

the persian sphinx

the persian sphinx is a term that conjures images of mystery, power, and intrigue in the heart of Iran's rich historical tapestry. This article delves into the multifaceted significance of the Persian Sphinx, exploring its cultural, historical, and symbolic meanings. From its mythological roots in ancient Persia to its influence on modern literature and architecture, we uncover how the Persian Sphinx has captivated scholars, artists, and travelers alike. Readers will discover the origin of the term, its representation in Persian mythology, its roles in Persian art and culture, and its relevance in contemporary discussions about Iran's national identity. Whether you are a history enthusiast, a mythology lover, or simply curious about the enigma surrounding the Persian Sphinx, this comprehensive guide provides valuable insights and knowledge. Continue reading to unravel the secrets and enduring legacy of the Persian Sphinx.

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Origins and Etymology of the Persian Sphinx

The phrase "the persian sphinx" is a blend of Persian history and classical mythology. Unlike the more widely known Egyptian Sphinx, the Persian Sphinx refers to mythological and legendary creatures from ancient Persia that combine human intellect with animal strength. The term has also been used metaphorically in various contexts, most notably in modern history to describe enigmatic figures or monumental mysteries associated with Iran. Etymologically, "sphinx" is derived from the Greek "sphingo," meaning "to bind" or "to squeeze," but in the Persian context, it has evolved to reflect unique cultural attributes. The Persian Sphinx is often depicted as a guardian figure, symbolizing wisdom, protection, and riddling intellect, which sets it apart from its counterparts in other ancient civilizations.

The evolution of the term highlights the fusion of Persian legends with external influences, especially as Greek and Persian cultures interacted

throughout history. Today, "the Persian sphinx" not only refers to mythological creatures but also serves as a symbol of Iran's enduring mysteries and the complexities embedded within its history.

Mythological Significance in Ancient Persia

The mythological roots of the Persian Sphinx are deeply embedded in ancient Persian beliefs and Zoroastrian traditions. In these narratives, creatures resembling the sphinx—such as the "Shirdal," or lion-eagle—served as protectors of sacred spaces and royal tombs. These beings were believed to possess the body of a lion, the wings of an eagle, and the face of a human, combining the noblest qualities of each species. Unlike their Greek counterparts, the Persian Sphinxes were more benevolent, serving as guardians and wise advisors rather than threats to travelers.

These mythological figures appear in the epic tales found in the Shahnameh, the Persian "Book of Kings," where they act as protectors of heroes and kings. The Persian Sphinx stands as a testament to the importance of wisdom, strength, and guardianship in ancient Iranian society. Their presence in ancient texts and carvings highlights their significant role in shaping the moral and spiritual values of the Persian people.

The Shirdal and Other Legendary Creatures

The Shirdal, meaning "Lion-Eagle," is perhaps the most recognized Persian sphinx-like creature. These beings were typically placed at the entrances of palaces and temples to ward off evil and provide divine protection. Other legendary creatures, such as the "Griffin" and hybrid animals, also shared similar features and functions within Persian myth. Their coexistence within Persian mythology reflects the culture's fascination with hybrid beings and the symbolic merging of human and animal traits for greater wisdom and protection.

The Persian Sphinx in Art and Architecture

The artistic representation of the Persian Sphinx is prominent in ancient Persian architecture and decorative arts. Majestic sphinxes adorned the grand palaces of Persepolis, standing guard at gateways and ceremonial entrances. These sculptures showcased the skill of Persian artisans in crafting detailed and imposing figures that symbolized both royal authority and spiritual guardianship.

Persian sphinxes were not just decorative; they conveyed deep symbolism and were integral to the aesthetic and spiritual ethos of Persian civilization.

Their presence in friezes, reliefs, and monumental gates provided a visual narrative of power, wisdom, and protection. Over time, these motifs influenced neighboring cultures, spreading the legacy of the Persian Sphinx across the ancient world.

Iconography and Symbolic Elements

The iconography of the Persian Sphinx typically features a combination of regal and mystical attributes. Common elements include:

- A human head, often crowned, symbolizing intelligence and royal lineage
- The body of a lion, representing strength and bravery
- Wings of an eagle, denoting spiritual elevation and swift protection
- Ornate jewelry or clothing, indicating nobility and divine favor

These artistic conventions reinforced the sphinx's dual role as both a physical and metaphysical guardian.

Cultural and Literary Representations

The legacy of the Persian Sphinx extends beyond visual arts into the realm of literature and cultural identity. In Persian poetry and classical literature, the sphinx is often a metaphor for enigmatic beauty, wisdom, and the challenges of deciphering profound truths. Writers and poets have invoked the imagery of the Persian Sphinx to symbolize riddles of fate, the pursuit of knowledge, and the mysteries of life itself.

During the 20th century, the term "the persian sphinx" gained renewed attention as a metaphor for political and historical figures in Iran whose actions or motives were shrouded in mystery. The most notable example is the use of "The Persian Sphinx" as a moniker for Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, Iran's former Prime Minister, whose life and legacy remain subjects of intense debate and fascination. This metaphorical use underscores the enduring allure and symbolic power of the Persian Sphinx in the modern era.

In Modern Literature and Popular Culture

Modern writers, artists, and filmmakers continue to draw inspiration from the Persian Sphinx. Its mysterious and captivating qualities make it a favored

motif in novels, films, and artistic exhibitions that explore themes of identity, heritage, and the unknown. The Persian Sphinx's adaptability across genres and artistic mediums speaks to its timeless relevance in Iranian and global culture.

