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Putting “Tehrangeles” on the Map : A Consideration of Space and Place for Migrants

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Putting “Tehrangeles” on the Map: A Consideration of Space and Place for Migrants

Atsuko Tsubakihara*

「テヘランゼルス」への地図

—移民の場所と空間に関する一考察—

椿原敦子*

In March 2010, a Westwood Boulevard street corner on the west side of LA City was named “Persian Square” by the city council. This was about three decades after the mass migration of Iranians into Los Angeles began. In this essay, I will examine how this symbolic place was created after the long absence of an explicitly Iranian locale in the city. This study will also reveal that how these migrants have constructed their subjectivity depending on their location.

I focus on several places to examine the social invisibility of Iranians in Los Angeles. Factors such as the multi-nucleation of residences and businesses; internal diversity in terms of political, class and ethno-religious affiliation; and a white-oriented mode of life have made Iranians socially invisible. There has been the possibility of a symbolic place for Iranians to emerge in Westwood, but it was not inevitable for this to be made explicit. Westwood has been a special place for many Iranians in LA; however, because of the nature of Westwood, it has long remained unnamed. Establishing a symbolic place for Iranians became possible only recently, after they were able to share lived experience in the space.

2010年3月、カリフォルニア郡ロサンゼルス市西部のウエストウッド通りの一角が市によって“Persian Square”と命名された。1979年のイラン革命を主要な契機として、ロサンゼルスにはイラン国外最大の人口が集中しているが、ペ

*Osaka University, Graduate School of Human Sciences

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キーワード : ロサンゼルスのイラン出身者, 移住, 場所と空間

ルシア（イラン）の名を冠した街区ができたのは初めてのことである。本論文では同地区がイランからの移住者にとって象徴的な場となったプロセスを明らかにする。

最初に、同地区が多くのイラン出身者にとって特別な意味を持つにも関わらず、いかなる呼び名もつけられることなく留まっていたことを考察した。その結果、自分たちを集団として表象することについて、統一見解の形成が困難なこと、地理的特性から、同地区には特定の集団を表象する場所を作るのが困難だったことを明らかにした。次に、場所への愛着は同地区でのイラン暦新年の祝祭により明示的になり、このことが集団の社会的認知を求める動きを加速させ、公的な命名に至ったことを指摘した。

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1 A brief history of Iranian migration to LA	4 Locating an Iranian place
2 The settlement process and a sense of the “non-Iranian place”	5 Mapping Westwood their way
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Prologue¹⁾

The accumulation of the Iranian population in Los Angeles (hereafter LA)²⁾ started about three decades ago, coinciding with the mass exodus around the time of the Iranian revolution in 1979. When the Iranian population in LA rapidly increased during the 1980s, their areas of residence and business also expanded. The decentralization of the Iranian population is often explained as being a result of their high socio-economic status: since their education level is higher than the national average and they invest large capital in their businesses, they have not formed an enclave economy (Min and Bozorgmehr 2000). This does not mean, however, that they are completely integrated into mainstream society and have lost their intra-group relationships, as the classical assimilation theorists would have thought. Instead, compared to other recent immigrant groups in LA, Iranians are more invisible in terms of their settlement. Most other groups in LA formed their own symbolic locales in the early stages of migration. Since the mid-1970s, for instance, Vietnamese refugees have largely settled in the adjacent areas of Westminster, Garden Grove and Santa Ana city, collectively known as Little Saigon.³⁾ Even immigrants of high socioeconomic status have formed ethnic neighborhoods, such as Chinese from Taiwan and Hong Kong in Monterey Park at the beginning of their migration in the early 1980s⁴⁾. Although Iranian immigrants' history goes almost as far back as these groups', it is only recently that one locale in LA has been officially named

after Iranians; in March 2010, a Westwood Boulevard street corner on the west side of LA City was named Persian Square by the city council.

However, unlike "Koreatown" or "Little Tokyo," the name "Persian Square" has rarely been used by either Iranians or other local people. This is partly because Westwood has the characteristics of what architectural theorist Charles Jencks (1996) terms a "multiclave⁵." He pointed out that not only ethnicity but also lifestyle divides Los Angeles into village-sized fragments, which he called "identity areas." In contrast, in "multiclaves," different clusters of ethnicity and lifestyle coexist. Westwood, for example, is surrounded by a university campus and affluent residential areas, and people of different classes, ethnicities and lifestyles go there to visit and work as well as to live. Thus the official designation of "Persian Square" seemed to attempt to inspire the emergence of an "identity area" out of this "multiclave."

The new name is not used also because of a gap between the Iranian people's sense of the place and the process of making Persian Square. The area has long been densely populated by Iranian residents and businesses. The name "Persian Square" was the result of negotiations among proponents, stakeholders and local governments. Nonetheless, Iranians have usually just called the area "Westwood," as they continue to today. Instead of "Persian Square," the less geographically specific term "Tehrangeles" (or "Irangeles") is popular among Iranians, both inside and outside LA. This term is commonly explained as meaning "the biggest Iranian community outside Iran" and does not refer to any specific area in the city. In addition, as I will discuss in more detail later, Iranians have never reached a consensus about who they are. The significance of Westwood as Iranian has derived from people's daily practices, but giving explicit meaning to the place was another matter.

To form an "identity area" for Iranians, an identity itself also needed to be created. Geographer Edward Soja explained one characteristic of Los Angeles as a postmodern city by using the coined term "simcity." In a "simcity," "the older distinctions between our images of the real and the reality" become blurred, and everything, including residence, work, clothing, food, and even "how we relate to others," becomes a matter of choice (Soja 1998: 452). Cultures then go beyond the essential/constructed distinction, and become "real fakes," what Jean Baudrillard defined as "hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1988). Several studies on Northern and Southern California have shown that the images of places have sometimes been represented by actors who think of themselves as not belonging to these places. For example, the Japanese-ness of Japantown in San Francisco has actually been maintained by Koreans (Kotani 2007), and in the case of LA's Koreatown, Latinos are the majority of employees and customers (Min 1996). These representations could be called the hyperreal identity of the places, but in the case of Persian Square, the Iranian/Persian-ness itself has also been created by reconciling contested views of history. In sum, there is a three-layered perception of Westwood: its multiclave-ness,

the daily experience attached to the place, and its hyperreal identity of Persian/Iranian-ness. These perceptions are not distinct to different people; rather, one person could hold all three at once.

How, then, have Iranians constructed an explicit symbolic locale after such prolonged invisibility? I will examine how the three perceptions were nurtured and how this invention worked. As David Harvey (2005) noted, the emergence of symbolic locale happens to every group, everywhere under certain conditions⁶); thus it is important to explore the necessity of time and location, rather than just ask *why* it has emerged. In other words, we should look into the *process* of making such a symbolic locale. In the era of globalization, it has become difficult to locate certain cultures and people on the map (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). In anthropological migration studies, then, “follow the people” strategies (Marcus 1995) that focus on the networks of people have developed⁷). Contrary to this trend, I argue that the “follow the place” strategy is more effective for analyzing the spaces of LA, where social relationships are fragmented into places.

