



THE
CULTURAL HERITAGE SYMPOSIUM
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, SPRING 2016

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME REPORT



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The lifting of crippling economic sanctions in January 2016 marked a new chapter for Iran and its relations with the rest of the world. The perception of Iran during its period of economic isolation gave rise to an incomplete and often mysterious image. As the country gradually reopens its doors, the opportunity to shed light on Iran's traditional yet increasingly modern society is more achievable today than at any time during recent history. **The Cultural Heritage Symposium** was organised to serve as a window between Western students and Iran's long history and rich culture

During the travelling symposium delegates were able to engage in a series of conversations, round-table meetings and lectures with local Iranian personalities (artists, musicians, entrepreneurs, journalists, professors and mullahs as well as university and high school students), with the core objective of achieving a deeper understanding of Iran's long cultural heritage against the backdrop of a modernising society reentering the global stage.



PROGRAMME DATES

**START: 27 FEBRUARY
2016
TEHRAN, IRAN**

**END: 6 MARCH 2016
TEHRAN, IRAN**

PROGRAMME TYPE

**TRAVELLING
SYMPOSIUM**

PROGRAMME DESTINATIONS

TEHRAN

QOM

ISFAHAN

SHIRAZ

DELEGATION DEMOGRAPHICS

10 Delegates

French x 4

British x 2

Costa Rican x 1

Dutch x 1

Portuguese x 1

German x 1

**PROGRAMME
DETAILS**

The Cultural Heritage Symposium offered a select group of delegates the unique opportunity to experience Iranian culture firsthand through meetings and exchanges with a diverse cross-section of Iranian society. From artists and calligraphers to Persian carpet experts and musicians, these interactions came together to offer fresh perspective on modern-day Iran as well as its cultural heritage.

**EXPLORE THE
HISTORICAL
DEVELOPMENT OF
IRANIAN SOCIETY**



**FACILITATE
MEANINGFUL
ACADEMIC
ENGAGEMENT**



**INTRODUCE
MODERN DAY
IRANIAN
CULTURE**



**PROGRAMME
OBJECTIVES**

CONVERSATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN



Shortly after arrival into Tehran, the delegation had the opportunity to visit the University of Tehran's main campus. After touring the campus, the delegation enjoyed lunch at the student cafeteria, experiencing the daily cuisine of their Iranian counterparts. In the afternoon, guided by architect and designer Mahdi Shadkar, the delegation met with some local students from the Faculty of Fine Arts. These Iranian students were competing in a competition at the Industrial Design Department on the theme of "a gift to Mother". This was an ideal opportunity for the delegation and these local students to engage in a dialogue about their education system, career plans and inspirations, among other topics.



LECTURES AND ROUNDTABLE MEETINGS AT THE REVAYAT INSTITUTE

The delegation were exclusively invited to the Revayat Institute of Cultural Studies. The first one was given by journalist Sa... was the Development of Iran's Tourism Industry, conducted by the Iranian film critic Hos... lecture on the Evolution of the



A ROUNDTABLE WITH THE GENERATION-Y OF TEHRAN

The delegation were lucky to meet and engage with a number of iconic personalities that represent some of Tehran's Generation-Y during a roundtable meeting held at a local coffee shop. The panel included female entrepreneur Tabassom Latifi, co-founder and CEO of Mamanpaz.ir (traditional handmade local food delivery application), photographer Ali Kaveh, co-founder and executive director of Everyday Iran, and poet and musician Siamak Abbasi. Discussions revolved around their respective projects, opportunities and challenges as well as their perspectives on Western society and culture.



OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE IRANIAN STUDENTS NATIONAL AGENCY (ISNA)

While visiting ISNA, the biggest news agency in Iran run by university students, the delegation were able to meet a group of student staff members to learn about their current work as well as their hopes for Iran's future. This visit was also an opportunity for the student staff to pose questions to our delegation. Particular curiosity was shown towards the perception of Iran among Westerners, as well as the increasingly security presence in Europe following the Paris attacks.



CONVERSATION WITH CALLIGRAPHER MASTER AMOUZAD

The final appointment in Tehran was a private meeting and demonstration by Calligrapher Master Amouzad. The delegation met with him at his workshop to discuss his completed art works, current projects as well as his views on the practice and the transmission of calligraphy in the modern times. Students also had the chance to watch a live demonstration.