The Persian Sphinx and Modern Iranian Identity

In contemporary discourse, the Persian Sphinx stands as a symbol of Iran's complex identity—a nation rooted in ancient traditions yet continually evolving in a rapidly changing world. The image of the sphinx, with its enigmatic smile and watchful gaze, resonates with Iranians who see themselves as guardians of a long and storied civilization. It also reflects the challenges of interpreting Iran's history and the diverse influences that have shaped its national character.

The Persian Sphinx continues to inspire debates about heritage, nationalism, and the interpretation of historical events. As a symbol, it bridges the gap between Iran's glorious past and its aspirations for the future, serving as a source of pride, curiosity, and collective memory for generations.

Fascinating Facts about the Persian Sphinx

The Persian Sphinx is more than just a mythical creature; it embodies centuries of symbolism, artistry, and national pride. Here are some intriguing facts that highlight its remarkable legacy:

1. The Persian Sphinx is often associated with Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, where sphinx statues guarded royal palaces.
2. Unlike the destructive Greek Sphinx, the Persian version is primarily seen as a benevolent protector and wise advisor.
3. Archaeological findings suggest that sphinx motifs were used in jewelry, pottery, and textiles, reflecting their widespread cultural significance.
4. The Persian Sphinx has influenced artistic traditions beyond Iran, including Mesopotamian, Greek, and Indian cultures.
5. In the 20th century, the term "the Persian Sphinx" was popularized in political discourse to describe enigmatic figures in Iranian history.

These facts illustrate the enduring fascination with the Persian Sphinx and

its unique place in both ancient and modern narratives.

Q: What is the Persian Sphinx?

A: The Persian Sphinx refers to a mythological creature in ancient Persian culture, typically depicted with the body of a lion, wings of an eagle, and a human head. It symbolizes wisdom, protection, and guardianship, and has also been used metaphorically to describe enigmatic figures in Iranian history.

Q: How does the Persian Sphinx differ from the Egyptian Sphinx?

A: The Persian Sphinx is generally portrayed as a benevolent guardian and wise advisor, whereas the Egyptian Sphinx is primarily a monumental figure associated with pharaonic power. The Persian version often has wings and is more closely linked to mythological narratives.

Q: What is the significance of the Persian Sphinx in Persian art and architecture?

A: Persian Sphinxes appear in the architectural designs of ancient palaces, especially at Persepolis, acting as guardians and symbols of royal authority. Their artistic representations convey themes of strength, wisdom, and spiritual protection.

Q: Who was called "The Persian Sphinx" in modern times?

A: Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, a former Prime Minister of Iran, was nicknamed "The Persian Sphinx" due to his mysterious persona and pivotal role in Iranian politics, particularly during the nationalization of the oil industry in the 1950s.

Q: What is the Shirdal in Persian mythology?

A: Shirdal, meaning "Lion-Eagle," is a legendary Persian creature similar to the sphinx. It features the body of a lion, wings of an eagle, and a human head, serving as a guardian in mythological stories and ancient art.

Q: How is the Persian Sphinx represented in literature?

A: In Persian literature, the sphinx symbolizes riddles, wisdom, and the pursuit of knowledge. It appears in epic tales like the Shahnameh and serves

as a metaphor for enigmatic beauty and life's mysteries in poetry and prose.

Q: Why is the Persian Sphinx important in Iranian cultural identity?

A: The Persian Sphinx embodies the nation's values of strength, wisdom, and protection. It connects Iranians to their ancient heritage and serves as a symbol of their enduring civilization and complex national identity.

Q: Are there any Persian Sphinxes in modern art or popular culture?

A: Yes, modern artists, writers, and filmmakers frequently use the Persian Sphinx as a motif to explore themes of identity, heritage, and the unknown, reflecting its ongoing cultural relevance.

Q: What materials were used to create Persian Sphinx statues?

A: Ancient Persian Sphinx statues were typically crafted from stone, limestone, or baked clay, often intricately carved and sometimes adorned with decorative elements to signify their royal or divine status.

Q: How has the Persian Sphinx influenced other cultures?

A: The concept and imagery of the Persian Sphinx influenced neighboring civilizations, including Mesopotamian, Greek, and Indian cultures, contributing to the spread of hybrid mythological figures throughout the ancient world.

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The Persian Sphinx: Unveiling the Enigma of Ancient Persia

Are you captivated by enigmatic creatures of mythology and history? Then prepare to journey into the fascinating world of the Persian Sphinx, a creature far less discussed than its Egyptian counterpart, yet equally steeped in mystery and symbolic power. This in-depth exploration will unravel the secrets surrounding this lesser-known, yet equally compelling, mythological being, exploring its origins, symbolism, artistic representations, and its enduring legacy in Persian art and culture. We'll delve beyond the superficial similarities to the Egyptian Sphinx, uncovering unique characteristics and interpretations that set it apart.

Origins and Early Representations of the Persian Sphinx

Unlike the well-documented Egyptian Sphinx, the Persian Sphinx's origins are shrouded in a more enigmatic veil. While precise dates are difficult to pinpoint, evidence suggests that the creature's representation in Persian art emerges during the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC). This period saw a flourishing of artistic expression, with the Sphinx appearing in various contexts, notably as a guardian figure, often flanking doorways, palaces, and royal tombs. These early depictions often showcase a distinct stylistic difference compared to their Egyptian cousins. The Persian Sphinx, while maintaining the lion body, often displays a more human-like face, sometimes with a distinctly Persian aesthetic incorporating elements of local headgear and attire.

