



# ASSOCIATION FOR IRANIAN STUDIES

انجمن ایران پژوهی

<http://associationforiranianstudies.org>

AIS Newsletter | Volume 40, Number 1 | May 2019



## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear Members,

I hope this column finds all Association for Iranian Studies members in good spirits during the Nowruz holiday season. Since assuming office, I've been working with members of the AIS Council to continue the administrative reforms of Past President Daryaei, and, to help organize matters for the 2020 conference.

*Tanzimat-e Hasaneh*

One of the first orders of business for the AIS Council at our February meeting was to enact guidelines with regards to travel reimbursements and honorarium for officers. There had been no set policy in place and this led to some confusion and irregularities in the past. We also began using the software "G Suite" to archive and share files, track expenses, and to facilitate web conference meetings for AIS Council and AIS Executive Committee. We also put out a call to recruit a new treasurer for the society. Our Executive Director had been serving as acting treasurer for years. I am pleased to report that James Gustafson, who is on the faculty at Indiana State University and a member of the AIS Council, has agreed to serve in this role, effective May 2019. He joins the Executive Committee at a time when we still have work to do to restore banking service for AIS in the United States and in improving the AIS finances and diversifying funding sources. We have also instituted a more transparent nominating process for the upcoming Fall Elections. The Nominating Committee, per recent announcement, has almost completed its task of preparing a slate of candidates for AIS Council and for President Elect (my old job). Please look for announcements about the election this coming fall.

Please use the link below to access a short film  
on the Twelfth Biennial Conference of the Association for Iranian Studies,  
held at the University of California, Irvine, August 14-17, 2018:

<https://vimeo.com/290795254?ref=fb-share&1>

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2019

CAMRON MICHAEL AMIN  
PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN

ALI GHEISSARI  
JOURNAL EDITOR  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

RIVANNE SANDLER  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

JAMES GUSTAFSON  
ACTING TREASURER  
INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

TOURAJ DARYAEE  
PAST-PRESIDENT  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

## COUNCIL 2019

CAMRON MICHAEL AMIN  
RIVANNE SANDLER  
TOURAJ DARYAEE  
MATTHEW P. CANEPA  
ROSE WELLMAN  
JAMES GUSTAFSON  
MARYAM MOAZZEN  
NAGHMEH SOHRABI  
FARZIN VEJDANI  
MARYAM N. SABBAGHI  
ARNOLD ALAHVERDIAN

FOR PAST COUNCILS AND  
BOARDS, PLEASE VISIT:

[HTTP://ASSOCIATIONFORIRANIANSTUDIES.ORG/  
ABOUT/OFFICERS/2018](http://associationforiranianstudies.org/about/officers/2018)

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS CONT'D

### Looking Forward to AIS 2020 in Salamanca, Spain: August 25th-28th

We expect the conference webpage to be open soon with information on the conference setting and conference hotels. Just as for previous conferences, you have an opportunity to submit proposals for organized panels (up to four presenters, one chair and/or discussant), roundtables (up to eight presenters and one moderator) and individual papers. Pre-organized panels and roundtables are much preferred! Look for an announcement when the proposal submission page is open. The deadline for proposals will be July 15, 2019.

Ever complain that you could not see a presentation because another panel was scheduled at the same time? Of course you have! What we are going to try this conference is to create some time and space for poster exhibits. For an additional registration fee, and, subject to the availability of space, authors who have been accepted into the program will also have an opportunity to feature their paper in a poster exhibit space overlooking the book exhibitor space. Time will be set aside in the daily schedule for authors to be available to discuss their papers over coffee with curious passers-by and fellow exhibitors.

### More Things We'll Need to do in 2020

Aside from the conference, AIS Council and Executive Committee will need to improve policies in support of the AIS mission. Some of these policies are fiscal: improving institutional membership, looking at new strategies to develop funds to support AIS publications and conferences, and looking for efficiencies in administrative costs. Other policies are, at root, about intellectual outreach. How do we bring more areas of research into dialogue within Iranian Studies? How do we bring insights from Iranian Studies into more areas of the academy? As you think about your panel and roundtable proposals think about the benefits of inviting a colleague who is new to Iranian Studies or from an academic discipline that is underrepresented within Iranian Studies. Think about including a discussant or moderator from outside Iranian Studies who can engage your panel on theory, methodology, or in comparative analysis. I am looking forward to learning more about the excellent work you are all doing through the newsletter, the journal, and, of course, the 2020 conference.

