

Albert Hotz and His Photographs of Iran : an Introduction to the Leiden Collection

Jan Just Witkam

ALBERTUS PAULUS HERMANUS HOTZ (1855–1930) came from a well-to-do Dutch family of industrialists. His father was co-owner of a large iron-casting plant in The Hague. But that was by no means the only occupation of the family. In 1874 J.C.P. Hotz, the father, founded the Persian Trading Association (Vennootschap Perzische Handelsvereniging J.C.P. Hotz & Zoon) a consortium which brought together Dutch venture capital necessary for setting up trade with Iran. Instigated by the Dutch consul-general in Būshīhr, Mr. Keun van Hoogerwoerd, he was convinced that the Dutch should not miss the business opportunities which were being seized by other nationals. That same year, at the age of only 19, Albert Hotz traveled to Iran to start commercial activities on behalf of the association. His stay in Iran lasted only a year, for the death of his father in 1875 forced him return to the Netherlands. When he returned to Iran a year later, Hotz opened two offices of the association in Baṣrah and Iṣfahān, followed by offices in Būshīhr, Shīrāz and Ṣulṭānābād, the head office being in London. Besides being one of the participants in the Imperial Bank of Persia, he was also active in the carpet trade and tried to develop transport on the Kārūn river, to name but two of his additional operations.¹ In 1895 the entire enterprise came to a standstill again, which brought Hotz into dire financial straits. After a short period of renewed activities, it all ended in 1903.

In 1893 Hotz had married Lucy Helen Woods, the daughter of Henry Woods Pasha, a British marine officer, who had become *aide-de-camp* to the Ottoman Sulṭān Abdūlhamid II (r. 1876–1909), in İstanbul. They had three children.² Hotz established himself in London, but his aversion to the English atrocities in the Boer war in South Africa (1899–1902) made him decide to move back to Holland in 1902. From 1909 until 1921, with interruptions, he became consul-general of the Netherlands in Beirut. Later he moved to Cologny, Switzerland, where he died in 1930.

¹ For the Hotzes' role in the activities of the bank, see Jones 1986, 61–5. For their involvement in a dispute with an Iranian merchant over some trade bills, see Floor 1983.

During the later years of his life, at least from 1913 onwards, perhaps even earlier, he kept extensive diaries which still have value as a source for our knowledge of day-to-day life of the epoch in Beirut, London, and Switzerland, and for our knowledge of Hotz's personal history. Volumes for 1913, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1919, and 1925 are preserved and kept in the Western Manuscripts Department of the Leiden University Library (Afdeling Westerse Handschriften, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden) (inv. no. BPL 2736-41).

Hotz's wide Persian interests became evident from his exhibit in the Colonial Exhibition of Amsterdam (Internationale Koloniale en Uitvoerhandel Tentoonstelling) in 1883. From the catalog which he produced for the exhibit for this widely publicized event (which, for the first time, gave the Dutch public a full taste of the exotic), it becomes clear that he had a great number of Persian products and commodities to offer for export, from animal hides, to minerals, oil samples from Dālākī, all sorts of artifacts, carpets, and brass work, to ibex horns and, of course, opium.³ As for the latter commodity, Hotz had specific ideas. During this time the Dutch East Indies government had a monopoly on the opium trade in Indonesia, and Hotz, with the idea of expanding his activities, must have had visions of Dutch embassies and consulates in the Far East serving as sale points for his Persian-made opium. But nothing ever came of this. Among Hotz's boxes of documentation there is one labeled "Opium" which contains a number of smaller tracts on the opium question, mainly in the Far East.

Hotz made another *faux pas*. In the early 1890s he drilled for oil at Dālākī in southern Iran, but as results failed to materialize as quickly as he had hoped, he folded this activity. His drilling towers were probably the very first structures of this type that were erected in Iran. Pictures of these, too, are preserved in his collection of photographs.

Nothing, so far, distinguished Hotz from any of his contemporaries, fellow-industrialists, and colleagues of international commerce who undertook any activity that could be made profitable. What did distinguish him, however, was his avid collecting of all sorts of information and documentation about Iran. He did this, no doubt, for the benefit of his firm and his own commercial and industrial activities, but there was more to it. He became an enthusiastic photographer and a passionate book collector. Not only did he leave a substantial collection of photographs that he had taken himself, but he also

² Hotz's grandson, Mr. Ch. Haccius, is at the time of publication of this articles living in Dublin.

