

3 February 1970

Marvin--

Hi! Happy (Chinese) New Year of the Dog.

Thanks for your 3 letters of intro. and the kind note.

I finally began taking my first genealogy but "EGO" has fled to Abadan for a week. There's something funny going on about the statistics of the Census bureau (aside from the fact that they've enumerated whole populations which don't exist--like the thousand Zoros. of Nejafalabad); the head of the Zoro. community says he's getting some statistics but only thru personal contact and promising the stuff would be confidential (?).

Thought the Institute and the Center should have a documentary case study of administration under "politics of insecurity": Ch. I enclosed.

See the second letter from Yaganegi (intro. to gov. of Yazd)--think I can bluff my way in the provinces on that?

Lois Beck has got her research permit and residence permit--still trying to get residence permit for the car. That's a .333 batting av. for the Center's anthropologists this year.

They say everyone in Iraq these days is being referred to as (it must be wacky translator) the "struggler President", the "struggler troops", the "struggler" mothers etc.--

from the Struggler Outposts of the Pahlavi (!) Center,

Best wishes,

Mike
Mike Fischer

The British Institute for Persian Studies
Box 2617, Teheran, Iran
1 February 1970

Prof. Marvin Mikesell
Department of Geography
The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Dear Prof. Mikesell:

I don't know if you will remember me--I introduced myself to you a couple of years ago when I first arrived at Chicago and asked about the graduate pro-seminar in geography which you dissuaded me from taking ('no one would want to take it who didn't have to' or something like that); I'm the son of Eric Fischer (A Question of Place, readings in the history of geog. thought; The Passing of the European Age, etc.) and have a BA in Liberal Arts/Geography from Johns Hopkins (MA Chicago, Soc. Anthro.); also I participated in Yalman's (and your and Zonis') seminar on the Near East last year.

Anyway, I should like to ask a favor--which I shall not begrudge if you refuse. I've been caught by a bureaucratic "sheluk" here in Iran; I've been confronted with a ministerial regulation saying that if you are an anthropologist (strike one) and you don't have a PhD (strike two) you can't get a research permit. (So says the Ministry of Arts and Culture; the Ministry of Science and Higher Education says it's OK to give me a permit; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs who eventually have to write the permit is watching to see who wins.) Although I have the word anthropologist in my files here, I might be able to get around the matter if I could get some letters of introduction as a geographer.

I have written to Prof. M. Gordon (Reds) Wolman at Hopkins for a letter certifying my background in geography. But inasmuch as I am currently at Chicago, I would probably need something from there too. Marvin Zonis has very kindly sent me a letter of introduction from the Near East Center which does not specify my field. If you could simply add to that a letter on letter head (as fancy as possible) introducing me as doing work of geographical interest, ~~involving~~ within the Center, I would be very grateful.

My project is on religion and social change among the Zoroastrians of Iran. I would like to be able to work around Yazd which is the transition zone of rural-urban migration of the Zoroastrians--a migration which will probably be completed in this generation. But if all this permit nonsense fails, I will probably still be able to work in Teheran where now half of the Zoroastrians of Iran reside and is to some extent "the end point" of the migration route.

Many thanks for your consideration of my admittedly somewhat bizarre request--whichever way you decide.

By the way, has Doug's Libyan project been adversely affected by the coup? Have you heard from Yalman?

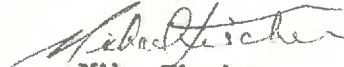
Best wishes from the "struggler" outposts of
the Pahlavi Center

Michael M.J. Fischer
Michael M.J. Fischer

The visa I'm on requires me to leave the country and return every three months. Four of us_x went out in December to Afghanistan and did the little tour--truly a fabulous place. The scenery is impressive, the monuments magnificent, and the people friendly (not yet ruined by that frenetic third-world crassness which has taken over Iran). If, as is likely, I'm still in Teheran in early March when I have to leave again, I'll probably just run across to Erzerum and back.

I hope all is well. Give my regards to Margaret.

Best wishes,


Mike Fischer

The British Institute for Persian Studies
Box 2617, Teheran, Iran
1 February 1970

Prof. M. Gordon Wolman
Department of Geography
The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Dr. Wolman:

Greetings! How goes life at the Hop? I thought I saw you at the Hopkins-Mt Washington lacrosse game last spring but lost you in the crowd before I could say hello. A friend from Chicago (at the Oriental Institute) has been trying to tell me that Hopkins is going bankrupt, the circumstantial evidence being (1) that no one will touch Albright's chair, and (2) that Rossi, in ignominious retreat from Chicago, was grabbed by Hopkins Soc. Rel. Dept. hungry for fund-raising types.

My charmed career in academia has hit some troubled (bureaucratic) waters as well, and I'm writing for some help, though I don't know if my request is either reasonable or if it will be of use back at this end.

Having done a study of religion and economics in a rural Jamaican village for my MA, I wanted to follow up with a dissertation on religion and social change among the modern Zoroastrians in Iran. I've gotten hung up in an incredible bureaucratic "sheluk" (a word that is quickly assimilated into English when referring to the legendary but not mythical administrative chaos in these parts). The Ministry of Arts and Culture to whom I originally applied for a research permit, decided after three months of promising me the permit to make known a (new?) regulation which says that if you are an anthropologist (strike one) and don't have a PhD (strike two) you can't get a permit. Meanwhile the Ministry of Science and Education has approved the permit. But the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who eventually has to write the piece of paper is sitting back waiting to see who wins. I have a letter of introduction from Chicago's Center for Near Eastern Studies which does not state my field. As far as I know, the Iranian bureaucracy has only two damning letters: one which I originally wrote to the Ministry of Culture--it's in French and in the pinch I can claim I didn't write it but had a friend do so (which is true)...; and secondly some forms I filled in for the Ministry of Science, but since they are very helpful and think the Ministry of Culture is being ridiculous I probably can change them.

Now then, if I can get you and Mikesell at Chicago to give me letters of introduction as a geographer, maybe I can avoid strike three. If you could write a letter of introduction (1) stating that I trained as a geographer at Hopkins, (2) that I have a BA from Hopkins; (3) maybe, that I worked as a geographer after graduating for the US Corps of Engineers (1967), and (4) that for the sake of geographical research, you would appreciate cooperation being given me; I would be most grateful. Such letters have absolutely no (0) value unless they are on letter head; and it helps if there's a gold seal of some sort (no kidding!).