I am that furious (?) tiger,
I am that Bahrām Gōr,
I am that one whom they call Abū-Ḡabala.

And here is an example of a contemporary quatrain genuine popular origin:

doto salb-e boland budīm bar-e ham
ḡedā gaštīm-o har do miḥorīm ḵam
na dassom mīrese un gol bečīnam
na un salb-e boland sar mīkone ham

We were beside each other like two tall cypresses,
we parted and sorrow is the nourishment of us both.
Neither shall my hand reach out to pluck this rose,
nor shall the tall cypress bend (towards me)³.

One of the most primitive poetic forms of purely popular origin, deprived of any literary influences, are the nuptial songs of the Shiraz population (*vāsūnakhā-ye Širāzi*). They consist of regular couplets mostly of 15 syllables (more seldom 14), rhymed in pairs (a a, b b, c c etc.). They are sung by the participants of wedding ceremonies (*'arūsī*). Usually one or several guests sing

³ Song from the environs of Shiraz.

them to the accompaniment of a small drum (*dāireh*), while those present clap their hands rhythmically. They accompany the wedding ceremonies from the engagement (*hāstegari*) until the *zefāf*, when the young married couple is conducted to the wedding-chamber. They are full of a primitive charm and have an inborn poetry, like the following:

Oy hamūmī oy hamūmī āb-e hamūm tāze kon,
šāzde dumād miyō hamūm šarbateš āmāde kon

O bathman! O bathman! Prepare fresh water for the bath,
the bridegroom is going to the bath, prepare a sherbet for him ⁴.
and

māder-e hošholḡ-o hošrūy biyō rūdet mībaran
zar bede zangil bede šam-e hūnat mībaran

Mother, good and beautiful, come, they bring you a child,
give gold, give a chain, for they are carrying a candle to your
house ⁵.

One example more:

raḡt-e hāb čit-e ḡalamkar oy nane ḡunom biyār
ḡālī vardār terme bendāz fardo šab yārom miyād

Bring a sheet, a cotton ḡalamkar, mummy dear —
take the carpet off, cover the bed with cashmere, to-morrow comes
my beloved.

The wedding songs of the Shiraz population bear a positive analogy to the nuptial songs of other oriental peoples. The inborn, unsophisticated artistic skill of popular songs, especially of those in the vicinity of Shiraz, deserves special attention. The excessive regularity of rhythm, rhyme and of the construction of the stanza are most noteworthy. We find stanzas of five, six and even eight

⁴ Sung before going of the bridegroom to the bath.

⁵ Sung by the leading the bride to the house of the bridegroom.

verses alongside of the generally used quatrain, although some doubt may arise as to their purely popular origin. Numerous apostrophes and anaphoras, repetition of whole verses or of their part only and the refrain (*radif*) so characteristic for underlining the principal thought or feeling, bring these works very close to artistic poetry. Here is one of these masterly quatrains:

sare kūče pasandat, oy vel,
kūtā būdī bolandat kardam, oy vel,
torši būdī mesāl-e āb-e limū
mesāl-e ḡord-e ḡandat kardam, oy vel!

At the corner of the back-street I admired you, o beloved!
You were so very small, I made you big, o beloved!
You were as sour as a lemon,
with a piece of sugar I made you, o beloved!

There are regularly 11 syllables in each verse and the rhythm is uniform: *pasāndat* : *bolandat* : *ḡandat*, a repetition of the term in the second and third verse *kūtā būdī* : *torši būdī* and, finally the *radif*: *kardam, oy vel*. A real lovesong masterpiece, shrouded with a mist of serene humour!

The following quatrain, slightly frivolous, is not deprived of finesse:

vel-e bālā bolandom didam emrūz
beyāz-e gardaneš čon šolī-ye rūz
dar in fasl-e bahār-o eyde naurūz
gol-e hargez načide čidam emrūz

I have seen my beloved to-day, tall and slender —
her neck is as white as the light of the day.
At this time of spring, on the feast of Nou-rūz (New Year)
I shall pick this flower to-day, hitherto unplucked.

The ancient and broadly widespread form of the quatrain is still vital, filled with an ever new content inspired by current life. The following quatrain can serve as a specimen:

be šoġl-e šūferī māyel šodam man
 šodam šūfer valī bīdel šodam man
 sedōye doč miyāt āvāze bolbol
 nešeš pošt-e rol ye hermān-e gol.

