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## Introduction

# The Felon, the Faithful and the Fighter: The Protean Face of the Chivalric Man (*javanmard*) in the Medieval Persianate and Modern Iranian Worlds

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### Abstract

*Javanmardi* is one of the most significant components in the identity of Persians and those who have lived and live in areas where Persianate culture has been and remains strong. This essay argues that the ethic of *javanmardi* demonstrates a high level of cultural continuity. The difficulty of defining this concept is partly resolved by relying on seminal texts from the medieval period and referring to important historical figures from early Iranian history. A taxonomy of types, the felon, the faithful and the fighter, are utilised in this article to provide a bricolage of characters who demonstrate that *javanmardi* is just as important in modern Iran as it was in medieval Persia.

### Introduction

In many nations, societies and communities there exists an idealised depiction of ethical perfection which reveals much about religious, national, trans-national, gender and class sentiments. A British tradition, typifying such an ideal, is the chivalrous English gentleman; in Japan it is possible to point to the Bushido ethic of the Samurai noble; and the Shaolin way of life in China may also be considered as an ethical worldview oriented towards human perfection. In pre-modern Persianate territories (which includes Iran, Central Asia, Anatolia and Mesopotamia) the ethic of *javanmardi* has played a pivotal role in the way people behave and perceive their own identity. And yet, defining the term *javanmardi* is problematic: on asking a cross section of modern Iranians about the term, for example, it is highly likely that the question would elicit a multitude of answers about their personal beliefs and their perception of society, and it is probable that they would provide many examples of celebrated

*javanmards* to illustrate their responses. A literal understanding of the term offers no genuine insight into its semantic meaning. The word *javanmard* is a compound noun made up of the terms *javan*, or ‘young’, and *mard*, or ‘man’. Thus, a literal meaning of *javanmardi* is young-manliness. The vague literal meaning of the word adds to the confusion and complexity of the topic, as inevitably Iranian understandings reflect the political, religious, social and economic situations of individuals. Perhaps one of the best entry points into *javanmardi* is found in one of the very earliest definitions of the term, contained in the *Qabus nameh*, written in 1083. The following anecdote concerns a group of ‘*ayyaran*, or gangs of Robin-hood type figures generally associated with *javanmardi*:

They say that one day in the mountains, a group of ‘*ayyaran* were sitting together when a man passed by and greeted them.

He said, ‘I am a messenger from the ‘*ayyaran* of Marv. They send their greetings to you and they say, “Listen to our three questions. If you answer [well] we accept your superiority, but if you do not answer satisfactorily you will have shown our superiority.”’

The [‘*ayyaran*] said, ‘Speak on.’

He said, [1] ‘What is *javanmardi*? [2] And what is the difference between *javanmardi* and non-*javanmardi*? [3] And if a man passes an ‘*ayyar* sitting at a crossroads, and a while later [another] man brandishing a sword comes hot on his tail intending to kill him, and he asks the ‘*ayyar*, “Has so-and-so passed here?” what should this ‘*ayyar* answer? If he says, “[No-one] has passed here,” then he has told a lie. And if he says, “He has passed here,” he has grassed on the man. Both of these [answers] are inappropriate with the ‘*ayyari way*.’ When the ‘*ayyaran* from the mountains heard these questions, they looked at each other. Among them was a man called Fozayl Hamadani, and he said, ‘I [can] answer.’ They said, ‘Go ahead.’ He said, ‘*Javanmardi* is doing what you say [you will do]. The difference between *javanmardi* and non-*javanmardi* is fortitude (*sabr*). And the answer that the ‘*ayyar* [gives to the man wielding the sword] is that he shifts himself a short distance from where he has been sitting and says, “For as long as I have been sitting here no-one has passed by.” And in this way he tells the truth.’<sup>1</sup>

For the author of *Qabus nameh* then *javanmardi* involved being a ‘man of your word’, courage and resilience (encompassed in the term *sabr*), refraining from slander and telling tales, and at the same time having the sagacity and know-how of extricating oneself from difficult situations. While the anecdotes from *Qabus nameh* describe an 11th-century ideal and are

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<sup>1</sup>Kay-Kavus ebn Eskandar, *Qabus nameh*, ed. Gholam Hosayn Yusofi (Tehran, 1373/1994-95), 247-48.

associated with a particular kind of *javanmard*, the same standards have been applied to *javanmardi* subsequently, whether in the form of treatises on the topic that proliferated in the 13th century, or in the composition of Timurid polymath, Hosayn Va‘ez-e Kashefi (d. 1504), whose treatise on the pre-Islamic hero, Hatem-e Ta‘i, depicts the latter’s generosity towards the misfortunate and was written explicitly to explain to the royal court the reality of *javanmardi*.<sup>2</sup> The same concerns are still paramount in the lives of popularly acclaimed *javanmards* of the 20th century, such as Gholam-Reza Takhti (to be discussed later).

Bearing these ideas of *javanmardi* in mind, I propose to examine manifestations of the concept firstly in the medieval period by dividing it into three categories: the felon, the faithful and the fighter. Then I will examine these three categories in the modern period with reference to examples from literature, cinema, popular culture and sport, and in this manner I hope to demonstrate just how all-embracing the concept is. The categories of felon, faithful and fighter provide an heuristic tool, and as such these categories are not mentioned together explicitly in *Qabus nameh*, nor in any of the Persian literature that discusses the term. They provide a convenient construct, however, by which to capture the disparate individuals whom have been associated with *javanmardi*.

### **The medieval felon**

Military connotations of *javanmardi* are in part due to its close association with the ‘*ayyar*, mentioned previously. There are descriptions of groups of ‘*ayyaran* in Iran and surrounding territories from the 9th century onwards that depict these individuals with the usual attributes that are commonly associated with soldiers. It is recognised that they also served as spies, and were an irregular and unpaid force that operated both on the territorial borders of the Islamic world and also in major cities such as Baghdad and Nishapur, where denominational strife existed (illustrated in **chapter one** by Raya Y. Shani).

It is interesting that around the time that *Qabus nameh* was composed, an era in which there was a confidence and a burgeoning literature written in New Persian, there are a number of works that portray the ‘*ayyar* and his attributes of *javanmardi*. One of these, *Tarikh-e Sistan* (composed towards the end of the 11th century), describes the attributes of Ya‘qub ebn al-Lays (9th-century ruler of Sistan), who, in addition to the kind of qualities mentioned in *Qabus*

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<sup>2</sup> Translated into English in Lloyd Ridgeon, *Jawanmardi: A Sufi Code of Honour* (Edinburgh, 2011), 175-214.

*nameh*, is said to have possessed sagacity and skill in spying.<sup>3</sup> This latter aspect of military *javanmardi* becomes all too apparent in the portrayal of heroes in Persian epic and romantic literature. For example, Ferdawsi's *Shahnameh* (completed in 1010) glorifies Rostam, the celebrated mythical champion and defender of ancient Iran, yet there are many passages in which he is shown in a less sympathetic light. 'He can be overbearing towards inferiors... grossly disrespectful to his superiors and he does not hide his contempt for those whom he despises, [and] he gets drunk.'<sup>4</sup> In fact his name, *Rostam-e dastan* actually means 'Rostam the trickster', and 'he is given to deceit at crucial moments... he pushes the limits of the codes [of *javanmardi*] ... in a word, he changes the rules when it suits him'.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the stories of *Samak-e 'Ayyar*, which were probably written down in the 12th century, portray this particular 'ayyar with commendable attributes counterbalanced by episodes where he resorts to cunning and trickery, the use of drugs and disguises.<sup>6</sup> These attributes testify to the 'ayyar's ingenuity and cleverness which may be termed 'deviousness'.