The definitions of “space” and “place” as analytical concepts differ among anthropology, geography and other related areas, yet they are intertwined with each other. “Space” is considered an objective material arrangement, or a hegemonic representation of a locale, whereas “place” is seen as subjective perception and an experience of a locale. Although this distinction between a “non-subject position of space” and a “subject-position of place” (Hirsh 1995: 9) is common, some theorists like Michael de Certeau (1984) have reversed the definitions (Agnew 2011: 318; Gieryn 2000: 465). In addition, Marxist geographers and sociologists such as Henri Lefebvre (1991) have used the term “space” as including the other theorists’ idea of “place.” There is thus confusion over the definition of “space” and “place.” In anthropology, both “space” and “place” have been used at times for understanding people’s perceptions; the sense of “place” and “non-place” (placelessness) has been discussed in relation to modernity (Augé 1995), whereas “space” has been used as a notion of geographically embodied practice and experience (Clifford 1997). Considering these previous studies, I venture to define both “space” and “place” as complexes of perception and material arrangements, and the key difference is whether these have a center (places) or not (spaces). Therefore, Persian Square in Westwood can be called a “place” and Tehrangeles a “space.”

1 A brief history of Iranian migration to LA

Official statistics show that there were 338,000 Iranians in the United States in 2003, while other research reveals that the population was actually about 600,000 in the same year⁸). The Iranian population in the United States and LA is always controversial for two reasons: first, US Iranian media and other organizations claim that the US census underestimates their number, but their own estimations are often

exaggerated for the sake of gaining the support of politicians (Bozorgmehr et al. 1993). Meanwhile, certain numbers of Iranians do indeed inhabit the city without legal registration, and it is difficult to determine the exact number of this unofficial population. Taking these challenges into account, anthropologist Haleh Ghorashi (2002: 115) has used previous studies, censuses and media reports to estimate the number of Iranians in LA to be around 200,000.

The historic mass exodus of the Iranian population started in the latter half of the 20th century. Mass emigration abroad started in the 1960s with non-immigrants. Most of these migrants were students, and their main destination was Europe. After a period of rapid economic growth in the early 1970s, the number of these Iranian students abroad sharply increased, partly because of the lack of higher education institutions in Iran. By 1977–78, there were about 100,000 Iranian students abroad, and about a half of them were in the United States (Matin-Asgari 2002: 225). According to one study of the settlement patterns of Iranians in the United States, most of the US Iranian population migrated to California secondarily, that is, from other cities in the United States. This secondary migration was driven by students moving from their campus towns after graduation in search of job opportunities or to reunite with family (Modarres 1998).

Iranian migration to the US drastically increased from 1977 to 1986 (Bozorgmehr and Sabagh 1988: 77). The Iranian-born population granted permanent residence status peaked in 1990 at 24,977, and the number has gradually decreased since. In total, 319,075 Iranian immigrants were admitted between 1980 and 2004, and this number includes those who changed their visa status from non-immigrant to immigrant. During the same period, more than one out of every four Iranian immigrants was a refugee or asylee⁹). A sampling survey of Iranians in LA revealed that those who were legally granted asylum and refugee status comprised 23.5%; however, regarding the reason for migration claimed by respondents, 40.1% identified themselves as asylum- and refuge-seekers (Bozorgmehr and Sabagh 1991). This indicates, as Caren Kaplan has pointed out, that it is impossible to make a strict distinction between “involuntary” refugees and exiles and “voluntary” immigrants (Kaplan 1996).

No matter what legal status they actually have, for some people the self-image of “being an exile” is important. Hamid Naficy (1993) describes the Persian media in LA as creating a symbolic order among Iranians living a chaotic life in exile, and he called these Persian media “exile media.” There were more than 90 periodicals and 23 local cable TV programs in 1993 (Naficy 1993). Because “Islamization” has pervaded the mass media in Iran since the Revolution, those in the media business such as singers, actors and screen writers have moved abroad. Gradually they gathered in LA and joined the “exile media” industry. More than 25 Persian satellite TV stations were there by 2005, and they broadcast all over the world, including to Iran. Typical programs include popular music shows and political talk shows, which

mostly discuss the current regime in Iran. Regarding the Persian music industry, Los Angeles exclusively produces music albums and videos and distributes them to Iranian communities all over the world. These LA-based Persian media have contributed to constructing the stereotype of “people in Tehrangeles”: affluent, successful in American society, and politically anti-Islamic Republic. The image of Tehrangeles has attracted certain people and provided a motive for them to move there. Graham and Khosravi (1997: 124) have described Iranians in Sweden as having an image of Tehrangeles/Irangeles as a vigorous community, and some of their informants wanted to move there for greater socio-economic success and a better family life.

Although Tehrangeles/Irangeles stands for their overall living space, there is no specific term denoting the people. There are two reasons for this absence of a term describing an agreed-upon self-image of Iranians in LA. One is that some people respond negatively to the stereotype described above. One term does exist, “Los-Angelesi,” an adjective for both Iranian products and people in LA, but it is only used pejoratively to criticize Iranians in LA for being too materialistic. The other reason is rooted in their diversity in terms of class and political affiliation. Nassehi-Behnam (2005) has identified two distinct categories of Iranian exiles: those who left the country before the presidential term of Bani-Sadr in 1980, and those who left after his impeachment in 1981. The former comprises mostly affluent Iranians, including members of the royal family and entrepreneurs who benefited from the economic development during the 1970s, as well as those who held key positions during the Pahlavi regime. The latter group is composed of “disappointed revolutionaries hostile to both regimes,” including students, political activists and intellectuals (Nassehi-Behnam 2005: 252–253).

These two groups share an anti-Islamic Republic attitude; however, they hold different views on the former regime. Therefore, political antagonism between these groups in LA has been fierce, especially during the 1980s. Ron Kelley describes the rallies against Iran’s Islamic government as follows:

[M]ost of the political demonstrators, and certainly the wealthiest, support the Shah’s son, Reza Pahlavi, and “constitutional monarchy.”... Unlike all other protest demonstrators, many participants arrive in Mercedes and other fine automobiles, dressed to march in fashionably expensive clothing. ... In recent years, the highly fragmented Iranian Left has been able to bring together no more than a few hundred people for their Los Angeles rallies because of difficulties in organizing numerous and often mutually hostile factions. (Kelley 1993b: 300)

Iranian political rallies have almost always been held at the Federal Building in West Los Angeles, and there have often been conflicts and clashes among the groups. In 1987, there was a rally against the visit to the UN of then Iranian president Khamenei. While one speaker was making a speech and some of the audi-

ence was yelling against him, Neusha Farrahi, a writer and owner of a bookstore in Westwood, immolated himself. There are many views regarding his intention, but according to the articles and memorandums he wrote, it has been understood that he was not only protesting against Khamenei and the Iranian government, but also criticizing the split among Iranians in LA or their political apathy (Kelley 1993; *Javanān* Oct 9, 1987). This case shows how one locale, namely the Federal Building, became a site of political confrontation.

In addition to the class/political differences, there is a great diversity of ethno-religious belonging compared to the demographic composition inside Iran; the Jewish, Armenian, Zoroastrian, Baha’i populations are relatively large (Naficy 1993; Adelpkhan 2001). As Islamization in Iran’s public institutions progressed, antagonism toward religious minorities grew. These minorities began to flee the country and those of the various minority groups stayed in different countries as asylum seekers because of the existence of supporting institutions in these countries. For example, the Iranian Jewish community has received assistance from a Jewish refugee aid organization in Austria, and many Baha’is resided in refugee camps in Turkey for a time. Thus, exiles’ pathways and experiences of emigration vary according to their ethno-religious affiliations. Differences in ethno-religious affiliation have also had an effect on their settlement patterns in LA; for example, many Armenians have settled in Glendale, while Jews have generally moved into Beverly Hills and the San Gabriel Valley.

