



# ASSOCIATION FOR IRANIAN STUDIES

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<http://associationforiranianstudies.org>

AIS Newsletter | Volume 44, Number 2 | November 2023

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

As the calendar year will soon draw to a close, there is much to reflect on and to take stock of. You will find in the following pages exciting updates from Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, our president, and Nasrin Rahimieh, the editor-in-chief of our flagship journal *Iranian Studies*. The mentorship committee presents an inspiring new funding initiative, and participants of the AIS online symposium report on their insights from this pioneering event. In other news, Pamela Karimi remembers the gifted Khosrow Hassanzadeh (1963-2023), an important figure of the contemporary Iranian art scene, and Hessam Habibi interviews the filmmaker Mohammad Ehsani about his impressive ethnographic film work on the music of Baluchistan. Finally, you will find the first instalment of the AIS scholar snapshots, a new initiative by our president to showcase the abundant talent of our association.

This issue is appearing in dark times with war and conflict in Israel/Palestine, Ukraine/Russia and Armenia/Azerbaijan, all of which are to varying degrees also affected by the choices and actions of the Iranian government. The AIS Board has issued two statements with regard to the war in Israel and Gaza and they are linked on page 5. In Tehran, another woman has died after arrest for "improper hejab", just 13 months after the death of Mahsa Jina Amini prompted the most sustained protests in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The repercussions of that event continue to be felt, some of which motivated a letter of grave concern to be issued by the AIS Committee for Academic Freedom. This is reprinted on pages 3 and 4.

In brighter news, one of the country's leading human rights activists, Narges Mohammadi, will next month be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her tireless advocacy, walking in the footsteps of another towering figure in human rights activism, Shirin Ebadi, who was honored with the same prize 20 years ago. Nobody should have to sacrifice what these two women and countless fellow travellers, in Iran and elsewhere, have sacrificed in the name of their struggle for freedom and equality. Those of us who enjoy these freedoms must guard them responsibly, in the academy and elsewhere.

Please do get in touch with your news and those of your colleagues, students and institutions. We are always on the lookout for exciting research reports, news regarding collections and acquisitions, conference reports, and much more, for future issues.

Best wishes, **Mirjam Künkler**

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ABOUT/OFFICERS/2022](https://associationforiranianstudies.org/about/officers/2022)

PRESIDENT’S NOTE

Dear colleagues,

I write this communiqué at the conclusion of our highly successful Inaugural AIS Online Symposium. The panels, convened over two days, covered many fascinating topics of literary, historical, and social significance, and included the robust participation of both audience members and presenters. Many joined us online from the Middle East, Australia, Europe, and throughout North America. The program brought together both young and established figures in the field and covered a range of diverse subjects.

Our online symposium, along with our biennial conferences, can launch us on a path of collaboration as scholars who may not agree on many issues, but who have come together to advance conversations on them, from antiquity to contemporary times. Our research, conducted in different fields and archives, can enable us to rethink received wisdom about past events and societies, but also inspire us to take intellectual detours and to analyze perspectives and sources that we had not previously considered. I believe we can agree that our online symposium did just that.

This program was only possible because of the remarkable and tireless labors of the Organizing Committee, headed by Dr. Khodadad Rezakhani and supported by Dr. Niki Akhavan and Dr. Amir Moosavi. They were a “dream team” in every sense, taking on this enormous responsibility with good cheer, creativity, and professionalism. The entire AIS Council, as well as our technical administrator, Mr. Hamoun Hayati, similarly played an indispensable role in providing input and ensuring its success.

This fall, we also launched our new Scholar Snapshots feature. We will expand this program and invite nominations as in the past. We are grateful for your engagement and always welcome your feedback.

With warm wishes,  
**Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet**

AIS-CAF STATEMENT

**AIS – CAF Statement on Expulsion and Suspension of Iranian University Faculty in Advance of the One-Year Anniversary of Woman, Life, Freedom Uprisings • September 8, 2023**

We write on behalf of the Association for Iranian Studies (AIS) and its Committee for Academic Freedom (CAF) to express grave concern over recent reports of the suspension, expulsion, and forced retirement of university faculty in Iran. The government has removed in recent weeks established university faculty and replaced them instead with individuals that support the state’s political positions but who lack appropriate scholarly credentials.

This purging has occurred throughout this past year but has increased substantially in advance of the one-year anniversary of the uprisings that began with the murder of Jīna Mahsa Amini on 16 September 2022. Ms. Amini was apprehended by the Morality Police ostensibly for having improper hijab. She was violently beaten while in custody of the police and died three days after her arrest. The episode sparked protracted uprisings throughout Iran.

The charges brought against dismissed professors include support of these protests, inciting students to protest, and the use of anti-régime slogans. Dr. Ali Sharifi-Zarchi, assistant professor of bioinformatics and artificial intelligence at Sharif University of Technology, reported recently that he had received a notice of dismissal. Dr. Sharifi-Zarchi had been an outspoken critic of the regime’s clampdown on students and universities from the beginning of the protests in September 2022. Similarly, scholars at other institutions of higher education have become subjected to similar firing slips. At Allameh Tabataba’i University, faculty members Dr. Ameneh ‘Aali and Dr. Hamideh Khademi were targeted for their support of student uprisings last year. These represent only a few of a much larger group of professors who have been summarily dismissed, some by telephone without formal notice. Days after these expulsions, new reports emerged about the additional discharge of seven professors from the Faculty of Literature at the University of Tehran. Further dismissals have taken place at Tehran’s Fine Arts University, and at Tehran University’s College of Fine Arts, Dr. Azin Movahed was dismissed. At Beheshti University Dr. Mohammad Ragheb was suspended from the department of Persian literature last year. In recent weeks Dr. Vahid Eidgah, Dr. Javad Bashari, Dr. Milad Azimi, Dr. Leily Varahram, Dr. Ghasem Azizi, and Dr. Dariush Rahmanian have been either targeted or dismissed from their positions. On some university campuses, many students have again been subjected to violence and similarly expelled. The activist HRANA news agency maintains that at least 700 students have been arrested over the course of the protests. These purges have increased during the presidency of Ebrahim Raisi.

Over the past year, university campuses have become sites of contestation and political protest, leading to the arrest and detention of countless students and teachers.

## AIS-CAF STATEMENT CONT'D

We are alarmed that these expulsions have taken place summarily and without due process. By engaging in retaliatory acts that amount to ideological purging of the university, the Islamic Republic has flagrantly defied the principles of academic freedom and expression that remain central to the foundations of higher education and knowledge production. These suspensions and expulsions have precedent, most prominently after the establishment of the régime in what was called a “cultural revolution” and again after the 2009 Green Movement uprising. Restrictions on academic freedom, as well as the suspension and expulsion of university professors, have compelled many academics to flee and to immigrate abroad.

Academic freedom remains one of the fundamental rights of university scholars. In 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel declared that call higher-education teaching personnel should enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association as well as the right to liberty and security of the person and liberty of movement. They should not be hindered or impeded in exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through freely expressing their opinion of state policies and of policies affecting higher education.” The European Union Charter of Fundamental Human Rights also affirms the principles of academic freedom.

Finally, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) stresses that academic freedom “protects the right of a faculty member to speak freely when participating in institutional governance, as well as to speak freely as a citizen.” The “[t]argeted harassment” of faculty and the “[l]ack of procedural protections” represent a serious threat to the academic freedom of professors and young university scholars.

AIS is a private, non-profit academic society founded in 1967 to support and promote scholarship and research on Iran and the Persianate world at the international level. An independent, non-partisan, non-political, and multidisciplinary international community, the association publishes Iranian Studies, the principal journal in the field. AIS membership includes scholars, students, and academic and professional researchers. We are committed to encouraging the free exchange of ideas and freedom of speech, both within and beyond the geographical boundaries of Iran.

AIS’s CAF has been closely monitoring the suspension and expulsion of university scholars in Iran and forcefully condemns these actions. It calls on the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to halt its improper purging of faculty and to protect the rights and freedoms of university academics by providing an environment free from harassment and retaliation that allows professors and students to pursue their research and to express freely their rights as citizens. We further urge state authorities to reinstate immediately and with full privileges all professors dismissed from their posts, as well as all students suspended or expelled from their degree courses, because of their participation in anti-régime protests.

## THE WAR IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

AIS Council has issued two statements on the War in Israel and Gaza. These can be found here:

October 12, 2023:  
<https://associationforiranianstudies.org/sites/default/files/AIS%20Council%20Statement%20on%20the%20War%20in%20Gaza.pdf>

October 22, 2023:  
<https://associationforiranianstudies.org/sites/default/files/AIS%20Council%20Statement%20on%20the%20Israeli%20Escalation%20of%20the%20War%20in%20Gaza%20and%20the%20West%20Bank.pdf>

## THE AIS MENTORSHIP COMMITTEE

The AIS Mentorship Committee is pleased to announce a new **graduate student workshop/research award**. Interested students should submit a brief proposal; the requested amount of funding and an overall budget; as well as a letter confirming acceptance to a workshop or a comparable academic research venue for participation. Demonstrated financial need will be prioritized. A letter from an advisor is also required and should speak to the relevance of the workshop to the student’s research and financial need.

Deadlines will be **September 15th** and **February 15th** annually. We are allotting \$6,000 a year, which will be split evenly for the two cycles. Each award will be worth up to \$1,000. Following the completion of the workshop/research, awardees will be asked to submit a brief report highlighting their work and the ways in which the award assisted them. Applications should be sent to:  
[mentorship@associationforiranianstudies.org](mailto:mentorship@associationforiranianstudies.org)



## JOURNAL NEWS

I am delighted to report that the fourth and final issue of 2023 is about to be published. It includes a special section on Persian Narrative, guest edited by Agnès Devictor, Yassaman Khajehi, and Justine Landau. Prefaced with an introduction written by the guest editors, it includes five articles examining forms of narrative spanning the Persian literary and cinematic traditions. *Iranian Studies* 56.4 also includes five additional articles, a review essay, book reviews, and short reviews.

I would like to report some changes to the journal's editorial board. I am pleased to announce that Hamid Keshmirshekan joined our team last spring as Associate Editor for Art and Architectural History. He and Kishwar Rizvi are working closely to bolster our submissions in the visual arts. Some members of the editorial board have completed their terms and/or are stepping down for personal and professional reasons: Assef Ashraf, book review editor for History, Mana Kia, Associate Editor for History, and Kianoosh Azarnia, Associate Editor for Antiquity and Late Antiquity. I thank them for their invaluable service, and I am indebted to them for the support they have provided me and the journal.

The new book review editor for history, Kayhan Nejad, joined the team last spring. The new Associate Editor for Antiquity and Late Antiquity, Khodadad Rezakhani, will begin his role in mid-October, and the new Associate Editor for History, Beeta Baghoolizadeh, will step into her role in mid-November. I look forward to welcoming them to the editorial team and working with them.

**Nasrin Rahimieh**  
Editor-in-Chief, *Iranian Studies*

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Guest Editor's Introduction

Justine Landau, "To Tell Anew: Fresh Perspectives on Persian Narrative"

Marina Gaillard, "Alexander the Great or Būrān-Dukht: who is the true hero of the *Dārāb nāma of ʿTarsūsī?*"

Marc Toutant, "What is at Stake in the Frame Story?: A Timurid Reshaping of the Romance of Bahrām Gūr"

Gabrielle van den Berg, "Early Persian Verse in Mutaqārib: Form, Structure, and Content"

Yassaman Khajehi, "From Ritual to Performance: Ta'zieh in Iran Today"

Agnès Devictor, "Soft Epiphanies: The Multilayered Narratives in Abbas Kiarostami's Film *Close-Up* (1990)"

## Articles

Ibrahim Safi, "Fārsigraphy in Zoroastrian Middle Persian Manuscripts"

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Farzin Vejdani, "Hair and Hat Ritual Shaming Punishments in Nineteenth-Century Iran"

Somaye Delzendehrooy, "Translator as Historical Re-Narrator: A Case of Clements Markham's Persian Translation of *History of Persia*"

Milad Azarm, "Shadow Performance in Iran"

## Review Essay

Kian Foroutan, "Yazd and its Zoroastrians"

## MEMBER NEWS

**Mansour Bonakdarian** has published the book *Éirinn & Iran Go Brách: Iran in Irish-Nationalist Historical, Literary, Cultural, and Political Imaginations from the Late-18th Century to 1921*, Anthem Press, 2022.