I wished to become a chaffeur,
 I became a chaffeur, but I lost my heart —
 The voice of the Dodge⁶ sounds to me as the song of the
 nightingale,
 a bunch of flowers sits at the steering-wheel.

Even naïve, childish songs take sometimes the form of a quatrain (*tarānehā-ye bačehā*) as, for instance:

morġak-e ħūbī daštam
 ħūbaš negeh nadaštam
 šaġale omad o bordaš
 sar pā nešast o ħūrdaš

I had a beautiful little bird,
 I did not guard it well enough.
 A jackal came and caught it —
 Sat down on his haunches and devoured it.

Songs and songlets sung by mothers and nannies are very diversified in rhythm. They usually have the character of a lullaby. Besides, they possess a great simplicity of language and form, both in their rhythm and rhymes. They do not follow the rules of classical poetry (*'arūd*) and they represent folklore in its most pure form. Here is one of these lullabies:

Lā lā lā lā gol-e pūne
 gadā omad dar-e ħūne
 nūnaš dādīm badaš omad
 ħudaš raft-o sagaš omad
 lā lā lā lā golam bāšī
 tō darmūn-e delam bāšī
 lā lā lā lā gol-e ħašĥaš
 bābāt rafte ħodā hamrāhaš

⁶ Dodge — the name of very popular motor-car at that time.

lā lā lā lā gol-e fondok
 nanat omad sar-e šanduk
 lā lā lā lā gol-e pase
 babat rafte kamar base
 lā lā lā lā gol-e zīre
 čerā ħābat namīgīre
 ki mādar ħurbūnat mīre...

La la la la, flower of the mint! A beggar came to the house —
 we gave him bread, he felt offended.
 He himself went away, but his dog came.
 La la la la, you are my(little) flower,
 you are medicine for my heart.
 La la la, flower of the poppy!
 Your father went away, God speed him!
 La la la la, flower of the hazel!
 Your mummy came, (she sat down) on the chest.
 La la la la, flower of the pistachio!
 Your father went away to work.
 La la la la, flower of the cumin!
 Why does not sleep come to you,
 when your mother loves you so much...

The lack of a logical relationship between the beginning and the rest of the lullaby, the theme of the flowers used as a stylistic ornament, are frequently found in the popular poetry of this kind.

The songs of the Persian folk possess specific features in their subject and style. Their language is very simple, commonplace, unsophisticated, deprived of metaphores and oratory skill, so characteristic for artistic production. They express the feelings and thoughts of simple people: peasants, workmen, artisans etc. It is interesting to note that they are nearly always the expression of the thoughts and feelings of a single person and not of a social group. Even if we perceive in them tones of rebellion against what is wrong and unjust, they appear only sporadically and do not have any stronger emotional accents, the less so if it concerns class or society.

The principal subject of popular songs is simple human love and the different feelings connected with it — longing for the beloved person, sadness and pain of separation, hope, disappointment and disillusion, youthful and girlish dreams etc. This can be better explained by examples:

agar mīram az ešk-e to mīram
be kabressun ravam ārūm begīram
be kabressun biyo benešin kenārom
ki šāyad zīr-e gel ārūm begīram

If I die, I shall die out of love for you,
I shall lie in a tomb and there find rest —
Come, sit on my tomb
for perhaps I shall be at peace in the earth...

or:

hoš az vaḥtī ki cārdasāle būdīm
gol-e sorḥ safid-o lāle būdīm
čaman tā pošt-e pā o gol tā zānū
hamīše pīš-e gol ḥabīde būdīm

Happy the times when we both were fourteen years old —
we were like red and white roses and like tulips.
Our feet stood in the grass, with flowers up to our knees,
and we always rested on flowers...

We find here rather frequently the theme of a complain on the unreliability and infidelity of a lover or a mistress, accompanied by a light irony or malicious derision, with a cheerfulness so typical of the Iranian character. Apart from this, there is no more profound philosophical investigation in the popular songs, a characteristic of the mystical texture of Sufis of classic poetry. The themes of the rose and the nightingale (*gol-o-bolbol*), the butterfly and the candle (*šam' o parvāne*), which have become so commonplace in artistic poetry of classical era, appear only quite exceptionally in popular poetry. The poetic Iranian folklore suggests the clear water of a spring, unblemished by any aromatic syrups or sugar.