Jettisoning the deviousness of the 'ayyar, Sufis of the time were concerned more with the selflessness and pursuit of truth and honesty and integrity which they believed was the kernel of *javanmardi*. Be that as it may, it is clear that by the 11th century some 'ayyars associated with Sufis, and no doubt this was a relationship that was symbiotic. For example, Hojwiri (d.c. 1076) cites the words of an 'ayyar who was engaged in a conversation with a Malamati Sufi, clearly showing that some of these brigands had lofty, spiritual ideals:

[Nuh the 'ayyar said,] My *javanmardi* is that I cast aside this robe of mine and I wear the patched [Sufi] gown (*moraqqa* ') and act in a way that accords with it so that I may become a Sufi, and in that garment I refrain from committing sin out of shame before the people.

Your *javanmardi* (i.e. that of the Malamati) is that you cast aside that patched gown so that you will not be deceived by people and they will not be deceived by you.

So my *javanmardi* is the preservation of the *shari'a* by making something clear and your *javanmardi* is the preservation of the truth by keeping secrets.<sup>7</sup>

### The medieval faithful (*faqir*)

<sup>3</sup> Anonymous, *Tarikh-e Sistan*, ed. T. Bahar (Tehran, 1381/2002-3). On skill and sagacity in the work, see Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism in Persian Sufism: A History of Sufi-futuwwat in Iran* (London, 2010), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Dick Davis, 'Rustam-i Dastan', *Iranian Studies* 32/2 (1999), 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, *Samak-e 'Ayyār*, ed. Parviz Na'el Khanlari (Tehran, 1964). For a discussion of these themes see Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism*, 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> Hojwiri, *Kashf al-mahjub*, ed. M. 'Abedi (Tehran, 1386/2007), 267-68.

Strange as it may seem then, the felon or outcast could also strive to be among the faithful, united in manifesting the appropriate character traits. While *javanmardi* had long been a concern for Sufis, as masters such as Solami (d. 1021) and Abu'l-Hasan Kharrāqani (d. 1034) among others had shown a keen regard for the tradition, it is with Abu Hafṣ 'Omar Sohravardi (d. 1234) that *javanmardi* emerged as a social institution with a distinct Sufi colouring.<sup>8</sup> Sohravardi's interest in *javanmardi* should be understood in the context of the Caliph's ban on all *javanmardi* groups (also known as *fotovvat* associations) in 1207, except the one where he declared himself head. A number of reasons have been posited for this move, but it seems that they all concern security, an issue with which Sohravardi, the Caliph's spiritual advisor and *Shaykh al-shoyukh* in Baghdad, does not seem to have been concerned. Sohravardi's two Persian treatises on *javanmardi* indicate that he was intent to seize the moment from the renewed interest in *javanmardi* in order to promote his own form of Sufism. Sufism in this late Seljuk period has been characterised by its increasing association with the masses, including tradesmen, soldiers and merchants, in fact anyone who desired some benefit from mixing with the Sufis, while not devoting a hundred percent of their time to spiritual activity. It is possible that Sohravardi adopted the *fotovvat* social organisations that existed in urban areas prior to the 13th century (although the function and nature of these associations during this period remains rather opaque). He established a spiritual basis for these groups, utilising the heritage and symbols that were familiar to the warrior ethos of the *'ayyaran* and *javanmardi*.

It is intriguing that during this period of early Sufi history of the 9th-12th centuries, when Sufis began to include the theme of *javanmardi* in their works, the role of the warrior par excellence of Islam, 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb, is not at all pronounced. It may be the case that these early Sufis were more inspired by the ethical message of the Qur'an and its inclusion of the word *fata* (young man), from which *fotovvat* is derived. Only at a later stage of history from the 13th century did Sufis connect 'Ali with *javanmardi*. It may well be the case that by the 12th and 13th centuries, when the social manifestations of Sufi *javanmardi* flourished, the warriorship heritage of the *'ayyars* dovetailed neatly and conveniently with the heroic myths and legends of 'Ali. It is rather fascinating to note that in this period of the 12th-13th centuries Persian authors conflate the figure of 'Ali with national heroes. For example, the 12th-century court poet Rashidi observes *javanmardi* in the following fashion:

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<sup>8</sup> For Solami and Abu'l Hasan Kharrāqani on *javanmardi* or *fotovvat*, see Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism*, 28-60.

One would say that [the *javanmard*] has borrowed in banquet and fighting and decision and intention

The hand of Hatem, the intelligence of Rostam, the physique of Bizhan and the heart of Haydar.<sup>9</sup>

The linkage between ‘Ali and Rostam is also evident in the poetry of Rumi, who remarks that he is tired of his weak natured companions and seeks a lion of God (‘Ali) or Rostam the trickster. Rumi also contrasts the two kinds of warfare: ‘[Seclusion] is the greater warfare, and [fighting] is the lesser warfare / Both are tasks for Rostam and Haydar.’<sup>10</sup>

The very first treatises on *fotovvat* as a social organisation, that were written at the beginning of the 13th century, include many references to ‘Ali, suggesting that the earlier ‘*ayyari*’ tradition may have adopted him as a kind of patron saint. When and why this occurred is unclear, although there are associations between ‘Ali and *javanmardi* in the 12th century when Maybodi<sup>11</sup> and Qane‘i Tusi composed their works.<sup>12</sup> Earlier connections cannot be discounted, especially as the Shi‘i influence of the Fatimids was present in the 12th-century works of Ebn Rasuli that popularised *fotovvat*.<sup>13</sup>

Sohravardi also promoted ‘Ali significance in *javanmardi*; in his Persian work with the Arabic title *Risala fi ‘l-futuwwa* he states that, ‘The Verifiers of the Truth have said that if there had been another prophet after Mohammad it would have been ‘Ali.’<sup>14</sup> ‘Ali, the great patron saint of *fotovvat* groups, the perfect military hero, now the ethically minded, all-merciful advocate of clemency, was thus utilised by Sohravardi to popularise his own promotion of the associations, wishing to turn them into ‘second-class’ Sufi organisations.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly,

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<sup>9</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two Coloured Brocade* (North Carolina, 1992), 361 n. 16. Note that Haydar (‘lion’ in Arabic) is an epithet given to ‘Ali.

<sup>10</sup> *Mathnawi*, V, 3802.

<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Ja‘far Mahjub, ‘Chivalry and early Persian Sufism’, in *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London, 1993), 554.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 556.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 578.

<sup>14</sup> Sohravardi, *Risala fi ‘l-futuwwa*, trans. Lloyd Ridgeon as an appendix to ‘Javanmardi: Origins and development until the 13th century and its connection to Sufism,’ *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 21/2 (2006), 65-74.