**Bahar Davary's** book, *In Ecotheology and Love: The Converging Poetics of Sohrab Sepehri and James Baldwin*, has been published with Lexington Books, 2022.

**Nile Green's** recent book, *How Asia Found Herself: A Story of Intercultural Understanding*, has won the 2023 Bentley Book Prize from the World History Association for best book in world history. Congratulations!

**Hessam Habibi Doroh** has published the book, *Sunni Communities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013-2021. Securitization, Secularization and Privatization*. (See also the publication report on pages 35-37.) Brill Publishers, 2023.

**Daniel T. Potts** has published the monograph *Aspects of Kinship in Ancient Iran*, UC Press, 2023. The book is the first title in the newly established Iran and the Ancient World (IAW) series.

**Ali Mohammad Tarafdari's** Persian translation of Roger Stevens, *The Land of the Great Sophy*, has been published, with an introduction by Ardeshir Zahedi, Tehran, 2023. Tarafdari has also published the article "Investigating the process and approaches of holding 'Hazara Ferdowsi' ceremony in 1933 in the world", in *Ganjine-ye Asnad*, Historical Research & Archival Studies Quarterly, 128, Vol. 32, No. 4, Winter 2023.

Khosrow Hassanzadeh, with his magnum opus "Haft Khan."

Image courtesy of Shahrzad Afrashteh.

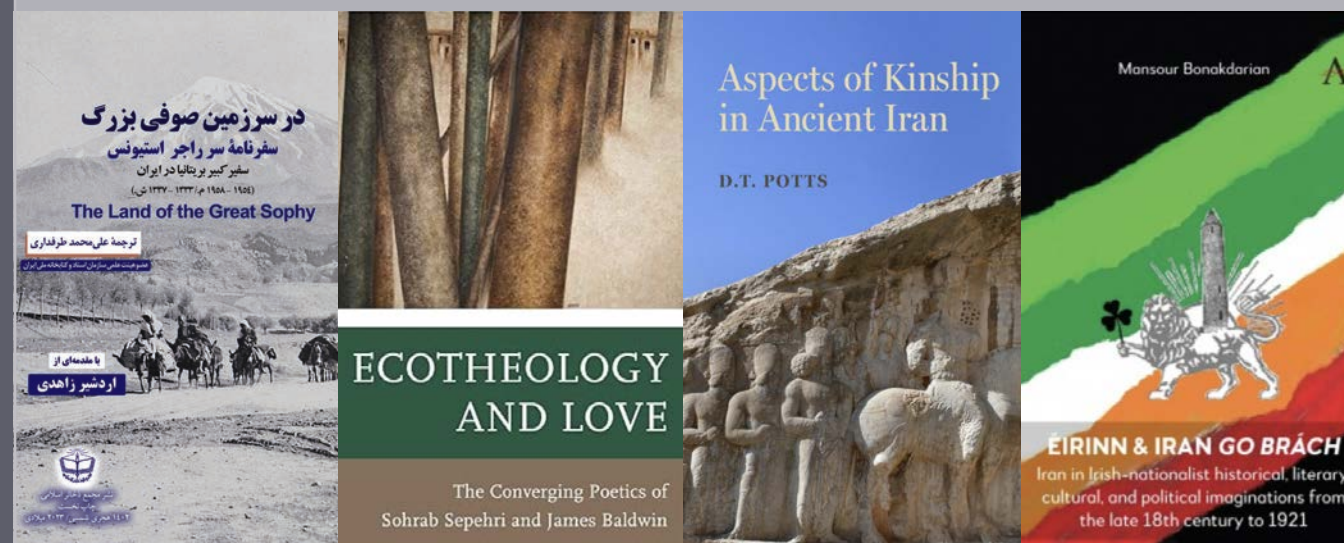
## OBITUARY

### In Memoriam: Khosrow Hassanzadeh (1963-2023)

Pamela Karimi  
University of Massachusetts

Khosrow Hassanzadeh, an important figure in the contemporary Iranian art scene, passed away in July 2023, leaving behind a remarkable body of work steeped in personal introspection, political consciousness, and a deep connection to Iran's rich cultural heritage. Born in 1963 in Tehran, Hassanzadeh's life and art were especially influenced by defining moments of post-revolutionary Iran.

Hassanzadeh had a knack for intertwining personal stories with broader societal discourses, serving as both a mirror and a lens through which we can see a nation grappling with its past and its present. While his art was unapologetically political, it was also deeply personal, reflecting his experiences and the shared memories of the laypeople. Having served over two years as a conscripted soldier during the Iran-Iraq war, Hassanzadeh also suffered injuries from a missile strike on Tehran. After transitioning back to civilian life, he pursued his passion for art. He enrolled at Mojtama-e-Honar University from 1989 to 1991, focusing on painting, and later studied Persian Literature at Azad University from 1995 to 1999, both in Tehran. From the very beginning, he was driven to produce grand murals and posters. Exceptionally, Hassanzadeh deftly balanced his artistic endeavors with working at a fruit shop in central Tehran, a choice that set him apart from many of his peers.





## OBITUARY CONT'D

This fascinating aspect of his life, which is featured in a 1998 documentary by Maziar Bahari, provided Hassanzadeh with firsthand insights into the lives, narratives, and challenges of everyday people. It's fitting that he often described his art as "people's art," deeply rooted in addressing societal issues faced by the common man. His approach echoed the ethos of the Saqqa Khaneh movement, a neo-traditionalist artistic wave in the 1960s Iran that likewise drew inspiration from the daily experiences and material culture of bazaars and historic parts of Iranian cities.

Like the Saqqa Khaneh artists, Hassanzadeh beautifully merged traditional Persian art forms with modern techniques, often melding calligraphy, painting, and printmaking. His celebrated series on "Terrorists" and "Prostitutes" captured global attention. Here, Hassanzadeh audaciously challenged conventional narratives, addressing themes of societal judgment, representation, and identity. Indeed, in a world often confined by political correctness, Hassanzadeh stood as a beacon of courage, confronting and challenging controversial themes.

A large segment of Hassanzadeh's work meditated on the idea of the pahlavan, a term traditionally linked with nobility, heroism, and wrestling champions. In a conversation with art historian Shiva Balaghi, Hassanzadeh reflected extensively on the changing nature of manhood in Iran. He used old historical photographs of pahlavans, modifying and juxtaposing them, to produce a vivid form of historical bricolage. One notable piece is his homage to the Iranian wrestler Takhti, who was not only an Olympic champion but also one who symbolized the modern-day pahlavan. Decades after his demise, Takhti remains a beacon of hope and resilience, embodying values that Hassanzadeh also believed to be the essence of Iranian culture. His exploration of manhood in Iranian culture continued with works like "Remember," in which he incorporated calligraphic references to Imam Ali, another important symbol of manhood in Iran.

Hassanzadeh's work was also rooted in Iranian poetic traditions. His magnum opus "Haft Khan" is a testament to his engagement with poetry. A massive ceramic work integrating diverse techniques like calligraphy, miniature painting, and photography, it tells the story of Rostam from Ferdowsi's epic poem, "Shahnameh." Across this piece, Hassanzadeh painstakingly incorporated excerpts from the poem, tying the past and present in a seamless narrative.

Another significant facet of Hassanzadeh's oeuvre was his homage to Iranian pop culture, especially iconic female singers, such as Ghamar and Googoosh. Through these pieces, he masterfully evoked the vibrant pre-revolutionary period, where women, rather than men, were often the revered central figures of Iran's pop culture. A hint of irony permeates most of Hassanzadeh's works that address pop culture. As

he remarked in *Bidoun Magazine*, "I love the richness of my culture and traditions, and I embrace the often surprising and humorous way[s] in which they penetrate and express themselves in contemporary society."

Hassanzadeh's artistry went beyond merely producing artwork. He often described being in a trance-like state while creating. In his own words, while immersed in his craft, Hassanzadeh was like "a dervish dancing around the pictures." Indeed, he ventured deep into the soul of a nation, sketching a tale of resilience, self-reflection, and a ceaseless pursuit of self-expression. He mined Iranian cultural heritage, drawing from various epochs and genres, right from miniature painting, classical poetry, to more contemporary forms. In merging the old and the new, he leaves behind an indomitable legacy, not just as a painter, but as a storyteller, and chronicler of important events after the 1979 Revolution.

Hassanzadeh's passing, tragically linked to the consumption of unregulated alcoholic beverages, highlights the dire consequences of strict alcohol prohibitions in Iran. Recent years have seen numerous such tragedies as a result of illicit brews, a dark reflection of the stringent Islamic laws imposed on the country, stricter than many other majority Muslim nations.

Throughout his career, Hassanzadeh's works found homes in prestigious venues worldwide, from the British Museum to prominent galleries and international art fairs. His art introduced global audiences to the intricate context of Iranian identity. The world of art is significantly richer for having witnessed the beautiful soul and genius of Khosrow Hassanzadeh. His departure leaves a void in the world of contemporary Iranian art, but his legacy will undoubtedly live on, guiding and influencing artists and enthusiasts alike.

**The Election Site for president and new council members  
is now open for voting until 3rd December, 2023:**

**Please consult this link for information and instructions:**  
<https://associationforiranianstudies.org/election/2023>



## JOURNAL

The *Digital Archive of Brief notes & Iran Review (DABIR)* is an open access, peer-reviewed, both print and online journal published by the **Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture** at the University of California, Irvine. DABIR aims to quickly and efficiently publish articles, brief notes and reviews relating to the pre-modern world in contact with Iran and Persianate cultures. The journal accepts submissions on art history, archaeology, history, linguistics, literature, manuscript studies, numismatics, philology and religion, from Jaxartes to the Mediterranean and from the Sumerian period through to the Safavid era (3500 BCE-1500 CE). Work dealing with later periods can be considered on request.

**The owner of *Iranian Books*, in business for 40 years in Bethesda MD would like to donate the books still in the store's collection to an institution or university or to another place of study or a library that will make good use of the books.**

For information and availability of books please link to the website:

<https://www.iranbooks.net/>.

There are also many more books not listed.

If you have suggestions or guidance for a home for these rare books, you may contact **Janet Whittaker**.

## MAGE PUBLISHERS

### RECENT TITLES



W W W . M A G E . C O M



## DISSERTATION NEWS

**Arash Azizi:** *Cold War from Below: A social history of Communist internationalism in the Middle East (1941-1983).*

Arash Azizi defended his PhD dissertation for a joint degree in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at NYU on July 31, 2023. On the committee served Zachary Lockman, Arang Keshavarzian, Sara Pursley, Lior Sternfeld, and Ervand Abrahamian.

### Summary

In the 1940s, mass communist parties emerged in Iran, Iraq and the Levant, following changes in regional and international power relations that gave them an unprecedented opportunity to work in open or semi-open conditions. As the Western-Soviet alliance gave way to the Cold War, the communist parties of the Middle East became crucial actors in this global theatre of conflict and competition. The communists practiced a form of internationalism which saw struggles in the Middle East as part of a global battle for socialism and embedded them in an international network of communist politics. As their horizontal ties to each other remained crucial, this politics also led to a new form of ties between actors in Iran, Iraq and countries of the Levant.

This dissertation is a study of the communist internationalism in the Middle East as practiced by the communist parties in the region. It focuses primarily on the alliance between the Tudeh Party of Iran and the Iraqi Communist Party, though four other communist parties in the region (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine/Israel) are also studied in some chapters as they were entangled in the same regional network. Starting with the 1940s and the construction of a network of internationally-linked mass organizations and trade unions by the communist movement in Iran and Iraq, the dissertation follows communist internationalism in the following four decades, as communist parties attempted to keep close ties amidst the rise of national antagonisms between their respective countries.