Distinguishing Features: Persian vs. Egyptian Sphinxes

A key difference lies in the representation of the face. Egyptian Sphinxes typically boast a pharaoh's face, imbued with regal power and divine authority. Conversely, Persian Sphinxes exhibit a greater diversity in facial features, sometimes appearing more feminine, and occasionally adorned with attributes reflecting the Persian cultural milieu. This suggests a broader symbolic range and a less rigid association with specific deities or rulers. The posture also varies; while Egyptian Sphinxes often sit majestically, Persian examples are sometimes depicted in a more dynamic stance, potentially implying a different symbolic function.

Symbolism and Interpretation of the Persian Sphinx

The symbolism of the Persian Sphinx remains a subject of ongoing scholarly debate. While its precise meaning hasn't been definitively established, several interpretations exist. Given its frequent placement near royal structures, one prominent interpretation suggests it symbolizes royal power, strength, and protection. The combination of the lion's might and the human head might represent the king's ability to balance divine authority with human leadership. Another perspective connects the Sphinx to the concept of guardianship, safeguarding the realm from evil forces or intruders.

The Sphinx in Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid Art

The Achaemenid Empire witnessed the most prolific use of the Sphinx in Persian art. However, its presence continues into later periods, albeit with variations in style and frequency. The Parthian and Sasanian empires also integrated the Sphinx into their artistic traditions, though often with modifications reflecting the evolving cultural and artistic preferences of each era. These changes illustrate the creature's adaptability and enduring resonance within Persian artistic expression.

The Persian Sphinx in Modern Contexts

While the Persian Sphinx might not hold the same level of popular recognition as its Egyptian counterpart, it remains a significant subject of study for art historians and archaeologists. Its enduring legacy is visible in modern interpretations and representations. Museums worldwide house collections featuring artifacts depicting the Persian Sphinx, allowing for continued examination and appreciation of its unique characteristics and artistic style. The enduring mystique of the creature continues to fascinate and inspire, ensuring its place within the broader landscape of ancient Persian mythology and iconography.

Conclusion

The Persian Sphinx, although less documented than its Egyptian counterpart, offers a compelling window into the rich artistic and symbolic landscape of ancient Persia. Its unique features, varying representations, and potential symbolism invite further scholarly investigation. By understanding the nuances of its artistic expression across various empires, we gain a deeper appreciation for the complex cultural and political contexts of ancient Persia and the enduring power of mythical creatures in shaping human narratives.

FAQs

1. Are there any surviving examples of Persian Sphinxes today? Yes, fragments and complete examples can be found in museum collections worldwide, notably in museums in Iran and other institutions possessing significant collections of Persian art.
2. How does the size of Persian Sphinxes compare to Egyptian Sphinxes? The size varied considerably depending on the context. Some were small, decorative pieces, while others were large-scale sculptures guarding monumental structures. There's no consistent size comparison with Egyptian examples.
3. Were Persian Sphinxes associated with specific deities? Unlike the Egyptian Sphinx, there's no single definitive deity associated with Persian Sphinxes. The symbolism is more open to interpretation based on context.
4. What materials were typically used to create Persian Sphinxes? Stone, particularly limestone, was

a common material. However, smaller examples might have been crafted from other materials like bronze or terracotta.

5. Are there any modern artistic interpretations of the Persian Sphinx? While less frequent than interpretations of the Egyptian Sphinx, modern artists sometimes draw inspiration from the Persian Sphinx, reinterpreting its form and symbolism in contemporary art forms.

the persian sphinx: *The Persian Sphinx* Abbas Milani, 2000 Amir Abbas Hoveyda was a central figure in the historic struggle between modernity and tradition in Iran—a struggle pitting Western cosmopolitanism against Persian isolationism, secularism against religious fundamentalism and ultimately civil society and democracy against authoritarianism ... In telling the story of Hoveyda's life, the author has not only laid bare the development of Iranian society during a pivotal period (1919-1978) but has also unearthed important new materials on U.S.-Iranian relations ...--Page [4].

the persian sphinx: The Persian Sphinx Abbas Milani, 2000 Amir Abbas Hoveyda was an Iranian intellectual, more comfortable with Sartre than with the classical Persian poet Saadi, who rose to become his country's Prime Minister, faithfully and for 13 years serving his king. The tragic Shakespearian tale of Hoveyda, who allowed himself to be seduced by the illusion of power, makes for fascinating reading. This work provides a narrative which illuminates the life of Iran's most pivotal and enigmatic 20th century figures but also sheds important light on Iran's late 20th century history.

the persian sphinx: *The Riddle of the Sphinx* Alexandre Montagu, 2019-04-02 From a daring escape from revolutionary Iran, to the glittering night clubs of Paris; from the Caspian Sea to Wimbledon, from the halls of Princeton University to an exiled princess's palatial New York apartment, the story takes us on a dramatic journey in an epic and psychological novel of self-discovery, sexual obsession, exile and destiny.

the persian sphinx: Eminent Persians Abbas Milani, 2022-08-01 As the 25th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution approached, Abbas Milani realized that very little, if any, attention had been given to the entire prerevolutionary generation. Political upheavals and a tradition of neglecting the history of past regimes have resulted in a cultural memory loss, erasing the contributions of a generation of individuals. *Eminent Persians* seeks to rectify that loss. Milani's groundbreaking portrait of modern Iran reveals the country's rich history through the lives of the men and women who forged it. Consisting of 150 profiles of the most important innovators in Iran between World War II and the Islamic Revolution, the book includes politicians, entrepreneurs, poets, artists, and thinkers who brought Iran into the modern era with brilliant success and sometimes terrible consequences. The biographies and essays weave a richly textured tapestry of lives, ideas, and events that reveals the true story of these decades in the life of a nation. The two volumes are divided into sections on politics, economics, and culture, each accompanied by an introductory essay that places the individual stories in their broader historical context. Drawn from interviews, extensive archival material, and private correspondence, *Eminent Persians* is a treasure trove of original documents, many appearing in print for the first time. Detailed sketches of personalities and personal foibles offer a compelling and highly readable account of this remarkable period of history on a human scale.