In sum, Los Angeles has attracted many Iranians for more than three decades. Many Iranians have moved to LA for better opportunities and family reunion. They have great diversity in terms of class, political and religious affiliations, and there is no agreed-upon term denoting the entire Iranian population in LA. Instead, they share stereotypes of Iranians in LA that are enhanced by the “exile media,” which represents them as affluent, successful in American society, and politically anti-Islamic Republic. While some people assimilate themselves into the stereotype, others seek to differentiate themselves from it. In the following section, I will examine the process of their settlement, and show how they reside and work in several distinctive areas yet remain socially invisible.

2 The settlement process and a sense of the “non-Iranian place”

Iranians started investing in LA real estate in the 1970s, prior to the mass migration. The reasons for the investments in this area are explained by the actors themselves according to two logics: the financial and the cultural. One trader in his forties whose sister and mother live in Beverly Hills explained his family’s motivation as follows: “It was not only Iranians but also the rich from all over the world who wanted to live in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, because of the fine weather, you know. During the 1970s, 1 toman was 1 dollar¹⁰), so it made no difference whether

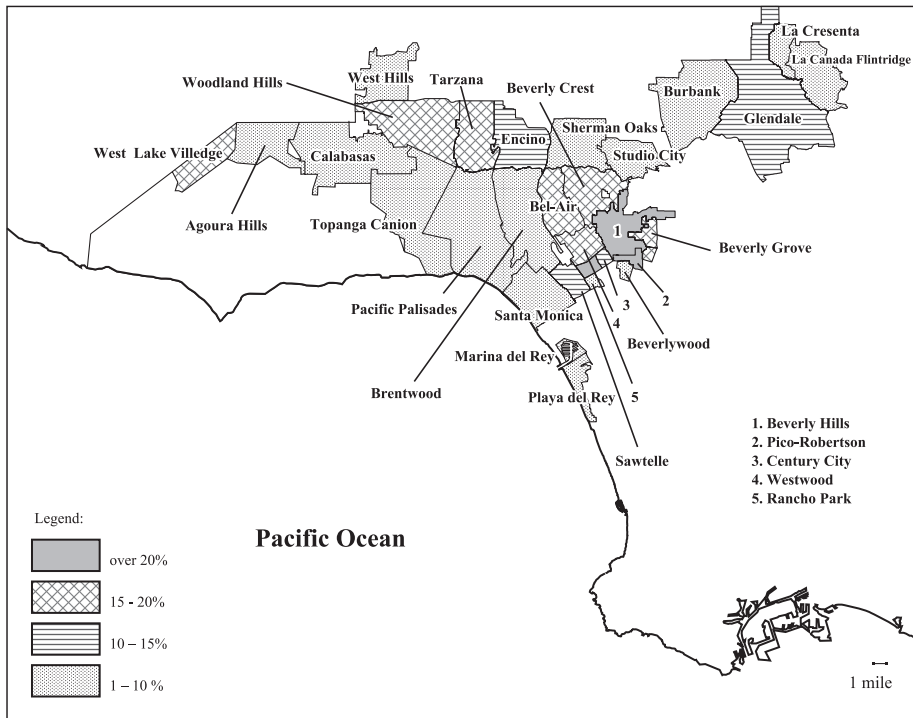
we invested in Iran or America.” Another informant, a real estate developer in his fifties, also recognized the fact of economic development in Iran, he also pointed to “Iranians’ nature”: “The investment boom was caused precisely by word-of-mouth information. We Iranians are strongly competitive: if one hears her neighbor has bought a house in Beverly Hills, she would try to buy a house next to him.” And he added, “Someone who doesn’t have enough money to do so will live in the areas around. The more money you have, the more you live in the center.”

In the context of Iranian Jews, according to Nahid Pirnazar (2005), many intellectuals and affluent Jews invested abroad in the 1970s, sensing the developing anti-Semitic sentiment in Iran. These investors “started to have two homes, one in Los Angeles and one in Tehran,” as “they still tried to enjoy the so-called economic benefits of the ‘Golden Jewish Era’ of the Pahlavi Dynasty,” so named because they had opportunities for upward mobility thanks to the abolition of job and educational limits after the 1906 constitution (Pirnazar 2005: 35). Not only Jews but all wealthy Iranians, even including the royal family, started to invest in real estate in Beverly Hills and other affluent areas in LA. Thus the investment boom of Iranians was backed by rapid economic development in Iran, and it was partly aimed at the dispersion of risk.

However, in a broader way, Iranians’ residential areas were widespread across Los Angeles and Orange County. Ali Modarres (1990) has pointed out that the multi-nucleation of residential patterns had already occurred by 1980. He notes that “different noncontiguous areas attracted different groups of Iranians.” Two types of groups, according to him, inhabited their distinct areas: one around universities and the other in areas of high socioeconomic status (Modarres 1990: 170).

Nowadays the Iranian-ancestry and Iranian-born population together represent one of the most distinguished groups of LA of all the recent immigrant groups, especially in terms of their settlement pattern. They have settled in the most affluent neighborhoods of Los Angeles County (Bozorgmehr et al. 1996). The statistics support this argument. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the population of those born in Iran and those of Iranian ancestry, based on the 2000 US Census, has been concentrated on the west side (such as in Beverly Hills, Pico-Robertson, West Los Angeles and Westwood), and in the affluent Western parts of the San Fernando Valley (such as Woodland Hills, Tarzana, and Encino)¹¹⁾. The greatest concentration of Iranian population in number is in Glendale, where most of the Iranian-born population (24,089) is Armenian¹²⁾. The area with the highest concentration in percentage, Beverly Hills, has an Iranian-born and Iranian-ancestry population of 11,978, which is about 35.4% of total population in the area¹³⁾ (Map 1).

Nonetheless, none of these areas with high concentrations of Iranians has become a symbolic center of the “Iranian place.” As I have shown through the narratives of informants above, Iranians considered the choice of residential areas as a matter of class difference. They utilized “American mainstream” criteria for mea-



(Map 1) Iran-born and Iranian-ancestry rates
 (Source: The *Los Angeles Times* ‘Mapping L.A. Project’ <http://projects.latimes.com/mapping-la/neighborhoods/> (retrieved 2011-12-13), data altered by author)

asuring their lives and success. Nilou Mostofi (2003) has explained the invisibility of Iranian identity in public space by using term “whiteness.” Avoiding the political hostilities between the United States and Iran and aiming to benefit from American liberal society, Iranians in the United States have tended to assimilate keenly into American mainstream society. They have even “whitened” their bodies through plastic surgery, dyed hair and so on (Mostofi 2003: 694). Ron Kelley points out that their commitment to Western culture traces back to Iran. Indeed, “Westoxification (*gharbzādegī*)” was a key term for describing the malaise of Iranian society as culturally influenced by the West, and in the revolutionary era, the notion extended to everything the wealthy have and the poor do not (Dabashi 1993; Beeman 1986). Those forced into exile have tended to already be familiar with Western material culture:

In Los Angeles, wealthy and even middle-class Iranian exiles have continued their obsession with French and Italian fashions and European automobiles: Mercedes (a favorite choice), BMW, and Rolls Royce. More than ever before, they display their prosperity to affirm their high status. The tendency to emulate American consumerist values is best exemplified on a local Persian TV station. (Kelley 1993a: 260)

Therefore, their presence as Iranians was invisible due to both their avoidance of prejudice and their affinity for the American way of life.