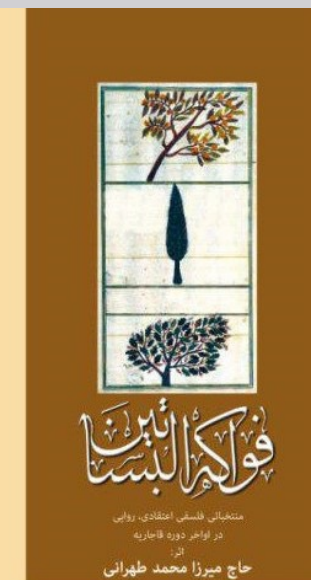
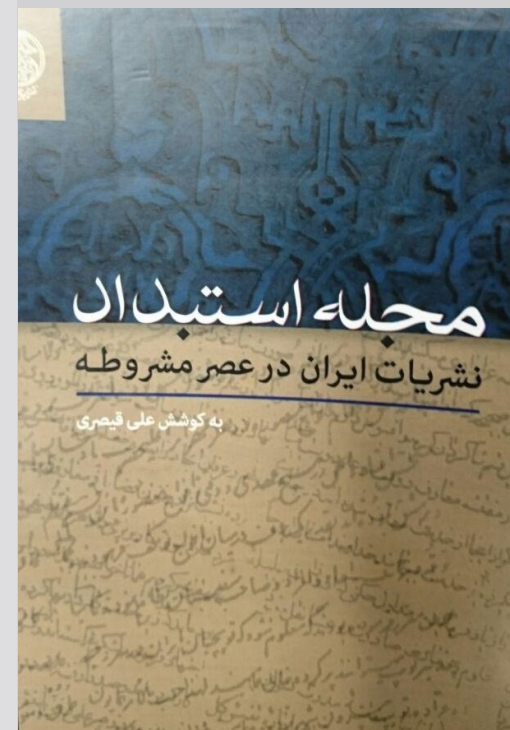
Camron Michael Amin  
The University of Michigan-Dearborn

## MEMBER NEWS

**Houri Berberian's** book *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* has been published with University of California Press, 2019.

**Willem Floor** has published the volume *Kermanshah. City & Province 1800-1945*. Washington, D.C.: MAGE, 2018. 591 p incl. index; with illustrations. He has also written with Jaap Otte "European Ceramics in Iran in the 19th and early 20th Centuries," *American Ceramic Circle Journal* XX, 2019, pp. 117-43; and with Gholam Vatandoust, "Juwak-kari, a Neglected Persian Art Form or Qajar Paintings on Wood," *Adle Nameh. Studies in Memory of Chahriyar Adle* ed. Alireza Anisi. Tehran: Pazhuheshgah-e Mirath-e Farhangi, 1379/2018, pp. 229-61. Finally, he has translated together with Hasan Javadi and Hormuz Ebrahimnejad, *Lazzat al-Nisa. The Pleasure of Women*. Barcelona: M. Moleiro, 2018, 201 p. illustrated.

**Ali Gheissari** has published two new volumes: *Fruits of Gardens by Hājī Mirzā Mohammad Tehrāni: A Philosophical Miscellany in Arabic and Persian in late Qajar Iran, c. 1914 (Fawāka al-Basātin: Montakhabāti Falsafī, E'teqādi, Revā'i dar Avākher-e Qājāriyeh, asar-e Hājī Mirzā Mohammad Tehrāni)*, Complete Arabic and Persian Text, in collaboration with Ali-Reza Abāzari, eds. with an Introduction by Ali Gheissari, Qom: Nashr-e Movarrehk, January 2019, 431pp.; and *Majalleh-ye Estebdād* (Journal of Despotism), complete set of a lesser-known periodical published in 1907-08, during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, ed., with an Introduction and additions by Ali Gheissari, Tehran: Nashr-e Tārikh-e Iran, April 2019, 744pp.