the persian sphinx: The Shah Abbas Milani, 2011-01-04 The definitive biography of the last Shah of Iran, tracing his dramatic rise and fall and his role in the creation of the contemporary Islamic Republic. Though his monarchy was toppled in 1979 and he died in 1980, the life of Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran, continues to resonate today. Here, internationally respected author Abbas Milani gives us the definitive biography, more than ten years in the making, of the monarch who shaped Iran's modern age and with it the contemporary politics of the Middle East. The Shah's was a life filled with contradiction—as a social reformer he built schools, increased equality for women, and greatly reduced the power of the Shia clergy. He made

Iran a global power, courting Western leaders from Churchill to Carter, and nationalized his country's many natural resources. But he was deeply conflicted and insecure in his powerful role. Intolerant of political dissent, he was eventually overthrown by the very people whose loyalty he so desperately sought. This comprehensive and gripping account shows us how Iran went from politically moderate monarchy to totalitarian Islamic republic. Milani reveals the complex and sweeping road that would bring the U.S. and Iran to where they are today.

the persian sphinx: *Iran and the Arab World* Hooshang Amirahmadi, Nader Entessar, 1993-01-15 The Middle East has been the arena of three cataclysmic events since 1979 - the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. All of these have brought about major changes in the inter-regional politics and relations between Middle East countries and the outside world. This book seeks to analyze the impact of these events on Iranian-Arab relations. The authors examine Iran's relations with the Arab states of the Gulf in detail and sheds light on the changing patterns of Iranian-Egyptian and Lebanese relations.

the persian sphinx: *Lost Wisdom* Abbas Milani, 2004 In the essays collected here, Abbas Milani uses an impressive array of cross-disciplinary Western and Iranian theories and texts to investigate the crucial question of modernity in Iran today. He offers a wealth of new insights into the thousand-year-old conflict in Iran between the search for modernity and the forces of religious obscurantism. The essays trace the roots of Shiite Islamic fundamentalism and offer illuminating accounts of the work of Iranian intellectuals -- both men and women -- and their artistic movements as they struggle to find a new path toward a genuine modernity in Iran that is congruent with Iran's rich cultural heritage. This book challenges the hitherto accepted theory that modernity and its related concepts of democracy and freedom are Western in essence. It also demonstrates that Iran and the West have more that brings them together than separates them in their search for such modern ideals as rationalism, the rule of law, and democracy.

the persian sphinx: Sphinx Christiane Zivie-Coche, 2004 Sphinxes are legion in Egypt--what is so special about this one?... We shall take a stroll around the monument itself, scrutinizing its special features and analyzing the changes it experienced throughout its history. The evidence linked to the statue will enable us to trace its evolution... down to the worship it received in the first centuries of our own era, when Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans mingled together in devotion to this colossus, illustrious witness to a past that was already more than two millennia old.--from the Introduction The Great Sphinx of Giza is one of the few monuments from ancient Egypt familiar to nearly everyone. In a land where the colossal is part of the landscape, it still stands out, the largest known statue in Egypt. Originally constructed as the image of King Chephren, builder of the second of the Great Pyramids, the Sphinx later acquired new fame in the guise of the sun god Harmakhis. Major construction efforts in the New Kingdom and Roman Period transformed the monument and its environs into an impressive place of pilgrimage, visited until the end of pagan antiquity. Christiane Zivie-Coche, a distinguished Egyptologist, surveys the long history of the Great Sphinx and discusses its original appearance, its functions and religious significance, its relation to the many other Egyptian sphinxes, and the various discoveries connected with it. From votive objects deposited by the faithful and inscriptions that testify to details of worship, she reconstructs the cult of Harmakhis (in Egyptian, Har-em-akhet, or Horus-in-the-horizon), which arose around the monument in the second millennium. We are faced, she writes, with a religious phenomenon that is entirely original, though not unique: a theological reinterpretation turned an existing statue into the image of the god who had been invented on its basis. The coming of Christianity ended the Great Sphinx's religious role. The ever-present sand buried it, thus sparing it the fate that overtook the nearby pyramids, which were stripped of their stone by medieval builders. The monument remained untouched, covered by its desert blanket, until the first excavations. Zivie-Coche details the archaeological activity aimed at clearing the Sphinx and, later, at preserving it from the corrosive effects of a rising water table.

the persian sphinx: *The Wicked Wit of Winston Churchill* Dominique Enright, 2011-06-09 This enchanting collection brings together hundreds of Churchill's wittiest remarks as a record of all that

was best about this endearing, conceited, talented and wildly funny Englishman.

