

## *Letters to the Editor*

Open letter to the Editor:

As the founder and funder of the Vladimir Minorsky Prize, I was distressed to learn that the prizewinning article was printed by *IS* without getting copyright permission, as noted in the letter from Jean Aubin, XXII, 4. My proposal, which was voted for by the SIS board and business meeting and given to the editor, included clear statements about copyright. I had thought these out and suggested that potential contestants obtain indications of probable consent before submitting their entries both from editors who held copyright and from the authors; that final copyright be obtained (unless obtained by contestants) by the *IS* editor, and that the author be asked for final approval of the translation. This was to be in publicity for the prize.

As editor of a new multidisciplinary journal, *Contention: Debates in Society, Culture, and Science*, I know all editors and scholars should be aware that copyright permissions are needed for all reprints or translations. We speak of reprints without permission from poorer countries as "pirating," and most Iranists know about it. It is more reprehensible in richer countries.

This letter will restate the purpose and guidelines of the Minorsky prize, which have been understandably misapprehended by my friend Jean Aubin. I thought of the prize in order to encourage the publication of good translations of outstanding research articles written in any foreign language and also particularly to encourage young scholars to do such translations. The motive of the translator cannot be called commercial, since most contestants do not win, and those that do could make more money in other ways.

The rationale and terms of the prize have not been adequately publicized by SIS or *IS* in the past. Any publicity should include a brief statement of its rationale, copyright conditions, and the need for approval of the translation by living authors. Although I agree that French is better-known than other languages, unfortunately it is not universally known. I am sure far more U.S. Iranists read arti-

cles in English translation than in French. French should not be excluded from consideration for the prize, though other languages should be encouraged.

Although this letter is long, I think it important to assure Jean Aubin and other foreign readers that a major motive of the prize, and the way it will be administered in future (if the new *IS* editor gives the needed assurances), is to *increase* interest in work done abroad, in proper language training, and in foreign works. This was why Rudi Matthee and I put much effort into two MESA panels on "Iranian Studies in Europe and Japan," later revised, edited (and translated when necessary), and printed as *Iranian Studies* XX, 2–4 (1988). This had brief analytic histories of Iranian studies abroad with select bibliographies, written overwhelmingly by people from abroad: Bernard Hourcade, Bert Fragner, Angelo Piemontese, Hisae Nakanishi, J. T. P. De Bruijn, Anna Krasnowolska, and Muriel Atkin.

Given the importance of good relations with foreign scholars, I will quote from my Introduction to that issue, whose spirit is the same as that motivating the Minorsky prize: "[A] number of points stand out. One is the enormous range of Iranian studies that have been and are still being carried out in a large number of languages. Despite the fact that in the postwar years English has become the chief international language, a scholar knowing only English and Persian is missing many important works. Today . . . this gap is becoming ever more serious. We find a revival of scholarship in German . . . which has produced a wide variety of original works. Almost the same may be said for Japanese, while the Russians . . . show increasing signs of turning their long history of quantity in Iranian studies to one of an increasing quality. . . . The French, and on a smaller scale the Dutch and the Poles, continue to do important work. . . . After the experience of editing this work, the editors feel more vividly than ever before the need to encourage English translations of original scholarly works on Iran (from all languages, including Persian)." We go on then to ask for suggestions of how to encourage translations and increased cooperation with foreign scholars.

In sum, I hope Jean Aubin and others are convinced that the motive of those of us who conceived of the prize was neither commercial nor filling up blank spaces in *IS*, and that he accepts my apology for assuming my statement on copyright procedure, included in the proposal approved by the society, had been followed. I also hope that he realizes that a main goal of the prize was and is to make U.S.-trained scholars more aware of scholarship done in a variety of languages, and of the importance of gaining a knowledge of many of those languages so that they can go beyond the very small sample available in translation.

*Nikki Keddie*