³ See [Hotz] 1883.

bought photographs from other, commercial photographers in Iran. Most of these are now in Leiden, and all together the Hotz photograph collection in the Leiden University Library consists of 1159 photographs. One must realize that preserving pictures of a country was at that time only possible by collecting photographs. It is true that long before the invention of photography in 1839, there had been travelogues illustrated with engravings and drawings, but sufficiently realistic information on the geographical, cultural, and ethnological features of any country came within reach of a wide public only with the spread of photography. Many commercial photographers set up businesses to cater to the needs of monarchs, administrators, tourists, and businessmen such as Hotz. Hotz was in many more ways different from the ordinary entrepreneur of his time. Although he had had no formal academic education, he wrote, in the course of the years, a number of memoirs and books on the history of the relations between Iran and the Netherlands. A publication of source materials about the activities of the Dutch East India Company (*Nederlandsche Oost-Indische compagnie*) was prepared by him. He did not complete it, however, and his friend Hendrik Dunlop published the first volume after Hotz's death.⁴

Hotz's splendid collection of atlases and geographical works is still available in the library of the Royal Geographical Society in London. His private library, consisting of over 10,000 volumes, can be best characterized as an impressive reference tool of a gifted amateur in the geography of the Middle East with an emphasis on Iran. Comprising most of his photographs, some Arabic manuscripts, and a large documentation system, it is now kept in the Leiden University Library.

All of these materials were bestowed on the Leiden University by Hotz's widow in 1935. By 1936 a two-volume catalog of the entire collection was published.⁵ The catalog did not, however, contain any description of the photographs and documentation system. The collection of books was incorporated in the Leiden University collections, and the volumes still bear shelf marks with the name of their former owner. They have been integrated in the central library's catalog ever since 1935.

The photographic collection was not entered in the library's catalog, and this omission almost caused it to be forgotten, though not lost. The same is true of the boxes of documentation. For some time they were placed, together with all of the books, in a special Hotz Room in the University Library, but in the early 1960s they were, for reasons of security, placed out of sight in the

⁴ See Dunlop 1930–.

⁵ See *Bibliotheek A. Hotz* 1935–6.

library's closed stacks. As they never had been given reference numbers, they could not be ordered by the Library's readers. This policy was changed in 1983, when the new University Library of Leiden University was about to be opened, and the old building had to be completely vacated. An unsuitable and incongruous structure, the old building, a converted chapel with countless extensions and additions and full of unexpected corners and attics, had been used as a library for slightly less than four centuries. When a building is emptied, many forgotten things come to light again. That is a story in itself. But, the Hotz photographs and the documentation boxes were among such rediscovered materials, well kept and untouched by readers.

The 1159 photographs are preserved in fifteen albums and five portfolios, consecutively numbered with two digits as albums 1–13, 15–6 and portfolios 14, 17–20. Each photograph has now been given an individual number of three digits, which is used in combination with the album number. Thereby each photograph in the collection has its unique reference. Ten albums (albums 1–10) contain some 657 photographs which Albert Hotz took during his long trip through Iran, from south to north, to the Caucasus and Russia, between 1890 and 1891. Hotz also made photographs of Iranian antiquities in Persepolis and other places. The following short survey of the contents of the collection is derived from the work by Vuurman and Marten.⁶

Album 1 contains 71 photographs taken by Hotz during his trip through Iran. They were, like most photographs in the other albums, printed as platinotypes by the firm of J. Thomson in London. The album contains pictures from Bandar 'Abbās, Būshihir, Khārg Island, Baṣrah, Baghdād, Muḥammarah, Bandar-i Nāṣirī, Ahvāz, Shūshtar, Dālakī, Shirāz and Kāzīrūn. Many duplicates of these are kept in albums 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10.

Album 2 contains 72 photographs of the middle part of the journey. It contains pictures from Shirāz, Persepolis, Pāsārgād, Iṣfahān, and Ṣulṭānābād. Doubles of these are kept in a number of other albums. Offices and personnel of Hotz's firm are depicted and identified with captions and legends.

Album 3 contains 72 photographs from the final part of the journey. It contains pictures of several hotels, guesthouses, offices, etc. from Ṣulṭānābād, Tehran, Tabriz, Erevan, Tiflis, Rostov, and Istanbul.

