INDEX OF TRANSCRIPT

NARRATOR: FRYER FRYE, RICHARD
TAPE NO.: 04

COURT, THE IMPERIAL

DEVELOPMENT & ITS IMPACT ON THE POPULATION

DEVELOPMENT & MODERNIZATION

ESHQAL, MANOUCHEHR, AS CHAIRMAN OF NIIOC

FAARAH, SHAHRANAD, ACTIVITIES OF

NAHRANDI, HOUSHANG

PAHLAVI UNIVERSITY

SHAH, REGIME OF THE

UNIVERSITIES
No, I'm not in any way trying to be a holier-than-thou attitude. Maybe if I'd been in the same position, I would've been the same. I'm just, as a historian, saying what happened and what I observed. What the operation or the feeling on the part -- in my opinion -- of the people in the Court was. This drive to what they called modernization had to be done quickly, with shock. And that they could handle it because the money was there and they could buy anybody. I mean, this was their philosophy, I think.

And, as you see, there came a shock and the oil prices fell, and lots of trouble. Because they had no plan and they couldn't put on the brakes. They couldn't pull in their
belts, and now they're pulling in their belts three or four times what they should have in the past.

Well, I don't know. I think that ... the mistake was a mistake again of not really understanding what was going on in the countryside and not reading their history, as it were. Because there are plenty of examples of reactions and uprisings and changes in Iran. You just have to look at them and think about them. But I just don't think that they wanted to consider. They were blind to anything except their own ability to change the whole country and the people.

Because they didn't have to think of the 

**swoon <common people>**, only the **ashraf**, and the **ashraf** were the educated ones, the avant-gardists, as it were. You see, if there were any kind of feeling... just to give you this feeling of the *Jashn-e Honar <Arts Festival>*; of trying to be moderate. "No, no! Extreme! Avant-gardiste! We've got to give them everything, shock-treatment!" They shocked them, all right. They shocked them into a revolution. Among other things.

So I think that there is very definitely a sort of feeling of, "Well, if they don't like it, we'll shove it down their throats!" And that's the way a lot of people felt. They
Frye-4

sure did.

And this is talking to not just peasants. I mean, people were dissatisfied -- they were always dissatisfied, complaining about it. But I mean people in the bazaar, and people who were feeling they might not be in the forefront of the intellectual movement in Tehran or in Shemiran, but nonetheless, it's a great mass of people who are sort of the middle-class, as it were, of Iran.

Because the westernized people were not part of that. I mean, they were not the middle-class. A vast number of middle-class people, Iranians, who had nothing to do with the West -- didn't speak any English or any German or French. And they had nothing to do with the West. They were Iranians. They were being ignored and pushed out of the way. So I think -- this is my feeling about what was going on there.

Q. Being a university professor in Iran, what observations do you have of the university system or systems? Whether or not there was a system in Iran during the Pahlavi regime?

A. Well, first of all, it is true that professors received a certain amount of prestige and feeling of regard by the
populace. And, again, one always refers to personal experiences. I remember once driving in our jeep in the street in Shiraz. Actually, my son was driving, and he shouldn’t have been, because he was only 15 years old at that time. And he ran into a Mercedes driven by a mujtahid, an ayatollah. So, we packed him off to school and went to the court -- the police station. I mean, the Ayatollah and myself.

And I remember the chief of police when he understood who both of us were. He was very respectful to both of us. He said, "This is -- we have no problem at all. Here is a professor, and here is an ayatollah. We will have no problems." In fact, we had insurance (unclear) and it was all worked out. But the feeling of respect was certainly, I think, very strong among the people for professors, for knowledge. You certainly had that. Now, that was among the populace. If you told them that you were an osteologist or professor, that was something, of the university.

In the university itself, well, there was a faculty council, and as a matter of fact there was the beginnings of real interesting university democracy, such as doesn’t exist over here, incidentally. In Europe, in the European, German, universities. In the sense that the staff, I mean the
instructors and professors really felt that they were able to make their voice heard.