<sup>15</sup> The prominence of ‘Ali in Sohravardi’s treatises is remarkable because prior to Sohravardi he had not been allocated such a distinct role. The works of Solami, Hojwiri and Qoshayri include ‘Ali as a representative in the tradition, however, he is only given limited space, a few lines, and at best a couple of paragraphs. Sohravardi’s *Kitāb fi ‘l-futuwwa*, however, includes ‘Ali in no less than six consecutive episodes to illustrate the reality of *javanmardi*, more than any other exemplar of the *fotovvat* tradition. (Sohravardi, *Kitāb fi ‘l-futuwwa*, trans. Lloyd Ridgeon, *Javanmardi: A Sufi code of honour* (Edinburgh, 2011), 42-86). For the significance of ‘Ali in the traditional medieval *fotovvat* (from the time of Sohravardi until Kashefi in the 16th century) see Lloyd Ridgeon, ‘‘Ali ibn Abi Talib in medieval Persian Sufi-futuwwat treatises’, in M.A. Moezzi, ed. *L’Ésotérisme Shi‘ite: Ses racines et ses prolongements* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2016), 665-85. This article refutes the idea of the ‘Shi‘itisation’ of *fotovvat* but argues for a more nuanced perspective that advances the ‘‘Alidisation’ of *fotovvat*.

treatises on *javanmardi* subsequent to Sohravardi do not shy away from presenting ‘Ali as the warrior-hero of Islam, suggesting perhaps that the contexts in which such texts were written embraced not so much the Sufi aims of Sohravardi, but rather the security desired by successive members of these groups in both the various Beyliks in post-Seljuk Anatolia and urban areas in the region of north-west Iran.

### **The medieval fighter**

Sohravardi appears to have written his works specifically as ‘second-class’ manuals of Sufism for groups of *javanmardan* or *akhis* (another synonym for the term used in both Persian and Turkish, see **chapter two** by Rıza Yıldırım). There is mention of *akhis* in Konya in 1221,<sup>16</sup> and subsequent reports of *akhis* in 13th-century Anatolia increase, some giving a positive spin on their activities, others negative. What is clear, however, regardless of whether they were chivalrous or revolting, is that they were certainly a force with which any ruler had to reckon. A valuable source for historians is Shams al-Din Ahmad Aflaki’s hagiographical work composed in 1318, in which he described virtues of the Sufi masters associated with the Mawlawi (pronounced Mevlevi in Turkish) order.<sup>17</sup> In his work Aflaki mentions the names of 22 different *akhis* who lived in Anatolia in the 13th and early 14th centuries. While many of these 22 are presented in a positive fashion, there are also reports in which the *akhis* are described as rogues and scoundrels. One of the most interesting characters is Akhi Ahmad. Aflaki says that he was nicknamed ‘the untouchable’, and that he was ‘foremost among the fearsome rogues (*rendan*)’. It seems that Akhi Ahmad was one of those *akhis* who was more than prepared to use violence, as Aflaki recounts in an episode in which the Sultan gave a royal patent to Hosam al-Din Chalabi (himself the son a well-known *akhi*) to succeed to a *khanaqah* (or convent). Akhi Ahmad came to the inauguration with ‘extreme spite, partisan zeal and the innate envy he possessed’. After having made his opposition clear, Aflaki mentioned that the ‘*akhis* of good repute... took hold of their swords and their knives, and the commanders who were disciples attempted to kill the rebellious rogues’.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Akhis* appear in Konya during a visit by ‘Omar Sohravardi who was acting as an ambassador of Caliph al-Naser in 1221. Ebn Bibi (d. c. 1284) records that the *akhis* were among the notables of Konya to salute him, and that later they came to his residence to kiss his cloak and receive his blessing.

<sup>17</sup> Shams al-Din Ahmad-e Aflaki, *Manaqeb al-‘arefin*, trans. John O’Kane, *The Feats of the Knowers of God* (Leiden, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Another criticism of *akhis* is made clear by Aflaki in an episode about one Shaykh Naser al-Din, who describes Rumi’s path as ‘puny’ and adds, ‘I don’t think there is any light in him’. Rumi responded and labelled him a catamite, which in the tradition of *javanmardi* was one of the worst sins imaginable. Yet improper sexual relations was one of the issues that was raised against the *akhis* and the *fotovat* tradition by their critics. (Aflaki, *Manaqeb al-‘arefin* (Leiden, 2002), 130-1). Mention should also be made of Aflaki’s depiction of some *akhis* who failed to



And yet Aflaki considered some *akhis* in a positive fashion, and these were usually disciples of one of the Mawlawi shaykhs. Perhaps the most well-known of all *akhis* associated with Rumi is the aforementioned Hosam al-Din Chalabi, also known as Ebn Akhi Turk, who was one of Rumi's spiritual companions. Frequently the *akhis* who had the stamp of approval from Aflaki were dignitaries, possessed wealth, and arranged *sama* ' parties. Indeed, some were among the most influential members of society, such as the Akhi Ahmad Shah, who spent his wealth in Konya on several thousand soldiers and toughs (*ronud*).<sup>19</sup> The importance of Akhi Ahmad Shah as a significant and respected figure in Konyan society is also evident in the anonymous *History of the Seljuqs in Anatolia (Tarikh-e Al-e Saljuq dar Anatoli)*,<sup>20</sup> as he is called a leader of the city (*sarvaran-e shahr*) and is accused by the Ilkhanid vizier of fermenting trouble in Konya. The same work alludes to Akhi Ahmad Shah's good character, as it recounts how he forgave Akhi Amir Ahmad a debt of 12,000 ' *adad-i soltani* (clearly a significant amount). The following episode in the text, entitled 'The Death of Akhi Ahmad Shah's Brother' is another indication of the *akhi*'s social standing, as we learn 'nearly 15,000 people followed his funeral cortège. No-one has seen such a period of mourning'.<sup>21</sup>

In the generation after Aflaki, Ebn Battuteh glorified the *akhis* of Anatolia, yet remarked that that they carried with them swords. He was deeply impressed with their generosity and hospitality, which at times amounted to rivalry among groups to bestow the greatest degree of hospitality upon travellers. Yet he was not oblivious to the social function that these spiritual soldiers offered, for he stated, '... in any part [of this land, i.e. Anatolia] where there is no ruler, it is the *akhi* who acts as governor; it is he who gives horses and robes to the visitor and shows hospitality to him... and his manner of command and prohibition and riding out [with a retinue] is the same as that of princes.'<sup>22</sup> The picture that emerges of the *akhis* from Ebn Battuteh's writings is that they adopted a social form of Sufism, such as the

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live up to Sohrawardiyan ideals in an incident in Sivas when 'a great riot broke out' and swords and knives were drawn by one group of *akhis* and opposing *akhis* and Sufi followers of Chalabi Amir 'Aref (d. 1319), (Aflaki, *Manaqeb al-'arefin*, 597). That relations were not always amicable between Sufis and *akhis* is also evident in Aflaki's reports about a certain Akhi Mostafa, who argued against the Sufis when he remarked that the Sufis should stick to their own affairs. The relations between Akhi Mostafa and Soltan Valad deteriorated further following a *sama* ' (spiritual music and listening to Sufi poetry) in which the dervishes displayed 'extreme behaviour', causing the *akhi* to observe, 'After this we must not invite the Mowlavis to our *sama* '. Chalabi Amir 'Aref was furious when he heard this, and took revenge by rampaging through the *akhi*'s lodge (Aflaki, *Manaqeb al-'arefin*, 586-7).

<sup>19</sup> Aflaki, *Manaqeb al-'arefin*, 419-20.

