

# TANAP Extends into Iran

In the past year the history research programme 'Towards A New Age of Partnership' (TANAP) has received several applications from young Iranian history scholars, eager to gain access to European sources concerning Iran's Safavid period (AD 1501–1722). Though there are several Safavid specialists at various history departments in Iran, from the time of the Islamic Revolution they have not been encouraged to use Western sources. Ever since Khatami came to power, some universities have taken up the challenge of internationalization and one cannot but wonder if this is a wind of change.

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By Henk Niemeijer

With Willem Floor and Rudolph Mathee's publications, Iranian historians have become increasingly aware of the importance of European sources for the writing and understanding of Iranian history. The universities of Tabriz, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Tehran all have well-known history departments and although Shiraz does not have a PhD programme in History, it is an attractive place in which to study the subject. Not only is Shiraz located close to important Persian archaeological sites such as Persepolis and Pasargadae, but the city also oozes an artistic and open intellectual atmosphere. One visit to the mausoleum of the great Persian poet, Khaje Shams ad-Din Mohammad Shirzai, also known as Hafez, says it all.

Before the Islamic Revolution, the University of Shiraz had an outstanding international reputation, partly due to its famous Asia Institute and partly because English was the language of instruction. In order to start rebuilding a new international reputation, the university established the Shiraz University International Relations Office (SUIRO), under Dr Khademi two years ago. According to the vice chancellor, Dr Shariff, the university wants to create

opportunities in study programmes abroad for some of its more than 14,000 students. In exchange they would welcome students from the Netherlands, in particular from Leiden, for instance on the PhD programme of the Department of Farsi Language and Literature. TANAP has succeeded in establishing cooperation, which aims at attracting postgraduate students from the Department of History (around 280 undergraduates) who are presently trained by Dr Gholamreza Vatandoust.

Tehran University is another institution that has a good number of Safavid specialists. Dr Zargarinezhad, the head of the department, explained that the examinations for the PhD programme in history are of an exceptionally high standard. The special library of the department reflects a strong interest in Iranian history, but shelves only a few books on Asian history in general – this lack of expertise is strongly felt.

One of the students of the Safavid specialist, Mansur Sefatgol, has been selected for the TANAP Advanced Master's Programme 2003. Rajabali Kavani Gerkhloo has written an excellent thesis on the Noctavi sect under the Savafids and aims to study Iran's connections with the Indian Ocean World at large during the seventeenth century, next year. We are glad to involve a student with expertise in handling Persian sources, and expects fruitful cooperation with the other students. <

Dr Gholamreza  
Vatandoust, Dr Henk  
Niemeijer, and some  
of the MA students  
of the University of  
Shiraz, Iran



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