### Sources

The dissertation is based on extensive archival research in Persian, Arabic and European languages. In my attempt at writing a transnational history of the Cold War 'from below', I sought out archival sources and intellectual and cultural productions of the communist movement itself as well as those of its main rivals on the left. I also used the more traditional state and diplomatic archives which remain an important source. But as much as one could read the state archives 'against the grain', accessing the perspective, priorities and life-worlds of the social movements is not possible without relying on sources created by the participants themselves.

### Interventions

With my focus on transnational ties between communist parties, I hope to intervene in three strains of scholarly literature. First, I counter the superpower-focused accounts of the Cold War by offering a "Cold War from below" approach that shows the relatively autonomous role played by Middle Eastern actors. Second, I challenge the Iranian-Arab division that has defined the field of modern Middle Eastern history where developments in Iran and the Arab world are seldom studied in the same frame. Third, building on the work of previous scholars such as Zachary Lockman, Joel Beinin, Ervand Abrahamian, Sanna Tannoury-Karam, Alma Rachel Heckman and Siavush Randjbar-Daemi, I contribute to a new generation of studies of the left in the Middle East which are interested not just in their perceived eventual failure but in the reconstruction of the social, political and cultural worlds created by leftist movements.

**Bahareh Ebne Alian:** *Rationalities of the Dual State in Iran: Religious Law and Authoritarian Power in the Islamic Republic*

Bahareh Ebne Alian defended her PhD dissertation for a degree in Sociology at the New School for Social Research on May 10, 2023. On the committee served Andrew Arato, Benoit Challand, Mirjam Künkler, and Andreas Kalyvas.

### Summary

There is a stubborn scholarly tendency to treat the Iranian regime and the revolution from which it was born as an exceptional phenomenon in the history of revolutions and a sui generis form of political regime; an 'Iranian exceptionalism' in defiance of available theoretical models and classificatory schemes. The culprit is often Islam, presented as the complicating element whose role in the revolution and its place in the politico-order of the post-revolutionary state supposedly set the Iranian experience apart as an aberrant one. But how unique is the Iranian experience? Was an authoritarian theocratic regime inevitable, given the role of political Islam in revolutionary mobilization and leadership? Is "sharia" the real foundation of the legal order of the Islamic Republic? And is the authoritarian character of the Iranian regime primarily attributable to its self-declared religious identity?

The dissertation addresses these questions through examination of post-revolutionary legal and constitutional developments in Iran. It begins by tracing the path to Khomeinists' takeover of the state, arguing the revolution's authoritarian outcome owes more to the revolutionary mode of regime change and subsequent sovereign form of constitution-making than the identity or content of ideology of the victorious camp. The study then proceeds to the fate of the new regime's project of legal Islamization by scrutinizing the post-revolutionary legal developments in the spheres of family, penal, and public law, revealing the impossibility of the originally intended Islamic state. Indeed, the research shows that more than the application of



## DISSERTATION NEWS CONT'D

the rules of the sharia, the history of the Islamic Republic and its legal order is replete with recurring instances of modification, circumvention, and outright violation of the sharia.

The resulting portrait resembles not so much a theocracy, but a durable species of authoritarian rule that Ernst Fraenkel called “The Dual State”. Using and extending Fraenkel’s theoretical framework, the dissertation shows how the Islamic Republic—through perpetuation of revolutionary exceptional mechanisms in the constitutional framework, instrumental (mis)use and politically selective application of the “sharia”, as well as the preservation of elements from Pahlavi’s legacy of autocratic legalism—has succeeded in establishing and maintaining a dual structure of law and discretionary power. In this dual structure, the political realm is separated from the non-political, normative domain governed by general legal rules and procedures, and is instead governed by unchecked discretionary power and rule of decrees. Such a compartmentalized framework of rule secures, through legal norms and institutions, a minimum of regularity and predictability indispensable for the functioning of a modern state, while ensuring at the same time that politics remain far beyond law.

### Sources

The research is based on legal and interpretive analysis of a variety of archival sources, including legal documents, ordinances of the Leader, political speeches and pamphlets, meeting minutes of various governmental bodies, newspapers, interviews, constitutional and parliamentary debates, decisions made by different political bodies, and numerous judicial cases over the past decades. In addition, scholarly works interpreting primary data on Iran as well as research on other instances of the dual state, most notably the Soviet Union, are employed as secondary sources to discuss different views on the topic.

### Interventions

The dissertation builds on the pioneering works on the relationship between religious and secular law and the nature of the state in post-revolutionary Iran by Said Amir Arjomand, Asghar Schirazi, Sami Zubaida, Houshang Chehabi, and others, while simultaneously anchoring the discussion in political theory to highlight the broader theoretical implications of the topic. In doing so, the analysis counters exceptionalist approaches to the 1979 revolution and the post-revolutionary Iranian state by offering an alternative framework for comparative understanding of the origin and institutional logic of long-term dictatorships like the Islamic Republic in Iran.

First, it attributes the revolution’s authoritarian outcome not to political Islam but to the revolutionary mode of regime change and constitution-making, similar to many other revolutions.

Second, the analysis challenges the conventional view that locates the authoritarian character of the regime in the primacy of religious law over secular law or the primacy of divine sovereignty over popular sovereignty as the legitimating principle. By documenting the challenges of the Islamic Republic in creating a legal order based on the sharia as well as the self-secularizing tendencies of the regime over the past four decades, the analysis shows how the authoritarian nature of the Iranian regime rests rather in the primacy of discretionary power over legal rules, whether religious or secular in content.

Third, by highlighting the authoritarian implications of the selective application of the sharia, the work offers a nuanced account of the relationship between religious law and authoritarian power in Iran which sheds light on the political advantages of a continued resort to Islamic jurisprudence by the regime, notwithstanding the failure of the project of legal Islamization in practice.

## AIS ONLINE SYMPOSIUM

### The Iranian Publishing Industry

On Sunday 22nd October 2023, we, Hosna Sheikholeslami, Mahdi Ganjavi, Farshad Sonboldel and Laetitia Nanquette, gathered to discuss in a roundtable the publishing industry in Iran, with a focus on the 20th century and particularly the post-revolutionary era.

Our starting point was that the medium of print is a powerful tool that shapes public opinion, so we decided to focus on examining its modes of interaction with society and the state. While the Iranian state has taken many forms over the 20th century, there has consistently been a state interest in influencing and using the publishing sector. It is indeed partly through the medium of print that the state conveys its ideology and contributes to the construction of its identity. Publishing thus serves as a focal point to think about the power of writing and how books, whether in print or digital format, have influenced and transformed Iranian society and politics from the Pahlavi period to the present day.

We started with a very brief introduction about the current state of the research on print culture, a very rich field to expand upon, with lots of material in Persian and several pioneering studies, especially on the modern period.

We then moved to the discussion of Franklin Book Programs (a non-governmental US program providing translations of books originally published in English), as an instance of a Cold War publisher and cultural diplomacy program. The question of the publisher’s relation to the state then led us to the question of censorship, which

## AIS ONLINE SYMPOSIUM CONT'D

is fluid, multi-layered and cannot be reduced to top-down censorship from above.

We discussed how publishers have responded to the challenges of censorship and political repression by giving examples of propaganda and of the incentives for publishers to implement internal censorship, because of the significant financial risks involved. Eventually, this led to the question of readership: who do the publisher and the censor think are going to be the readers for the book? Their negotiation thus becomes a discussion about the imagined reader.

We then moved to the anti-licensing movement in the 2000s and discussed underground and digital publishing of experimental literature. Our discussion closed with reflections on the divide that exists between the canon within Iran and in the diaspora, which is partly linked to processes of distribution and to the complexities of the production of knowledge.

Iranian publishing offers a way to think about some challenges encountered in print culture in recent decades and a vantage point to discuss the significance of culture in Iran's social and political transformations. There are a lot of topics we did not touch upon, like piracy for example, and we hope to continue this discussion and to be joined by other scholars at later events. Readers, please do reach out if this is a topic you are working on, we would love to collaborate.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the AIS and of the organisers of the conference. The online format presented a great opportunity to get together without the complexities (financial, in terms of time commitment during busy teaching periods, or as carers) of an in-person conference. Hopefully, going forward, AIS will be able to alternate online symposia with in-person conferences.

*Laetitia Nanquette, University of New South Wales*



The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

# BOOK AWARD

## CRITERIA AND NOMINATION GUIDELINES:

1. Nominations are accepted for scholarly monographs published in English between January 2021 and April 2024. Books translated into English are also eligible if the translation is published between January 2021 and April 2024.
2. Edited volumes and new editions of previously published books will not be considered for the award.
3. Nominations are accepted from authors or publishers. In either case, a single-page nomination letter with the subject line "Book Award Nomination" must be sent as a PDF to [iran@princeton.edu](mailto:iran@princeton.edu). The letter must include the monograph's complete bibliographical information and a concise summary of the book's contribution to the field of Iranian and/or Persian Gulf Studies.
4. **Nominations must be made by April 1, 2024 (for books published after January 2021-April 2024). Books must be received before April 30, 2024.** See [Call for Submissions](#) for more information.

**Four copies** of the book must be sent to:

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Princeton, NJ 08544  
USA



## PROGRAM NEWS

### The Pourdavoud Center at UCLA announces the following program news:

- *Aspects of Kinship in Ancient Iran* by Daniel T. Potts was published on October 10, 2023 as part of the newly established *Iran and the Ancient World (IAW)* series of the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World at UCLA, published by UC Press. Originally delivered as the Biennial Ehsan Yarshater Lectures, *Aspects of Kinship in Ancient Iran* is an exploration of kinship in the archaeological and historical record of Iran's most ancient civilizations. Pp. 148, 24 color illustrations; ISBN 9780520394995; Paperback \$34.95, £30.00
- Dr. Lara Fabian (2018 Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World) has joined the faculty of the UCLA Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures as Assistant Professor of Iranian Archaeology.
- The Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World launched a podcast, *Legacies of Ancient Persia*, in October 2023. Episodes will be released bimonthly on Thursdays and explore the legacies – in all forms – left by ancient Persia through interviews and round-table discussions with leading scholars and experts to discuss the impact ancient Iranian civilization has had on other ancient cultures and modern global patrimony.
- The Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World has awarded six graduate fellowships for the 2023–24 academic year through the *Morvarid Guiv Graduate Fellowship in Zoroastrian Studies*. This fellowship was established in 2018, thanks to a gift from the Trust of Morvarid Guiv, and supports graduate students working on all aspects of Zoroastrian studies at UCLA. Awardees (in alphabetical order) are: Hong Yu Chen, Ethan Friedland, Charlotte Howley, Emma Petersen, James Scherrer, and Alexander Youngstrom.
- The First and Second Achaemenid Workshops were hosted by the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Innsbruck, respectively. Organized by M. Rahim Shayegan (UCLA, Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World) and Robert Rollinger (University of Innsbruck), the first conference, titled “Identity, Alterity, and the Imperial Impress in the Achaemenid World” featured 22 lectures and was held on April 12–14, 2023. The second conference, “The Achaemenid Persian Empire and Imperial Transformations in the Ancient Near East (7th c. BC – 2nd c. BC),” was held on July 3–7, 2023 and featured 32 lectures. Videos from the First Achaemenid Workshop are available on the Pourdavoud Center's [Online Video Library](#), and the recordings of the Second Achaemenid Workshop will be posted soon.

## REPORTS FROM SISTER ORGANIZATIONS

### ASPS/JPS Early Career Prize

The Association for the Study of Persianate Societies and its flagship *Journal of Persianate Studies* are delighted to congratulate the inaugural co-winners of the ASPS/JPS Early Career Prize: **Dr Mariano Errichiello** (SOAS) for his paper, ‘Beyond the Theosophical paradigm: Ilme K̄shnum and the entangled history of modern Parsis’, and **Dr András Barati** (Institute for Mediæval Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences), for his article, ‘The Chessboard *toghrās* of the Safavid royal decrees’. A prize committee consisting of JPS Associate Editor D Gershon Lewental (chair), Alyssa Gabbay, and Evrim Binbaş selected these winners based upon the creativity of topic and source materials, originality of analysis, and overall scholastic contributions, and announced their decision at the recent ASPS convention in Yerevan in June 2023. The winners will share a cash prize of \$250 and their articles will be published in the *Journal of Persianate Studies*.

