

حسن بیگی، محمد رضا. *تهران قدیم*. تهران: ققنوس، ۱۳۶۶، ۴۸۰ص.

Hasan Baigi, Muhammad Reza. *Tihran-i Qadim*. Tehran: Qiqnus, 1988, 480pp.

## ABSTRACT

### Old Tehran

#### تهران قدیم

This book is a summarised form of articles published under the same title in the magazine *Itila'at-e Haftigi* from its Iranian New Year edition in 1984 to the corresponding edition in 1985. The work begins with an etymology of the word “Tehran” and demonstrates that its Arabic version, which is spelled differently, is distorted and has no historical basis. Using travellers’ accounts as the source, the book goes on to explain how Tehran became the capital and provides a smooth and pleasant description of the gates, neighbourhoods, traditions, and people of the city.

This book is in essence an overall monograph of “old Tehran” along with a collection of supplemental narratives. With the exception of the news sources, the references for these have not been noted within the text. Instead the sources are included within a bibliographic index of books consulted for the work. Of course, there are parts of the text which are based on what the author has himself seen and heard. As such, like Jafar Shahri’s book (titled also *Tihran-i Qadim*, 1370), these segments do not need to reference sources. For example, in describing the Tup-i Morvari (The Pearl Cannon), the author speaks of his own recollection

of seeing the Shah's order and the signature of the Iranian maker on the barrel of the cannon. This eliminates historical doubts about whether the cannon was made by the Portuguese and whether it was made by order of Fath-Ali Shah.

The author has also used readers' letters to the editor in correcting and completing this work. To some extent, this makes his approach similar to the anthropological method of the late Anjavi Shirazi. That is to say, some information is gathered from local informants and the researcher then organises or summarises it.

The best assessment for *Tihran-i Qadim* is to consider it a narrative of how Iran's urban society entered modernity and modernisation and how it showed cultural resistance or reception in facing it. The introduction of the first automobile to Tehran, the establishment of the first hospital and electrical plant, and the history of the postal service, cinema, and banking in Tehran are all sections in *Tihran-i Qadim* which may not have been gathered according to the most academic of methods but have content that is of anthropological interest.

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Translated by Niki Akhavan