به کوشش:  
علی قیصری

یا همکاران:  
علیرضا اباباذری



## MEMBER NEWS CONT'D

**Nioucha Homayoonfar** has published the book *Taking Cover: One Girl's Story of Growing Up during the Iranian Revolution*, National Geographic Children's Books, 2019.

**Chad Kia**'s book *Art, Allegory and the Rise of Shi'ism in Iran, 1487-1565* will shortly be published with the University of Edinburgh Press, June 2019.

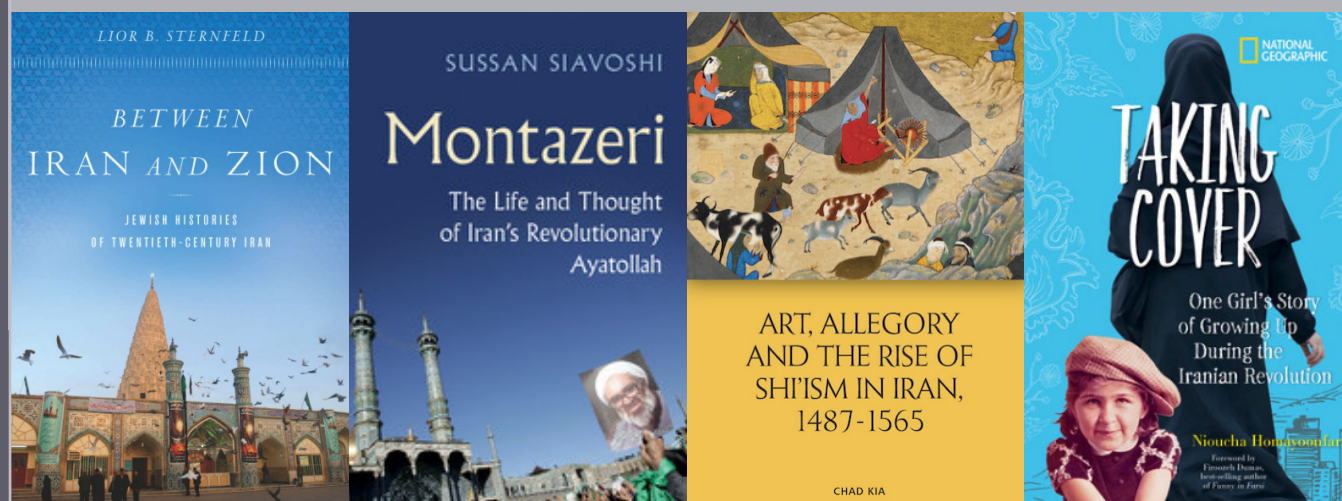
**Vera B. Moreen** has published the following articles:

- "The Jews of Iran in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. 7. Eds. Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe. Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 1046-1057.
- "A Brief History of Judeo-Persian Literature," in *Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton: 1935-2018*. Ed. Sabine Schmidtke. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press. Pp. 479-483.
- "Judeo-Persian Literature," in *A History of Persian Literature. Vol. 9, Persian Literature from Outside Iran, the Indian Subcontinent, Anatolia, Central Asia, and Judeo-Persian*. Ed. John R. Perry. London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018. Pp. 390-409.

**Sussan Siavoshi**'s book Montazeri: *The Life and Thought of Iran's Revolutionary Ayatollah* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) has been awarded the 2018 Biennial Houshang Pourshariati Iranian Studies Book Award.

Sussan Siavoshi has also been appointed to serve as a member of the 2019 MESA Book Awards Committee to select winners for MESA's three book awards: the Albert Hourani Book Award, the Nikki Keddie Book Award, and the Fatima Mernissi Book.

**Lior B Sternfeld** has published *Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth-Century Iran* with Stanford University Press, 2018.



## NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION

### Save the date! AIS 2020 in Salamanca, Spain, in August 25-28, 2020

Dear AIS members,

With great pleasure I announce that the Faculty of Philology at the University of Salamanca, Spain, will host our **Thirteenth Biennial Iranian Studies Conference** in **August 25-28, 2020**.