Now, of course, the appointments all came from up above. And the chancellor was always appointed by the Court, by Tehran. And many people in the university resented that, because, especially in the time of Alam, when he paid little attention to the university, being in Tehran, and he had his assistant, Amir Motaghi, running it. Well, it was the same in Tehran university.

No, there was the feeling, I think, about the system, that it was really working out quite well, in the sense that there were more and more trained people coming back from abroad, who were trying to establish standards and to build up a proper instruction and proper system of examinations, and the like. I was quite ... much involved in all of that, and I must say, I was well-impressed by most of the people -- there were always exceptions of course, everywhere.

But the system was, as everywhere, not just there but here, a conflict between the administration and the faculty. And it came out many times. And in the case of Pahlavi University in Shiraz, generally speaking the faculty would side with the students in their protests, for one thing, and they would
even get beaten-up and arrested. Faculty as well as students. And there was sort of the feeling that, well, that the administration would send in the troops, as it were, if anybody didn't toe the line.

However, as far as the academic side went, there was no pressure. I remember many times discussing in the History Department and in our own Institute and in the Persian Department... (I participated, of course, in both the Persian Department and the History Department at the university) ... about standards, or trying to hold up, and getting people in.

And again there were all these anomalies about having people at the university who were being paid by the Ministry of Education, not by the university, and not being under the jurisdiction of the higher ... but being under jurisdiction ... and that was a little bit stupid, I think, because then you had a feeling that some people were a little bit different as far as their affiliations were concerned. They always felt they had more security by being part of the Ministry of Education system, rather than being just employed by the university. That was certainly the case. And again this applied all over Iran.

But I was really struck by the awfully low standards and poor
teaching of history, for example, in Iran. All over. In Tabriz and Mashhad and Esfahan.... The language-teaching was much better. Literature was much better everywhere. Language and literature. And, well, it was just this one .... And, of course, Political Science was pretty awful, too. You know, you just felt that the best people, very much like the Soviet Union, were going into ancient things and into .... The best brains would be going into the sciences, of course.

Or, as far as the arts were concerned, humanities, they were going into ancient things, things that wouldn't impinge on the present situation or politics in any way.

The constant problems that we had, of course, are well-known, to everybody, of the students being arrested in protests and all that. And this was going on all the time. It was a source of constant concern and uneasiness and unhappiness among everybody, faculty as well as the students. So I think it had an effect. It had a bad effect on ....

Sort of the feeling that, sure, as far as our own little affairs are concerned, we are free to do them, but we don't really have any voice in the handling of the university. And certainly not under Motaghi and under Houshang Mahavandi.
Nahavandi, of course, and everybody knew this, was in Shiraz for one reason alone -- because he’d been put there -- and he wanted to do everything to ensure that he would get out of Shiraz and become a minister in Tehran. Prime minister, of course, is what he wanted to be. Everybody used to joke about that.

But when you have people like that, who are political appointees, in effect, and put in Mashhad or wherever to keep them quiet or to reward them for being removed as a minister, or something or other, why it’s not good for the morale of the faculty. That’s quite clear, you know. What is Nahavandi doing running a university?

So, there was this constant feeling. And, of course, also there was a little bit of a problem between the administration -- well, again, that’s the case everywhere -- conflict between the teaching ..., the faculty and the administration. But that’s nothing new. That’s the same.

On the whole, the university was the one place where I thought there was ... reasonableness, at least. In spite of the constant problems with the students. Of course, many of the students should have been doing their work rather than
out demonstrating for this, that or the other. It affected their quality .... In the long run, I think it could have worked out. It's tragic that it hasn't and won't.

Well, that's about all I guess I can say. I mean, things will come to mind. Again, it's usually these little incidents or things that happened that you then began to generalize or began to attach them to other things and say, well, this is impressions that you have.

But I must say that I didn't feel there was any great difference -- of course, some of the standards, some of the things there were problems, I won't say that. History, as I said, was terrible. And I went to the other universities, which were not .... You know, Pahlavi University was really an American-system university. So, okay, you felt that. But I didn't feel any great difference with Tabriz, or Meshhed, or Esfahan, as far as that went. You know, they didn't have their instruction in English, but that was really the only thing.

