

Eslamic or Islamic, Esfahan or Isfahan?

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When we ran a headline with the word Eslamic instead of Islamic, we were anticipating a few calls from our observant readers. But we were truly pleased with the number of meticulous readers who called and questioned us about it. The inquiries prompted us to explain the policy we have adopted in this regard.

Based on my studies and experience in the field of linguistics and phonetics, and in light of the fact that we, the Iranian-Americans, comprise a force of over one million people, I think it is time for us to take control of whatever that is related to our identity. Many Iranian scholars have been trying to correct the mistakes, and sometimes, intentional errors, in what the Western world has printed about the heritage, history and culture of Iran and Iranians.

I have tried to take a small step in the same direction in my book that is to be published in the near future. It documents exciting data including tools found in a cave dating as far back as 65,000 years, wall paintings in another cave tested to be 40,000 years old, the earliest proof of the existence of an orchestra in about 5,500 years ago and many more.

In an extended effort in the same direction, I am humbly suggesting to all Iranians to help change the names related to Iran to their correct spelling.

These spellings were dictated by the British colonialists who had control over every aspect of Iranian affairs, especially in the 19th century. The same dictation has been used by the Americans without any consideration as to their proper pronunciation by Iranians. For instance, not a single Iranian would pronounce Esfahan as Isfahan (Eesfahan-I have used *ee* to show the sound that one utters in pronouncing English words such as *deed* or *hit* or anywhere in between), Nezami as Nizami (Neezami), Eslam as Islam (Eezlam), Moslem as Muslim (Moosleem), Rostam as Rustam (Roostam), Booshehr as Bushire, etc.

Fortunately, the trend of using proper spelling has already begun. Recently Reuters News Agency wrote “Jomhur-ye Eslami” in a report regarding a newspaper that is published in Iran with that name. Also, Lonely Planet Publications whose books on travel are distributed worldwide, has published a book on Iran with such spelling that helps an English-speaking person to pronounce Iranian names the way Iranians do. Some examples are: Nader Shah instead of *Nadir Shah*, Qom instead of *Qum*, Kermanshah instead of *Kirmanshah*, Kerman instead of *Kirman*, Jolfa instead of *Julfa*, Damavand instead of *Demavand*.

This proves that westerners are willing to correct their mistakes once they are pointed out to them.

Certainly, it will take some time and a lot of effort on our side to achieve such a huge task, but I think it is well worth it. As a compromise, we may agree to use Eslamic and Islamic interchangeably due to the fact that this is not a true Persian name, but we should be steadfast in regards to the usage of proper Iranian names.