The prize committee thought that Dr Errichiello's submission was a well-written and intriguing study of an esoteric interpretation of Zoroastrianism that developed in the early Twentieth Century amongst the Parsis in India, making use of Gujarati primary sources to enhance our understanding of Parsi historiography and contributing to our broader knowledge of intellectual and religious history in India and the Persianate world.

As for Dr Barati's article, the prize committee noted that this meticulous study of *toghrās* on Persian documents expands our knowledge of the function of this calligraphic signature as a royal emblem in the Şafavid period, while also touching upon its use in Mongal, Timurid, and Mughal royal decrees. Through careful use of both pre-Şafavid and Şafavid-era sources, he provides insight into how *toghrās* served as authenticating symbols endowed with authority and prestige.

The biennial prize seeks to encourage and reward scholarship about the broader Persianate world by individuals at the beginning of their careers and we encourage end-stage doctoral students and early-career scholars to look out next year for the call to submit original and unpublished work for the prize to be awarded at our next convention in 2025. For more information on JPS, as well as past issues, visit <https://brill.com/view/journals/jps/jps-overview.xml>.



The opening ceremony of the ASPS 9th Biennial Convention in Yerevan. © Persian Dutch Network

## REPORTS CON'D

### Ninth Biennial Meeting of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (ASPS)

From 30 May through 3 June, 2023, the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (ASPS) gathered in Yerevan, Armenia, for its Ninth Biennial Meeting. The conference was co-sponsored by The Institute of Oriental Studies at Russian-Armenian (Slavonic) University and The Institute of Archaeology & Ethnography at the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. Over the course of four days, over 150 scholars from 21 countries presented papers covering a wide range of disciplines and topics, including art, archaeology, history, linguistics, literature, politics, and religion from the Achaemenid period to the present, touching on all parts of the Persianate world.

Alongside the paper presentations, the ASPS also hosted a film festival, screening Mehrdad Zahedian's award winning documentary *Zemistan ast* (2019), Maryam Sepehri's *Alborz, We Climbed Mountains* (2023), and Pejman Akbarzadeh's *Derbent, What Persia Left Behind* (2022). ASPS President Dr. Sussan Babaie (The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London) gave the Presidential Address "Persianate Studies through the Lens of Trans-Asias: The Mongols". In conjunction with the editorial board of the *Journal of Persianate Studies*, the ASPS also awarded the inaugural ASPS/JPS Early Career Prize to András Barati for his paper "The chessboard toghrās of the Safavid royal decrees" and Mariano Errichiello for his paper "Beyond the Theosophical Paradigm: Ilme Kşnum and the entangled history of modern Parsis". Each recipient will have their papers published in a forthcoming issue of the JPS. On the final day of the conference, participants traveled together to visit the 13th century monastery of Geghard and the first century Temple of Garni.

Those interested in attending the next ASPS conference, scheduled to be held in 2025 with location to be announced soon, should consider joining the ASPS. Membership information is available at <https://www.persianatesocieties.org/membership-form/>

## Call For Papers: Journal Articles on Persian Language and Literature

Allameh Tabatabai University (ATU), Tehran, has a longstanding journal in the field of Persian literature and comparative literary studies entitled *Literary Text Studies* (متن پژوهی ادبی), which is a prestigious top-ranked journal in Iran that has contributed substantially to the growth and development of Persian literary studies over the years. The journal's website is <https://ltr.atu.ac.ir>.

A new issue is soon to be out, which will be published entirely in English, and we are calling for related papers from international professors of Persian language and literature.

To contribute, please contact Masoud Farhamandfar, Assistant Professor of English Literature at [farahmand@atu.ac.ir](mailto:farahmand@atu.ac.ir), Orcid ID: 0000-0001-8194-6719



## FILM: THE VOICE OF BALUCHISTAN

**The Film Maker Mohammad Ehsani in conversation with Hessam Habibi Doroh June 2023**

Habibi: You have worked on different film projects in different parts of Iran. Could you give us a general overview of your latest project, its origins, its main idea, and the overall story?

Ehsani: The current project is a continuation of my previous film projects in which I worked on environmental issues, with social elements. I have made documentaries about the Urmia, Hamon and Karon Lakes. The main difference with the current project, which focuses on Iranian Baluchistan, is that in addition to paying attention to environmental and climatic issues, I now also look to the people to capture the local cultures. In the current film, I follow the music, religion and culture of Baluchistan: it is a documentary about the culture of the Baloch people, who are known mostly for their music. The movie introduces us to the social atmosphere of Baluchistan, the economic poverty and main characteristics of that region, as well as the customs and music.

In fact, the people of that region speak to us through the language of music.

The music played in this movie has a philosophy behind it. Let me give an example. One chapter of the film deals with Gowati music. Gowat means “wind” in Baluchi language. The Gowati ceremony is one of the most mysterious rituals in the southern regions of Iran, which has been continued in other parts of Iran and is performed with music. Gowati is in essence a music therapy ritual. Currently there are few people who can perform this music ceremony in Baluchistan, and I was able to record part of their rituals for this project.

Habibi: Could you tell us more about the Gowati music ritual?

Ehsani: Well, it is usually performed for adults and especially for women who are victims of violence. It is supposed to remove the “bad ghosts” from the suffering person. It is performed by men and a spiritual master organizes this ceremony, which takes about two hours. The ritual is sung (with instrumental accompaniment) and usually in Baluchi although it can also be sung in other local languages. The texts are mystical and spiritual texts that are often in the form of poetry. The ritual is performed in private for the individual only and repeated if needed, depending on the situation or constitution of the person who receives this treatment. [See link to a clip at the end of this interview.]

Habibi: I think similar ceremonies exists in Hormozgan province and are known there as the Zar ritual. Music in general plays an important role in Baluchistan and Baluchi culture. Which groups of musicians were you able to interview for the film?

Ehsani: There are many well-known musicians in Baluchistan. If you go, you realize that seven out of ten people can play an instrument. So, people talk to you with music. But we went in particular to the legends of Baluchi music who influenced their musical world.

Habibi: Now, even people who are into music, both in Iran and outside of Iran, tend to know very little about ethnic music of Iranian minorities and especially Baluchi music. That is, what you are saying, there are musicians or artists who have very big names, but in Tehran, if you ask some artists or musicians, maybe they don't know the other musicians in the periphery of Iran. How do you see the gap between center and periphery?

Ehsani: It is true. This is because of political issues. We have something called Baluchistan Day, a world day recognized by the United Nations and celebrated all over the world, but no one in our country knows that such a day exists. This is because of political concerns. It has to be mentioned that it is not so that no one knows musicians from Baluchistan. For example, in the Gowati ceremony that we filmed, three of the main musicians had just returned from a trip to Switzerland where they performed in a festival. They often travel to European countries. Sima Bina, a famous Iranian singer who worked for years on regional music of Iran, in her last project, which is about the music of Baluchistan, worked with these musicians. In the Tehran or metropolitan music communities, there is an awareness of musicians in other parts of Iran, such as Baluchistan. But in Iran, due to the political issues, the central government has tried to marginalize the ethnic groups, especially by oppressing the Kurdish and the Baloch people. Therefore, we see a lack of recognition in wider society.



Caption left and page 27:  
Scenes from the film.

© Mohammad Ehsani.



## FILM CONT'D

Habibi: A point that has always interested me about Baluchistan is the coexistence of different, seemingly contradictory, ideas. On the one hand, you have a very religious Sunni Hanafi society, which has its long history, and on the other hand, you have this old, cultural and ritual history, which is reflected in traditional life of Baluchi people. How do you see this duality?

Ehsani: That is right. There is a society that is very traditional and classic. Especially women are under pressure. For example, in Baluchistan, it is not easy to bring fifteen-year-old girls in front of the camera. And this is related to their culture and not necessarily Islam. That is, in this case it is also not related to the Islamic Republic and it has been the case also before the 1979 revolution. It is part of a very traditional society, with rich musical and narrative culture, for example, there are uniquely Baluchi love stories like Hani and Shimrid, which are similar to Leili and Majnun. The main reason for this is that Baluchistan is influenced by other cultures because of the sea. In terms of music, they are heavily influenced by India, and also Africa. There are black people who were brought to Iran as slaves during the time of Portuguese rule over parts of southern Iran. Black communities from Africa stayed in Iran and became indigenous and they brought their own culture and music with them. That is, the music of Baluchistan and in general the music of the southern regions of Iran has many different themes.... African music and Indian and Iranian themes and all these have been combined together.

Habibi: I know you met many fascinating people in your work in Baluchistan. Could you give an example which you would like to highlight to our readers?

Ehsani: In this film, we meet a woman named Shamshuk, who is known today as “the voice of Baluchistan”. Shamsuk is a black woman and a Sunni Muslim. Her acts and thoughts are completely modern, but she grew up in a closed and traditional environment and decided to become a singer and dancer in that community. She is among the greatest singers and dancers of Baluchi society in general. But she is rejected in her society. This woman has collected all the lullabies of the people of Baluchistan and the old songs that are part of the identity of these people. And now, during the latest movements in Iran, she has become a bit famous, and the people who used to condemn this woman are now listening to her voice, and she has become the voice of Baluchistan. In her music she cries out for freedom. In fact, she should be famous like “Adele” based on her voice but instead she is trapped in poverty and leads a miserable life. Shamsuk with her music encourages people to be alive and be brave. And this is the voice of a black woman from Baluchistan.

Habibi: This is fascinating, both in terms of history and current narrative. These voices tell us both the current situation and very rich history. But they don't have the power of the media, they don't have the national media, there is not even local media to introduce them. That is the reason that the work of people like you is extremely important. Could you please share with us some of the difficulties you faced finalizing the project?

Ehsani: You are right these voices are extremely important because of continuous social and environmental changes in this region. Which means if we, film makers and researchers, do not document the lives of people and their culture, in few years we have nothing left. Due to environmental issues, people located in peripheral areas of Baluchistan emigrate to other regions and move to urban centers. By leaving their regions, large parts of their culture get lost. The same as natural resources, many lakes and rivers are completely destroyed due to climate change and if we fail to record and document them the future generation will not have a chance to see them. This documentary about Baluchistan is to a larger extent complete but in order to finalize it and prepare it for viewings, there are still financial difficulties on my way. Of course, for the projects like mine there are almost no state funds as the majority of funds are dedicated for specific projects of interest to the authorities. Sadly, some of the wealthy Iranian communities outside Iran, who claim that they love their country, ignore my request to support at least part of this project financially. My hope is that through research institutions and foundations we will have the possibility to finalize this documentary and present some of the neglected communities of Iran and motivate others to pay more attention to parts of the Middle East's cultures that are in danger.

Habibi: How did you acquire access to the people who are shown in the film? For example, did you already know Shamsuk or did you meet her on the trip?

Ehsani: Access and familiarity were formed through numerous trips to the region before filming and during the research phase, which lasted for a year. Through these trips, I made connections with people who could help me understand their culture and main figures, such as Shamsuk. I discovered Shamsuk during these trips and we formed a continuous and close relationship.





## FILM CONT'D

Habibi: Why did you choose Baluchistan this time for your documentary?

Ehsani: I had already made a film in the Sistan region. My documentary “Once Hamon” deals with the issue of the drying up of the Hamon lake and its impact on the lives of the local people. Baluchistan, especially its music, which is very powerful, mystical and romantic, has been my favorite for a long time. In the new documentary, I discussed the music and tunes of Baluchistan along with the climate and environment of the region. In other words, on one hand we see the environmental impacts in the region, but we also see the rich cultural heritage that people of Baluchistan carry with themselves.

Habibi: Did you need a permit to film and is it a difficult process to obtain a work permit?

Ehsani: Yes. A permit is required for filming. And we obtained all these permits, and it was not a difficult process for me because we apply for a filming license through House of Cinema in Tehran, of which I am a member, and this is a routine for all filmmakers who are members of House of Cinema.

Habibi: What cinematic techniques did you use for this last work, and were these techniques you used different from previous works?