Q. The system was the same between ...?

A. Pretty much, yes. It was different with Pahlavi University in that it was completely following the American
system, whereas in Tehran, as you know, it was the French
system more than anything else. But after all, in a
university, you have this possibility of differentiation.
And I didn’t feel that the universities were anything other
than doing their work. Slowly. That there was no problem
except that they needed better, higher standards, they needed
more equipment, and some things like that. But there was
nothing to be ashamed of.

Q. But when you say the standard was low, and the teaching
in history was not that good, what kind of history were they
teaching? What note were they taking towards history?

A. Well, I can tell you that very clearly. Everywhere,
Meshhad, Tabriz, too. Everywhere they had courses, for
example -- I mean, my own field, which is ancient Iranian
history -- in not one of these universities, not one, was
there anybody who was a specialist in any way. In Meshhad
University, ancient history was taught by a woman -- I’ve
forgotten her name -- who was trained at Indiana, who was a
specialist on Qajar history, or that’s what she’d written her
thesis on. And really she didn’t care, didn’t like, and
didn’t know anything about ancient history, but she had to do
it. So it was more or less pro forma.
In Tabriz, they actually had Sarkashti, the fellow who was quite good in Pahlavi, who didn't want to teach history, but was doing it because there was no one else around. And Abadan and Esfahan was just awful -- a <unclear>, I mean, really ... not trained at all. They couldn't get anybody. There wasn't anybody. There was nobody who'd been trained. Now that's just that.

Now, what did they have? They had American Studies and American History in all of these places at the end, paid for by the USIS or AID or something. I've forgotten, because I must confess I had very little to do with the American establishment and I didn't care too much for it. Because they were more or less -- like many of the Persians -- they were out there for tourism and to make money. No interest in the country. No interest.

They would hire people, and I would tell them. I said, "Look, it's better to hire somebody who's at least interested in Iran, even if he's not a specialist in European History, because you don't need it at that level. But unless you get people who are really interested in your students and in the country, they will only come here as long as they have the chance to travel around and to enjoy themselves and to make money, and then they'll leave." Again and again I said so,
but no one listened. They wanted some hiring people from all over.

And so they had American History, and I can't understand what that has to do with <unclear>. I’m sure it was taught terribly.

But then they had .... even the Islamic History of Iran. I’m just trying to think. There were some good people, but traditional people in Tehran University: Parvizi, Bestan Parvizi, for example, from Kerman. He really knows it, but he’s not trained in history. He knows his sources, he knows Kerman and he writes books about it. I enjoy him very much. But, you know, he would more or less teach history as the old books are written -- dynasties and the like, but no analysis.

G. Well, this is what I’m interested in, because it seems that, historically in Iran, history has been manipulated to serve the interests of ....

A. Yes. Everybody felt this was the case. And, frankly, maybe that’s the reason they had all these foreigners. They even had an Afghan teaching history in Pahlavi University. I always felt that the history departments are so bad. You know, they’re so much below all the other departments.
Q. <unclear> the history, because they’re so ...

A. Well, I’m sure that was one of the reasons for it, that they just wanted people who were safe. Who wouldn’t give any real lessons or bring up questions .... I remember teaching, also, ancient history of Iran, the Sasanians, and all the students, of course, were interested in Mazdak. But this is the kind of thing which can be developed and discussed and explained. But, no. Everything of course was done.

I guess now they’re not teaching anything. They’re only teaching Islamic history. Now, as far as Islamic history was concerned -- and that’s a thing that puzzled me a little bit, because you would expect that in Iran, Iranian history would be taught. But even in those days, it wasn’t. I mean, occasionally, in Mashhad, for example, and in Tehran, they had courses on Qajar history. But the rest of the history was Islamic history. And I was really astounded.