Online registration is now open for participants on the following link: <https://associationforiranianstudies.org/conferences/2020>

Salamanca, one of the most beautiful cities in Spain and UNESCO heritage, is easily reachable by train (<http://www.renfe.com/EN/viajeros/index.html>) or by bus (<https://www.avanzabus.com/>) directly from Terminal 1 and Terminal 4 of Madrid Barajas-Adolfo Suárez International Airport (MAD).

Salamanca is also well known for hosting one of the oldest universities in the world. Indeed, the University of Salamanca celebrated its 800th anniversary last year. Its Faculty of Philology, located at Plaza Anaya in front of a majestic cathedral (<https://www.usal.es/facultad-de-filologia>), is distributed in three main buildings, two of which are palaces and in less than 50m walking distance from each other. These will be our conference venue.

The city possesses more than 10,000 hotel vacancies, most of them either in the centre or very close to it, exactly where the Faculty of Philology is located. There are many hotels and accommodation possibilities in the centre of the city, which makes lodging very comfortable for the attendees of the conference. But please don't forget to book your accommodation in advance, because many tourists visit Salamanca in August! If you would like to be hosted in a Renaissance palace, 30 rooms have already been blocked at the Colegio Arzobispo Fonseca (<https://colegiofonseca.usal.es/>), but you will also find a list of some other excellent hotels (some of them palaces as well) in the city at quite affordable rates at the following link: <https://associationforiranianstudies.org/conferences/2020/accommodation>

The city centre features a large variety of restaurants and tapas bars of every sort, where participants can be delighted with the local food, famous in Spain for its high quality. Sightseeing tours will be arranged for participants interested in exploring the historical monuments of Salamanca to recover from hours of stimulating scientific discussions.

On the academic side, please let me remind you, firstly, that we encourage panel sessions on specific topics of Iranian Studies from many fields of research, and secondly, that the AIS 2020 will not only accept papers, but also printed posters and pre-recorded digital posters that will be exhibited in our conference venue.

I very much look forward to welcoming you in Salamanca and wish you an inspiring AIS 2020 Iranian Studies Conference.

Yours,  
Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo

## NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION CONT'D

### Program Committee for AIS Biennial Conference 2020

I am pleased to report that our Program Chair, Miguel Angel Andres Toledo, has organized the program committee for our **conference** on August 25–28, 2020 at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Salamanca. We will be issuing a formal call for proposals later this month. The website will be open May 15 to receive proposals for individual papers, panels, round tables, and -for the first time- poster exhibits. The submission deadline is July 15, 2019. In the interim, please make sure your membership is up-to-date as your membership will need to be active in order for you to pre-register and submit your proposals.

I want to acknowledge that many more people offered to participate on the program committee than we could accommodate. Something tells me that spirit of volunteerism is going to translate into some wonderful pre-organized panels and roundtables for our Program Committee to consider.

Let me acknowledge and thank the members of AIS 2020 Program Committee in advance.

Best to all,  
Camron Michael Amin  
AIS President

List of Program Committee members:

Agnes Korn (CNRS, France), Amy Malek (College of Charleston), Anousha Sedighi (Portland State University), Antonio Panaino (University of Bologna), Carlo Cereti (University of Rome), Chiara Barbatì (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna), Claudine Gauthier (University of Bordeaux), Enrico Raffaelli (University of Toronto), Haila Manteghi (Westfälische Wilhelms Universität Münster), Jane Lewisohn (SOAS, London), Kevan Harris (UCLA), Maria Subtelny (University of Toronto), Matteo Compareti (Shaanxi Normal University, China), Mirjam Künkler (University of Göttingen), Mostafa Abedinifard (University of British Columbia), Nahid Siamdoust (Yale University), Peyman Jafari (University of Amsterdam), Shaul Shaked (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Touraj Daryaee (University of California, Irvine), Yuhan Vevaina (Oxford University)

Starting on May 15th, 2019, you will be able to submit your paper, panel, and roundtable proposals for AIS 2020.

Right now, you can update your membership, pre-register for the conference and review information about the conference site, the University of Salamanca, Spain. Remember, only current members who have pre-registered may submit proposals.