Album 4 contains 67 photographs taken in 1891 which mainly concern "road construction in Persia." The photographs were taken along the middle part of Hotz's journey. Aspects of public transport such as coaches, post offices, post horses, caravansarais, tollhouses, bridges, river boats, and so forth are shown. This album too contains several duplicates.

⁶ Vuurman and Marten 1995.

Album 5 contains 23 photographs (21 in platinotype and 2 in albumen prints) of offices and personnel of Messrs. J.C.P. Hotz & Co. and of the Imperial Bank of Persia. Locations in Tehran, Iṣfahān, Shirāz, Tabriz, Baghdād, and Baṣrah are shown.

Album 6 contains 66 photographs, all made in platinotype. They are all duplicates which also appear in albums 7–10.

Album 7 contains 22 photographs (platinotype prints) illustrating carpet-weaving. There are photographs from Ṣulṭānābād, Iṣfahān, and “Meshed-i Madar-i Sulayman.” Among others, people active in different stages of wool-producing, weaving, and knitting are shown.

Album 8 contains 44 photographs in albumen print, which were already produced in other albums as platinotype prints. On the whole, both the album and the photographs are in a bad state of preservation.

Album 9 is titled “A collection of Photographs taken in Persia, Turkey, and the Caucasus, during a seven months’ journey in 1891.” Platinotype prints by J. Thomson. (Vol. I). It contains 111 photographs of Strait of Hurmuz (1), Būshīr (13), Khārg Island (5), Baṣrah, Euphrates and Tigris (11), Baghdād (5), Bandar-i Nāširi (8), River Kārūn and Ahvāz (4), Shūshṭar (10), Dālakī (4), Kāzirūn (8), Shirāz (27), Persepolis (10), Pāsārgād (3), and Iṣfahān (2).

Album 10 is the sequel to album 9. It too is titled “A collection of Photographs taken in Persia, Turkey, and the Caucasus, during a seven months’ journey in 1891.” Platinotype prints by J. Thomson. (Vol. II). It contains 110 photographs of Iṣfahān (25), Ṣulṭānābād (9), “Enshidan” (3), Ibrāhīmābād (2), Qum (3), Tehran (5), Tabriz (2), Erevan (2), Tiflis (11), and İstanbūl (9). There are, in addition, 39 photographs taken *en route*. There is some emphasis on the carpet industry and on the Armenians of Julfā near Iṣfahān.

Album 11 contains 72 collodium prints of photographs taken by Ernst Hoeltzer (1835–1911), dating from the 1890s with pictures mainly from Iṣfahān, Julfā, Kāshān, Qum, and Tehran. It contains town views, notables, artisans, and craftsmen. Hotz apparently purchased these from Hoeltzer, who lived for a long time in Iṣfahān, where he had married an Armenian woman.

Album 12 contains 69 collodium prints of photographs by Hoeltzer, and 6 others which cannot be identified. The Hoeltzer photographs mainly concern Iṣfahān (25). There are also pictures of Farīdan (9), Julfā (8), “Rhorood” (5), and Kāshān. Quite a number of the Hoeltzer photographs have been identified and described by Iraj Afshar in his *Ganjīnah-i ‘aks’-hā-yi Īrān*.⁷ *Album 13* contains 72 photographs (albumen prints) made around 1890 by the French photographer Antoine Sevruguin, who was active as a commercial photographer in Tehran from about 1880 onward. They were apparently purchased by Hotz. The prints contain the usual Sevruguin negative registration numbers. The album contains views

⁷ See Afshar 1992, 77–8, 86.

of Kāzīrūn, Shīrāz, Baghdād, Takht-i Rūstam, Būshīhr, Iṣfahān, Baṣrah, Kīrmān, 'Alī'ābād, and Rasht.

Portfolio 14 contains 41 loose photographs, pasted on cardboard. There are 19 photographs, both platinotype and albumen prints, from Iran. Their technical quality and state of preservation are bad. The remaining 22 photographs were taken in Europe.

Album 15 contains 74 photographs by Antoine Sevruguin. Many show scenes of daily life, women in traditional attire, scenes from Kurdistān, dancers, music ensembles, weaving, families, people on horseback, street vendors, and a dentist.

Album 16 is the sequel to album 15, and its 28 photographs by Sevruguin are numbered consecutively 75–102. They were mostly taken in Iṣfahān, Tehran, and Baghdād.

Portfolio 17 contains 26 photographs in different formats, pasted on cardboard. They are both platinotype and albumen prints from negatives of several photographs in Europe, Russia, and Iran. Some can be identified as works of Hotz, Hoeltzer, Jules Lind, and Sevruguin, while there are some from a Russian photographer.