Nature, with which a man of the country is in constant contact, is an obvious background for simple psychic experiences and plays the role of a stylistic ornament. The theme of nature, just as in the poetry of other nations throughout the world, is often introduced into the Iranian songs with no logical relationship to the thought they express as, for instance:

šū-e māhast o abr-e pāre pāre
omīdvāram ki bargardī do bāre

The night is moonlit, with a small cloud here and there —
I expect that you shall come once more...

or

sar-e kūye bolande āsemūnī
mane hamro bebar ey yār-e ḡunī

(The blue) sky high over the mountains —
take me away with you, my dear friend!...

It is very characteristic that the popular Persian songs have, contrary to expectation, a secular aspect. Allusions to scriptural or literary characters, such as Yūsūf and Zolayḥā, Yūsūf, Laylī and Maḡnūn or to the Shiit saints, the imām Reḏā, his sister Fāṭema etc. appear very seldom and possess a rather metaphorical meaning. They do not express any religious feelings.

A few words concerning rhymes must be added. In popular songs they have, in a predominant measure, a regular, traditional form. However, we also find, even rather frequently, assonances or partial rhymes, as *biyāi : abī*, *angūr : maḡbūl* and so on. Rhymes of that kind are surely of a popular origin.

The high artistic qualities of many songs, which have found their way into the collections of Iranian folklore, lead involuntarily to the question of their origin and authenticity, of the milieu in which they arose and continue arise. The mutual influence of popular and artistic poetry is undoubtful, but it is difficult to assess at present the quality, range and degree of this influence. There exist, most probably, some criteria which permit to select from the enormous mass of songs and ballads those which indubi-

tably have a popular origin. However, the narrow frame-work of the present article does not allow a more detailed study. This shall be done somewhere else, at a different occasion.

The poetic folklore of Iran deserves to be collected and investigated, the more so that, most unfortunately, it perishes rapidly and beyond recall owing to the influence of a general modernisation of life in that country. The advantages of studying Iranian folklore are very great. Besides an abundant material — linguistic, historical, literary, concerning customs and usages, it also provides esthetic experiences of not insignificant kind.

PS. For presenting more complete bibliography we have yet to note the following items, with which we have not become acquainted as yet:

1) Īzedpanāh Hamīd, *Tarānehā-ye maḥallī-ye Lorestān*, Ḥoramābād 1345 H.

2) *Dohtar-e Raštī* (maḡmū'e-ye tarānehā-ye gīlākī), Gurgīn, Tehrān 1340 H.

3) *Tarānehā-ye rūstāī-ye Ḥorāsān* ta'lif-e Ebrāhīm Šakūr-zādeh.

4) *Folklor* az 'Abdo'l-Ḥosain Nayyerī.

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DIE PERSONENNAMEN DER SCHULJUGEND VON IRAN

In dem vorliegenden, bescheiden angelegten Artikel möchte ich dem Leser ein Fragment meiner ausführlicheren Arbeit (die sich in Vorbereitung befindet) über die Personennamen der gegenwärtigen iranischen Völker, so der bodenständigen Perser, ferner der Tadschiken, Afghanen, Kurden, Osseten usw. darstellen.

Wennschon die personale Namensgebung der einstigen, genauer gesagt, der alten Iranier im fundamentalen Werk von Ferdinand Justi *Iranisches Namenbuch*, Marburg 1895, gewissenhaft angeordnet und beschrieben wurde, so werden die Personennamen der gegenwärtigen iranischen Völker von den Iranisten beinahe völlig ausser Acht gelassen. Eine Ausnahme bilden lediglich kurze Darstellungen: die Arbeit von A. A. Gafurov, dem sowjetischen Iranisten, über die Personennamen der tadschikischen Kinder *Способы и виды наречения детей в таджикском языке* in *Индийская и иранская филология*, Moskau 1964) und eine kleine Arbeit des Verfassers des vorliegenden Artikels über die Personennamen der iranischen Frauen (*Noms des femmes iraniennes* in „Folia Orientalia“, IX Band, 1968). Wir lassen selbstverständlich kleinere onomastische Notizen, die in ethnographischen Arbeiten anderer Autoren enthalten sind, ausser Acht.

Das Thema „die personennamen der Schuljugend von Iran“, das nur scheinbar bescheiden anmutet, ist recht interessant und verdient besondere Aufmerksamkeit des Iranisten. Seine Bearbeitung nämlich liefert uns interessante und wichtige Einzelheiten, die auf den Entwicklungsprozess in der heutigen persischen Gesellschaft hinweisen. Auf die Schlussfolgerungen, die sich aus