



*Touraj Daryaei M.A. Ph.D.*  
*Associate Professor of Ancient History*  
*Department of History*  
*Email: tdaryaei@fullerton.edu*  
*Telephone (714) 278-3474 / Fax (714) 278-2101*

To: National Geographic Society

December 1, 2004

Dear Sarah Clark,

I am writing to you as a professor at California State University, Fullerton. I have been a member of the National Geographic for the past two years and for reasons enumerated below, I will cancel my membership with your organization. This is not so much because of my personal and national loyalties, rather the wrong decision by your committee to place the name of “Arabian Gulf” next to that of “Persian Gulf.” The body of water called “Arabian Gulf” already exists for another body of water which I teach about in my ancient history courses. What you have done is to confuse the bodies of water for the students and others alike. In antiquity the Greeks and Romans called the Red Sea as “Arabian Gulf” (Pomponius Mela, *de Chorographia*, passage 72). Am I to tell me students that the National Geographic Society has decided to change its location for us?

As for the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf, it is clear that it was known as *Persicus sinus* “Persian Gulf,” or as *Persicum mare* “Persian Sea” in the Classical Sources. In the Islamic period the Arabs called this body of water as (Arabic) *bahr Faris* “Sea of Fars.” In the first half of the twentieth century it was known as *khalij al-fars* “Persian Gulf” by virtually all Arab countries. From The Europeans who continued the Classical tradition employed such terms as *Sino Persico*, *Sinus Persicus*. Thus in the West and the Middle East this body of water was known as the “Persian Gulf.”



*Touraj Daryaei M.A. Ph.D.*  
*Associate Professor of Ancient History*  
*Department of History*  
*Email: tdaryaei@fullerton.edu*  
*Telephone (714) 278-3474 / Fax (714) 278-2101*

It was only with the appearance of Arab nationalism and the president of Egypt, Nasser, who was hostile to the late of Shah of Iran that the term *al-khalij al-'Arabi* “Arabian Gulf” was coined. It simply did not exist before! How could we go about changing names for places because of war of words or nationalism? The Society states that since many institutions and people use an alternative name for the Persian Gulf, then “Arabian Gulf” must be mentioned.

By your logic then *Shatt al-Arab* which is the waterway bordering Iran and Iraq, and known as *Arvand Rud* “Arvand River” by the Iranians for several decades must also be mentioned. But this would be historically incorrect and I would not support the changing of names based on nationalism. By this logic if the Iranians begin calling the Sea of Oman or the Arabian Sea the “Sea of Iran,” then the National Geographic would have to cave in and place such artificial names for these bodies of water. Even the island of *Kesh* in your map is mentioned by its alternate Arabic name *Qays* which is almost never used in Iran and it belongs to Iran.

If it is personal (Directorate) or financial matters that govern such decisions, then I must say that I am dismayed that such a reputable organization would be pushed to create false names as acceptable alternatives. But again, we live in a world where even names can be bought or changed for money. I just did not expect that the National Geographic Society would do such a thing. Rest assured that I will have this matter discussed in our department and my fellow historians in other California State University campuses will hear about this matter. I do ask you to please cancel my subscription.

Sincerely,



*Touraj Daryae M.A. Ph.D.*  
*Associate Professor of Ancient History*  
*Department of History*  
*Email: [tdaryae@fullerton.edu](mailto:tdaryae@fullerton.edu)*  
*Telephone (714) 278-3474 / Fax (714) 278-2101*

Touraj Daryae  
Associate Professor of Ancient History  
[tdaryae@fullerton.edu](mailto:tdaryae@fullerton.edu)