Ehsani: Technically, the main difference is the use of two cameras. This movie was filmed with two professional cameras to capture different elements. One of the cameras is from the perspective of the wind, which is always moving, and shows the environmental aspect of the movie and the second camera represents the signs of the wind in this journey which are the objects that the movie tries to capture.

Habibi: Thank you very much for this insightful interview and I hope many people will see your films and recognize how unique and important they are documenting ways of life that are under threat.

Mohammad Ehsani was born in Tabriz and studied English literature at university. Being interested in social, historical and anthropological issues led him to make documentaries. His films have been screened at many domestic and foreign festivals and have won awards. The subject of most of his works has been environmental issues with an environmental-social approach in recent years. Mohammad Ehsani joined the Iranian Documentary Filmmakers Association, IRDFA, in 2007. Some of his films can be viewed here:

1. **Karun:** <https://vimeo.com/377536604>

Password: 135252

2. **Once Hamoun:** <https://vimeo.com/195192347>

Password: 197373. The film won the main prize of the Ecotop Environmental Film Festival in 2017.

3. His last documentary, titled “**The Water Will Take Us**” has been selected to screen at the following international film festivals in October and November: The 9th Green Montenegro International Film Festival / Montenegro, July 2023; CineEco 2023 - 29th Serra da Estrela International Environmental Film Festival - Seia / Portugal, October 2023; 31st Eco cine International Environmental and Human Rights Film Festival / Brazil, November 2023; the 11th Water Docs Film Festival, Toronto/ Canada, November 2023.

4. Demos of his newest project on “**The voices of Baluchistan**” can be viewed here:

Shamshuk: <https://vimeo.com/817243066>

Gowati Ceremony: <https://vimeo.com/817009462>

Donali: <https://vimeo.com/817250689>

Monir Parmoon: <https://vimeo.com/817266291>

The password for all is: 12345.

If you wish to support Mohammad Ehsani’s work or schedule screenings of his film, please get in touch [here](#).

Caption left and right:  
Both images show Shamshuk during filming.

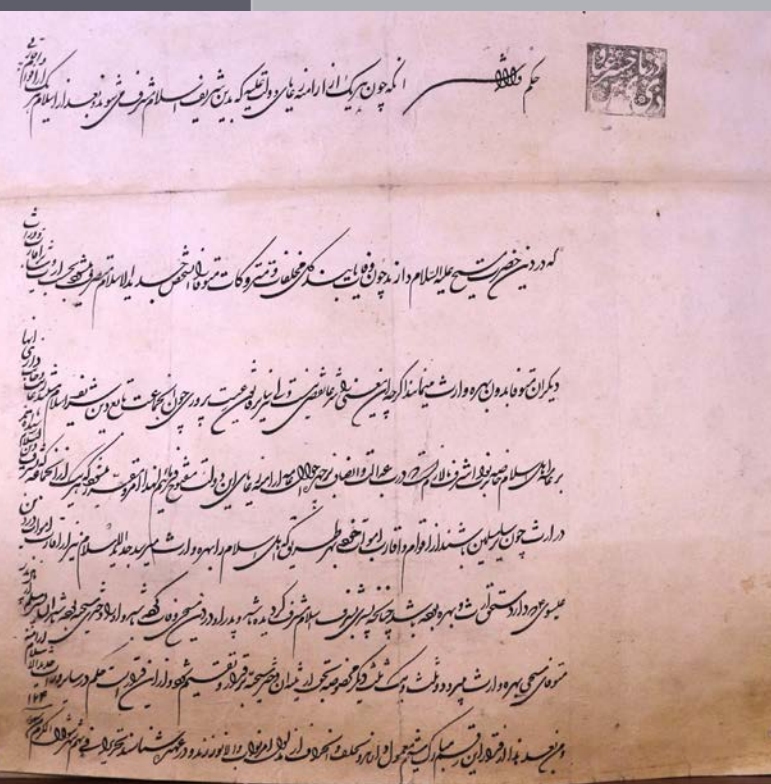
© Mohammad Ehsani.



## QAJAR ART AT THE MATENADARAN MUSEUM, YEREVAN

In the summer 2023, the Matenadaran Museum in Yerevan organised an exhibition devoted to Persian art in the Qajar period (1789-1925). Matenadaran is considered a national cultural institution in Armenia and it is well known for its unique manuscript collection. The exhibition included rare Persian manuscripts, royal orders, book covers, metalwork and ceramic tiles. Alongside the artwork, photographs of Antoin Sevruguin were presented as well. Sevruguin devoted his life to photographing society, nature and historical monuments.

Professor Yvette Tajarian, senior researcher of the Oriental Studies Department at Matenadaran, curated the exhibition. In her interview with Voice of America's Persian Service, she underscored the "significant connections between the Persian-Armenian community and the Qajar rulers." Professor Tajarian also introduced a unique 1825 Royal Decree by Prince Abbas Mirza on display at Matenadaran.



The exhibited manuscripts and royal orders have to a large extent been acquired from the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow. When the institute was closed down, Matenadaran received part of their treasure. "The limited appreciation by the Armenian people of Persia, or Iran, in the Qajar period was the primary motivation to organise this exhibition," Professor Tajarian told VOA. "Before this exhibition, for around five years, I worked on Matenadaran's Persian manuscripts and categorised the illustrated ones. Several Qajar art pieces, manuscripts and book covers in Matenadaran were published in a book. (Yvette Tajarian: *Specimen of Qajar Art at the Matenadaran*. Yerevan: Matenadaran, 2021.) It became a source of inspiration to organise an exhibition as we felt that publishing a book alone was insufficient."

Highlights of the exhibition can be viewed in the VOA programme (with English subtitles) at: <https://youtu.be/5CqXhFzPZgA>, produced by Pejman Akbarzadeh.

1825 Royal Decree by Prince Abbas Mirza (Matenadaran Museum, Yerevan), Source: Persian Dutch Network.

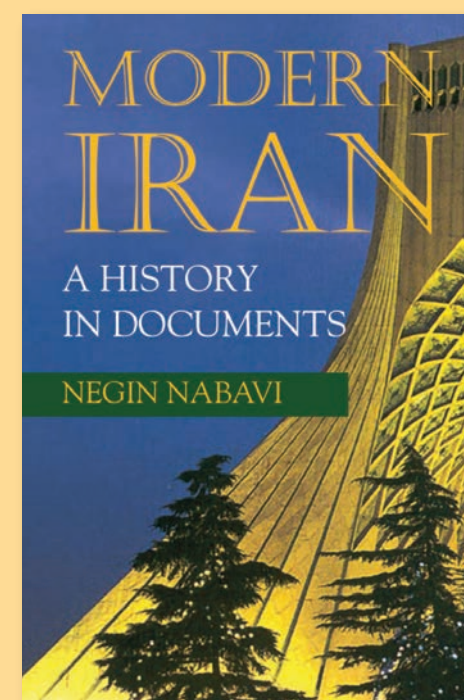
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**Negin Nabavi**, associate professor at Montclair State University, is the author of *Intellectuals and the State in Iran: Politics, Discourse, and the Dilemma of Authenticity* and *Iran: From Theocracy to the Green Movement*.



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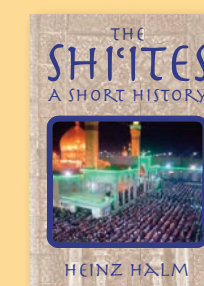
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## RESEARCH REPORT

### The Significance of *ṛtācā brzmniy* in Xerxes' Cultic Reform

Gad Barnea, University of Haifa

Ever since its preliminary publication in 1936, Xerxes' "Daiva" inscription (XPh) has been seen as an important and unique witness to early Achaemenid Mazdean orthopraxy and cultic propaganda. This royal inscription describes a liturgical reform or, at least, the enforcement of such a reform, targeting and condemning the cult of the *daivā*—a designation describing competing deities. The key to decoding this reform hinges upon an obscure expression that appears thrice in the document—normalized as a-r-t-a-c-a : b-r-z-m-n-i-y—the meaning of which is yet to be fully understood.

Close to nine decades of research into the meaning of this syntagm have made significant strides towards helping us understand it but have yielded only partial and unsatisfactory results. In a paper recently presented at the AIS online symposium, I analyze and synthesize the previous attempts and offer a new and systematic approach to considering and evaluating the various parameters involved. It looks separately at each component of the expression (*ṛtā*, *-cā*, and *brzmniy*) through a careful consideration of Avestan sources, combined with etymological, onomastic, epigraphic and even archeological data to produce a broad and more comprehensive annotated translation.

I show how the narrative surrounding *ṛtācā brzmniy* in XPh was carefully crafted to focus on the location where the liturgy should take place. The analysis also leads to the conclusion that the first element, *ṛtā*, most likely referred to the yazata representing "Truth/Order." Moving to the second element, I argue that it is highly unlikely that the *-cā* in *ṛtācā* derives from a contracted *hacā*. This option appears to be supported by the Elamite transliteration *ir-da-ha-zi* that seems to preserve the *-h-* of *hacā*. However, the paper presents clear evidence for the use of *-h-* as a marker of vowel lengthening in Elamite transliterations, which explains the presence of the *-h-* much more naturally without having to account for otherwise undocumented forms. In fact, the reliability of Elamite transliteration of Old Persian terms has come under scrutiny in a more general sense. Cameron in 1959, in his edition of the Elamite version of XPh observed several serious scribal errors in this text and Francine Mawet noted in 1978 that "it happens that the same Elamite form appears with or without a final vowel, the latter being able to be purely graphic, without morphological or phonetic value." Finally, the third element of the syntagm, *brzmniy*, transliterated in Elamite as *bīr-ra-iš-man-nu-ia* is also ambiguous given that the initial *bīr-* in Elamite can indicate *no-vowel* or a syllabic *ṛ* (*ar*) as can be seen in the Elamite transliteration of the personal name *Bardiya*, rendered *bīr-ti-ya*.

The problem of the etymology of *brzmniy* is likewise challenging. The Avestan *barəsman* (< *barəz-*) derives from the Sanskrit *bṛh* "to grow high." Mayrhofer attaches it to the stem BARH ("kräftigen, groß machen, fest machen;") and the Indo-Germanic stem *\*bhelǵh* "schwellen, etwas Schwellendes unterlegen," but does not consider *brzmniy* to be related to it. Rather, he also relies entirely on the Elamite transliteration and prefers to connect *brzmniy* to *brahman* via *\*brazman-*. If true, it would be the sole record of this lexeme in the Achaemenid period. Hennig, who also preferred *brahman*, accounted for the etymology by claiming that "Old Persian *brazman* survives in Middle Persian and Parthian *brahm*." This, however, is misleading and circular since, as mentioned, there is no OP *brazman* other than as a putative source for *brzmniy* and his proposal would require an improbable etymological evolution: from the Vedic *brahman* to a hypothetical *\*brazman* (in *brzmniy*) in the Achaemenid period and back to *brahm* in Middle Persian/Parthian. It is precisely the preservation of *brahm* in Middle Persian/Parthian that argues against an alleged *brazman* deriving from *brahman* in the Old Persian.

The final part of the paper expands the perspective to look at other forms of evidence: archeological and onomastic. It looks at the Aswan stele which preserves the existence of the place called *brzmdn'*, which is almost certainly related to the *brzmniy* from the XPh inscription, as previously noted by Bogoliubov. This supports the first step of the analysis which showed that XPh was crafted to stress *the location* in which *Ahuramazdā* and *ṛtā* are to be worshipped, indicating that such a *sacrum locum* (using the stem *brzm-* plus the suffix *-dan* denoting "place" or "building") might have been built according to the concept of *brzmniy* at Syene (and most probably other parts of the empire at the time). This joins the analysis of the personal name *Ṛtabr̥zana*, which seems to conserve both elements of the syntagm *ṛtācā brzmniy*. It is first documented in the reign of Darius I and seems to be related to this term—as used in XPh. All of the personal names in the Achaemenid period containing *brz* are uniformly based on the concept of "exaltation."