<sup>20</sup> Anonymous, *Tarikh-e Al-e Saljuq dar Anatoli*, ed. Nadira Jalali (Tehran, 1377/1999).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb, II (Delhi, 1999), 434.

performance of *sama* ' and communal meals, along with the idealised character traits associated with soldiers, including courage, bravery and self-sacrifice.<sup>23</sup>

The full importance of the *akhis* can be appreciated in reference to the assumption of power in Ankara by these groups, which took place shortly after Ebn Battuteh's visit to Anatolia. G.G. Anarkis has claimed that the *akhis* 'had organised a self-sufficient town life; and they had imposed a paternalistic despotism, with themselves as ruling caste'.<sup>24</sup> In resisting the attempts by the early Ottomans to impose their rule over Ankara, the *akhis* revolted and Anarkis views this as 'a republic with socialistic tendencies... and it struggled on for almost a decade'.<sup>25</sup>

In any case, it is clear how powerful the *akhis* could be in Anatolia. It is surprising, however, that Ebn Battuteh's references to the *akhis* occur only in the Anatolian context; he does not mention *akhis* once when he describes his travels in Iran. However, he does speak of groups of young men in Isfahan who have more than passing similarity to the *akhi* groups in Anatolia, without labelling them with such a technical term.<sup>26</sup> The members of each craft elect one person from their own ranks as a headman, and the various organisations attempt to out-do one another in hospitality, although it is not clear the extent to which there was any Sufi activity involved, which is so conspicuous within the accounts of the Anatolian *akhis*. In addition to this, mention should be made of the connection in Iran between the ideals of *javanmardi* and those of the strong hero, the *pahlavan*, who is typified by a great wrestling champion and Sufi, Purya-ye Vali, who lived in the 14th century. A composer of verse steeped in Sufi themes, Purya-ye Vali is also mentioned by 15th-century Sufi hagiographers who foregrounded his skill at wrestling, and in particular his compassion for his opponents. The *pahlavan* is also mentioned by Ebn Battuteh in the Iranian context, in Shiraz to be precise, in an anecdote in which one *pahlavan* motivates a group of young men to rise up with weapons to settle a local dispute during which they kill many soldiers and seize money that is being taken away to a ruler in Iraq.<sup>27</sup>

The connection between tradespeople, *javanmardi* and Sufism in the Iranian context has also been witnessed during the episode of the Sarbardar rule (1335-80 in Khorasan), which

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<sup>23</sup> See the discussion in Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism*, 61-91.

<sup>24</sup> G. G. Anarkis, 'Futuwwa traditions in the Ottoman Empire', *Journal of Near-Eastern Studies* 12/4 (1953) 236.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. It is to be wondered, however, if his views reflect the larger context of the movement of Shaykh Bedreddin, who took advantage of the loss of the Ottomans to Timur in advancing less centralised power and a relief from high taxes.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, 295.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 307-8.

was supported by a number of Shi‘a Sufis and was messianic in tenor. The connection of the Sarbardars with *fotovvat* is suggested by comments made by Hafez Abru (d. 1430) who remarked that most followers had a trade (*saheb-e herfa*) – that these were tradespeople, not full-time Sufis, and perhaps they were among the *ahl-e fotovvat*. He also uses the term *akhi* to describe some of the movement’s followers.<sup>28</sup>

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Having addressed the theme of *javanmardi* in the Persianate world during the medieval period it is now possible to see the extent of cultural continuity in the modern period. While the survey of the medieval period investigated texts that were influential over a very broad territorial range that included Anatolia, Iran, the Caucasus, Khorasan and Mesopotamia, to name a salient few, it is not possible in the confines of this article to survey the same breadth of territory in the modern world. Instead, the modern period will be investigated by concentrating on Iran alone. It remains to be seen if the three-fold categorisation of *javanmardi* to felon, faithful and fighter, is applicable to regions beyond Iran’s borders, but that is a task for other scholars.

### **The modern felon**

The term *javanmardi*, despite the noble and idealistic perceptions that many Iranians have of the concept, is also related to the phenomenon of the street tough, or the *luti*. With its strong connection to masculinity, bravery and courage, the ideal of *javanmardi* is often compromised in urban and lower-class settings, and it is here that the *javanmard* may slip from the demands of the ideal, and rather than protect, guard, assist, and act selflessly, he may transgress and commit crimes, extort, plunder, exploit and carry out self-serving acts. Although the origins of the *luti* manifestation may be traced to ‘*ayyari*’ roots, from the 19th century and into the 20th century, the phenomenon of the *luti* became more common, identifiable through particular forms of street fashion and verbal expression.<sup>29</sup> While the *luti* may adhere to the ideals of *javanmardi*, he may deviate from this and become a hoodlum, a thug and a felon, or to use the Persian term a *lat*. Exemplifying the *lat* is the well-known figure of Sha‘ban Ja‘fari (otherwise known as Sha‘ban Bimokh, or Sha‘ban the Brainless) who is associated in the popular

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<sup>28</sup> John Mason Smith, Jr, *The History of the Sarbardar Dynasty 1336-1381 A.D. and its Sources* (The Hague, 1970), 56-57.

<sup>29</sup> On the *lutis*, see Reza Arasteh, ‘The character, organization and social role of the “Lutis (Javan-Mardan)” in the traditional Iranian society of the nineteenth century’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 4 (January 1961), 47-52; Willem Floor, ‘The political role of the Lutis in Iran’, in Michael E. Bonnie and Nikki Keddie, eds. *Modern Iran: The Dialectics of Continuity and Change* (Albany, 1981), 83-95; idem, ‘The Lutis-A social phenomenon in Qajar Persia’, *Die Welt des Islams* 13 (1971), 103-21.

imagination with the downfall of Mosaddeq (the democratically elected Prime Minister) in 1953 and the emergence of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the exercise of genuine political power as the second Pahlavi monarch. For most, Shaban Ja'fari's life manifests the worst trappings of the *luti*. A more positive image of the *luti* is found in Tayyeb Hajj Reza'i, who was the head of Tehran's fruit and vegetable markets, and found fame for supposedly commanding riots against the Shah in 1963. Aside from his bravery, Tayyeb is known for his generosity (paying the bills of all customers in a restaurant) and distributing meals to the deprived and poor.<sup>30</sup> In reality, many *lutis* straddled the dividing line between the chivalry of the *javanmard* and the thuggery of the *lat*. As Babak Rahimi has observed, the *luti* is 'a Robin Hood and a street tough, he can be both paradoxically, admired and hated, honoured and despised for crossing boundaries of accepted norms of behaviour, even at times transgressing the law'.<sup>31</sup> The ideal of *javanmardi* in manifestations of *lutigari* (practising the *luti* mode of existence) in the 20th century extended to popular culture. As one observer has discussed, the 1970s pop diva Googoosh represented the positive elements of the *luti*, a term that was a 'broadly used adjective that combined arak and prayer, violence and charity, homosexual behavior and devotion to family'. Googoosh flaunted her sexuality, according to this perspective, not in a demeaning fashion, rather 'in [the] crossing of gender lines in her behavior [suggesting that] the *luti*/woman singer was above the written and unwritten law of female behavior'.<sup>32</sup> In a case of life imitating art, Googoosh married Behrooz Vossooghi, the actor in many *luti* roles in Persian cinema (to be discussed later). The significant point, however, is that the *luti* adopted a somewhat liminal position in society in relation to the law, and yet it was often this liminality that promoted a sense of *javanmardi*, with acts of generosity and bravery, and also the ability to do something and put things right. It often seemed that although the *luti* and the *javanmard* abided by the *shari'a*, there was another code of law which could take precedence, a sense of an un-written code that provided a degree of flexibility to ensure that correct outcomes could prevail, even if this was achieved through devious or unorthodox means.

### **The modern faithful**

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<sup>30</sup> See the article by Olmo Gözl, in this volume.

<sup>31</sup> Babak Rahimi, 'Digital *Javanmardi*: Chivalric ethics and Imagined Iran on the internet', in this volume, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Setareh Sabety, 'Googoosh on Tour: Decoding a popular Iranian myth', *The Journal of the International Institute* 8/2 (2001), <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/jjii/4750978.0008.204/--googoosh-on-tour-decoding-a-popular-iranian-myth?rgn=main;view=fulltext>> [last accessed 19 May 2016].

