

The concept of 'honour' in Classical and Contemporary Persian Literature

Ed. by

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Investigating the link between literature and shared values is crucial to understanding a culture. In Persian culture, the concept of 'honour', and the values it conveys, has always been present in literary works of various kinds and genres, from its origins to the present day. It is a theme that dominates the 11th-century epic (*Shāhnāma* by Ferdousi), discussed throughout moralistic literature from Sa'di's *Bustān*, to moral treatises such as Abū Ḥāmed al-Ghazālī's *Kimiyā-ye sa'ādāt*, present in mirrors for princes (Ka'us Ibn Iskandar's *Qābusnāma* or Nezām al Molk's *Siyāsatnāma*) and in much mystical and didactic poetry by key authors such as Faridoddin 'Attār and Rumi. It is a concept that has survived through the centuries, sometimes in disguise, to the present day, re-emerging with different nuances in contemporary literature. Suffice it to mention two fundamental novels of the 20th century, *Tangsir* and *Sang-e sabur* by Sādeq Chubak, in which 'honour' has a key role, and they have influenced all subsequent fiction.

This theme is expressed mainly by the terms *ābruy* and *nāmus*—along with a wide range of synonyms—and, depending on the historical context and the nature of the texts, ranges from reputation to reliability, from social credibility to prestige, from generosity to loyalty, from decorum to dignity. Furthermore, and this aspect is not less important, it takes on different meanings when used in reference to women—for whom it has traditionally been embodied in virginity and modesty—or to men—for whom it is primarily expressed in recognition and social prestige—outlining a system of values with a strong gender connotation. Honour therefore touches on areas and values that are still deeply rooted in Persian culture and which still have an influence that is sometimes expressed in very subtle ways in family and social relationships, as much contemporary fiction demonstrates (I am thinking, for example, of Maryam Jahāni's novel *In khiyābān sor 'atgir nadārad*).

Moreover, it is impossible not to notice how the extraordinary contemporary production of children's and young adult books in Iran, which sees a massive presence of reinterpretations, abridgements, and rewritings of the most famous stories and characters from the classical tradition, keeps alive the values

rooted in the country's culture and therefore also the 'sense of honour'. This approach responds to a didactic vocation and at the same time it conveys norms and principles of conduct recognized as positive models.

The theme of honour that I propose for this monographic issue, closely linked to broader concepts such as justice, friendship, honesty, and sincerity, sums up all the virtues recognized by a cultural context and occupies a central position. Honour consists in possessing those virtues and in the respect that such possession inspires. It is interesting to note that this is a fundamental concept but at the same time one that has 'fallen into decline' today, apparently emptied of the centrality it once had. Yet most of the elements that characterize it are still fully active in Iranian language and fiction.

This volume is an opportunity to present a number of contributions, based on classical, modern, and contemporary texts of various genres, which reveal the different facets of this concept in order to construct an analytical framework of the fundamental elements, ever-evolving but still present, that characterize the concept of honour as it has been defined, interpreted, and used in literature.

Suggested topics:

- Inner conflict and sense of honour
- The sense of honour in the family context
- Honour and gender specificity
- Honour and dishonour: innate virtue and acquired virtue
- What honour for the new generations?
- The invisible threads of the sense of honour

Deadline calendar:

- 15 June 2026: deadline for submitting abstracts (450 words max., including bibliography and brief biographical note)
- 30 June 2026: notification of acceptance or rejection of the proposal
- 2 October 2028: submission of complete essays in accordance with editorial guidelines
- 1 October 2029: publication of the volume

Proposals (title, abstract and brief bibliography on the topic) should be sent by the above date to the following email addresses:

rivistacostellazioni@gmail.com, neghin@unive.it

Length and presentation of contributions:

Individual articles, written in Italian, English or French, may not exceed 40,000 characters, including spaces, and must include a title, abstract in English, keywords, notes and bibliography. Articles will be subject to double-blind peer review. The editorial guidelines can be consulted at:

https://www.rivistacostellazioni.org/_files/ugd/76cf18_b2e2cd8fa3b4436d99a46d178e00bd92.pdf