In conclusion, the analysis shows that the expression *ṛtācā brzmniy* and the concept it represented was more widely adopted than previously thought and its most probable interpretation—taking all available datapoints into account—is that *ṛtā* refers to the *yazata* representing the cosmic concept of "Order/Truth" with an enclitic *"-cā"*, i.e. "and," and *brzmniy* refers to the concept of height/exaltation—a concept physically symbolized by the barsom twigs. I therefore propose the following translation of *ṛtācā brzmniy*: "and the Order<sup>YAZATA</sup> characterized by the exaltation<sup>RITE</sup>." This cultic concept seems to have been pervasive from the late sixth to the end of the fifth century BCE, at least—as various forms of it have been found from Persepolis to Egypt—in Old Persian, Elamite and Aramaic.

## BOOK PRESENTATION

**Amir Hassanpour, *The Peasant Uprising of Mukriyan 1952-1953: Consulate Documents, Diplomatic Correspondence, and the Press Coverage***

(شورش دهقانان مکریان ۱۳۳۱-۱۳۳۲ ش. اسناد کنسولگری، مکاتبات دیپلماتیک و گزارش روزنامه ها)  
Toronto: Asemana Books, 2022.

By Mahdi Ganjavi (University of Toronto), editor and translator of documents

*The Peasant Uprising of Mukriyan 1952-1953: Consulate Documents, Diplomatic Correspondence, and the Press Coverage* is the compendium volume of Amir Hassanpour's seminal book on *The Peasant Uprising of Mukriyan 1952-1953* (شورش دهقانان مکریان ۱۳۳۱-۱۳۳۲ ش) (Toronto: Iran Namag, 2021). The volume includes additional documents held at Amir Hassanpour Fonds at the University of Toronto Archives and relating to his extensive research on the historiography of the Mukriyan peasant uprising. Among these is the Persian translation of Amir Hassanpour's article in Kurdish on the Peasant Movement of 1952-53 (first published in 2017 in *Derwaze, Kurdish journal of social sciences and humanities*); the Persian translation of 54 declassified documents from the American Consulate in Tabriz and the American Embassy in Tehran; Persian translations of eight diplomatic correspondences related to the United States Department of State; translations of 18 news reports and articles from historical newspapers, including the *New York Times*, *New Times*, and *Trud*. In some sections original copies of documents are also included.

Moreover, the volume includes the transcribed correspondence between Amir Hassanpour and Massoud Muhammad (a prominent Iraqi Kurdish intellectual and scholar, 1919-2002) on the issue of feudalism and class formation in Kurdistan, along with 20 original handwritten letters between the two and, finally, twelve other historical documents related to the Mukriyan peasant movement.

The two volumes provide the historical documents as well theoretical, historical, and political analysis of this understudied movement, a crucial event in the modern history of Iran.

The untimely passing of Professor Amir Hassanpour abruptly interrupted the final phases of his comprehensive two-volume work on the Kurdish Peasant Uprising of 1952-53. However, in the face of this formidable setback, I, Mahdi Ganjavi who at that time served as Professor Hassanpour's research assistant, embarked on an effort to bring this work to a close. Collaborating with Professor Shahrzad Mojab, intellectual, political and life partner of Professor Hassanpour, our objective was to bring this project to fruition, viewing it as a personal and scholarly homage to the legacy of Amir Hassanpour. The volume now stands as a manifestation of my deep

appreciation of him, not only for the invaluable wealth of knowledge he produced but also for the privilege of actively contributing to his scholarly pursuits.

The historical documents featured in this book offer a multifaceted lens through which scholars and researchers can gain insights into various aspects of the socio-economic landscape of the region. These documents provide a rich source of information not only about class formation and peasant movements in Iran and Kurdistan but also about the broader geopolitical context. They often contain classified information that sheds light on covert operations, diplomatic maneuvers, and intelligence assessments, thereby offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the geopolitical dynamics in the region. Furthermore, the documents provide insights into the motivations and interests of external powers, especially the U.S. The documents reveal the underlying factors that shaped foreign policies, such as the containment of regional rivals, and the promotion of ideological agendas. Additionally, the materials offer a valuable window into the methods and information sources employed by the U.S. Consulate during the relevant era, deepening our understanding of international diplomacy and modes of intelligence gathering at the time. Finally, the Persian translations of English declassified documents and historical dailies, and the meticulous manuscript preparation make essential historical records more accessible to a broader audience, ensuring that the knowledge they contain can continue to inform scholarship for years to come.





## BOOK PRESENTATION CONT'D

Professor Amir Hassanpour (17 November 1943 – 24 June 2017) was a prominent Kurdish-Iranian Marxist historian and linguist. His major research areas were Kurdish socio-linguistics, Kurdish history and nationalism, as well as peasant and social movements in the Middle East and Kurdistan. He was an influential intellectual and revolutionary thinker who advocated for Kurdish Studies and the rights of national minorities for self-determination. He is the author of *Essays on Kurds: Historiography, Orality, and Nationalism* (2020) and *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (1992). He published numerous articles in academic journals and reference works such as the *Encyclopedia of Television*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and *Encyclopedia of Modern Middle East*. His more recent works are articles in the *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures* and *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*.

In conclusion, the profound contributions of Professor Amir Hassanpour, both as a scholar and as an advocate for the rights of national minorities, have left a significant mark on the fields of Kurdish studies and the socio-political history of Iran. This book, by delving into the wealth of historical documents from the Amir Hassanpour Fonds at the University of Toronto Archives, not only pays homage to his enduring legacy but also provides an invaluable resource for understanding the complex socio-political landscape of Kurdistan and its connections to the broader Middle East. The significance of declassified documents in this context cannot be overstated. These documents serve as windows into the clandestine actions and foreign policies that have influenced communities, and they enrich our understanding of the geopolitical dynamics in Kurdistan. By revealing the motivations and strategies of external powers, these documents illuminate the intricate web of global politics that has often converged on this region.

**The 2022 Kamran Djam Lecture at SOAS can now be viewed online.**

It was held by Professor Robert Hillenbrand of the University of St Andrews and titled: **What makes the Great Mongol Shahnama great?**  
 (Part I): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZiE\\_SfI0vk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZiE_SfI0vk);  
 and **What Problems Does the Great Mongol Shahnama Pose?**  
 (Part II): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ildgLetJ7CQ>

***Sunni Communities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013–2021: Securitization, Secularization and Privatization* (Brill, Series: Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia, Volume: 131, 2023)**

*By Hessam Habibi Doroh, University of Public Service, Budapest*

In the early stages of my South Asian studies education, around 2013-2014, I became acquainted with the existence of Iranian Sunni Hanafi Muslims, followers of the School of Deoband. This revelation surprised me due to their relative obscurity in the public domain. It was apparent that, in Iran, there existed a scarcity of academic research on this topic, with only a few articles focusing primarily on security concerns. Among Western scholars, Stephane Dudoignon stood out as one of the few who had delved into the intricacies of Iranian Sunnis, particularly in the South-Eastern region of Iran. Conversely, within the Sunni communities themselves, a vast reservoir of local knowledge, oral history, and, most significantly, socio-political narratives remained largely unexplored.

As I embarked on my research project, President Hasan Rouhani assumed office, championing the concept of “*etedal*” or modesty, with promises of open doors. Concurrently, amid ongoing negotiations regarding Iran’s nuclear program, the new government aimed to facilitate foreign investment and improve the country’s economic situation. Moreover, President Rouhani garnered considerable support in minority-dominated provinces and among Iranian Sunni communities during both the 2013 and 2017 elections, fostering an environment conducive to discussions about their socio-political aspirations and the challenges they face in Shi’i majority environments.

The Rouhani era witnessed notable shifts toward more participatory and inclusive policies. The Islamic Republic seemed to establish standards guaranteeing certain rights for minority groups. For instance, the Citizen’s Charter of Rights published in November 2016 or the 12th Government’s program from April 2017 (pages 70-74 in the book). However, possessing such standards does not necessarily translate into full implementation. The demands for constitutionally granted rights by minority groups, particularly Iranian Sunni communities, revealed a lack of coherent operational policies and instances of direct or indirect discrimination against officially recognized minorities.

During the presidency of Hasan Rouhani, beside economic liberalization and privatization, the country witnessed a growth of religious charity organisations under the influence of religious institutions, which provided certain services which in the past had been provided by the state. As a consequence, in the case of Iranian Sunnis, the transfer of public wealth to Sunnis religious institutions had tied the religious communities to their religious authorities (mosque and madrasa) more than to the state, which failed to adequately support its citizens. As an example, charity organisations in Zahedan under the influence of the main Sunni institution (the Makki

## BOOK PRESENTATION CONT'D

institute, which is fully independent from the state) grew strong roots in socially disadvantaged parts of Baluchistan to support other Sunni communities. This created an opportunity to connect with Sunni communities elsewhere and create an awareness of solidarity among Sunnis.

Simultaneously, the securitization of ethnic and confessional minority groups expanded, resulting in increased pressure on Sunni communities and mounting economic and environmental challenges in provinces such as Sistan-Baluchistan and Kurdistan. These factors contributed to tensions between Sunni communities and the state.

The protests that erupted at the end of 2019, shaking Rouhani's administration and his overall popularity, were, to a significant extent, an outcry against the pervasive poverty and destitution experienced by many Iranians, including Iranian Sunnis. In this context, certain Sunni communities in Sistan-Baluchistan and Kurdistan began to utilize their platforms, including Madrasas and Friday sermons, to express their discontent.

This book aims to comprehend the dynamics of the eight years from 2013 until 2021 by focusing on the relationship between the state and Sunni communities. To illuminate this relationship, I analyze speeches delivered by five individuals of the political elite of the Islamic Republic (Ali Khamenei, Ebrahim Raisolsadati, known as Raisi, Ali Yunesi, Naser Makarem Shirazi, and Javad Karimi Qodusi), each occupying different positions in the hierarchy and representing diverse interests. Additionally, I include texts and speeches from Iran's Sunni communities (Molana Abdolhamid Esmailzahi, Kak Hasan Amini, Jalal Jalalizade, Molana Behzad Feqhi and Molavi Abdolghaffar Naqshbandi), providing insight into their circumstances and their interactions with the state. This analysis, all sourced from the Hasan Rouhani era, aids in elucidating the underlying cultural, historical, and social elements shaping Sunni-Shia relations in Iran today.

In addition to analytical tools, the book relies on primary sources and ethnographic fieldwork. Few studies have explored the post-2013 period, especially within Iran's peripheral regions, through fieldwork. My ethnographic research primarily took place between 2017-2021 in mosques and madrasas across three provinces: Khorasan, Sistan-Baluchistan, and Kurdistan. However, conducting research on the ground presents its challenges and limitations. Security concerns often permeate conversations, and some individuals are cautious when discussing the topic, noting that it is a securitized issue. Furthermore, statements often mirror official narratives disseminated in state media, emphasizing that "there are no issues concerning Iranian Sunnis, and any problems are the work of enemies seeking to tarnish the country's image."

For these reasons, it was even more essential to immerse oneself in Iranian Sunni communities to reach people and gain insights from their experiences. Maintaining a balance between immersion and objectivity was crucial to avoid becoming entrenched in a single perspective and to be able to critically reflect on the collected data.

It is remarkable how communities can influence researchers and their analyses, despite their aspiration of being objective observers. Initially, I intended to focus primarily on the political aspects of Iranian Sunnis but witnessing the daily lives of people residing in peripheral areas motivated me to delve into the socio-economic aspects of their existence as well. Interacting directly with local communities provided valuable insights into their intellectual sources, preferred books or articles, and the popularity of certain Sunni clerics. This interaction also provided me with access to extensive audio archives of Sunni communities, primarily containing Friday sermons, which remain largely unexplored by both academia and the wider public. Many of these audio files are now accessible through the Iran Data Portal.

The book, despite its limitations and inability to answer all relevant questions, is meant to initiate discussions and debates and provide empirical insights for doing so. An exploration of the Iranian Sunni communities' situation unveils a topic that has been marginalized, overshadowed by securitization, and is approached by the Islamic Republic in the context of permanent geopolitical rivalry with Saudi-Arabia. Additionally, even opponents of the Islamic Republic, both inside and outside Iran, tend to not pay much attention to the concerns of Iranian Sunnis due to their religious and ethnic identities. However, as argued in this book, any discourse regarding Iran's future must address the socio-political demands of Iranian Sunnis. A crucial first step, in my opinion, is to examine the diverse Sunni communities without securitization and top-down skepticism, but instead by posing societal questions and engaging with the communities' religious, social, and political contributions.