Here is a link to get started:

<https://associationforiranianstudies.org/conferences/2020>

### From the Editor of Iranian Studies

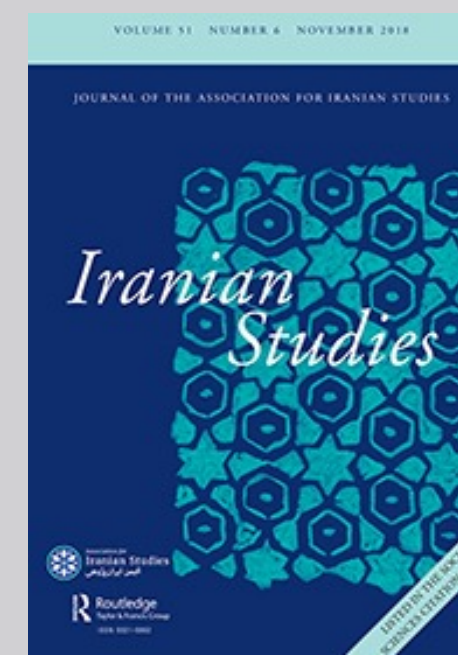
The *Iranian Studies* journal is currently in its fifty-second year of continuous publication, and with international distribution and recognition it is the leading academic periodical in the field of Iranian studies. The latest data provided by the publishers show the journal has received its highest Impact Factor to date. We owe this achievement to the journal's successive editorial teams whose commitment and dedicated hard work has helped the journal become the premier academic forum in the field, and to a promising pool of scholars worldwide whose contributions have expanded the field of Iranian studies in depth and scope.

The journal welcomes new additions to its core editorial team: Cameron Cross (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) as new Associate Editor for Classical Persian Literature; Hussein Banai (Indiana University, Bloomington) and Norma Clair Morrucci (University of Illinois, Chicago) jointly as Associate Editors in the general field of Social Sciences; and Domenico Ingenito (University of California, Los Angeles) and Aria Fani (University of California, Berkeley) as Book Review Editors respectively in Classical and Modern Persian Literature. Ali Akbar Mahdi, the journal's valued editorial colleague, has joined the general Editorial Board.

As of its last issue in 2018, *Iranian Studies* has added a new section dedicated to occasional contributions in the form of notes on primary source material and archival reports. These notes that may vary in length are intended to introduce to the scholarly community hitherto little known or altogether new material relevant to different aspects of Iranian studies. The material that are presented in these notes will be supported by a scholarly infrastructure in order to better introduce and contextualize their subject matter. The journal welcomes contributions by scholars to introduce various types of source material or archival reports relating to all aspects of Iranian studies.

Beginning with 2019, the print edition of the journal will be published as three double issues annually. In the new format the readers will find a better balance between diverse range of material from articles and book reviews to memorial notes and occasional reports on primary research material. Change in the format of the print edition, however, will not impact the regular publication of the journal's online edition.

Ali Gheissari  
Editor-in-Chief, *Iranian Studies*  
Department of History, University of San Diego  
<http://associationforiranianstudies.org/Journal>





## PROGRAM NEWS

### Iranian Studies at Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

Mateusz M. Kłagisz

In the autumnal *AIS Newsletter*, the first part of a research report on Iranian Studies at Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland, was published. At that time, a Kurdish Studies Section as well as the research project *Orientalia Polonica. Polish Traditions of Research on the Orient* were showcased. This time, as announced, the Afghan Studies Section will be depicted.

The history of Afghan studies in Krakow started in the 1960s when Wojciech Skalmowski, who held a PhD in linguistics from Humboldt University Berlin, at that time in the GDR, delivered several lectures on the grammar of the Pashto language. Unfortunately, his sojourn in Krakow was short-lived because he obtained a scholarship to travel to Iran. Due to the difficult political situation in Poland, he decided later to move to Belgium instead of returning to his native country and continued research on the Pashto language and literature there. Skalmowski was the first to translate Khushhal-khan Khattak (17th c.)—the forefather of classical Pashto literature—into Polish poetry—the forefather of classical Pashto literature.