Portfolio 18 contains 18 photographs of groups of pupils and teachers of the Osmaniye Mohamedan College and the Syrian Protestant College, both in Beirut. Some photographers are identified as works of Sarrafian and Guiragossian.

Portfolio 19 contains 46 photographs of a great variety of subjects: 6 show Hotz's stand and Ziegler's stand at the Amsterdam exhibition of 1883, 12 are from the Dutch East-Indies, 10 are from Russia, and 12 are from Egypt. Some photographers are identified as works of Joseph Fietta, A. Scavo Fils, Pascal Sébah.

Portfolio 20 contains 57 photographs of as great a variety as portfolio 19: École de droit in Beirut, Odessa, Shaṭṭ al-'Arab, Moscow, Beirut, Smyrna, Damascus. Some photographers are identified as works of A. Scavo Fils of Beirut, S. Antonopulo of Odessa, David Gazala of Baghdād, Joseph Fietta of Saint Petersburg, Bonfils.

There are more photographs in the Hotz collection. These were found in the boxes with the documentation materials, and have not yet been identified or described. As they may be relevant to the documentation, they have been left where they were found, for the time being.

Some of the Hotz materials have gone to institutions other than Leiden University Library, but the Leiden collection is by far the largest. Main repositories of Hotz photographs outside the Leiden library must be mentioned:

Amsterdam, Royal Institute of the Tropics (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen). Collection of 230 platinotype prints of Hotz's photographs (1213/1–238). These can be identified with numerous Hotz photographs in the Leiden albums, notably albums 9 and 10.

Edinburgh University Library. Collection of 35 photographs by Hotz from Iran (Phot. I 11.57).

Leiden, Department of Art History and Cabinet of Prints (Prentenkabinet der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden). Collection of 37 platinotype prints from Hotz's travels in 1891. These are duplicates of several of the Leiden albums, notably in albums 9 and 10.

Leiden, Museum of Ethnography (Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde). Collection of 199 albumen prints (1959–2160), and an album of 22 platinotype prints on carpet-making, of 1891. Similar to the Leiden album 7.

London, Royal Geographical Society. An unknown number of Hotz's own photographs of his travel through Iran, Turkey, and the Caucasus in 1890 and 1891. Probably similar to the ones in the Leiden albums, notably albums 9 and 10.

Rotterdam, Museum of Ethnography (Museum voor Volkenkunde Rotterdam). Collection of 67 albumen prints (F4021–96/98) and two albums (FA0049/1–2) with contents similar to Leiden albums 9 and 10.

Only recently has the photograph collection been cataloged. A catalog database was created using the SquareNote program, which is written by Lucy Linch and David Cook. It functions mainly by the catchwords which one attaches to the objects described. The captions which Hotz wrote on the leaves on which the photographs are pasted served, in the English translation, as a starting point for the descriptions. Very general categories, such as persons, buildings, crafts, Islamic punishments and so on were added to the items in the database. As complete as possible an index of geographical names was entered as well. All photographs have been given individual numbers. This is only the first step towards the study of the photographic collection; the database allows for all sorts of future extensions and expansions.⁸ But much more needs to be done, including the enhancement of the descriptions of the pictures. A selection of the photographs has already been published by Vuurman and Martens.⁹

In addition, it is important to try to establish a firm link between the photographic collection and the other documentation materials collected by Hotz. Only this makes the integrated research of documentation, the personal history of the collector, and the photographic collection possible. It is fortunate that the different materials have always been kept together. In time the results will be evident.

⁸ Two assistant students from the Utrecht University, Ms. Dorothee Tutuarima and Mr. Guido van Dongen, have performed the task of cataloging the photographs.

⁹ See Vuurman and Martens 1995.

Hotz's documentation system deserves some attention here. It consists of about eighty boxes in which a great number of smaller publications are contained. These are arranged according to subject, as is clear from the labels on the back. Hotz must have been a compulsive collector of all sorts of ephemeral materials, both concerning Iran and concerning other issues which interested him. It is this sort of material which usually does not survive, since libraries and archives often do not collect them in an organized way. And even if they do, such materials are often very difficult to find in formalized library catalogs. The Hotz documentation collection contains all sorts of smaller publications and pamphlets. These are preserved according to a roughly designed subject division in some eighty boxes and portfolios. A selection of the subject headings, with indication of the number of boxes or portfolios, is as follows:

Other than Iran

Educational institutions in Beirut (1), International Geographical Congress, London 1895 (1), International Orientalist Congresses (1), Islam (1), Jordan (1), Marine (1), Opium (1), Palestine (2), Shipping (1), Syria (2), Turkey (1).