### Sunni Communities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2013-2021 Securitization, Secularization and Privatization



Hessam Habibi Doroh

BRILL



## AIS SCHOLAR SNAPSHOTS

We are pleased to announce a new AIS initiative, Scholar Snapshots! AIS boasts many engaging, socially conscious, and creative scholars involved in fascinating and valuable research endeavors. Meet your inspiring colleagues and learn about their favorite pastimes in the process!

If you would like to nominate a scholar (self-nominations are also very welcome!), please submit your suggestion(s) to:

[director@associationforiranianstudies.org](mailto:director@associationforiranianstudies.org)

### YALDA HAMIDI

#### Brief Bio

Yalda Hamidi (She/Her/Hers) is Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and faculty fellow for "Teaching Toward Social Justice" at Minnesota State University Mankato and a member of Ms. Committee of Scholars. She identifies as a feminist pedagogue, mentor, and storyteller.

In her research, Yalda brings an anti-racist and transnational feminist lens to studying the Iranian diasporic literature and feminism/s.

At MNSU Mankato, Yalda teaches Transnational, Postcolonial, Islamic Feminism/s, Feminist Pedagogy, and Queer of color Critique courses. She collaborates with Women's Centers and non-profits to share stories of Iranian feminism/s and literature with the public.



#### Brief description of current research

Yalda's research, "Cartography of Transnational Iranian Feminist Struggles," argues that the scene of the Transnational Iranian Feminism/s has at least four distinctive voices of multicultural, post colonialist, queer and ethnic, and white feminism/s. This research provides decolonial methodologies for rhetorical listening to these voices and advocates for an anti-racist and social justice-oriented lens to address the gaps, retrieve the ghostly voices, and bring the margins of Iranian feminism/s and literature into its center.

#### Awards and Recognition

2023: Women of Distinction Award, YMCA Mankato

2023,2022, and 2021: Women of Courage and Vision, President Commission on Status of Women, Minnesota State University, Mankato

2021-2022: Advisor Recognition Award, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Minnesota State University, Mankato

2021: National Women's Studies Association, "Feminist Change Agent Award of 2021," for founding the Islamic Feminism Book Club in collaboration with the Women's Center at Minnesota State University Mankato

2018: Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Contributions in Mentorship, LGBTQ Services, Stony Brook University

2017: Vivien Hartog Graduate Student Teaching Award, Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Stony Brook University

#### Any advice you wish you were given but were not!

I wish I had known about graduate school's stages and benchmarks before entering the Ph.D. program. As a first-generation immigrant and a woman of color in academia, it could have helped me maximize my limited resources and avoid confusion.

#### Your favorite Iranian food

Loubia polo, and it is underrated!



#### Your favorite Iranian song

Khooneye Ma, by Marjan Farsad

#### Your favorite destination in Iran

Bushehr

#### Your Favorite Pastime: Chess or backgammon?

Chess



## AIS SCHOLAR SNAPSHOTS CONT'D

### RANIN KAZEMI

#### Brief Bio

Ranin Kazemi is an Associate Professor of History at San Diego State University where he has been teaching global and Middle Eastern history since 2015. Kazemi became interested in the history of Iran and the Middle East while attending college at Middle Tennessee State University, where he wrote an honors thesis on the Sufi love imagery in the poetry of the thirteenth-century mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi. Kazemi pursued his graduate work at The Ohio State University, where he obtained an MA degree and wrote a graduate thesis on the historiographical thought of Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi, an important eleventh-century historian of the Ghaznavid state. Kazemi then obtained two Master's degrees and a PhD at Yale University, where he worked on the social and economic history of modern Iran with a special focus on the nineteenth century. Throughout this academic and intellectual trajectory, Kazemi enjoyed taking classes on a wide variety of topics related to the history of the Middle East in the medieval and modern periods and was privileged to work with a number of wonderful mentors and scholars of Iran and the Middle East.

#### Brief description of current research

Kazemi's current research projects focus on the social and economic history of Iran with particular attention to three inter-connected scholarly areas: 1) the history of social protest and political dissent in the nineteenth century, 2) the history of food, famine, and bread riots in the Qajar period, and 3) the history of consumer culture and recreational drugs in modern Iran. Kazemi has published several lengthy, monographic articles about these topics in peer-reviewed scholarly journals such as *Iranian Studies*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *the British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, and *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*. He is also completing a book-length study of the economic, social, and political origins of the Tobacco Protest, one of the earliest national and revolutionary movements in the modern Middle East. Kazemi contends that the significance of these research projects lies in the fact that they bring the stories of revolution, political dissent, global capitalism, and other social and economic changes in contemporary Iran to the nineteenth century. In so doing, his research explains the context in which a modern society emerged in the Qajar period and how a deeper understanding of this society helps us grapple more effectively with important contemporary issues.



#### Awards and Recognition

Kazemi's work has received many awards from national and international academic institutions. He was most recently the recipient of a 12-month grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. His research was also supported by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, the American Research Institute in Turkey, and the American Institute of Iranian Studies. Kazemi's teaching at graduate and undergraduate levels has received recognition as well. He was most recently the recipient of a 2019 Outstanding Faculty Award in recognition of being selected as the Most Influential University Professor at San Diego State University. Finally, Kazemi's service has been recognized in 2021 when he was appointed the Director of International Business at SDSU, an interdisciplinary program that is consistently ranked among the top ten undergraduate International Business programs in the US.

#### Any advice you wish you were given but were not!

Students entering the field of Iranian studies can consider working on topics or periods of Iranian history that have not received sufficient scholarly attention. The eighteenth century is a case in point or the social history of key moments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Young scholars of Iran might also consider becoming conversant in the scholarship of the rest of the world. Adopting a global vision allows us to situate the stories of Iran and the Middle East in a meaningful context. We should moreover learn about the history and cultures of the broader Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Russia -- regions surrounding the geographical space that the Persian/Iranian civilizational area occupies. Finally, it would be wonderful if students of modern Iran could nurture a deeper understanding of ancient, medieval, and early modern Iran. There are many continuities in the literature, culture, and history of modern Iran that require scholarly work and attention.

#### Your favorite Iranian Food:

Gheimeh ( خورش قیمه ) with saffron rice or Baghali Polo, Persian pickles, cucumber yogurt or mast-o-khiyar, and sabzi khordan (a mixture of fresh herbs and vegetables).

#### Your favorite Iranian Song:

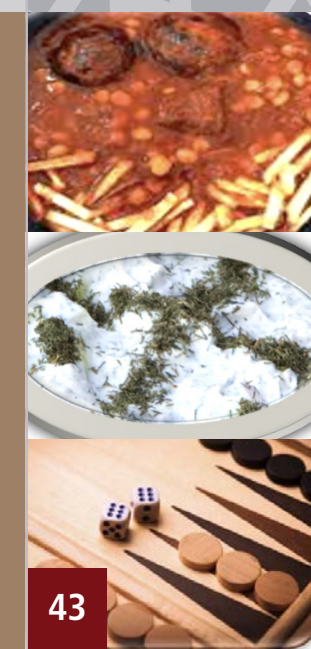
A tasnif entitled, "Jan-e 'oshshaq," ( جان عشاق ) by the late Mohammad-Reza Shajarian

#### Your favorite Destination in Iran:

Hafezeyyeh in Shiraz, the resting place of Hafez

#### Your favorite Pastime: Chess or Backgammon?

Chess over backgammon, although I play them both with great relish!







## AIS SCHOLAR SNAPSHOTS CONT'D

### GOLNAR NIKPOUR

#### Brief Bio

My name is Golnar Nikpour, and I am a scholar of modern Iranian political, intellectual, and cultural history. I am currently Assistant Professor of History at Dartmouth College, and I received my Ph.D. from Columbia University's Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies. Before joining the faculty at Dartmouth, I was an A.W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and served as Neubauer Junior Research Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University. My research has taken me all over the world and has been supported by the Social Science Research Council, the A.W. Mellon Foundation, and the Giles Whiting Foundation. Since 2019, I have served on the editorial collective on the journal *Radical History Review*, and I also serve on the editorial board of the *Radical Histories of the Middle East* book series on Oneworld Press.

I never considered a career as a historian before I first attended college as an undergraduate. I took a class on the history of the Middle East in my first year as a result of my personal connection to the region and a desire to learn more about it and wound up loving the intellectual and methodological work of researching and writing about history. Today, I teach on an interdisciplinary set of topics including modern Middle Eastern and North African history, Iranian history, political theory, Islamic studies, critical prison studies, and women and gender studies. My first book, entitled *The Incarcerated Modern: Prisons and Public Life in Iran* – a history of modern Iranian prisons and carcerality in a global context – is forthcoming with Stanford University Press.

#### Brief description of your current research

My current book project examines key moments in the establishment of the modern prison system in Iran in the early 20th century, the resulting incarceration of millions of Iranians over the course of the next decades, and some of the responses among both Iranians and non-Iranians to those prisons. I argue that the making of the modern prison system has led to an elemental and enduring transformation in Iranian life, not just for political activists but for all Iranians. I further argue that this transformation did not happen in isolation but was rather part of a worldwide trend promoting and entrenching carceral solutions – surveillance, policing, and mass punishment and imprisonment – to a wide host of social issues. My book examines what I call the public life of the prison in Iran and argues that far from being simply a site of private suffering, the modern Iranian carceral system emerged and remains as a generative public locus for questions of citizenship, rights, and political belonging and unbelonging.

#### Any advice you wish you were given but were not!

I think the best advice I can give any young scholar or student is to follow your own intellectual path and to read generously and voraciously. Read work in your field and read outside of your field as well – don't get trapped in a closed echo chamber of just a few voices. Read without ego. And don't let the anxious voices in your head tell you that you don't belong!

#### Your favorite Iranian food

No question: ghormeh sabzi all the way! Could anyone say anything different?!



#### Your favorite Iranian song

My favorite singer is Hayedeh, who had the greatest voice of all time, and my favorite song of hers is "Soghati."

#### Your favorite destination in Iran

I love spending the day in the nooks and crannies of the used bookshops of Tehran, near the University of Tehran. This might be the most fun place in the entire world!



#### Your favorite pastime: Chess or backgammon?

I grew up playing chess with my father and love it, although I still can't beat him!

## CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS

### Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program

We are delighted to announce that the application is now open for the U. S. Department of State's 2024 Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program and its virtual initiative, CLS Spark! We welcome your students to apply now to learn a critical language on a funded virtual or overseas summer program.

The application is available at <https://clscholarship.org/apply>. The deadline for applications is 8:00 pm Eastern Standard Time on Tuesday, November 14, 2023.

The CLS Program provides intensive language instruction and structured cultural enrichment experiences designed to promote rapid language gains.

Depending on language and level, U.S. students can either apply for the overseas CLS Program or its virtual initiative, CLS Spark. The CLS Program offers in-person cohort-based programs at partner institutions abroad that provide instruction at various levels for U.S. graduate and undergraduate students in 13 critical languages: Arabic, Azerbaijani, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu.

The CLS Program, through its CLS Spark initiative, provides beginner-level virtual instruction for Arabic, Chinese, and Russian for competitively selected U.S. undergraduate students whose home campuses do not offer these languages. More information on eligibility is available at:

<https://clscholarship.org/applicants/eligibility>.

The CLS Program will host webinars, Q&A sessions, and alumni panels for students and advisors throughout the fall. A full calendar with these events and corresponding registration links is available at:

<https://clscholarship.org/events>.

The CLS Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by American Councils for International Education. It is part of a wider government initiative to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering foreign languages that are critical to national security, economic prosperity, engagement with the world.

If you have any questions, please contact the CLS Program team at: [cls@americancouncils.org](mailto:cls@americancouncils.org).