The *luti* achieved his status by adhering to a number of conditions, such as manifesting generosity and kindness, and in addition to these essential virtues, he was frequently expected to engage in acts of charity, which dovetailed neatly with the duties expected of a believer in Shi‘a Islam. Moreover, it should not be thought that *lutis* were anti-Islamic, indeed, many of them were devout Muslims who performed pious acts, such as engaging on pilgrimage to the shrines of the Imams. The connection between Shi‘a piety and *lutigari* should not be surprising if only because, as mentioned earlier, Imam ‘Ali has long been considered a kind of patron saint within the *javanmardi* tradition. *Javanmardi*, and the influence of Imam ‘Ali, has been witnessed in a variety of locations and situations in the modern period. In his *Isfahan is Half the World*,<sup>33</sup> the father of the modern Persian short-story, Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh, recalls his youth during the first decade of the 20th century. A chapter of this book is devoted to his visit to a *zurkhaneh* (a traditional Persian gymnasium, the subject of a chapter in the present volume by Philippe Rochard and Denis Jallat), typically considered the bastion of the *lutis* and *javanmards*, and witnessed there the same kind of salutations and veneration for ‘Ali that continue to this day. Such an association continues in the present age; a good example of this was provided by Gholam-Hosayn Karbaschi, mayor of Tehran between 1989 and 1998, who was accused of corruption, arrested and put on trial. Karbaschi himself has been viewed as a model for modern *javanmardi*.<sup>34</sup> Be that as it may, what is of interest here is his appropriation of Shi‘a Islam to defend his own honour. While exercising in Evin prison’s *zurkhaneh*, Karbaschi observed, ‘In [‘Ali] it is possible to find the crystallisation of *javanmardi* and also the aspiration of a prisoner, perhaps innocent, that looks for the unique justice of ‘Ali.’<sup>35</sup>

The association of ‘Ali with *javanmardi* may in part be a result of a famous *hadith* that states, *la fata illa ‘Ali wa la sayf illa Dhu’l-faqar* (‘there is no youth but ‘Ali and no sword but [his sword] *Dhu’l-faqar*’).<sup>36</sup> The Arabic *fata* is an equivalent of *javan* in Persian, making the application of the term to the Imam all the easier. It is reasonable to assume that what held true in the *zurkhaneh* during the late Qajar period, when Jamalzadeh visited the institution, was also the case for decades and centuries prior, perhaps originating in the *zurkhaneh* during the Safavid period when the public praising of ‘Ali commenced.<sup>37</sup> It is of interest, however, that the term is never applied to a clerical figure; the association between *javanmardi* and a leading

<sup>33</sup> Sayyed Mohammed Ali Jamalzadeh, *Isfahan is Half the World*, trans. W. L. Heston (Princeton, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of Karbaschi see Fariba Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, trans. Jonathan Derrick (London, [1988], 1999), 14-29.

<sup>35</sup> Cited in Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> On this *hadith*, see **Chapter 1** by Raya Y. Shani.

<sup>37</sup> Rosemary Stanfield Johnson, ‘The Tabarra’iyan and the early Safavids’, *Iranian Studies* 37/1 (2004), 47-71.

ayatollah, for example, is not made in the imagination of the general public. In terms of specific and more contemporary representatives of the faithful *javanmard*, the Islamic Republic of Iran has promoted Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh, a youth of thirteen years of age who threw himself under an enemy tank during the Iran-Iraq War and exploded a grenade belt that he had around his waist. The Islamic Republic commemorates his example through the issue of stamps, murals, and a well-maintained *zurkhaneh* in Tehran (used for displays to foreign visitors) named after him.<sup>38</sup>

### **The modern fighter**

Neither felon, nor specifically a recognised faithful figure of religion, Gholam-Reza Takhti (d. 1968) was one of the greatest popular heroes of 20th-century Iran, as the Olympic gold-medallist for wrestling in 1956. He was celebrated as a champion of *javanmardi*, not only for his physical prowess but also for his upright character. During my fieldwork in Iran in the first decade of the new century, the story that was repeatedly told me by the athletes of the traditional Iranian *zurkhaneh* was how he wrestled an opponent from Russia who had injured his right knee. Takhti would only attack and hold his opponent by the left leg, and here, the specific qualities appear to be correct courtesy, fairness and sportsmanship. The perception of Takhti as a great *javanmard* was no doubt assisted by his sympathies for the popular anti-imperialist National Front, and his apparent opposition to the increasingly dictatorial regime of the Shah in the 1960s. Subsequent to his death, the memory of Takhti and his *javanmardi* has been celebrated by Iranians, prior to and after the revolution. At present, there are streets named after him, films made about him, stamps commemorating him, statues of him erected in prominent locations in Tehran,<sup>39</sup> and even exhibitions devoted to him in locations outside Iran.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For the life and significance of Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh, see Mohammad Azizi, *Khab-e Khun, Sargozasht-e Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh* (Tehran, 1390/2011).

<sup>39</sup> Houchang Chehabi, 'Sport and politics in Iran: The legend of Gholamreza Takhti', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 12/3 (1995), 48-60.

<sup>40</sup> This includes the small exhibition devoted to Takhti at the British Museum, London in 2009. 'Takhti: a modern Iranian hero,' <[http://www.britishmuseum.org/about\\_us/news\\_and\\_press/press\\_releases/2009/takhti.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2009/takhti.aspx)> [last accessed 10 December 2015].

As a heuristic device, classification of *javanmardi* into the felon, the faithful, and the fighter provides a pedagogical tool that allows for simplification of an extremely complex phenomenon. The three categories have been selected because they appear in both modern and medieval ages, and suggest a considerable degree of cultural continuity. At this point it is necessary to consider the work of Fariba Adelhah. Her *Being Modern in Iran* has utilised the concept of *javanmardi* to demonstrate in a Weberian style (of increasing rationalisation, bureaucratisation, individualisation and commercialisation) how Iranians enjoy their own form of modernity. One of her first examples of the new modern *javanmard* is the aforementioned Gholam-Hosayn Karbaschi, who encouraged citizens to pay taxes to finance his ‘green’ policy of opening up public spaces for people in Tehran to enjoy a great variety of individualised forms of entertainment and relaxation. However, this approach has not been approved by all observers; indeed, Soraya Tremayne retorted that ‘it is doubtful if anyone in Iran would consider Karbaschi as a *javanmard*. The essence of being a *javanmard* is that of a man who, in order to help others, takes risks and makes sacrifices at his own expense and not that of the people.’<sup>41</sup> If the yardstick of being a *javanmard* depends on public opinion, there are many individuals whom Adelhah classifies as a *javanmard* who would probably raise a few eyebrows. It is interesting that she implies that the popularity of Ayatollah Khomeini is attributable to his *javanmard* values which included ‘lonely courage, the most extreme determination, the simplicity of habits suited to a mystic’. Moreover, his ‘style of government did not involve any breach with the *fotowwat* style’.<sup>42</sup> In addition to Karbaschi and Khomeini, Adelhah also promotes Mehdi Bazargan as a *javanmard*, which again, is a rather unusual choice for many Iranians, but not so surprising given her understanding of the four vital elements that compose *javanmardi*.<sup>43</sup> These are giving and receiving, being supported by the public, practical ability involving a skill, and purifying acts. The degree to which Karbaschi, Khomeini and Bazargan were successful in fulfilling all of these four elements is of course open to question. I would suggest that Adelhah’s analysis, interesting as it is, especially as it permits the individual to strive after his or her own perfection and *javanmardi*, is lacking if it

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<sup>41</sup> Soraya Tremayne; review of Fariba Adelhah, ‘Being Modern in Iran’, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6/4 (2000), 743.