Regular Pashto language classes started only when Jadwiga Pstrusińska, who studied in Afghanistan between 1973–6 at the Faculty of Philology and Humanities of the University of Kabul, returned to Poland in 1976. She had been teaching the Pashto and Dari languages, holding classes on the literature and cultures of Afghanistan until her retirement in 2011. At that time, she prepared, *inter alia*, a collection of Dari and Pashto texts dedicated to the students—it was a pioneering project that for a long time served students of Iranian Studies in Krakow as a basic source of their knowledge about the various literary traditions of Afghanistan. Jadwiga Pstrusińska also organised the Afghan Archive which consists of about 3,000 books, scientific/popular articles and magazines, political leaflets and posters, Afghan press and various materials published by the Afghan opposition in the 1980s.

Since 2007 the Afghan Studies Section has been represented by three people: Mateusz M. Kłagisz, who holds a PhD in linguistics, and two PhD students—Mikołaj Bolczyk and Khalil Ahmad Arab. Kłagisz conducts occasional Pashto classes and lectures on various issues related to the history of (pre)modern Afghanistan. His current research is devoted to propaganda posters printed by Afghan communists in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; the results have been presented in three articles published in the *Polish Journal of Arts and Culture* as well as during the *Afghanistan in Academia Workshop* (October 20th 2018, SOAS, London).

Mikołaj Bolczyk is preparing a PhD dissertation on Seyyed Baha'uddin Majruh and his masterpiece *Azhdaha-ye khodi* (Ego-Monsters) while Khalil Ahmad Arab is interested in modern Dari literature, especially Ziya-Siyamak Heravi, as well as animal studies. Both have presented their work during various conferences and seminars, *inter alia*, the St. Petersburg International Conference of *Afghan Studies* (St. Petersburg, Russia, 27–29 June 2017) and the *World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies* (Seville, Spain, 16–20 July 2018).

Although it is the smallest sections of the Department of Iranian Studies at Jagiellonian University, the Afghan Studies Section is involved in various scientific meetings and seminars as well as popular science events, such as celebrations of the *Nouruz*—Iranian new year—or the *Afghan Culture Week in Bytów* (10–14 October 2014).

### Iranian Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Iván Szántó

The Department of Iranian Studies of the Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, is the center of Persian linguistic and cultural studies in Hungary, and one of the main Central European institutions devoted to the research of Iran and the Persian-speaking world (including Afghanistan and Tajikistan). Its courses offer an introduction to classical and modern Persian languages, literature, linguistics and grammatical studies; regional history, historiography, art, and religions of the Pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. The programs encompass BA, MA, and PhD levels. Besides its educational tasks, the Department of Iranian Studies is also engaged in research, especially in Persian philology, linguistics, and art history, serving as the venue of scholarly gatherings, including the upcoming 15th Ernst Herzfeld Colloquium of Islamic Art and Archaeology (*Spaces and Frontiers of Islamic Art and Archaeology*, 4–6 July 2019).

Mazda Publishers now publishes the first series in Kurdish Studies to be established in the United States and elsewhere.

For more information, see

<http://www.mazdapublishers.com/series/bibliotheca-iranica-kurdish-studies-series>

## LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

### Pre-1979 Revolution Iranian Political Pamphlet Collection

The University of Oklahoma has acquired a substantial collection of primary source material relating to the 1979 Iranian revolution. The collection comprises approximately three hundred items, mostly consisting of pamphlets and short political tracts produced by intellectuals, student activists, and political parties working to overthrow the Pahlavi monarchy. Much of the material was printed and circulated by leftist and Islamist opposition groups residing in Europe and North America during the 1960s and 1970s. The bulk of the material is in Persian. Some items in the collection are also in English, French, and Arabic. Among the Persian language sources are numerous translations from material originally in Russian, German, French, Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Collectively, the material illustrates the global currents of thought and politics that shaped much of the anti-Shah activism in the years preceding the 1979 revolution. While many of the items in this collection are unique, the “OU Pre-1979 Revolution Iranian Political Pamphlet Collection” is intended to supplement the substantial collections housed at other libraries and research institutions, such as the “Iranian Political Opposition Literature Collection” at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, the University of Manchester’s “Nashriyah: digital Iranian history” archive, and material held at Amsterdam’s International Institute for Social History. Smaller collections and individual items may also be found at other major research libraries.

