

Report from the Conference *20 Years of “Iran and the Caucasus”*: A Breakthrough in Aghveran (Armenia), 21–23 October 2016

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In October 2016, a celebration took place marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the journal entitled “Iran and the Caucasus”. This international academic journal was established in 1997 by Professor Garnik Asatryan, the head of the Caucasian Centre for Iranian Studies (CCIS) in Yerevan, and incorporated another publication issued at the centre – “Acta Kurdica”, also founded by Asatryan. The aim of the new journal was to differ from the local academic approaches based on local perspectives and using regional languages, which limited the availability of their publications. From the beginning, “Iran and the Caucasus” was meant to be an international, multidisciplinary Orientalist periodical¹.

The first five volumes of the journal, in the period running from 1997 until 2001, were published in Tehran by the International Publication of Iranian Studies (*Entesharat-e beynolmelali baraye mottale’at-e irani*). Today, “Iran and the Caucasus” is published by the Brill Academic Publishers as a peer-reviewed journal that comes out in four issues per year (twice a year, in May and December) and accepts articles in English, French and German, edited under the guidance of an Editorial Board consisting of prominent scholars. It promotes original and innovative research on the history, culture, linguistics, literature, folklore, sociocultural anthropology, and the politics of the Iranian-Caucasian world – the term *Iran* in the understanding applied here embraces “the vast area from Asia Minor to India, including Central Asia, that is, all territories that have ever been within the political boundaries of

¹ V. Arakelova, *Iran and the Caucasus*, [www 01].

Iran, or inhabited by Iranian peoples, or have been influenced by Iranian culture"². The journal is divided into four major sections: history and culture, linguistics, historical and political issues, and book reviews.

The editor-in-chief of the journal has been Garnik Asatrian since its inception until the present day. The journal is run by an editorial board consisting of the editor and three associated editors: Victoria Arakelova (CCIS, Yerevan), Uwe Blaesing (University of Leiden), and Giusto Traina (University of Lecce). The International Editorial Board and International Advisory Board of the journal consists of scholars of Iranian studies from Europe, Asia, North America and Australia, among others Bert G. Fragner, James Russell, Mikhail Pelevin, Ehsan Yarshater, Garry Trompf, Carlo Cereti or Said Amir Arjomand. It is worth mentioning the cooperation with Polish academics, including Anna Krasnowolska – a professor of Iranian studies from the Jagiellonian University.

The three-day conference held in October 2016 in Armenia was devoted to the twentieth anniversary of the journal. It was organised in the Aghveran resort, located about 50 kilometres north of the Armenian capital city Yervan. This provided an interesting opportunity to meet researchers from different countries, including some from Dagestan, Iran or Armenia who rarely attend conferences held in Europe. Interestingly there were a strong representation of scholars from Poland – Professor Anna Krasnowolska, Dr. Paulina Niechciał, Dr. Mateusz Kłagisz and Dr. Artur Rodziewicz from Jagiellonian University, Dr. Magdalena Rodziewicz and Roman Żuchowicz MA from Warsaw University, Dr. Przemysław Adamczewski from the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, and Dr. Jacek Jarmoszko from the National Library of Poland.

The panels, sometimes occurring at the same time, included, among others, History, Yezidi Studies, Caucasia, Linguistics, Medieval and Classical Literature or Modern History and Political issues. On the second day, a round table was also organised: An Assessment of Dariush Borbor's Contribution to Architecture, Urban Planning and Iranian Studies, devoted to an Iranian architect and academic, present in person at the conference.

The organisers provided an opportunity to relax and socialise at two banquets with toasts offered by by conference attendees who played the role of a traditional local toastmaster – Tamada. The last afternoon gave the participants a chance to see some Armenian historical monuments – there was

² *Iran and the Caucasus*, [www 02].



an organised trip to visit the Kecharis – a medieval Armenian monastic complex located 60 km from Yerevan that used to be one of the major religious and educational centres of Armenia.

Bibliography

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Note about the author

Dr. Paulina NIECHCIAŁ is an assistant professor at the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Her main area of research includes the sociology and anthropology of religion, religious minorities, processes of identity building and the contemporary culture and society of Iran, Afganistan and Tajikistan. Her recent publications include a book entitled *Mniejszość zaratusztriańska we współczesnym Teheranie. O tożsamości zbiorowej w kontekście dominacji szyickiej* (*Zoroastrian Minority in Modern Tehran: On Collective Identity in the Context of Shi'a Domination*, 2013) as well as a variety of academic articles.

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