I mean, even the books that they were using were not Iranian. Iranian history wasn’t being taught. It was sort of Middle Eastern history. History of Europe, of course. Nothing in the Far East -- I mean, Good Lord, India -- no one knows anything or cares anything about that. Even about the
neighbor. No. India, China -- no, no, no. Nothing. Nothing at all. And that's one of the recommendations I made. This is insanity.

This is one thing, incidentally. I got the teaching, for a short time, the only place in Iran where Chinese and Japanese were taught. Uh! Cuneiform and <?>, as well. But it never got off the ground. Nothing happened. And I don't think they .... no one cared for it particularly. Which is too bad, because the potentiality was there, there was interest. I swear that if there'd been any kind of encouragement at all, we could have developed first-rate people trained in all these things. But nothing. Nothing.

Q. Well, what are some of your experiences with the Shah's policies regarding universities?

A. Well, I don't have too much experience directly with the policies, except ... going in and talking to the Chancellors. Frequently they would tell me, "Well, this is the way it is from Tehran." So I'm sure the Court took a very strong interest in what was going on, a very close interest in what was going on in the universities. And you always felt that -- there it was -- this dominance of Tehran was just overwhelming. I mean, people -- how do you get anything
done? Go to Tehran!

Sometimes I would say, "Well, look, why do we have to go to Tehran? This isn't important. It's a thing that can be decided here." "No, no, we have to go to Tehran." I had to go to the ministry up there many times. Just to explain .... Many times I made projects or plans for what to do. I couldn't get any support. People in Shiraz were frightened. They didn't want to do anything without getting the order from Tehran.

The biggest problem was this centralization -- centralized authority. I think maybe this is a kind of key to what was going on in the country. The over-centralization, and the inability to delegate authority. It all rests upon what I think is fundamental to democracy anywhere, and certainly in Iran. You've got to be able to make mistakes. Democracy is postulated on the fact that you're human beings, and there are errors.

But when you have a system in which you cannot make mistakes -- if you make a mistake, you lose your job, you lose your position, or something -- nobody's going to take any risks. So nobody would do anything.
I would get ideas, and I would go to the Ministry of Arts and Culture. They're very nice people there. They would sympathize, and they would talk to me: "Bale, bale. You have to consult Tehran", and that would be the end of it. I established very good relations with the Ministry of Arts and Culture in Shiraz, and with the university people, and with the dervishes -- with everybody -- the bazaar, too.

I became a real Shirazi in the sense that the people I would see, I would say hello to them, going down the street all the time. Good morning. So there was no hostility. But I must say I would many times agree with them that I -- and I got to be talking like them and feeling like them. And I believed it too. Tehran was ruins the town. And it was ruins the countryside. By their policies.

And, of course, if you brought this up -- if you brought it up, you're an obscurantist. Or, you don't know what you're talking about. And so on, and so on. You were just pushed aside. So I sure experienced that. Boy, I did. As I told you: "Aghay-e Frye, ma avantgardist hastim, shoma folklorist hastid.." <Mr. Frye, we are avantgardistes, and you are a folklorist.> This is sort of the feeling that I had. But they should have listened to other people, not necessarily to me. And there were a lot of people. But a feeling of "What
can you do, anyhow?" No initiative. That’s the real thing.

And even when I went outside, to get money. I got money from the Gulbenkian Foundation. Oh, my God! How can you do this without the permission of Tehran? You know, I was called in to Nahavandi’s office, and he said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "Well, look. We don’t have any money." I went to Manouchehr Eghbal, the great oil office -- and I remember waiting and coming in with all these people around. "So what do you want?" He was really a tough character. Did you ever see him or meet him?

Q. Yes.

A. And I said, "Well, I want money for this and that." And he said, "What do you do?" Oh, he got so mad. He said, "I give all this money to Nahavandi. Go ask it from him! Ask it from him! He’s the head of the university. He’s the chancellor. Why are you coming to Tehran?"

And I said, "Look, I can’t get it from him. He won’t give it to me. He says we have to go to Tehran." "Ohh" he said, "what kind of a country is this?" Manouchehr Eghbal!

