

# MIDDLE EAST STUDIES IN ACTION COMMITTEE FOR UNDERGRADUATE MIDDLE EAST STUDIES POSTER SESSION, MESA 2023

# Iranian Olympia: Bodybuilding, Class, and Masculinity in Iran

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December 18, 2022 marked a moment of national pride for the people of Iran. Hadi Choopan was crowned Mr. Olympia, the first-ever Iranian to achieve this feat. Better known by his nickname, "The Persian Wolf," Choopan has taken the international bodybuilding scene by storm and subsequently become a public persona, providing a fascinating subject for an analysis of contemporary Iranian culture. Traditional notions of Iranian masculinity emphasize moral and non-physical characteristics such as humility and courage, while Choopan's physique represents new and emerging notions of masculinity that emphasize representations of one's body.

Previous scholarship on Iranian masculinity and its relationship to body-building focused on the impact of steroid use but failed to analyze how the sport of bodybuilding has impacted Iranian culture. My research brings together scholarship on gender and sexuality, sport and modernization, and masculinity studies. Additionally, I draw on Persian primary sources on Hadi Choopan and the sport of bodybuilding and their representations in Iranian official and diaspora media. I divided my paper into three sections. In the first section I discuss scholarship on Iranian masculinity; in the second, I examine the sport of bodybuilding and its relationship to class; and finally, I analyze the discourse on bodybuilding and masculine women in Iran. Throughout, I elicit the workings of hegemonic masculinity to support my argument that Hadi Choopan and his Mr. Olympia win represent the formation of a new model of hegemonic masculinity in Iran.

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## **IRANIAN OLYMPIA**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MIDDLE EAST STUDIES DEPARTMENT



## Background

HOW HAS HADI CHOOPAN'S MR.

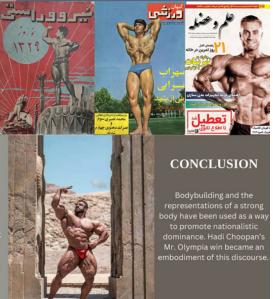
OF BODYBUILDING IN IRAN?

- Bodybuilding is a sport dedicated to muscular developments where its participants display their muscles
- that is akin to the Olympics of bodybuilding
   Hadi "The Persian Wolf" Choopan is the first ever Iranian to
- win the Mr. Olympia title.

### ORIGINS OF IRANIAN BODYBUILDING

### MEDIA AND INTERVIEWS

- which only goes to support Choopan's



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