The narrative of the “American way” can also be heard from Iranian businesspersons. Since the 1980s, Iranian developers have bought real estate and buildings all over the LA metropolitan area. What these developers have bought is mostly in the high-rises along the Wilshire corridor, old buildings in the Downtown Fashion District and the Jewelry District, and luxury shopping malls in Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. Iranian business tenants are also often located in these areas; however, even when the landlords and tenants are both Iranians, they insist that the business partner is “coincidentally Iranian.” In addition, Iranian shopkeepers and business owners tend to stress that they are not exclusively dealing with Iranian customers. One clothing retailer in his fifties in Downtown recalled the early days of his business this way:

When I came to LA from New York with my wife and children in 1990, I did not have any acquaintances here. I knew one coffee shop in San Fernando Valley close to my home, where many Iranians came. I went there and complained that I am jobless, and one guy advised me to go to downtown and start a retail business. I was a clothing retailer in Iran, but here I started my business from nothing. I started selling women’s clothing from a stall in downtown Santee Alley, an almost abandoned, skid-row area. I learned Spanish because most of my customers were Latinos. Mexicans, Arabs, and Armenians came and started small businesses. There were thirty to forty Iranian clothing retailers around the area at that time. There was no association, and business was more competitive than based on mutual help. Anyone who succeeded moved out. The landlord of the former tenant was American, and the current tenant is Iranian; but it doesn’t matter who they are—I just found a vacant stall with a “For Lease” sign.

He obtained word-of-mouth information about the business and started his business without any help or connections. There were also some Iranians in the same business around his stall, and many Iranian landlords; however, they tended to compete against each other. This is a common element among the other Iranian businesspersons’ narratives from my interviews.

In sum, the high density of Iranian residences and businesses has not necessarily created a sense of “Iranian place.” Though Iranians have started to invest, reside, or work spontaneously in certain areas, and even though information about the areas is given through word-of-mouth from fellow countrymen, they imagine themselves as located in an “American place.” Thus these places are “non-Iranian places,” where they do not have collective sense of belonging as Iranians.

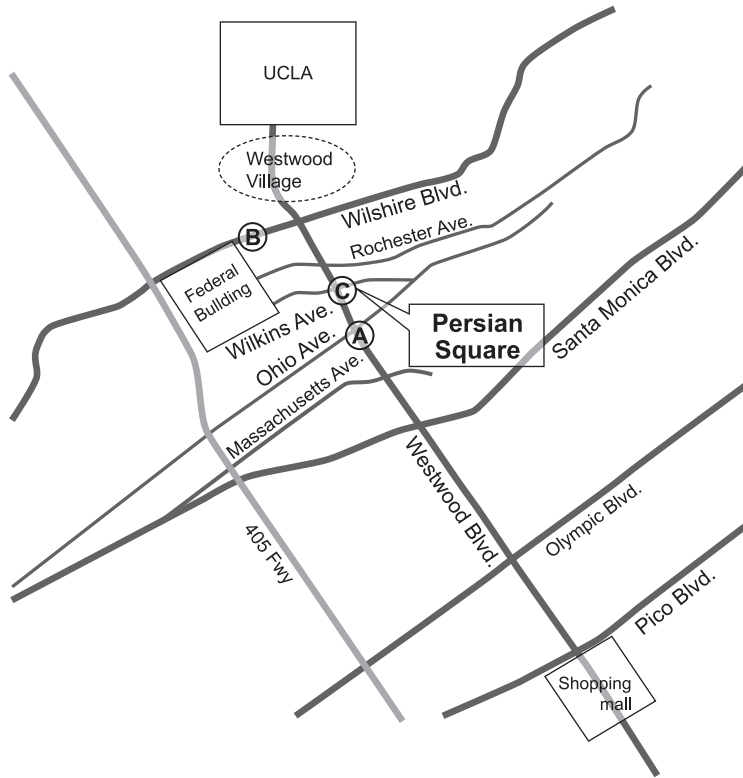
3 The Westwood multiclave

Narratives of the Westwood area differ slightly from the other areas’. Here,

there is also a large population of Iranian residents, but the commercial zone in the area is more important in relation to the sense of place for Iranians. One Iranian painter who has his office in Westwood told me that his business does not exclusively target Iranian customers, but he explained the reason of choosing the location by placing importance on maintaining Iranian connections for his business: “I opened my office in Westwood because it was convenient for me to extend relationships with Iranians, which bring me rewards in business. Actually finding a tenancy itself was also possible because of Iranian connections, though the owner of the building is not Iranian. I am not expecting Iranian customers here. We are in between Beverly Hills and Santa Monica, and celebrities often visit my place.” One Iranian fashion designer gave an account of the opening of her store in an interview for a Persian local magazine: She had moved her store from Brentwood, where “riches, celebrities, and politicians come and go,” to Westwood, which is “the center of Beverly Hills and Bel Air.” She further defined Westwood as the place where “celebrities and athletes visit, and also the hub of my dear Iranians” (*Javanān* June 4, 2010: 82). Brentwood also has a high density of Iranians, but she made a distinction between these two places. She measured Westwood through dual criteria, both as the center of an affluent neighborhood and as a center for Iranians. Westwood’s more explicitly Iranian atmosphere is further seen in Ali Modarres’s observation that some Iranian businesses have two locations, one in Beverly Hills or Westwood and the other somewhere along Ventura Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley, but they display Persian signs only in Westwood (Modarres 1990: 204–205).

On Westwood Boulevard, the business area is located in between UCLA and a large shopping center on the corner of Pico Boulevard (Map 2). Westwood Village, which is north of Wilshire Boulevard, had been developed by an investment company since the late 1920s. Westwood Village was once “an acclaimed model community with a premiere shopping, business, and entertainment district” serving the university and adjacent residential neighborhoods (Wanamaker 2010: 8). Since the company stopped developing this area in 1955, condominiums, office buildings and educational facilities have thrived along Westwood Boulevard. Workers from high-rise office buildings, students, and residents from neighboring affluent areas now frequent Westwood. Movie theaters, cafes and restaurants, fast-food shops, and major bookstores, supermarkets and clothing retailers are located among its office buildings.

Most Iranian-owned businesses are located south of Wilshire. According to one informant, there were about 600 Iranian-owned businesses between Rochester and Massachusetts Avenues in 2010. Iranian-owned businesses are located not only on these three blocks, but also all along Westwood Boulevard. Grocery stores and restaurants, travel agencies, beauty salons, legal services offices, and medical clinics have all put up Persian signs there. Even other businesses in the area, such as Lebanese, Thai, Indian, and Greek restaurants, are sometimes owned by Iranians too.



(Map 2) The Westwood area and the three plans for an Iranian place

In the 1970s, there were only a few Iranian businesses in Westwood. One of them was a small grocery store and another was a kebab restaurant in Westwood Village. An owner of a Persian bookstore in Westwood recalls,

The first Persian business, a small grocery store owned by an Iranian lady, was selling a small portion of products from Iran. Students of this area, mostly students of UCLA, came down from the campus to the shop. Then more Iranian businesses opened nearby and more Iranians visitors came to socialize at the restaurant and cafe, even at the grocery store and bookstore.