the persian sphinx: *History of the Persian Empire* A. T. Olmstead, 2022-08-29 Out of a lifetime of study of the ancient Near East, Professor Olmstead has gathered previously unknown material into the story of the life, times, and thought of the Persians, told for the first time from the Persian rather than the traditional Greek point of view. The fullest and most reliable presentation of the history of the Persian Empire in existence.—M. Rostovtzeff

the persian sphinx: *Empire, Authority, and Autonomy in Achaemenid Anatolia* Elspeth R. M. Dusinger, 2013-04-29 The Achaemenid Persian Empire (550–330 BCE) was a vast and complex sociopolitical structure that encompassed much of modern-day Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan and included two dozen distinct peoples who spoke different languages, worshipped different deities, lived in different environments and had widely differing social customs. This book offers a radical new approach to understanding the Achaemenid Persian Empire and imperialism more generally. Through a wide array of textual, visual and archaeological material, Elspeth R. M. Dusinger shows how the rulers of the Empire constructed a system flexible enough to provide for the needs of different peoples within the confines of a single imperial authority and highlights the variability in response. This book examines the dynamic tensions between authority and autonomy across the Empire, providing a valuable new way of considering imperial structure and development.

the persian sphinx: *Samak the Ayyar*, 2021-08-03 The adventures of Samak, a trickster-warrior hero of Persia's thousand-year-old oral storytelling tradition, are beloved in Iran. Samak is an ayyar, a warrior who comes from the common people and embodies the ideals of loyalty, selflessness, and honor—a figure that recalls samurai, ronin, and knights yet is distinctive to Persian legend. His exploits—set against an epic background of palace intrigue, battlefield heroics, and star-crossed romance between a noble prince and princess—are as deeply rooted in Persian culture as are the stories of Robin Hood and King Arthur in the West. However, this majestic tale has remained little known outside Iran. Translated from the original Persian by Freydoon Rassouli and adapted by Prince of Persia creator Jordan Mechner, this timeless masterwork can now be enjoyed by English-speaking readers. A thrilling and suspenseful saga, *Samak the Ayyar* also offers a vivid portrait of Persia a thousand years ago. Within an epic quest narrative teeming with action and supernatural forces, it sheds light on the lives of ordinary people and their social worlds. This is the first complete English-language version of a treasure of world culture. The translation is grounded in the twelfth-century Persian text while paying homage to the dynamic culture of storytelling from which it arose.

the persian sphinx: *Reading Revolutionary Iran* Ze'ev Maghen, 2023-03-06 The burden of this book is twofold. The first half is charged with identifying and critiquing the many prejudices and misconceptions that inform popular – and even scholarly – perceptions of Islam and Iran, those rooted in neo-conservative hostility no less than those arising out of pro-regime apologetics or (what we will argue are) misleading post-modern methodologies. This is a key component of our overall investigation, both because the illusions occluding our view of the Islamic Republic are (we assert) piled so high and deep, and because setting the record straight on many a contentious issue is the most appropriate context for elucidating the positive positions of the revolutionary clerics. These last represent, perhaps more than anything else, the premier critics of Western civilization in our day, and their ideologies may therefore be best comprehended when placed in dialogue with, and in polemic against, the worldviews of that civilization (which in their own turn are often most profoundly understood when offset by their present-day Islamist nemeses). As noted above, it is not all contention: unexpected meeting points and congruities emerge, as well, when the activist Shi'ite clerics are placed in the same virtual room with their occidental counterweights. The second half of the book deploys a large number of rarely tapped primary sources, both ancient and contemporary, in order to tease out the attitudes of the class of Muslim scholars recently and currently at the helm of the Iranian state in a variety of significant fields, including the role of religion in society, the relationship between democracy and theocracy, the modern Western Weltanschauung, the

Sunni-Shi'i schism, and much more. Though the author parses, and provides background and context for, the myriad citations from these influential Muslim thinkers, the ultimate objective is to allow them to speak for themselves.

the persian sphinx: Thebes Paul Cartledge, 2020-05-26 Continuously inhabited for five millennia, and at one point the most powerful city in Ancient Greece, Thebes has been overshadowed by its better-known rivals, Athens and Sparta. According to myth, the city was founded when Kadmos sowed dragon's teeth into the ground and warriors sprang forth, ready not only to build the fledgling city but to defend it from all-comers. It was Hercules' birthplace and the home of the Sphinx, whose riddle Oedipus solved, winning the Theban crown and the king's widow in marriage, little knowing that the widow was his mother, Jocasta. The city's history is every bit as rich as its mythic origins, from siding with the Persian invaders when their emperor, Xerxes, set out to conquer Aegean Greece, to siding with Sparta - like Thebes an oligarchy - to defeat Pericles' democratic Athens, to being utterly destroyed on the orders of Alexander the Great. In *Thebes: The Forgotten City of Ancient Greece*, the acclaimed classical historian Paul Cartledge brings the city vividly to life, and argues that it is central to our understanding of the ancient Greeks' achievements - whether politically or culturally - and thus to our own culture and civilization.

the persian sphinx: Rostam Abolqasem Ferdowsi, 2009-09-29 The selected adventures of Persia's Hercules, from Iran's great national epic *No understanding of world mythology is complete without acquaintance with Rostam*, Iran's most celebrated mythological hero. According to the *Shahnameh* (the tenth-century Book of Kings), this titan, magnificent in strength and courage, bestrode Persia for 500 years. While he often served fickle kings - undergoing many trials of combat, cunning, and endurance - he was never their servant and owed allegiance only to his nation's greater good. Anyone interested in folklore, world literature, or Iranian culture will find Rostam both a rousing and illuminating read. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout world history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

the persian sphinx: Creating the Modern Iranian Woman Liora Hendelman-Baavur, 2019-11-07 A fresh look at Iranian popular culture and women's role within this prior to the 1979 Revolution.

the persian sphinx: Tales of Two Cities Abbas Milani, 2006 Offers a memoir of revolution and exile. This book is not only the odyssey of one intellectual doomed to exile, but also a message of hope and salvation for the increasing number of people forced to leave their homeland and settle in America.