<sup>42</sup> Adelhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, 47-48.

<sup>43</sup> One review claimed that Adelhah brought ‘far-fetched examples of people who are socially and culturally very different from each other, thus leaving the reader totally bewildered’. Farideh Pourgiv, review of Adelhah, ‘Being Modern in Iran’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32/1 (2005), 119. While Pourgiv’s complaint is understandable, she seems to have missed Adelhah’s argument, concerning the ‘democratisation’ of *javanmardi*. Whether the general public view these individuals as ‘real’ and ‘good’ examples of *javanmards*, and whether it accepts her definition of *javanmardi* is another matter.

is to be assessed on the basis of popular perception. *Javanmardi* also includes important concepts such as justice and compassion, which assume significance when considering the examples set by Takhti and Tayyeb. Of course it is dangerous to discuss popular perceptions, which are fickle, subject to rapid alteration and manipulation by political actors even before speaking of how popular perceptions are measured or ascertained. Nevertheless, there are enduring associations made by the public between *javanmardi* and figures such as Rostam, 'Ali, Purya-ye Vali, and Takhti. Arguably these individuals will be associated with the tradition long after those set up by the Islamic Republic, such as Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh, or those discussed by Adelkhah. Despite this, Adelkhah's work, if nothing else, reminds us to be wary of making essentialist assumptions about the nature of *javanmardi*.

Indeed, the three categories of felon, faithful and fighter must also be viewed with some caution. These are certainly not hermetically sealed or mutually exclusive registers, as in reality *javanmards* shift from one category to another. The felon that was Shaban Ja'fari was also known as a fighter for a cause that some believed to be just: the ideal of a modern, nationalist Iran. The faithful turn to the religious figure of Imam 'Ali who is also praised as one of the greatest fighters of early Islamic history,<sup>44</sup> and likewise the case of Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh combines both categories of faithful and fighter. And Takhti is also an intriguing figure; as Houchang Chehabi has noted, 'he was a pious man who was an observant Muslim and regularly went on pilgrimages, yet he was a loyal supporter to the end of Mosaddegh's secular movement.'<sup>45</sup> This Iranian nationalist/Shi'a transnationalist theme is also evident in Jamalzadeh's *Isfahan is Half the World*. The author presents the institution of the *zurkhaneh* in a rather idealised fashion that oscillated between glorifying the Iranian nation, and the ethical perfection that came about through reflection on the actions of the Twelve Shi'a Imams.

But perhaps one of the most interesting manifestations of *javanmardi* that demonstrates the complexity of the subject is to be found in the fictional character of Qaysar in Ma'soud Kimia'i's 1969 film, *Qaysar*. Hamid Naficy describes Qaysar as a representative 'of the heroic and masculine character', possessing 'values of manliness and generosity'.<sup>46</sup> He manifests bravery and courage, and appeals to a romantic nostalgia for an ideal of 'lost' masculine chivalric values. The film depicts Qaysar's desire to uphold the family honour in avenging the rape of his sister and the murder of his brother. He takes the law into his own hands and succumbs to the thuggery, brutality and violence of the *luti* in the revenge killing of six of those

<sup>44</sup> See how Rumi portrays 'Ali as the great military hero, in his *Mathnawi*, I, 3790-3938.

<sup>45</sup> Chehabi, 'Sport and politics in Iran', 57.

<sup>46</sup> Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, II (North Carolina, 2011), 299.



associated with the crime. At the same time, Qaysar's complex situation is rendered even more complicated by his faith in Islam, depicted in his promise to pay a pilgrimage to Mashhad, which contrasts with his penchant for vodka and intimacy with cabaret girls. So, is Qaysar a felon, a fighter for the truth, or one of the faithful? The answer, of course, depends upon 'the gate we use to enter his life'.<sup>47</sup> The pronounced popularity of the film during the 1970s may be explained as the identification of Iranians with Qaysar's *javanmardi*. In a time when, according to Naficy, 'compassion toward the poor, the weak, and women are replaced by unbridled thuggery, which the police are either unable or unwilling to contain',<sup>48</sup> Qaysar showed how individuals could resist forces of the regime that permitted such circumstances. In effect, the *javanmardi* of Qaysar, despite its excesses, argued for access to public space, and the correct balance between justice and mercy. However, in the subsequent generation of the Islamic Republic, the film was criticised not only by Islamicists (such as Ayatollah Khalkhali who banned the film in Tehran in June 1980),<sup>49</sup> but also by feminist observers such as Shahla Lahiji who protested at how Kimia'i's conceptualisation *javanmardi* denied any agency to women.<sup>50</sup>

The adaptability of the *javanmardi* concept and the human condition of all of these heroes in the tradition is all too often airbrushed away. While Shaban Ja'fari's brutality and violence is frequently remarked upon, especially within the Islamic Republic, 'real' *javanmards* are accorded esteem and are exempted from criticism. The whisper of Takhti's suicide is barely audible over the clamour that SAVAK and the Shah's regime had him assassinated,<sup>51</sup> and in the Islamic Republic Imam 'Ali's sixteen concubines are never discussed,<sup>52</sup> while his misogynistic words in *Najh al-balagha* have only recently attracted critical appraisal.<sup>53</sup> This willingness to overlook human fallibilities reflect the need for the creation of heroes, role-models and idealised exemplars.

The creation of *javanmards* and their longevity then is determined by individual perspectives which are influenced by the ever-changing socio-political persuasions of each particular generation. Needless to say, Iran has experienced tectonic upheavals in its political

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<sup>47</sup> Adelpkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, 295.

<sup>49</sup> Ali Reza Haghighi, 'Politics and cinema in post-revolutionary Iran', in *The New Iranian Cinema*, ed. Richard Tapper (London, 2002), 112.

<sup>50</sup> Shahla Lahiji, 'Chaste dolls and unchaste dolls: Women in Iranian cinema,' in *The New Iranian Cinema*, ed. Richard Tapper (London, 2002), 219-21.

<sup>51</sup> See Chehabi, 'Sport and politics in Iran', 55-56.

<sup>52</sup> See Sohravardi, *Awarif al-ma'arif* (Cairo, 1427/2006), 187-88.

<sup>53</sup> The criticism of this dimension of 'Ali among Iranian feminists is articulated most forcefully by Ziba Mir-Hosseini, see her *Islam and Gender: The religious debate in contemporary Iran* (London, 2000), 219-26. Moreover, his physical abuse of his wife Fatima is not discussed in Shi'a circles. See Manuela Marin, 'Disciplining wives: A historical reading of Qur'an 4:34', *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003), 12-13.

sphere in recent times, and it is to be expected that this would also be reflected in shifts in the way *javanmardi* is perceived. Certainly the promotion of Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh and a generation of young war volunteers as contemporary *javanmardan* reflects this. If Mohammad-Hosayn Fahmideh is a great ‘Islamic war hero’, it is worthwhile to consider too that some have posited less ‘Islamic’ *javanmards* as alternative war-heroes. The Iranian artist Khosrow Hassanzadeh associated his 2009 exhibition on Takhti with the war dead, as he placed the central image of Takhti in a structure that, in his words, ‘echoes the *hejleh*, temporary shrines that are put up to commemorate the dead’. Himself a war veteran, Hassanzadeh reflects that ‘Takhti represents a time that has passed in Iran, a time that I miss, a time destroyed by war, economics and politics.’<sup>54</sup> And the idea of the war veteran as a *javanmard* has been taken up recently by the controversial film-maker Masoud Dehnamaki, although his attempts to glorify the Iranian *basij* have been strongly criticised, even by war veterans.<sup>55</sup>