This was, as was unanimously said by the Iranian entrepreneurs in Westwood, the beginning of the history of Westwood as the central place for LA Iranians. During the 1990s Iranian businesses that had been operating elsewhere moved into Westwood¹⁴⁾. As a result, Westwood gained a remarkable distinction from other Iranian-business-dense areas. First, there was a greater variety of businesses as compared to the other Iranian-business-concentrated areas. Second, there were certain kinds of businesses in Westwood that could be found nowhere else inside the Los Angeles

area. Persian bookstores are the typical case: there were five such bookstores in the area by the late 1990s.

Shahram Khosravi has described Iranian small businesses in Stockholm, and in his observations entrepreneurs often changed their type of business out of concern for prestige, even if their earnings would decrease. Having a bookshop especially was thought of as a “cultural activity (*kāl-e farhangī*)” and bookshop owners were generally satisfied with their businesses (Khosravi 1999). The same idea of “cultural activity” can be applied to booksellers in Westwood. Some owners of these bookstores aim at establishing their store as a publisher and intellectual salon like historical bookstores in Iran. The owners’ backgrounds are typically somehow related to books, former editors, writers, journalists, or booksellers. In their careers, they not only import books from Iran but also publish books. They host periodic cultural events such as poetry nights (*shab-e she’r*), film screenings, and so on. Sometimes their businesses have failed in terms of economic profit and barely survived in the market. The owner of one bookstore in Westwood succeeded the store from his friend, who was once a publisher in Iran. For him, taking over the bookstore was just to carry out his friend’s wishes, and since the business has been unprofitable, he has held onto his other business. Like some other owners of bookstores in Westwood, he has had his own programs on the radio and reviewed books. He explained that his program was one way to differentiate his store from others. Sometimes he also contributed articles to journals and newspapers in Persian. Thus, having a bookstore was a kind of cultural activity which sometimes involved out-of-pocket expenditures.

Although Iranian business has consistently increased in Westwood, the area’s multiclave-ness has been sustained for two reasons. One reason for this is that the number of Iranian “ethnic” businesses has remained constant. From the early 2000s, the number of certain businesses such as Persian bookstores, restaurants, and record shops has leveled off. To solve the problem of commercial overcrowding, then, selection and adjustment have progressed. Two main strategies for survival have been observed: one is the relocation of a shop within the Westwood area, and the other is a differentiation of the items sold from those of similar businesses. For example, one grocery store sells halal meat for Muslims, while another sells kosher meat for Jews. According to some shopkeepers, they decided on relocation when rent increased or when business went up or down and storage space needed to be adjusted accordingly. The same type of business has often come to a vacant shop after the previous shop’s relocation, for example, restaurant after restaurant and grocery store after grocery store.

The other reason is that most of the Iranian businesses there have offered their services to any customer rather than exclusively to Persian speakers. In addition to the case of the art gallery and the fashion boutique I have mentioned, even shops selling Iranian foods, such as confectionaries and sandwich shops, have a wide

range of American customers. One young newly-arrived Iranian who had won a green card told me about his job-hunting experience: “I walked in the door of every Iranian restaurant and shop in Westwood when I came to LA. Not having English skills, I thought that would be the only way to find a job... In the end, contrary to my expectations, they told me that I must be fluent in English because they serve not only Iranian customers.” Since recruitment is mainly based on personal contacts, the majority of the employees of the Iranian-owned shops are newcomers from Iran. However, their customers are diverse because of Westwood’s location and employers’ belief that they should offer their services primarily in English.

The Westwood landscape has not changed abruptly, but it has gradually changed in its ownership. Sometimes Iranian business owners in Westwood buy the business licenses of non-Iranians when they expand their businesses. Thus most Iranian business owners represent the area’s multivalence, but its Iranian-ness can still be glimpsed: hair salons, travel agencies, photo studios, and mobile phone shops not only provide bilingual service, in Persian and English, but also cover the specific needs of Iranian customers. For example, a Greek restaurant offers an Iranian-style breakfast with Barbari bread, cheese and honey; hair salons provide eyebrow hair removal and Persian epilating wax; and mobile phone shops sell international calling cards and SIM cards that are also available in Iran. Their dual criteria for their businesses have resulted in “doing American business with Iranian service.”

Although the presence of Iranians in Westwood has remained largely invisible to the broader American public, it has become a significant place for Iranian consumers. The biggest difference between Westwood and other places such as Beverly Hills is whether these customers “behave as Iranians” or not. As I described in the last chapter, Iranians in LA do not always behave “as Iranians”; they live “as Whites” in affluent residential areas, join the mainstream American economy, and prefer European brand-name goods. Westwood is one of a few places where they constitute an Iranian subjectivity by providing and consuming services and goods. For instance, while chain coffee shops are usually considered “non-places” with no significance, one has become a significant meeting place for Iranians: those who did not previously know each other can often be found sitting together at a table and playing backgammon in a coffee shop in Westwood. One chain discount store on the street is also an important site for Iranians visiting Westwood; people stop by the store to find souvenirs for relatives in Iran and elsewhere, even when they do not have any upcoming travel plans.

Private cultural and social gatherings have also been nurtured in Westwood. In Iran, there is a stylized social gathering called *dowreh* (salon). A *dowreh* is a private gathering that is held with some regularity in members’ houses in a rotation, and each gathering has its subject, such as a speech about literature, poem recitations, or discussions about politics. The *dowreh* dates from the early 20th century, and it

flourished during 1970s. It has played a role in the large cities of Iran as a way of maintaining professional, alumni, and family ties (Zonis 1971). Those who came to LA have also maintained their relationships through the *dowreh* (cf. Naficy 1993), though in a slightly different way, as well as through the other cultural gatherings like the poetry nights I have discussed. Because their members have been scattered around the entire Greater Los Angeles area, and have been too busy to treat the other members in their own houses, these *dowreh* tend to be held in Persian restaurants. Some of the gatherings became more public, and members called for increased participation through local Persian media. For example, one group held a luncheon and Iranian film screening in Westwood throughout the 1980s. It was described as being “as if it was a film screening in a cultural salon in the 1320s [in the Iranian calendar, which is circa 1940s A.D.]” (*Javanān* Aug 28, 1987: 17).

There is, however, also tension and suspicion among Iranians when they visit the area because of their political diversity. After rallies at the Federal Building, located on the western edge of Westwood, demonstrators often visit the area in small groups. Sometimes there are disputes among these groups in coffee shops and restaurants, just as at the rallies. Encountering other unknown Iranians is sometimes considered risky, especially for those interested in Iranian politics. Once when I was asking one informant’s life history and political views in a chain coffee shop in Westwood, a man came toward the informant and greeted him in Persian. I asked if my informant knew him, and he answered, “No, not at all. You know, Westwood is full of spies. They are hanging around, listening to conversations. So we should be really careful here.” Then he started talking about assassinations and harassments for prominent political Iranians abroad. While he was speaking, he was continuously looking around as if he thought ordinary people like him were not the exception under such a threat. According to him, he indeed had an experience of poisoning during a rally. For him, Westwood was such an arena where he was caught by the significances of a threat, just the same as he had been in public gathering of Iranians before.