Concerning Iran

Ancient history (1), Antiquities (2), Arts and craftsmanship (1), Avesta (2), Bibliography (1), Chronology (1), Consular reports: Işfahān, Shirāz, Kirmān, Sistān; Başrah, Baghdād, İstanbul; Rasht, Mashhad, Kirmānshāh; Miscellaneous (4), Description of the country (3), General subjects (1), Geography (medieval and Arabic geographers) (1), Geology, botany, and zoology (1), History (5), Pre-Islamic history (4), Pre-Islamic language (3), Language and script (1), Literature (2), Islamic manners and customs (1), Maps of Turkey and Iran (1), Newspapers in European languages (1), Roads (2), Tapestry (1) Trade (2), Travels (5).

The contents of these boxes has yet to be fully analyzed. Simple browsing gives the impression that the boxes contain materials that shed more light on the subject matter of the photographs. A reverse effect can also be seen. Several smaller publications reflecting the history of photography in Iran and the Middle East can be found in the boxes. One notable example of this is the discovery of a copy of Bonfils's list of photographs available for sale. Few people have preserved such precious documents, but Hotz did. As already said, it is only by an integrated research of the Hotz photographs, the documentation materials which he collected, and biographical and autobiographical materials, that quality results can be achieved. In Hotz' case, it is only by a fortunate coincidence that this is possible at all.

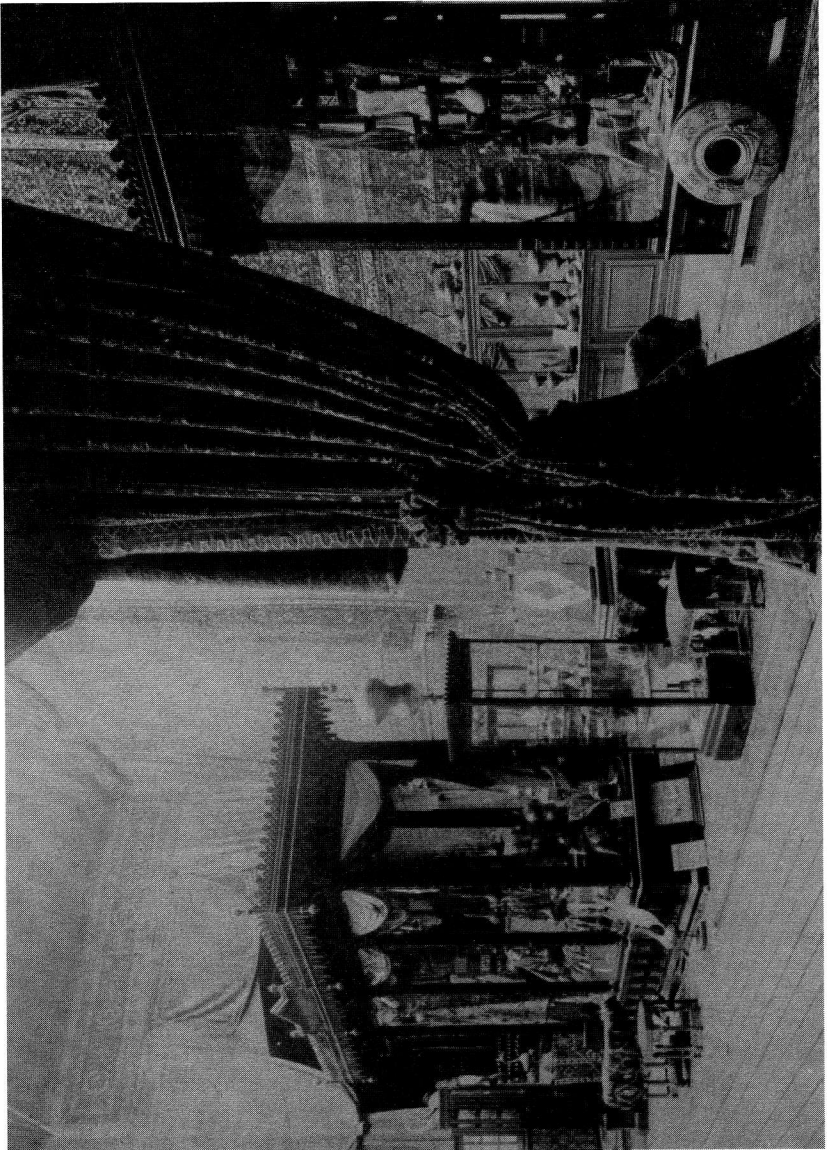


Fig. 1. The Persian Section of the Colonial Exhibition of Amsterdam, 1883.
Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden

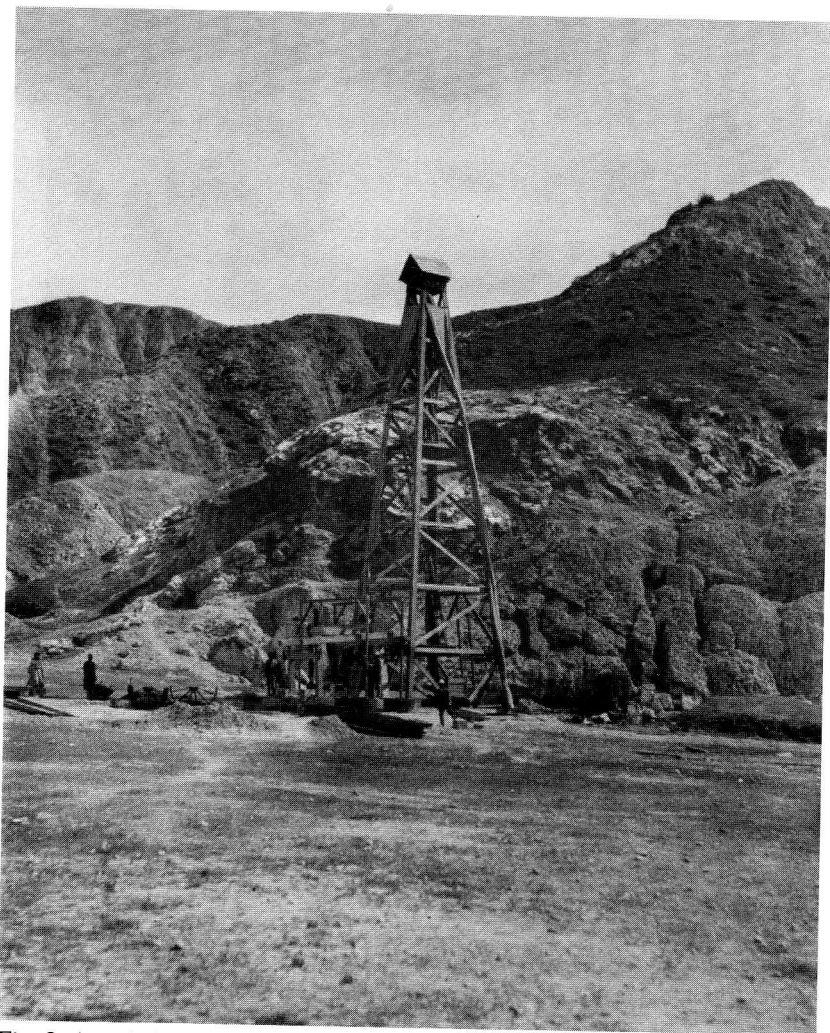


Fig. 2. An oil-drill rig at Dālakī, southern Iran. Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden



Fig. 3. Albert Hotz and his wife Lucy Helen Woods. Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden

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IRAN AND IRANIAN STUDIES
Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar

EDITED BY KAMBIZ ESLAMI

ZAGROS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

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Jacket illustration: binding for a *Būstān* of Sa'dī, copied in 1026/1617, Art and History Trust Collection, courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

First edition 1998

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 98-84316

Iran and Iranian studies : essays in honor of Iraj Afshar / edited by Kambiz Eslami.
p. cm.

English, French, and Persian.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-966-34420-0

1. Iran—Civilization. I. Afshār, Iraj.

II. Eslami, Kambiz, 1956–

III. Title.

DS252.4.I67 1998

955.219—dc20

98-84316 CIP

ISBN 0-966-34420-0 (cloth : alk. paper)

Manufactured in the United States of America

Zagros Press

P.O. Box 1556

Princeton, NJ 08542-1556

The publication of this volume has been made possible by grants from The Program in Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University and the Yarshater Fund

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