the persian sphinx: In The Shadow Of The Sword Tom Holland, 2012-04-05 A SUNDAY TIMES TOP TEN BESTSELLER 'A stunning blockbuster' Robert Fisk 'A brilliant tour de force of revisionist scholarship and thrilling storytelling' Simon Sebag Montefiore 'A compelling detective story of the highest order' Sunday Times 'Tom Holland has an enviable gift for summoning up the colour, the individuals and animation of the past' Independent In the 6th century AD, the Near East was divided between two venerable empires: the Persian and the Roman. A hundred years on and one had vanished forever, while the other seemed almost finished. Ruling in their place were the Arabs: an upheaval so profound that it spelt, in effect, the end of the ancient world. In *The Shadow of the Sword* explores how this came about. Spanning from Constantinople to the Arabian desert, and starring some of the most remarkable rulers who ever lived, he tells a story vivid with drama, horror, and startling achievement.

the persian sphinx: The Shah and the Ayatollah Fereydoon Hoveyda, 2003-02-28 But such characteristics, which exist in other Muslim countries - especially in the Arab world - fail to clarify the particularities of the Iranian revolution..

the persian sphinx: Antiquity and Modernity Neville Morley, 2009-01-30 The nature, faults and future of modern civilization and how these connect to the past are tackled in this broad-reaching

volume. Presents a study of modernity that examines classical influences Incorporates political, economic, social, and psychological theories Highlights writings from a wide range of thinkers, including Adam Smith, Marx, Mill, Nietzsche, Weber, and Freud

the persian sphinx: The Fall of Heaven Andrew Scott Cooper, 2016-08-02 An immersive, gripping account of the rise and fall of Iran's glamorous Pahlavi dynasty, written with the cooperation of the late Shah's widow, Empress Farah, Iranian revolutionaries and US officials from the Carter administration In this remarkably human portrait of one of the twentieth century's most complicated personalities, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Andrew Scott Cooper traces the Shah's life from childhood through his ascension to the throne in 1941. He draws the turbulence of the post-war era during which the Shah survived assassination attempts and coup plots to build a modern, pro-Western state and launch Iran onto the world stage as one of the world's top five powers. Readers get the story of the Shah's political career alongside the story of his courtship and marriage to Farah Diba, who became a power in her own right, the beloved family they created, and an exclusive look at life inside the palace during the Iranian Revolution. Cooper's investigative account ultimately delivers the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty through the eyes of those who were there: leading Iranian revolutionaries; President Jimmy Carter and White House officials; US Ambassador William Sullivan and his staff in the American embassy in Tehran; American families caught up in the drama; even Empress Farah herself, and the rest of the Iranian Imperial family. Intimate and sweeping at once, *The Fall of Heaven* recreates in stunning detail the dramatic and final days of one of the world's most legendary ruling families, the unseating of which helped set the stage for the current state of the Middle East.

the persian sphinx: The World Book Encyclopedia , 2002 An encyclopedia designed especially to meet the needs of elementary, junior high, and senior high school students.

the persian sphinx: In the Persian Empire Khadija Ejaz, 2010-12-23 What was it about Persia's leadership and military that compelled powerful civilizations like Greece and Rome to fear and respect the might of the largest empire the ancient world had ever seen? The Persian Empire dictated administrative, economic, and artistic trends on an international level for a thousand years. Its people respected diversity and practiced one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world. But who were these people, really, who gave us the famous Persian carpet and taught us landscape gardening, polo, and wine making? Why do people today who can trace their lineage and traditions back to this remarkable empire still proudly celebrate festivals like Nowruz regardless of their nationality or religion? Discover this and more as you journey back in time over 2,000 years to experience life in the Persian Empire and meet the people who called this great empire home.

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the persian sphinx: Seven Wonders of the Ancient World Paul Jordan, 2014-05-01 The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and all sorts of mysteries attaching to them, have intrigued people since the second century BCE. Why were these particular creations chosen and when? And why did the ancients want to draw up such a list in the first place? What were the technical and cultural factors involved in the creation and listing of the Wonders? The Seven Wonders still rival many of the phenomenal products of both nature and mankind in their size, majesty, and beauty. Six of them no longer stand, having been destroyed by natural disaster or by human intervention. From the Pyramids at Giza to the Colossus of Rhodes, from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to the Lighthouse of Alexandria, from the Temple of Ephesus to the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and the

Statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World have never ceased to fascinate down the ages.

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the persian sphinx: *The Myth of the Great Satan* Abbas Milani, 2013-09-01 This critical review of the history of America's relations with Iran shows how little of the two countries' long and complicated relationship is reflected in the foundational axioms of the Great Satan myth. The author explains why meaningful and equitable relations can begin only after the two nations have arrived at a common, critical, and accurate reading of the past.

the persian sphinx: *King of the Benighted* Manuchehr Irani, 1995 Foreword by Nasrin Rahimieh. Includes Nezami's 'Black Dome' from 'The Seven Beauties'.

the persian sphinx: *A Window Into Modern Iran* Abbas Milani, 2019-06 The inner workings of Iranian politics, as experienced by two key figures at their center, are revealed as never before through the meticulously preserved documents and photographs in the Ardeshir Zahedi Papers at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives. These materials are essential for understanding modern Iranian history and its global context. These archives were preserved over the course of two illustrious careers: those of Ardeshir Zahedi, Iran's ambassador to the United States and United Kingdom and minister of foreign affairs; and his father, Fazlollah Zahedi, military general and prime minister of Iran after the 1953 overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh. Abbas Milani, American-Iranian historian and an expert in US-Iran relations, has sifted through these archives to select resources of unparalleled value and fascination for understanding Iran's politics, culture, and history--both before and after the 1979 Revolution that toppled the shah and sent him and the younger Zahedi into exile. Published for the very first time, the papers and photos included here are connected with many of the key events and figures of the twentieth century. They are indispensable primary sources for scholarship on modern Iranian history as well as intriguing studies on the mechanisms of international diplomacy.