SIGHTSEEING TOUR AND MEETINGS IN QOM, THE HOLY-CITY OF SHIA ISLAM

Considered as the "Shia Vatican" where Ayatollah Khomeini initiated the first movements of the Islamic revolution, the holy-city of Qom was a unique opportunity for the delegation to experience the central place of religion in the Iranian cultural heritage and the society. Before visiting the main monuments of the city, two hojatoleslams (also known as mullahs) Risheri and Arab gave us an introduction of the Shia clergy structure and described their daily activities. The day after they guided our delegation through the local streets walking as well as paying visits to important spots such as the Shrine of Fatema Masume, the House of ayatollah Khomeini and the Khezr mountain. Finally our delegation had the rare opportunity to meet with ayatollah Rafiepoor to discuss the topic of religious mysticism.



EXCHANGES AT THE ISFAHAN FINE ARTS AND MUSIC SCHOOL

Established in 1315, the Isfahan Fine Arts and Music school, has a long and rich history in training artists in various activities: tile work, pottery, brocade weaving, carpet weaving, carpet design, enamel work, engraving, marquetry, wood carving, inlaid work, statuary and painting.

This onsite visit was a good opportunity for the delegation to see the artistic process of various disciplines, but also meet young and talented arts students who were eager to share the stories behind their work as well as their career goals and inspirations. The visit was concluded with a performance by the school's music students.



AN EVENING OF ZURKHANEH (TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS)

During the evening, the delegation attended a Zurkhaneh performance session, a local male traditional martial arts. The Zurkhaneh was originally seen as place to train and get closer to God through weight training, as strength was seen as something godly. The delegation were able to observe how this tradition was being maintained and passed through the generations.



KHANEGHAH AHMADI'S SUFI CONVENT

The delegation were fortunate to gain invitation to an important cultural spot in Shiraz, the Khaneghah Ahmadi, a convent that reunites the local Sufi community. Our delegation took tea with their leader, Sheikh Moradzadeh and then visited convent's museum where all the pieces of history, work and innovation brought by their community's elders over the last decades. This opportunity provided delegates with the chance to learn more the history of Sufi Islam in Iran.



CAMPUS VISIT AND LECTURES AT SHIRAZ UNIVERSITY

To conclude the symposium, the delegation gained exclusive access to one of the campuses of Shiraz University. Discussions were held with Iranian students from the Faculty of Arts and Architecture where the delegation also sat on in two specially prepared lectures. The first one was given by illustrator and professor Dr. Myriam Akbarzade on The Evolution of Visual Aesthetics in Iran. The second one was on The Contemporary Iranian Performing Arts by theatre director Aida Catibeh.



**PROGRAMME
ORGANIZERS**



DELEGATIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Delegations For Dialogue is a UK-based non-profit, non-partisan, non-religious organisation that equips future generations of global leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the causes of conflict. Each year they organise a series of "travelling symposiums", fact-finding programmes and sports and cultural diplomacy missions within contentious regions divided by conflict. They also organize conferences and events locally within a growing network of university campus associations located around the world. Delegations For Dialogue was established in 2015 and has since nine global dialogue programmes engaging over 114 students and professors from 29 different countries.

More information: www.delegations.org



PIERRE TÂM-ANH

DFD Team Member
LEAD IRAN CO-ORDINATOR

French-Vietnamese entrepreneur, Pierre Tâm-Anh is also the co-founder of the training platform Educ4t.io and the Parisian cultural festival « LE BRUIT DE LA VILLE ». Prior to DFD, Pierre worked in Seoul (South Korea) as a business developer for the French consulting and impact investment company LE COMPTOIR DE L'INNOVATION. Pierre has a Master's Degree in Finance & Strategy from Sciences Po Paris. He also studied at the University of Hong Kong and TEC de Monterrey (Mexico City Campus).



OMID MOJABI

DFD Team Member

LEAD IRAN CO-ORDINATOR / TRANSLATOR

A British-Iranian research analyst based in London, Omid earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Manchester and his master's degree from the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Omid regularly travels to Iran and the wider region, and is active in helping Western companies to better understand the Iranian market. He has previously acted as a consultant to the International Crisis Group, Fanack BV and the Transparency International and has spoken at conferences arranged by the University of Oxford and the American University of Sharjah.



ALAN GREGORY

DFD Founder

IRAN SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

Alan is a mixed British-Chinese graduate of the University of Hong Kong. Following graduation Alan gained professional experience in strategic consulting and academic research. Prior to co-founding Delegations for Dialogue, Alan was based in Beijing where he organised more than a dozen student programmes in North Korea. He has since organised all of Delegations For Dialogue's programmes in NE Asia and Myanmar. He most recently established a coffeeshop in Taipei, Taiwan and currently works as a freelance writer and analyst. Alan speaks English and Mandarin Chinese.