It is clear that a variety of *javanmardan* exist, or rather there are perceptions of great heroes who are ‘projected as a range of ideal virtues which the collectivity [of society] attributes as paradigmatic to its own ideal state’.<sup>56</sup> But as argued previously, this does not mean that these individuals are trapped within the categories of felon, faithful and fighter. They are not mutually exclusive, and there is no an essentialised structure which inheres within every manifestation of *javanmardi*. Perceptions of *javanmardi* are contingent upon a host of social, economic and political factors, which are in a permanent state of flux. For some, the idea of *javanmardi* is simply survival in the struggles of day-to-day existence, typified in a response given by a man from Tehran to Fariba Adelkhah’s question about the characteristics of a *javanmard*: ‘Today you are a *javanmard* if you succeed in bringing home a kilo of meat.’<sup>57</sup> Here we risk falling into the relativism of so many modern studies whereby concepts such as *javanmardi* are deconstructed to the point of becoming absolutely meaningless. While it is true that identities are simply human constructs that are flexible and whose forms are constantly altering in a protean dance, they feed from and are nurtured by a collective memory that brings with it suppositions, myths, political ideologies and spin, and a host of other forms of baggage. It is at this point that tradition becomes crucial to an understanding of *javanmardi*. According to the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, tradition has a positive connotation, even if

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<sup>54</sup> ‘Takhti: a modern Iranian hero’.

<sup>55</sup> Narges Bajoghli, ‘Debating the Iran-Iraq war on film’, *Middle East Report* (Summer 2014), 42.

<sup>56</sup> Olmo Gözl, in the present volume.

<sup>57</sup> Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, 31.

it contains all the prejudices and biases of its readers or audience. Through tradition, the intention of the author is transcended, while the past and history come into dialogue with us in the present. In effect Gadamer's understanding of tradition rejects essentialised understandings, and yet it does not slip into incoherent relativism. The authority of tradition ensures that the basic parameters of the subject are preserved.<sup>58</sup> The foundation of this specific tradition emerges from the 10th century in the Persianate world in texts, histories, biographies, hagiographies and other genres of medieval writing which suggest that the selection of these three categories of felon, faithful and fighter is not arbitrary. The existence of the same categories in both the medieval Persianate world and modern Iran is indicative of cultural continuity through hundreds of years, and may indeed assist in appreciating the concept of *Iraniyat*, or Iranianness.

## Conclusion

From its earliest times exponents of *javanmardi* have described the concept in such a way that reveals a flexibility which ensures adherents can adapt to prevailing circumstances. The general elements of courage, selflessness and generosity are sufficiently broad in meaning that they need not obstruct any change in orientation. This flexibility may be a simple case of shifting the place where one sits; it may consist of adopting a more lenient interpretation of the *shari'a*, foregrounding a more merciful and forgiving understanding of Islamic Holy Law,<sup>59</sup> in the meanwhile allowing felons, faithful and fighters to adjust their identities to suit the requirements of the age. The flexibility in perceptions of *javanmardi* and the very broadness of the category itself means that these three categories of felon, faithful and fighter have frequently become blurred and a *javanmard* may occupy two or even three of these territories. This elasticity also means that the concept is not tied to any particular ideology; it transcends the 'isms' of modernity, the exclusivism of religious denomination and, perhaps, even gender distinctions. These characteristics account for the lasting appeal of *javanmardi*, and its history and tradition root the concept in the Iranian mind, providing a model of perfection and ideal behaviour. To understand *javanmardi* is to comprehend Iranian history, and what it means to be Iranian. Of course, just like Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, it is a powerful construct of the human mind, and one that has continued to manifest new exemplars in the course of the 20th century. What challenges Adelskhan's Weberian transformations bring to

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<sup>58</sup> See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (London, 2002), 60-62.

<sup>59</sup> This is the argument of Sohrevardi, see Ridgeon, *Javanmardi*, 42-51.

*javanmardi* remain to be seen. The *javanmardi* categories of felon, faithful and fighter permit a view of modern Iranians that seems to correspond to the more popular articulation of the concept, although it is by no means the only one available.<sup>60</sup> From the examples investigated in this introduction one of the themes that deserves further investigation is the *javanmard* as a tragic hero. So many of these heroes have tragic fates and histories. Imam 'Ali's 'right' to leadership of the community was disputed, and he was eventually assassinated by an opponent. Rostam killed Sohrab, his adversary, who unbeknown to him, was his own son. Tayyeb was executed for his 'involvement' in the 1963 uprising against the Shah, and Takhti's death has been enveloped in conspiracy theories. But it is not always the case that to be a *javanmard* it is necessary to offer the ultimate sacrifice of one's life (although it certainly assists in the process in popular imagination). Performing exemplary deeds, such as those undertaken by our wrestling champions, Purya-ye Vali and Takhti, typify this, as do the kinds of merciful acts attributed by Sohravardi to 'Ali. The combination of performing exemplary acts, possessing compassion and mercy, fighting for the deprived and the dispossessed and the weak in the face of harsh, brutal and unfair tyrants and fate helps in the process of identifying the *javanmard* as opposed to other kinds of heroes or popularly acclaimed individuals in Iran.

Many of the themes in this introduction re-appear in the chapters of this book. The **first chapter** by Raya Y. Shani illustrates the multivocality of *javanmardi*, as it discusses groups of young men in 10th- and 11th-century Nishapur, who may have been inspired by the Sufi and/or Shi'i ethical perspectives of the concept, as well as the more militaristic dimension which was centred on the figure of 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb. All of these perspectives are illustrated by the plates and pottery that were used at the time, and which were decorated with the motto: 'No youth but 'Ali and no sword but *Dhu'l-faqar*'. Certainly *javanmardi* was an integral element of the identity of these communities, whatever their denomination or spiritual proclivity, but it was far more than just one of the elements of the ideology of the time. Its demands on brothers (members of fraternities) in the various locations of Nishapur were determinants of action, illustrated in the strife that blighted Khorasan in this period. This feature of *javanmardi* seems to have been recognised by political authorities, who understood the necessity to control or utilise the strength and popularity of *javanmardi* organisations (which were also known as

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<sup>60</sup> Worthy of note is the PhD thesis by Arley Loewen, *The Concept of Jawānmardī (manliness) in Persian Literature and Society* (PhD submitted to the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations of the University of Toronto, 2001). In this work, Loewen presents three models of *javanmardi*: the heroic warrior (whose main aim is to gain a good reputation); the spiritual champion (whose focus is on correct courtesies (*adab*)); and the wrestler (who fuses the two together). There are similarities with Loewen's categorisation with that presented here, although the differences should be obvious.