In sum, most of the Iranian businesspersons cited dual aims for explaining their choice of location: one was seeking affluent customers and the other was developing relationships with Iranians. As a result, the multiclave landscape has been maintained, while the Iranian business network has gradually expanded. At the same time, Westwood has become a place with an Iranian identity from Iranian consumers’ point of view. This identity formation has not necessarily come by their consuming Iranian services and goods, but by consuming them in “Iranian way”: playing backgammon in a coffee shop, having a traditional salon-style gathering in a restaurant, and so on. There is not only a nostalgic and harmonious atmosphere associated with this, but also sometimes an air of dispute and suspicion among the visitors.

4 Locating an Iranian place

It was in 2004 that the celebration of *Nowrūz*, a celebration of the Persian New Year at the spring equinox¹⁵⁾, was started by several Iranian businesspersons in Westwood. One block of Westwood Boulevard was closed, a stage was set up on the street, and Iranian singers and entertainers performed. Since its second year, local politicians such as congressmen and mayors have been invited. Announcements and live coverage of the event are broadcast on the local Persian TV and radio stations. Along with Persian food stands, Iranian financial consultants from American banks set up booths on the street. According to an organizer, nearly 10,000 people join the celebration every year.

There are also outdoor events related to the Persian New Year held in LA. *Chahār Shanbe Souri*, literally means “Red Wednesday” and is a ritual held in the evening on the last Wednesday before the New Year. People make a fire and leap over it to wish for their health in the next year. *Sizdah Bedar* is the thirteenth day after *Nowrūz*, and since staying at home on this day is believed to bring bad luck, people go on picnics.

Compared to the other Persian New Year events in LA, *Nowrūz* in Westwood has two distinguishing features. First, the program was newly created for public celebration. *Nowrūz* has long been basically celebrated at home; people visit each other’s homes and greet each other. People display seven symbolic items that start with the letter “S”¹⁶⁾ (*Sofreh-ye Haft Sīn*). Special mixed nuts, herb rice and grilled white fish are served as special dishes for the New Year. In the case of Westwood’s *Nowrūz* celebration in 2006, professional dance groups performed traditional dance on the stage, and singers sang famous LA-made Persian popular songs. Comedians came and performed ethnic, religious, and provincial jokes about Iranians. These local entertainers usually perform at nightclubs called *Cabareh* (cabaret) or celebrations of anniversaries, weddings and so on. Although the content of the celebration was different from conventional domestic events, the celebration included nostalgic elements and familiar entertainment and was widely approved of by the audience. In the process through which this private get-together transformed into a public outdoor gathering, much of the program’s content was created, and even familiar elements were changed in scale and setting. For example, a huge *Sofreh-ye Haft Sīn* was displayed on the street. *Hajji Fīruz*, a traditional character of *Nowrūz*, also came onto the stage. His face is painted black and he usually wears red clothes and a hat and sings short repetitive ditties. In Iran, *Hajji Fīruz* used to appear on the street in the days preceding *Nowrūz*, entertaining passersby to earn a few coins¹⁷⁾. Combining several elements of old customs, the *Nowrūz* celebration was thus reinvented as an outdoor festival.

In addition, the celebration employed patriotic elements such as the national flag and patriotic songs, but these were different from those defined by the current

Iranian government. The flag of *Shīr-o-Khorshīd* (The Lion and Sun, the emblem of the flag of the Pahlavi dynasty) was set up on the stages, and some audiences also wore one as a robe. This flag is often used on other occasions in LA, while the flag of Islamic Republic is almost never seen in Iranian public gatherings. As Amy Malek (2011: 401) has described, supporters of the flag often insist that the motif of the Lion and Sun has been employed over the centuries and “claim its cultural heritage transcends political affiliation with any one regime over another¹⁸,” although the usage of the flag is intricately linked with the expression of one’s political stance. In one anti-Islamic government rally in LA, the so-called monarchists—supporters of Shah’s son, and constitutional monarchists—used the *Shīr-o-Khorshīd* flag. Meanwhile, the People’s Mujahedin (MKO or MEK), a France- and Iraq-based militant opposition organization also continues to use this flag. Thus the *Shīr-o-Khorshīd* flag has been deployed in support of competing ideologies.

Nevertheless, in the *Nowrūz* Celebration, the *Shīr-o-Khorshīd* flag was used as the de facto national flag. One of the organizers of the *Nowrūz* celebration said that the flag does not specifically belong to the Pahlavi dynasty; rather, it is a patriotic symbol of Iran. His assertion can be supported by the fact that the song “*Ey Irān* (O Iran)” was sung in the celebration instead of either the pre- or post-Revolution Iranian national anthems. The program on the stage started with the singing of “*Ey Irān*.” Almost all the people around the stage were standing and listening or singing passionately. “*Ey Irān*” was first performed in 1944, and the song gained great popularity among Iranians at home and abroad throughout the time before and after the Revolution¹⁹. This song was used as a quasi-anthem during the transitional period of the Revolution. The song has been widely used among the Iranian diaspora, from the rallies of monarchists to gatherings at an Islamic center. Therefore, although these patriotic elements can be narrowly understood as symbols of particular political ideologies, they admit wider interpretation, such as nostalgia or anti-oppression.

The second distinctive quality of this *Nowrūz* celebration is its location: its locale is linked to people’s daily life, while the other New Year events are held in temporary settings. In Los Angeles, *Chahār Shanbe Sūri* is held on El Segundo Beach near the airport, while for *Syzdah Bedar*, Balboa Park in San Fernando Valley and Mason Park in Irvine are popular picnic destinations. There has also been a *Nowrūz* celebration in Los Angeles City Hall. But none of these locations are places for daily life. This lack of a connection between festival locations and everyday life is partly due to the fact that the organizing committees of these events are cross-regional: Most Iranian organizations in LA developed as professional associations such as those of civil engineers, doctors, and lawyers. These cultural and business associations have developed on a broad regional scale, so associations based on location remain unformed or at the level of informal interpersonal relationships. There has been no Iranian business association in Westwood up to the present, although some business leaders have said that they are currently on the way to

establishing one. However, an informal alliance has developed through the *Nowrūz* celebration. Through the celebration of *Nowrūz*, recognition of Westwood as an Iranian street has become explicit. Not only is this recognized by the event's participants or the audience of its media coverage, but also and more importantly, by businesspersons in the area, neighborhood residents, and local governments: when blocking the street, approvals from both the inside (the affected businesses) and the outside (the city departments) are needed. Merchants outside the closed block then need to choose whether they will open or remain closed on the day of the event, and whether or not to become more actively involved in selling products inside the blocked-off area.

With these two distinctive qualities, the Westwood *Nowrūz* celebration has obtained wide recognition embedded in a particular location. Unlike the other Persian New Year Events, the celebration has no basis for comparison with the one in Iran, so its authenticity has not been called into question. It can be said that the celebration has become “a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (Baudrillard 1988: 166). It has become something beyond Iranians' ordinary sense of New Year's celebrations, like a national festival. And unlike other annual Iranian celebrations, this celebration is held in a familiar place, in turn providing symbolic meaning to the place.

5 Mapping Westwood their way

On March 28, 2010, the 7th annual celebration of *Nowrūz* was held on Westwood Boulevard. At that time it was officially announced that a part of Westwood Boulevard had been named “Persian Square.” The City Council minutes describe “the legend” of Westwood this way:

Within Council District Five, the first Persian business in the City opened in 1974 on the corner of Westwood Boulevard and Wilkins Avenue. [...] Many of the businesses on Westwood Boulevard, between Wilshire Boulevard and Ohio Avenue, are owned and operated by people of Persian cultural identity. Several members and organizations of the Persian community have requested the City to officially designate this specific area as “Persian Square.”