The collection is housed at the University of Oklahoma’s Bizzell Memorial Library.

This [link](#) provides for more information, including a research guide and PDF catalogue of the collection.

### *DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies*

The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies DĀNESH is a peer-reviewed undergraduate journal, edited by a team of students at the University of Oklahoma.

Since its founding in 2016, DĀNESH has been dedicated to highlighting the research of a growing undergraduate program in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

The current issue is available [here](#).

### Special Journal Issue: The 40th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution

The *Michigan Quarterly Review*, the flagship literary journal of the University of Michigan, is releasing a special *Spring 2019* issue focused on Iran to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution. The issue is guest-edited by scholar, author, and University of Michigan professor of Iranian History and Culture *Kathryn Babayan*.

“Revolutions,” writes Babayan, “are extraordinary events; they proclaim a decisive historical moment that simultaneously projects a new future and demands a reinterpretation of the past. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was such a moment.” Babayan worked closely with the MQR team to bring together “Glimpses of lives scattered across social classes, ethnicities and continents,” inspired by a “common desire to grapple with the aftermath of the revolution.”

This issue was conceived of when *Khaled Mattawa*, MQR’s Editor-in-Chief, entered into conversation with Babayan about the degree to which Iranian literature “has not gained the international attention it merits.” Mattawa noted that “Being an enemy nation, Iran, at least in the United States, is seen through a narrow prism that limits what is expected of Iranian culture.”

The Spring 2019 issue of MQR includes new fiction and poetry from the Iranian diaspora as well as translations of work from emerging and notable writers in Iran. Poets from the Iranian canon, including Sohrab Sepehri, Qeydar Aminpur, Reza Shafi’i Kadkani, and Sayyed Ali Salehi share space with poets from the diaspora such as Roger Sedarat, Fatemeh Shams, Amir Safi and Leila Emery. Short fiction from Hossein Mortezaeian Abkenar and Nilofar Shidmehr appear alongside essays from M.R. Ghanoonparvar, Salar Abdoh, and Amy Motlagh as well as translations from scholars Franklin Lewis and Dick Davis.

In addition to the print journal, a special folio of writing on Iran is now available at MQR Online. This work includes *an interview with the Iranian muralist, and MQR cover artist, Mehdi Ghadyanloo*, a conversation between celebrated translators Ilan Stavans and Sara Khalili, and an interview with critically-acclaimed writer Porochista Khakpour.

On April 23rd the issue will launch at Literati Bookstore in Ann Arbor with readings from contributors Mason Jabbari and Shahla Farghadani, as well as MQR staff.

As we increasingly hear Iran mentioned in the nightly news we need, more than ever, texts that challenge our assumptions and, as Mattawa says in the forward for this issue, “attempt to render Iranian life in its complexity and life-affirming resilience.” For inquiries about this issue and for bulk orders please email us [mqr@umich.edu](mailto:mqr@umich.edu)





## RESEARCH REPORT

### Tracing Woodworkers' Families in Fifteenth-Century Mazandaran (Iran)

Sandra Aube (CNRS, Paris)

The province of Mazandaran (Northern Iran) houses a corpus of medieval mausoleums associated with a substantial group of woodworks, chiefly wooden doors and cenotaphs. Dated to the period between 1420 and 1510, many bear the signature of a woodworker (or “carpenter,” *najjār*). About fifty wooden pieces have been identified, kept in situ or scattered in museums' collections.

The woodworkers' milieu in medieval Iran is barely known. Unlike calligraphers or architects, woodworkers usually do not appear in biographical or other Persian sources. Many wooden works of art have now vanished, and woodworkers' corporations have been little studied. In this context, the significant amount of woodworkers' signatures found in fifteenth-century Mazandaran deserves to be carefully analyzed. This remarkable corpus provides new perspectives and suggests that the corporation benefited from an improved status during this period. Interestingly, this repertoire includes names that are occasionally repeated, constituting an opening to reconstitute a craftsman's career, while the onomastics make it possible to identify families of woodworkers.