the persian sphinx: *Winds of Change* Reza Pahlavi, 2001-12-18 The son of the deposed Shah of Iran reflects on Iran's political situation (without mentioning his father) and argues for a campaign of civil disobedience to the current Iranian regime that would hopefully lead to a constitutional monarchy restoring a Pahlavi to the throne of Iran. He discusses energy policy, foreign policy, and the Iranian Diaspora suggesting that the policies of the current clerical leaders of Iran have led to disastrous results for the Iranian people. He counters this with some rather bland bromides about international cooperation, secularization, self-determination, and cultural preservation. If brought back to the throne, he claims he will consult all of the Iranian people in governing the nation. Annotation copyrighted by Book News, Inc., Portland, OR.

the persian sphinx: *Writing the Sphinx* Eleanor Dobson, 2022-08-18 This book explores literary and Egyptological cultures from the closing decades of the nineteenth century to the opening decades of the twentieth, culminating in the aftermath of the high-profile discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922.

the persian sphinx: *Heroes* Stephen Fry, 2018-11-01 IMAGINE SANDALS ON YOUR FEET, A SWORD IN YOUR HAND, HOT SUN BEATING DOWN ON YOUR BRONZE HELMET . . . ENTER THE WORLD OF STEPHEN FRY'S SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER, HEROES 'An odyssey through Greek mythology. Brilliant . . . all hail Stephen Fry' DAIL MAIL _____ Few mere mortals have ever

embarked on such bold and heart-stirring adventures, overcome myriad monstrous perils, or outwitted scheming vengeful gods, quite as stylishly and triumphantly as Greek heroes. In this companion to his bestselling *Mythos*, Stephen Fry brilliantly retells these dramatic, funny, tragic and timeless tales. Join Jason aboard the Argo as he quests for the Golden Fleece. See Atalanta - who was raised by bears - outrun any man before being tricked with golden apples. Witness wily Oedipus solve the riddle of the Sphinx and discover how Bellerophon captures the winged horse Pegasus to help him slay the monster Chimera. Filled with white-knuckle chases and battles, impossible puzzles and riddles, acts of base cowardice and real bravery, not to mention murders and selfless sacrifices, *Heroes* is the story of what we mortals are truly capable of - at our worst and our very best. _____

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the persian sphinx: *The Book of Dragons & Other Mythical Beasts* Joe Nigg, 2002 The beasts that inhabit the realms of ancient myth and folklore are among the most compelling creatures of imagination. This is a modern collection of animal lore in the tradition of natural histories, including beasts from all over the world.

the persian sphinx: *The Age of Aryamehr* Roham Alvandi, 2018-07-15 Fully incorporates Pahlavi Iran into the global history of the 1960s and '70s, when Iran mattered far beyond its borders. The reign of the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-79), marked the high point of Iran's global interconnectedness. Never before had Iranians felt the impact of global political, social, economic, and cultural forces so intimately in their national and daily lives, nor had Iranian actors played such an important global role - on battlefields, barricades, and in board rooms far beyond Iran's borders. Iranian intellectuals, technocrats, politicians, workers, artists, and students alike were influenced by the global ideas, movements, markets, and conflicts that they also helped to shape. From the launch of the Shah's White Revolution in 1963 to his overthrow in the popular revolution of 1978-79, Iran saw the longest period of sustained economic growth that the country had ever experienced. An entire generation took its cue from the shift from oil consumption to oil production to dream of, and aspire to, a modernized Iran, and the history of Iran in this period has tended to be presented as a prologue to the revolution. Those histories usually locate the political, social, and cultural origins of the revolution firmly within a national context, into which global actors intruded as Iranian actors retreated. While engaging with that national narrative, this volume is concerned with Iran's place in the global history of the 1960s and '70s. It examines and highlights the transnational threads that connected Pahlavi Iran to the world, from global traffic in modern art and narcotics to the embrace of American social science by Iranian technocrats and the encounter of European intellectuals with the Iranian Revolution.

the persian sphinx: *Soldier of Arete* Gene Wolfe, 1989-08-15 The second volume of Gene Wolfe's powerful story of Latro, a Roman mercenary who, while fighting in Greece, received a head injury that deprived him of his short-term memory. In return it gave him the ability to converse with supernatural creatures, gods and goddesses who invisibly inhabit the ancient landscape. At the Publisher's request, this title is being sold without Digital Rights Management Software (DRM) applied.

the persian sphinx: *The Last Shah* Ray Takeyh, 2021-01-26 The surprising story of Iran's transformation from America's ally in the Middle East into one of its staunchest adversaries An original interpretation that puts Iranian actors where they belong: at center stage.--Michael Doran,

Wall Street Journal For the clearest view of Iran for the last 100 years, this book is it.--Marvin Zonis, author of *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah* Offering a new view of one of America's most important, infamously strained, and widely misunderstood relationships of the postwar era, this book tells the history of America and Iran from the time the last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was placed on the throne in 1941 to the 1979 revolution that brought the present Islamist government to power. This revolution was not, as many believe, the popular overthrow of a powerful and ruthless puppet of the United States; rather, it followed decades of corrosion of Iran's political establishment by an autocratic ruler who demanded fealty but lacked the personal strength to make hard decisions and, ultimately, lost the support of every sector of Iranian society. Esteemed Middle East scholar Ray Takeyh provides new interpretations of many key events--including the 1953 coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq and the rise of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini--significantly revising our understanding of America and Iran's complex and difficult history.