(Excerpt from The Los Angeles City Council minutes submitted 2002-02-10)

However, designating a specific place as “Persian Square” was not accomplished in a short and easy way. The plan had emerged even before the first *Nowrūz* celebration in Westwood began. It took a great deal of time and effort to lobby congresspersons and negotiate with the neighborhood and stakeholders' associations.

There was controversy over the terms of the name and its location. In the most recent case, there were at least three different plans to designate a Persian Square. One possibility was across from Wilshire and Veteran Boulevards, at the corner of

the Federal Building located near Westwood Street. People have long gathered there for protests against the Iranian regime and for every event related to political incidents in Iran. But that place is commonly just called “Federal”²⁰. During the street protest in Iran after the presidential election in 2009, one girl was shot and killed in front of a video camera. The image was broadcasted worldwide, and the girl, named “Neda,” became an icon of Iranian civil protest. In LA, one group submitted a plan for a “Neda Square” at the corner of Ohio Avenue and Westwood Boulevard (Map 2: A)²¹. It is said there was another proposal for a “Neda Square” to be located on the Federal corner (Map 2: B)²². In the end, though, “Persian Square,” not “Neda Square,” was designated for the corner of Wilkins Avenue and Westwood Boulevard (Map 2: C).

In the past, some people insisted that the name should be related to “Iran” or “Iranian,” but the local government representatives and American stakeholders did not welcome this, because it evoked negative images in relation to Iran-US diplomacy. The name “Persian” was employed as an alternative. The usage of these two names has historically coexisted and their definitions have intertwined²³. The name “Persia” was used as an official name for centuries until 1934, when Reza Shah Pahlavi officially designated the country name “Iran.” The Pahlavi dynasty also stressed its continuity from Achaemenid Empire; in 1971, the monarchy held the 2500th anniversary of the dynasty in front of Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of Achaemenid Empire. These terms nonetheless often cause controversy when the Iranian diaspora denominate their organizations or activities (cf. Malek 2011).

One business owner in Westwood who was actively involved in the Persian Square plan explained the distinction between the name of “Iran” and “Persia” as follows: “Persia is the name of the ancient empire, and it includes a broader area such as current Afghanistan. The name Iran evokes the current Islamic regime. The Persian Empire had ethnic and religious diversity; thus people from any ethno-religious background can call themselves Persian.” Regarding the ethno-religious diversity of Iranians, the City of Los Angeles has also officially mentioned this diversity: “Iranian-Americans are vibrant, peaceful, and law-abiding citizens, many of whom are Baha’i, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Zoroastrian faiths.” Accordingly, “the cultural and historical significance of Nowrūz” is recognized in the same document, which was approved on March 19, 2010²⁴.

Defining the name of the place was thus related to the politics of recognition, both inside and outside the community. The differentiation of Iranians in LA from the current Iranian polity has long been an important issue for many Iranians. However, this has often appeared in internal conflicts among Iranians in LA, for example, in clashes between different political groups in front of the Federal building or in mutual criticism between Persian satellite TV stations. Furthermore, people have not been much concerned about seeking recognition from outside the community. On the other hand, Iranians frequently visit Westwood and join the *Nowrūz* celebra-

tion. There was no agreement; rather it spontaneously became popular among Iranians to get together in Westwood, and it ended up gaining official recognition from the local government, which represents “harmony with diversity.”

6 Conclusion

In this essay, I described two kinds of places: one is where there is a certain density of Iranian residences or businesses yet is one that has not become an “Iranian place,” while the other is one that turned out to be an “Iranian place,” namely Persian Square in Westwood. In the former case, three main factors can be seen. The first is the multi-nucleation of residence and business. Prior to the mass Iranian migration to LA around the 1979 Revolution, Iranian students resided in campus areas and then many of them moved again to LA after graduation. Additionally, the wealthy class in Iran invested in real estate in affluent neighborhoods and moved there after the Revolution. Furthermore, those who brought large capital revitalized a business district in decline. These multilayered immigration processes caused a multi-nucleation of their living space. The second is internal diversity. Iranians in LA are strongly aware of class, political, and ethno-religious differences among their community and have often explained their lack of unity by reference to this diversity. The LA-based Persian “exile media” has contributed to creating their self-image of being wealthy and has fostered a political momentum against the current Iranian regime. While some Iranians have identified themselves with this “wealthy exile” stereotype, others have been criticizing this sort of Iranians and have sought to dissimilate from them. As a consequence, Iranians do not share a term that represents the entire Iranian community in LA. This fragmentation is reflected in the absence of a symbolic center of Iranians in the city. Finally, the third factor is the “whiteness” of Iranians in the social arena. They have utilized American mainstream criteria for their lives, and have considered their population concentration as an outcome of their economic and social achievements. Their consumption is also white-oriented, that is, preferring Euro-American brand products and aesthetic values. This white-oriented mode of life is partly due to their avoidance of discrimination, but it is also rooted in the cultural influence of the West in Iranian society. Areas of concentrated Iranian businesses and residences are thus “non-Iranian places” for Iranians in LA and their public presence has remained invisible.

Westwood has also been invisible from the mainstream American public view for a long time, in spite of the accumulation of Iranian residences and businesses there. The birth of Persian Square was mainly influenced by Iranian business in the area. Just as with Iranian businesspersons in the other areas, Westwood proprietors insist on the liberal principles of their economic practice. However, they have also thought of their business location as having a special importance because of its connection with other Iranians. Although it has not drastically increased in the last

three decades, there has been a certain accumulation of Iranian “ethnic” businesses. These business owners tend to consider their businesses as “cultural activities”; therefore, running such a business is not only an economic practice but also an expression of their identity. Nevertheless, the development of a single identity in the area has not gone beyond a certain degree, and the multiclave landscape has been preserved. Meanwhile, Iranian consumers not only consume ethnic services and goods, but also stroll the entire streets of Westwood in an Iranian way. For example, traditional salon-style cultural gatherings in restaurants continue, and chain coffee shops work as meeting places for chat and recreation with unspecified compatriots. Thus, for many years the understanding of the area of Westwood remained diverse and implicit, while this random flow of people nurtured a collective sense of group affiliation.

The celebration of *Nowrūz* in Westwood enabled this nascent collective sense to become an explicit one. The new open-air celebration of *Nowrūz* is different from its conventional activity, but it is widely supported by participants. This domestic annual event has turned into a public outdoor celebration with patriotic elements, but it has gone beyond an essential/constructed matter and participants have accepted it as hyperreality. The symbolic meaning of a place which was once privately consumed has thus gained public recognition, and Westwood has officially become a central place for Iranians in Los Angeles.

In this case study of Iranians in LA, I have illustrated the invisibility and sudden emergence of a symbolic place named after Iranians from a different perspective, one that challenges the classic assimilation model. I focused on several places and examined the multilayered practices of different actors, and I found that Iranians neither have lost their sense of group affiliation nor merely maintain a monolithic identity. They creatively use social relationships and construct their subjectivity, depending on the location. There have been some forces behind making a place with a single identity for a long time, but this became possible only recently, when Iranians in LA were able to share a lived experience in the place through consumption, celebrations and contingent events in Iran.