## ÉIRINN & IRAN GO BRÁCH

Iran in Irish-nationalist historical, literary, cultural, and political imaginations from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to 1921

By Mansour Bonakdarian

This book analyzes particular patterns of nationalist self-configuration and nationalist uses of memory, counter-memory, and historical amnesia in Ireland from roughly around the time of the emergence of a broad-based non-sectarian Irish nationalist platform in the late eighteenth century (the Society of United Irishmen) until Ireland's partition and the founding of the Irish Free State in 1922. In approaching Irish nationalism through the particular historical lens of "Iran," this book underscores the fact that Irish nationalism during this period (and even earlier) always utilized a historical paradigm that grounded Anglo-Irish encounters and Irish nationalism in the broader world history, a process that I term "worlding of Ireland." In effect, Irish nationalism was always politically and culturally cosmopolitan in outlook in some formulations, even in the case of many nationalists who resorted to insular and narrowly defined exclusionary ethnic and/or religious formulations of the Irish "nation." Irish nationalists, as nationalists in many other parts of the world, recurrently imagined their own history either in contrast to or as reflected in, the histories of peoples and lands elsewhere, even while claiming the historical uniqueness of the Irish experience. Present in a wide range of Irish nationalist political, cultural, and historical utterances were assertions of past and/or present affinities with other peoples and lands.

Mansour Bonakdarian specializes in modern British, Irish, Iranian, and imperial history.



*"Mansour Bonakdarian offers a sustained, meticulously researched comparative history on Irish-Iranian entanglements spanning the long nineteenth century. Moving from the initial conduit of romantic orientalism toward a colonial lens on Imperial British world politics, it is a very welcome addition to the fields of Irish studies, nationalism studies, and comparative history."* — **Joep Leerssen**, Emeritus Professor, Universities of Amsterdam and Maastricht

*"The worlding of Irish culture has a complex history, as Mansour Bonakdarian's consummate study proves. Before Ireland was Europeanized, Irish writers and historians found a cultural fount in the history and culture of Iran. Bonakdarian expertly shows us the breadth of Irish-origin stories tying Érin and Iran—where they came from, what they overlooked, and how they inspired."* — **Joseph Lennon**, Villanova University, author of *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History*

*"Bonakdarian's fascinating study illuminates one of the lesser known aspects of intellectual history and nationalist historiography, that between Irish and Iranian nationalisms and the way in which they sought to contextualize their movements in relation to each other and wider liberation movements. A brilliant, penetrating study which deserves to be read widely."* — **Ali M. Ansari**, University of St Andrews

### Key features

- > Undertakes an unparalleled study of Irish nationalism during the period through the lens of non-Irish history.
- > Investigates Irish nationalist familiarity with, and appropriations of, Iranian "history" and motifs.
- > Provides first-time coverage of Iranian familiarity with Irish politics and history prior to the early twentieth century.
- > Examines patterns of selective Irish nationalist expressions of cross-territorial solidarity with, as well as instrumentalist neglect of, the Iranian "nation."

Hardback - 9781839989452 | £80 / \$110  
Ebook - 9781839989469 | £25 / \$35

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## CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS CONT'D

### Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

The Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania invites applications for a "CARGC Postdoctoral Fellowship." This is a one-year position renewable for a second year based on successful performance.

#### Overview

The Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication (CARGC) produces and promotes scholarly research on global media, communication, and public life. Our work brings together regional and area studies scholarship with theory and methodology in the humanities and social sciences to understand how local, lived experiences of people and communities are profoundly shaped by global media and communication technologies and industries. This synthesis of deep regional expertise and interdisciplinary inquiry stimulates critical conversations about entrenched and emerging communicative structures, practices, flows, and struggles.

We explore new ways of understanding and explaining the world, including through public scholarship, the arts, multi-modal scholarship, and digital archives. With a core commitment to the development of early career scholars worldwide, CARGC hosts postdoctoral, doctoral, undergraduate, and faculty fellows who collaborate in research groups, produce peer-reviewed scholarship, contribute to CARGC's Global Media & Communication Podcast, and organize talks, lectures, symposia, conferences, and summer institutes.

Ongoing research groups focus on media, migration, and diasporas; media environments and the climate crisis; media industries and cultural politics; and media history and theory. We recommend that applicants familiarize themselves with CARGC's mission and research activities listed on our website. We are particularly interested in candidates with expertise in the following areas: environmental media/ecomedia, indigenous media cultures, Latin American and Latinx media, and global Blackness.

#### Fellowship Details

CARGC postdoctoral fellows work on their own research while also participating in and leading ongoing research projects within CARGC. During the fellowship, they present their work as part of a postdoctoral colloquium and work closely with the Senior Research Manager on a plan for publishing their research. There are limited opportunities for teaching that are decided in consultation with Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies.

Fellows will receive a minimum stipend of \$65,000, commensurate with previous postdoctoral experience. CARGC will also provide a research fund of \$3,000, individual health insurance and dependent coverage, a workspace, and a computer in CARGC's office, and library access. In addition, CARGC will cover \$1,000 in domestic relocation expenses and \$2,000 if moving internationally. Please note all postdoctoral fellows must submit documentation to demonstrate eligibility to work in the United States. Non-US citizens selected for this position will be required to apply for an appropriate US visa.

This is a residential fellowship. CARGC strives to be an inclusive community of scholars driven by intellectual curiosity and exchange rooted in the life of the Annenberg School, the University of Pennsylvania, and the city of Philadelphia. To foster mentoring and collaboration at all levels, we expect fellows to be fully engaged in the life of the center. Postdocs are therefore expected to work at our beautiful sixth-floor premises on the Penn campus.

#### Eligibility

We welcome applications from early career scholars with Ph.D. awarded by an institution other than the University of Pennsylvania. The chosen applicant must have successfully defended their dissertation by the fellowship start date. The appointment typically begins on August 15.

#### Submitting Your Application

A complete application consists of:

1. **Cover Letter** – Please include a section explaining how your research aligns with CARGC's mission, fits with one or more CARGC research themes, and contributes to the field of global media and communication studies.
2. **Research Statement** – In no more than three double-spaced pages, please explain your core research interests and how you plan to build on your dissertation research. Include research questions, topic significance, theoretical framework and methods, clear description of primary sources and necessary language skills, and a tentative publishing plan.
3. **CV** (not to exceed three pages) – Please list degrees, peer-reviewed publications, academic non-peer-reviewed publications, public scholarship, invited talks, conference papers, other relevant qualifications, and specific research and language skills.
4. **References** – Please provide names and contact information for three references (including that of your dissertation supervisor). If your application is shortlisted, we will get in touch with your referees in mid-January 2024. Please make sure your advisors/supervisors are aware of this timeline.
5. **One peer-reviewed publication** – Please include a published peer-reviewed journal article or a chapter published in an anthology/edited collection. An article/chapter accepted for publication and forthcoming is acceptable (but not work that is under review).

## CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS CONT'D

### Timeline

All materials must be sent **as a single PDF document** to [cargc@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:cargc@asc.upenn.edu) by **December 1, 2023**. Because of the volume of applications, we are unable to read drafts of submissions. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. We expect to contact finalists for Zoom interviews by the end of January and make final decisions shortly thereafter.

### Additional Information

If you have additional questions, please email us at [cargc@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:cargc@asc.upenn.edu). Kindly do not contact CARGC staff or the CARGC director individually.

The University of Pennsylvania values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University of Pennsylvania is an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer. Candidates are considered for employment without regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, national or ethnic origin, citizenship status, age, disability, veteran status or any other legally protected class. Questions or concerns about this should be directed to the Executive Director of the **Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs**, University of Pennsylvania, 421 Franklin Building, 3451 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6205; or (215) 898-6993 (Voice) or (215) 898-7803 (TDD).

**Rare Book School's Andrew W. Mellon Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography (SoFCB)** invites applications for its 2024–26 cohort of Junior Fellows. The deadline is **Friday, 17 November 2023**.

This scholarly society works to advance the study of texts, images, and artifacts as material objects through capacious, interdisciplinary scholarship—and to enrich humanistic inquiry and education by identifying, mentoring, and training promising early-career scholars. Junior Fellows will be encouraged and supported in integrating the methods of critical bibliography into their teaching and research, fostering collegial conversations about historical and emerging media across disciplines and institutions, and sharing their knowledge with broader publics.

The fellowship includes tuition waivers for two Rare Book School courses, as well as funding for Junior Fellows to participate in the Society's annual meeting and orientation. Additional funds are available for fellows to organize symposia at their home institutions, and fellows will have the option of attending a bibliographical field school to visit libraries, archives, and collections in a major metropolitan area. After

completing two years in good standing as Junior Fellows, program participants will have the option to become Senior Fellows in the Society.

The Society is committed to supporting diversity and to advancing the scholarship of outstanding persons of every race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, and socioeconomic background, and to enhancing the diversity of the professions and academic disciplines it represents, including those of the professoriate, museums, libraries, archives, public humanities, and digital humanities. We warmly encourage prospective applicants from a wide range of disciplines, institutions, and areas of expertise.

For more information and to apply, please visit: <http://rarebookschool.org/admissions-awards/fellowships/sofcb/>.

For more information about diversity and the SoFCB, please read the SoFCB Diversity & Outreach Committee's **Welcome Letter**.

Inquiries about the SoFCB Junior Fellows Program can be directed to SoFCB Administrative Director Kathryn Higinbotham at [sofcb\\_staff@virginia.edu](mailto:sofcb_staff@virginia.edu).



Apply Now!

**RARE BOOK SCHOOL**  
**SoFCB**

The RBS-Mellon Society of Fellows in Critical Bibliography is now accepting applications for its 2024–26 cohort.

*Due Friday, 17 November 2023*

[rarebookschool.org/admissions-awards/fellowships/sofcb](http://rarebookschool.org/admissions-awards/fellowships/sofcb)



## CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS CONT'D

### CfA: Assistant Professor of Persian Literature and Culture University of Virginia

The Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Virginia invites applications for a tenure-track position at the rank of Assistant Professor in Persian Literature and Culture.

We seek scholars who draw on deep training in the history of Persian literature to engage with contemporary forms of cultural production, especially as embedded in their political and cultural contexts, in order to broaden understanding of our globalized world. We encourage application from those who work on literature in any part of the Persian-speaking world, including transnational and diasporic locations, and those whose work brings them into conversation with emerging trends within theoretical paradigms, such as: translation studies, migration and diaspora studies, disability studies, sexuality and gender studies, or democracy and human rights.

Preference will be given to candidates who can teach undergraduate and graduate-level courses in both Classical and Modern Persian literature, as well as to those who can contribute to the intellectual community of a department diverse in language and discipline.

Review of applications will begin 5 January 2024 and continue until the position is filled.

#### Qualifications

We seek scholars with an active program of research and publication in Persian literature, cinema, or related specialty, and with a commitment to excellence in teaching. The successful candidate must have a PhD completed by the time of appointment, 25 August 2024, and must have native or near-native fluency in Persian and English.

#### Application Instructions

Visit <http://apply.interfolio.com/130434> to apply. Attach the following to your application:

- Curriculum vitae including the names of three referees
- Cover letter addressing your research trajectory, areas of scholarly and teaching interest, potential collaborations at UVA or beyond, and how your skills and experiences could advance the University's ambition to cultivate the most vibrant community in higher education in order to prepare students to be leaders in a diverse and globally connected world.
- A sample of your scholarly writing.

Please direct any questions about the position to: Farzaneh Milani at [fm22z@virginia.edu](mailto:fm22z@virginia.edu). For question about the application process, contact Melanie Sponaule, Academic Recruiter at [unw5dq@virginia.edu](mailto:unw5dq@virginia.edu).

#### Equal Employment Opportunity Statement

The University of Virginia, including the UVA Health System which represents the UVA Medical Center, Schools of Medicine and Nursing, UVA Physicians Group and the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library, are fundamentally committed to the diversity of our faculty and staff. We believe diversity is excellence expressing itself through every person's perspectives and lived experiences. We are equal opportunity and affirmative action employers. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, veteran or military status, and family medical or genetic information.

**The University of Virginia offers confidential Dual Career Services to partners of incoming faculty candidates. To learn more, please visit [www.dualcareer.virginia.edu](http://www.dualcareer.virginia.edu)**