the persian sphinx: Caesar and Cleopatra Illustrated George Bernard Shaw, 2020-09-24
Caesar and Cleopatra is a play written in 1898 by George Bernard Shaw that depicts a fictionalized account of the relationship between Julius Caesar and Cleopatra. It was first published with *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* and *The Devil's Disciple* in Shaw's 1901 collection *Three Plays for Puritans*. It was first performed in a single staged reading at Newcastle upon Tyne on 15 March 1899, to secure the copyright. The play was produced in New York in 1906 and in London at the Savoy Theatre in 1907

the persian sphinx: The Political Economy of Iran Farhad Gohardani, Zahra Tizro, 2019-03-07 This study entails a theoretical reading of the Iranian modern history and follows an interdisciplinary agenda at the intersection of philosophy, psychoanalysis, economics, and politics and intends to offer a novel framework for the analysis of socio-economic development in Iran in the modern era. A brief review of Iranian modern history from the Constitutional Revolution to the Oil Nationalization Movement, the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the recent Reformist and Green Movements demonstrates that Iranian people travelled full circle. This historical experience of socio-economic development revolving around the bitter question of "Why are we backward?" and its manifestation in perpetual socio-political instability and violence is the subject matter of this study. Michel Foucault's conceived relation between the production of truth and production of wealth captures the essence of hypothesis offered in this study. Foucault (1980: 93-94) maintains that "In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth; indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place." Based on a hybrid methodology combining hermeneutics of understanding and hermeneutics of suspicion, this monograph proposes that the failure to produce wealth has had particular roots in the failure in the production of truth and trust. At the heart of the proposed theoretical model is the following formula: the Iranian subject's confused preference structure culminates in the formation of unstable coalitions which in turn leads to institutional failure, creating a chaotic social order and a turbulent history as experienced by the Iranian nation in the modern era. As such, the society oscillates between the chaotic states of socio-political anarchy emanating from irreconcilable differences between and within social assemblages and their affiliated hybrid forms of regimes of truth in the springs of freedom and repressive states of order in the winters of discontent. Each time, after the experience of chaos, the order is restored based on the emergence of a final arbiter (Iranian leviathan) as the evolved coping strategy for achieving conflict resolution. This highly volatile truth cycle produces the experience of socio-economic backwardness and violence. The explanatory power of the theoretical framework offered in the study exploring the relation between the production of truth, trust, and wealth is demonstrated via providing historical examples from strong events of Iranian modern history. The significant policy implications of the model are explored. This monograph will appeal to researchers, scholars, graduate students, policy makers and anyone interested in the Middle Eastern politics, Iran, development studies and political economy.

the persian sphinx: Allegory in Iranian Cinema Michelle Langford, 2019-07-25 Iranian filmmakers have long been recognised for creating a vibrant, aesthetically rich cinema whilst

working under strict state censorship regulations. As Michelle Langford reveals, many have found indirect, allegorical ways of expressing forbidden topics and issues in their films. But for many, allegory is much more than a foil against haphazardly applied censorship rules. Drawing on a long history of allegorical expression in Persian poetry and the arts, allegory has become an integral part of the poetics of Iranian cinema. *Allegory in Iranian Cinema* explores the allegorical aesthetics of Iranian cinema, explaining how it has emerged from deep cultural traditions and how it functions as a strategy for both supporting and resisting dominant ideology. As well as tracing the roots of allegory in Iranian cinema before and after the 1979 revolution, Langford also theorizes this cinematic mode. She draws on a range of cinematic, philosophical and cultural concepts - developed by thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Christian Metz and Vivian Sobchack - to provide a theoretical framework for detailed analyses of films by renowned directors of the pre-and post-revolutionary eras including Masoud Kimiai, Dariush Mehrjui, Ebrahim Golestan, Kamran Shirdel, Majid Majidi, Jafar Panahi, Marziyeh Meshkini, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad and Asghar Farhadi. *Allegory in Iranian Cinema* explains how a centuries-old means of expression, interpretation, encoding and decoding becomes, in the hands of Iran's most skilled cineastes, a powerful tool with which to critique and challenge social and cultural norms.

the persian sphinx: History of Glass and Ceramics in Iran, 1500-1925 Willem Floor, This comprehensive and richly detailed study by renowned scholar Willem Floor is the culmination of what is known about domestic glass and ceramic production—location, quality, craftsmen—in Iran from 1500 until the end of the Qajar period in 1925. Because of increasing imports, the Qajar government tried to improve domestic glass and ceramic techniques through transfer of technology, (once through direct foreign investment). The reasons for these failed attempts are discussed as well as the development of the import of glass and ceramic products. Over time, there was not only a change in the places of origin of glass and ceramic imports, but also in their volume and composition, which, during the Qajar period, included a large variety of cheap articles for mass consumption. There is an appendix for each chapter giving a market assessment for glass and ceramic production in Iran, written in French by Belgian consultants in 1891. The Belgian assessments offer a detailed chemical analysis of glass and ceramics made in Iran, as well as an inventory of the types of glassware and ceramics made by domestic craftsmen. It concludes with proposals for the establishment of a modern glass and ceramic factory in Iran. This superb body of research will not only be of great interest to Iranian scholars inside and outside the country, but also to everyone interested in the story of glass and ceramics throughout the world.

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