Notes

- 1) This essay is based on my field research which was conducted during January–February 2008, and February–March 2011. The research was supported by grants from Shibusawa Ethnology Promotion Foundation in 2007 and Osaka University Scholarship for Short-Term Student Dispatch Program in 2010. I would especially like to thank them.
- 2) The boundaries of administrative Los Angeles (county and city) and the broader sense of Los Angeles are different; most academic analyses discuss the latter so-called Greater Los Angeles, sprawling over five counties, namely Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Bernardino County, Riverside County and Ventura County. Greater Los Angeles is officially defined as a combined statistical area by the US Office of Management and Budget. When I mention Los Angeles in this article, it means Greater Los Angeles unless otherwise noted.
- 3) Little Saigon developed in an area in economic decline, and the Vietnamese community.

- 4) Monterey Park attracted still more Chinese immigrants from the mainland and other parts of Asia with fewer resources, but kept the nickname “Little Taipei,” representing the strong presence of Taiwanese in business and local politics (Zhou, Tseng and Kim 2008).
- 5) Jencks classifies the areas of LA into two categories: areas that have a single identity and those that have a heterogeneous identity, which he calls “multiclaves.” In the former category, he places the gated community, the gay district and Beverly Hills to Watts, Little Tokyo and Little Saigon. The latter category includes Culver City, downtown LA, and Westwood (Jencks 1996: 49).
- 6) David Harvey (2005) described the emergence of ethnic places as a result of the “uneven geographical developments” under neoliberalism. Furthermore, he defined “ethnicity” as a form of local alliance in the global market economy. Although his standpoint comes close to economic determinism, this might present a good explanation for both group and territory formation that avoids essentialism. We should examine both the economic and non-economic aspects of group and territory formation, such as people’s value systems and patterns of behavior.
- 7) The “follow the people” strategy has a potential pitfall when we define people from the same origin as one group without considering their differences in class, gender, generation or any other attribute. This results in only the analysis of the “native”-with-mobility, entailing all the problems Appadurai identified about the “native” (Appadurai 1988). While George Marcus’s multi-sited ethnography is now generally defined as “follow[ing] people, connections, associations and relationships *across* space” (Falzon 2009: 1; emphasis added), Marcus does not underestimate the importance of physical space. Instead, he appreciates strategically situated single-site ethnography, though when he mentions “site,” this does not necessarily mean a geographical site but could include groups who have different interests within one locale.
- 8) Massachusetts Institute of Technology Iranian Studies Group Research Team
<http://web.mit.edu/isg/> (accessed November 19, 2005).
- 9) Migration Information Source
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=404> (accessed September 30, 2011)
- 10) The toman is an old currency unit equivalent to 10 rials, and it is still used as a colloquial term. To be precise, 1 dollar was about 70 rial (7 toman) in 1976 (Bahmani-Oskooee 2005: 7).
- 11) Mapping L.A. <http://projects.latimes.com/mapping-la/> (accessed March 19, 2011). The demographic information on ethnicity is based on the data of the U.S. Census Bureau. Note that the neighborhood boundaries were defined by the *Los Angeles Times* and the census tract demographics were adjusted along with the boundaries.
- 12) The total population of the city in 2000 was 194,973, so the Iranian-born population was about 12.7%. Iranian-ancestry population is not included in this percentage. Although there is no single religious/linguistic affiliation of the Iranian-born population, the city of Glendale holds a large number of Iranian-born Armenians. Bob Yousefian, the mayor of the city from 2004 to 2005, is also an Iranian-born Armenian.
- 13) Recently Iranians’ participation in local politics has progressed, and a Shiraz-born Jewish Iranian, Jimmy (Jamshid) Delshad, was elected the mayor of the city of Beverly Hills from 2007 to 2011.
- 14) According to several informants, most of the Persian restaurants were located in North Hollywood and Beverly Hills before the Revolution and moved to Westwood during the 1990s.
- 15) The Iranian calendar is a solar calendar and begins on the vernal equinox.
- 16) The seven items of *Sofreh-ye Haft Sin* are as follows; *sib* (apple), *sir* (garlic), *serke* (vinegar), *sabzeh* (sprouts of barley), *somaq* (sumac spice), *senjed* (fruit of jujube), and *samanu* (malt pudding). Sometimes *sekkeh* (coin), *sonbol* (hyacinth), *samak* (fish, usually goden fish), or *sepand* (esfand) replace or supplement these seven items. In addition, a mirror, candle and book (usually the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, *Divān-e Hāfeẓ* (anthology of Hafez poetry) or *Qur’ān*) are also placed there. The *Sofreh-ye Haft Sin* is thus diverse, and there are several possible origins. At any rate, *Sofreh-ye Haft Sin* has only come into vogue in the last century. Shahbazi, Shapour S. “HAFT SIN” *Encyclopedia Iranica* <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haft-sin> (accessed November 25, 2011)
- 17) Omidzarar, Mahmoud. “ĤĀJĪ FIRUZ” *Encyclopedia Iranica*
<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haji-firuz> (accessed November 25, 2011)
- 18) To represent Iran while avoiding the conflict arising from using the national flag, people sometimes use the tricolor flag without any emblems.

- 19) Hoseini Dekhordi, Morteza and Parvin Loloi “EY IRĀN” *Encyclopædia Iranica* <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ey-iran> (accessed November 25, 2011)
- 20) Not only Iranians but also non-Iranian American citizens have held demonstrations in front of the Federal Building, including those against NATO’s 1999 Kosovo air attack and the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.
- 21) Westwood Homeowners Association minutes, September 15, 2009.
- 22) “L.A.’s Iranian Americans want ‘Neda Square’ named in Westwood,” *Jewish Journal*, October 12, 2009.
- 23) The name “Persia” drew its tribal identity from a land of origin, while the name “Iran” emphasized an ethno-religious identity derived from the ancient empire. The etymological origin of the name of Iran was derived from Middle Persian *Ērān* in Sassanid period in the third century AD. In order to legitimize the dynasty’s power, the rulers in this period claimed to be the descendants of the ancient kings of the Achaemenid Empire. They also created their ethno-religious identity as the people of *ariya* (Aryan) and followers of Ahura Mazda. The term *ariya* became the basis of the word *Ērān*. The dynasty promoted “Iranization” and abandoned Greek cultural, religious and linguistic influences. In spite of the Sassanians’ emphasis on their continuity with Achaemenid Empire, the Achaemenid Empire itself had put greater emphasis on being “Persian” than on being Aryan. The name *Persis* in ancient Greek, or *Pārsa* in old Persian, both of which referred to the southwestern part of present-day Iran, was extended to apply to the “tribes” of Persians when they confronted other groups such as the Medes and Bactrians. After the fall of the Sassanian Empire, the name of Iran disappeared and was revived as an official name only after Mongolian domination; after this, the name has retained its validity as a political concept (Wiesehöfer 2001: xi–xii).
- 24) Council file No. 10-0002-S17.

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Figure 1 The sign of “Persian Square” on the Corner of Westwood Boulevard and Wilkins Avenue. The first Iranian business around this area used to be located at the building behind the sign. (March 2011, photo by author)



Figure 2 “Haft Sin” in a restaurant on Westwood Boulevard. Book of Persian poet Hafez was placed in front, and nationalistic symbols such as the emblem of Lion and Sun was also added. (March 2012, photo by author)



Figure 3 *Nowrūz* celebration on Westwood Boulevard. (March 2006, photo by author)



Figure 4 A grocery store on Westwood Boulevard selling special items for *Nowrūz*, such as flowers, dried fruits and even goldfishes. (March 2006, photo by author)