So I went back to Nahavandi, went back to the university, and
said, "Well, I'll go get the money myself, outside." And I got the money from the Gulbenkian Foundation. And you know what they -- they blew up. They said, "How can you do this? This is outside the country. We have no control." In effect, they said, we have no control on it.

Q. Was this the only objection? Because it came from outside?

A. Well, that's the objection that they gave me, you see. They said that you can't do this, you have to clear this, you have to clear it with Tehran. And, you know, I want to Tehran, for God's sake! I went to them. Finally I found out that the way to do things was to go to the Queen's Office. It was the only way you could get anything done.

Q. Like getting permission.

A. Sure. Like getting permission. So I'd go to the Queen's Office. It was awfully difficult to get to see her, you know, <unclear>. She was frustrated all the time, too, I know. I remember, the first or second time I saw her in regard to this, she said, "Mr. Frye, you think that I'm Empress of Iran. That anything I do will happen. I give an order and it will happen. Believe me, I give orders and
nobody pays any attention. I give all kinds of orders. I can’t get anything done. You may not think so, but believe me,” she said, “it’s true.”

Q. She couldn’t get anything done.

A. Well, it was just like this, when I went to Nahevandi, you see. After getting it signed, you know, please transfer Shahpour Shahbazi from the university, from the Ministry of Education, over there. And I took this in to that bureaucracy. And I remember putting it down. (I’ve forgotten his name.) And I said, “You see, this is it.” And then I waited. Nothing. Then I came back to him and said, “Look. I have it in writing. You have it in writing. This is the chancellor of the university. Appointed by Tehran. This is the way you’re supposed to get things done. Why can’t you transfer his?”

And he said, “Well, His Excellency doesn’t understand.” And then I went back to His Excellency. “Che kar konam? Che kar konam?” (What shall I do?) There was a kind of paralysis. It was highly centralized, and yet nothing could be done unless everybody agreed. Everybody would agree all the way up.
What I did find out, and what my big lesson in Iran was, this: anywhere in the world, you have to work both sides, top and bottom. You cannot think that you’ve got it done just at the bottom. You’ll have terrible trouble. If you think you can do it from the top, you will also. You’ve got to work both sides. And that is the only way you can get anything done. You’ve got to get cooperation all the way. And if you don’t, run after it; you’ve got to pursue it. If you don’t pursue it, you don’t get anywhere. You have to do everything yourself. And you have to, because you cannot rely on anyone else.

Well, this is true more or less anywhere else. The problem in Iran was that, here, once you get something in the bureaucracy, you don’t have to follow it; there in Iran, you have to follow everything. I had to follow my salary check to get it. I had to follow all the time. Anything. Any kind ... Anything to do with finances I had to follow it. Always myself. Because I’d send somebody over from the Institute. “Please give us our salary. I am unable to work.” Boy, I really .... I experienced a great deal.

I learned so much there. I learned what ....

I had to learn why we built with bricks from Esfahan or Nain.
Not bricks from Shirez, local bricks. Because the bricks in Shirez have more salt in them and would crumble after a number of years. The best bricks of all you could get from Nain, but that's far, and it costs money to transport them. So what do we do? Well, we get 'em much cheaper from Esfahan because you have a paved road between Esfahan and Shirez, between Esfahan and Nain it's a bad road. So it costs double. It costs more to ship bricks from Nain to Esfahan than from Esfahan to Shirez, which is five times the distance.

So you've got to learn these things! Boy!

And then you have to learn how to deal with the quota <foreman>. Oh, boy! I used to get these workers who would come in .... the foremen would come in and say they'd stopped their work. I said, "Well, don't pay them." He said, "It doesn't matter. They won't work. They don't care. They're Shirezias." Esfahanis would come in and say, "We'll work overtime -- azafah kar. We work hard." Just like two different people -- like night and day.

The Shirezias are just like southerners are everywhere. They take life easier. That's why it's so strange to think that they're changed.
Ok. Well, I think we'll have to end it here, because I have to go off.