*fotovvat* associations). In **chapter two**, Rıza Yıldırım suggests that social organisations in the Middle East centred on the *shari‘a* and **tariqa** (commonly understood as the Sufi path). The former represented the state while the latter stood for non-governmental means of social stratification and authority schema. When the central authority began to crumble in the beginning of the 13th century, the Caliph appropriated the **tariqa** in the form of the *javanmardi* or *fotovvat* associations that had assimilated much from the Sufi forms of structure and devotional activity. The significance of the Anatolian variant of *javanmardi* (*ahilik*) from 13th century onwards is taken up in **chapter three** by Maxime Durocher through an analysis of the *akhi* lodges. In addition to reviewing medieval sources that discuss the functions of these institutions, such as hospitality and security, important questions are raised concerning the architecture of such institutions, which details the kinds of activities performed by these fraternal communities. Rather than simply envisaging an urban space for communal meals and certain ritual activity such as the *sama*’, Durocher points to rural structures, and other buildings which included, for example, a shrine and a bath-house, and he suggests that by investigating the patronage of the *akhi* lodges recorded in *vaqf-namehs* future scholarship may uncover more details about the *akhi* phenomenon. The Anatolian dimension of *javanmardi* is further investigated in **chapter four** by Sibel Kocaer, who analyses the relationship between Sufism and *javanmardi* within a text known as *Hızırname*. The two main themes in this work reflect the same forces at play in Nishapur during the 10th-12th centuries which were discussed in **chapter one**. That is, *Hızırname* foregrounds *javanmardi* through certain Sufi themes, such as the ascent to God, and the search for the water of life, and association with warrior dervishes in Anatolia; thus the combination of ethical perfection on the one hand, and bravery and courage in defending the values and identity of the local community on the other. **Chapter five** stretches the boundaries of the influence of Persianate *javanmardi* to the limits. The focus by Ines Aščerić-Todd is on *javanmardi* in Bosnia, and she demonstrates the continuity of the Persianate tradition into the Bosnian milieu in the 15th century and beyond by examining the initiation rituals, the prevalence of Sufi-flavoured *fotovvat* and also the intertwining of *fotovvat* within the trade guilds. Rachel Goshgarian’s contribution in **chapter six** shows that *javanmardi* transcended religious categories.

Although the chapters thus far have assumed that practitioners of *javanmardi* would be Muslim, the Persianate territories included non-Christian communities. This included Christian Armenian communities which borrowed heavily from the tradition of *javanmardi* in the establishment of Armenian *fotovvat* associations in Anatolia. Goshgarian’s chapter provides

the context for the production of these 13th-century Christian *fotovvat-namehs*, which by and large parallel the contents of the Islamic treatises on the topic. Goshgarian states that the two texts penned by the author of Armenian treatises ‘will seem familiar to anyone who has read any constitution on *fotovvat* in any other language’.<sup>61</sup> Included in the chapter are translations which enable researchers to test her claim.

In **chapter seven**, Jeanine Elif Dağyeli investigates the guilds that were mentioned in **chapter five**. However, Dağyeli’s analysis demonstrates that the guilds have existed in Central Asia (among other places) for hundreds of years, and were still influential in the 19th century. Thus we begin to witness the influence of *javanmardi* in the modern period. The treatises of the guilds embody the ideal ethics to be manifested by workers: they were ‘the materialisation of a “permanent possibility” to reach the ideal, an imagination of how craftsmanship should and could be’. Such literature continued to be passed down well into the 20th century. **Chapter eight**, by Philippe Rochard and Denis Jallat, discusses the relationship between *javanmardi* and the *zurkhaneh* in modern Iran. Whilst negating any essentialist orientation of *javanmardi* within the *zurkhaneh*, the authors point to ways in which associations have been and continue to be made between the two. Moreover, the chapter also highlights specific connections between the *zurkhaneh* and Sufism. Rochard and Jallet are keen to emphasise the fluidity of spiritual and ideological dimensions of the *zurkhaneh*. The changing contexts in which the *zurkhaneh* found itself equally applies to interpretations of *javanmardi*, which is reflected in discussions about the origin of the ethic and its significance. The chapter suggests that changes in Iranian society will affect perceptions of both the *zurkhaneh* and *javanmardi*. Rochard and Jallet touch on the figure of Tayyeb Hajj Reza’i as one of the manifestations of modern *javanmardi*, and he is also the subject of **chapter nine**. Tayyeb Hajj Reza’i is commonly understood to have opposed the Shah and was subsequently executed for his beliefs. The life of Tayyeb presents a number of complications for those who wish to portray him as a *javanmard*, yet Olmo Gözl illustrates how and why he has become ‘a hero of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the first martyr of the Islamic movement ... not only ... represent[ing] ideality, but rather ... defin[ing] the ideal virtues of a hegemonic Iranian-Shi‘a collective identity’.<sup>62</sup> The ambiguity of Tayyeb’s life dovetails into the ambiguity of *javanmardi* itself.

One of the other great heroes of modern Iran, Gholamreza Takhti is among the subjects of **chapter ten** by Babak Rahimi. In his analysis of the changes that may be witnessed to the

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<sup>61</sup> Goshgarian, **chapter 6** in the present volume.

<sup>62</sup> Gözl, **chapter 9** in the present volume.

*javanmardi* concept during the digital revolution, Rahimi points to conflicting interpretations on the ‘blogestan’ about how to understand the legacy of *javanmardi* as it pertains to Takhti. The increasing space that the IT transformation yields is also apparent in how *javanmardi* is appropriated by women, especially during the so-called ‘green-revolution’. Simply put, these developments indicate that *javanmardi* is certainly not a static concept, but it reflects the desires and aspirations of modern Iranians, helping to express what *Iraniyat* actually is.

The subsequent two chapters focus on how *javanmardi* is reflected in modern Persian film. Nacim Pak-Shiraz concentrates on the pre-revolutionary period and illustrates how *javanmardi* became a tool to express cultural goals. Hence, in the beginning of Iran’s cinematic industry, ‘heroism and *javanmardi* were to be found in this new man, whereas tribal men were now mocked as backward rebels detrimental to a strong, unified nation’. During the 1950s cinematic heroes resembled Western men, or at least those manifested in Hollywood. Yet Pak-Shiraz demonstrates that there were some films that portrayed the *luti* in such a way that he emerged as a hero over the Western male, although he did not challenge the hegemonic masculinities. She also argues that the ‘alternative’ cinema produced several films that break gender roles, and thus the codes of traditional *javanmardi*. Even so, these movies do not reflect a crisis of masculinity’s inability to assert its authority but rather ‘social instability and inability to form relationships’. Chapter twelve continues to examine Iranian cinema, as Farshad Zahedi analyses *javanmardi* in the context of changing gender roles in the modern period, bringing the reader up to date with a discussion of films such as the award winning 2011 movie, *A Separation*.

The final two chapters investigate the nature of *javanmardi* outside Iran in the modern period. Christine Allison and Estelle Amy de la Bretèque examine *javanmardi* within the Yezidi Armenian community, and delineate the modern shifts in perceptions of ‘*ciwanmêrî*’. Whereas Cihanger Agha is mainly appreciated as a hero because of his courageous struggles against Turkish forces at the Battle of Sardarabad in 1918, more contemporary versions of *ciwanmêrî* foreground the family and clan and feelings of heroism that are linked to a tragic and heroic death. (Interestingly, Rochard and Jallet observe that *javanmardi* is attributed to an individual very often after his death, or when an overall interpretation of the individual’s life is possible.) This helps to explain the perception that some *mafioz* leaders, such as Çekoê Xidir, gunned down at the age of 26, are personifications of *ciwanmêrî*. The authors conclude that ‘heroic figures are not created just by values but by the enactment of heroic feelings’<sup>63</sup> (such

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<sup>63</sup> Allison, in the present volume.

as anti-state ideology). Finally, the volume is completed by David Barchard, who investigates *javanmardi* in modern Turkey, and observes that there is general ignorance about the concept, although the legacy of the tradition is best represented in the emergence of recent attempts to live out the *fotovvat* tradition of the *akhis*. Barchard observes that this phenomenon represents ‘an attempt to transcend the legacy of the entire period since 1839 and the Tanzimat, Westernisation, and Kemalism, and return to an entirely Islamic social and cultural order’.

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