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# Paradise Lost, Persia From Above



## Synopsis

In 1976 and 1978, aerial photographer Georg Gerster had the rare opportunity to record the landscape of Iran on over 100 flights and 300 flying hours. This unique photographic project resulted in a near-complete documentation of the major archaeological sites and important landscapes in the region. The book includes spectacular images of ancient citadels, desert ruins, and rice fields spreading like a vast patchwork quilt in a river delta. There are many unexpected sights, such as the bird's-eye view of a crowded ski resort in the Elburz Mountains, within easy reach of Tehran. Iran's densely packed cities, such as Bushehr, located on the Persian Gulf, are elegantly captured by Gerster. They appear so very different from Western European or North American cities of the same period; the complex, interlocking flat-roofed buildings are both timeless and timely, with architecture that has stood unchanged for thousands of years, along with brightly-colored 1970s cars parked in the colonnaded courtyards. Even the Iranian landscape contains surprises: on closer inspection, the elaborate patterns made in fields with tractors and ploughs turn out to have more to do with politics than agriculture or land art. A law at the time Gerster was photographing allowed people to claim unused land by planting crops on it, and this type of "agridoodle" was apparently enough to support such a claim. Persia is the ancient name of the region we now know as Iran. We still reference the country's long and rich cultural heritage when we speak of Persian carpets and Persian miniatures, of Persian language, history, and literature. In her introduction to this book, Iranian-born writer Maryam Sachs lists some words borrowed from the Persian language by English speakers, including azure, bazaar, gazelle, magic, musk, tapestry, scarlet, narcissus, and paradise. These words offer insight into the country's landscape, inhabitants, and traditions - influences that have indirectly shaped the photos in the book. *Paradise Lost* vividly brings to life a place, time, and culture that few people outside of Iran were able to witness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Extraordinary."-Sue Norris, Financial Times "Astonishing aerial photographs of Iran... Images of the country's diverse, rugged beauty are finally seeing the light of day."-Horatia Harrod, Sunday Telegraph "An intriguing collection... Transformed into strange and intricate tapestries and patchworks, the rich complexity of Iran's natural and cultural landscapes [...] have a humbling, otherworldly beauty."-Metro

Maryam Sachs (b. 1962) was born in Iran and educated at the Sorbonne in Paris. She has a Masters in Economic Development from Columbia University, New York, and her books include the anthologies *The Kiss*, *The Moon*, *The Wild Emperor* (with her husband, designer Rolf Sachs), and *Sans te dire adieu*, a novel. She lives in London. Georg Gerster (b. 1928) is a pioneer in aerial photography. For over 50 years he has taken breathtaking pictures of mountains and deserts, coasts and lakes, and agrarian and industrial landscapes all over the world. He took his first aerial photographs in the Sudan in 1963, and since then he has taken photographs in 111 countries on all continents, covering all types of territories from the to Antarctica. He has photographed some of the world's most spectacular archaeological sites and ancient monuments, from the temple at Karnak, Egypt and the Acropolis in Athens to the Great Wall of China. From 1975 to 1995, Gerster shot a series of now highly-collectible advertising posters for Swissair. Gerster sees his work as a philosophical instrument: "distance creates an overview, and an overview creates insight." Based near Zürich, Switzerland, he also works as a journalist, and is a regular contributor to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *National Geographic*.

This book is a must-have for people interested in Iran and in aerial photography. The photographs are gorgeous and present a completely new perspective. It is also interesting to compare these photos to what can be seen through Google Maps and see how and how much things have changed.

it took its time to arrive but it arrived in the conditions described by the seller. I like this book right

from start, it is a great collection of rare aerial photos of Iran. It is breathtaking.

Fantastic.

It's a great book with great quality

The best book for its content.

I love pictures and print. not really the words. It is perfect gift idea. but you would not be happy as there is no picture from north or northwest of Iran in this selection. so it is more desert-ish pictures.

Photographer Georg Gerster proposed a pioneering aerial photography project documenting the landscape of Persia from above, and in the 1970s the Empress agreed to the project idea. PARADISE LOST: PERSIA FROM ABOVE is the result, representing some 300 flying hours and providing a complete photographic record of the landscapes and cities of Persia. Text describes the regions depicted, adds Persian poetry to the mix, and provides a rare glimpse at a region commonly hidden from the world's eye. Essential not just for arts collections, but for any strong in Middle East history and culture.

The amazing landscape, cities, ruins and historical monuments of Iran have been captured and recorded with such an excellent collection of aerial photographs which equal Erich Schmidt's pioneer aerial reconnaissance of Iran, published in 1940 (Flights Over Ancient Cities of Iran). The beauty of these images has been unfortunately somehow wasted by first the photographer's very personal, and - to some degree - offending account of his work in Iran, and second by the awkward organization of the book's content and text. It is really embarrassing to see a book exclusively on Iran with a table of contents which enlists the name of the Persian Gulf simply as "the Gulf" (the readers should wonder which Gulf?). The comble is when you see that the author of the text is an Iranian woman married to a Swiss. That is even worse when you find out that the book is dedicated to Farah Diba, the former queen of Iran!!! Ignorance or hypocrisy? Or both. It is really graceless. Even the title is silly: Paradise Lost! As someone well familiar with the terrain and all the sites represented in this book, I can say that the "paradise" is still there! I bought the book just for the sake of its wonderful images of Iran. Ignore the dull text, and let the images speak for themselves.

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