I have recently traced two of these families in two articles: (a) “Skills and Style in Heritage: The Woodworker Fakhr al-Dīn and his Son ‘Alī in the Mazandaran (Iran, ca. 1440-1500),”<sup>1</sup> and (b) “Family Legacy Versus Regional Style: Tracing Three Generations of Woodworkers in Māzandarān (Iran, ca. 1460s-1500s)”<sup>2</sup>. The composition of these lineages can be summed up as follows:

(a) Regarding the first family studied, we are able to establish three generations of masters (*ostād*), spanning from ca. 1440 to 1500. Ostād Fakhr al-Din b. Ostād ‘Ali [*Generation 2*] was a woodworker active around the 1440s in Sāri, where he signed a wooden door for the Emāmzāde Yāhyā. According to his name, his father was also a craftsman (Ostād ‘Ali, [*Generation 1*]), whose work remains unknown.

Fakhr al-Din's son is named Ostād ‘Ali b. Ostād Fakhr al-Din b. Ostād ‘Ali Najjār [*Generation 3*] – after the name of his grandfather. He is known for having worked in Bābol (for the mausoleum of Solṭān Moḥammad Ṭāḥer b. Musā) and in Bābolsar (Ebrāhim Abu Javāb Mausoleum). The two wooden doors he signed document a career of at least 30 years, between 876/1471-2 and 906/1500.

Another connection might be established with Ostād Moḥammad b. Ostād ‘Ali Najjār [belonging to *Generation 2*], supposedly a brother of Fakhr al-Din. His professional activity is recorded at least between 841/1437 and 858/1454, which corresponds roughly to the same period as his brother's career. In 841/1437, he signed a wooden door for Ebrāhim Abu Javāb Mausoleum in Bābolsar, that is to say, at the same place where his nephew Ostād ‘Ali worked sixty-five years later.

(b) The second family of woodworkers that I studied also spans three generations (from ca. 1460s to 1500s). Ostād Aḥmad Najjār b. Ḥosayn-e Sarāvi constitutes the earliest stage of this lineage [*Generation 1*]. He is recorded for having worked several times in Bābol, on the Emāmzāde of Qāsem b. Musā al-Kāẓem, between 870/1465 and 888/1483.

At least two of his sons became woodworkers as well [*Generation 2*]. One is Shams al-Din b. Ostād Aḥmad Najjār-e Sāri, whose name is associated with two wooden doors made in Bābolsar (for the mausoleum of Bibi Sokine), and with two wooden cenotaphs, one being made in Sāri (for the Emāmzāde of ‘Abbās). His other son is Ḥosayn b. Ostād Aḥmad Najjār-e Sāri Aḥmad Najjār. He is known for having made double doors between 873/1468 and 890/1485, in Limrāsk (Emāmzāde Boland Emām), Sāri (mausoleum of Shāhzāde Ḥosayn), and in Bābol in the very same monument where his father had already worked prior him.

Ḥosayn's son constitutes the last stage of this lineage [*Generation 3*]. Moḥammad b. Ostād Ḥosayn Najjār-e Sāri is identified through a single piece of work made during his youthful career (894/1488-1489): a wooden cenotaph kept in the mausoleum of Shāhzāde Ḥosayn, in Sāri, that is to say, in the same place where his father already worked. It appears that, besides a legacy of skills, these two lineages of craftsmen assume also a legacy of working places.

Wooden door,  
mausoleum of Shāhzāde  
Ḥoseyn, Sāri.

Photo:  
Sandra Aube 2018



Cenotaph, mausoleum of  
Shāhzāde Ḥoseyn, Sāri.

Photo: Sandra Aube 2018



<sup>1</sup> in: *Channels of Transmission. Family and Professional Lineages in the Early Modern Middle East*, S. Aube and M. Szuppe (eds.) [Eurasian Studies Special Issue, 15/2, 2017], p. 283-303.

<sup>2</sup> forthcoming in: *Families, Authority and Knowledge in the Early Modern Middle East. Dynamics of Transmission (15th-17th c.)*, Ch. Werner, M. Szuppe et al. (eds.).



## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

While medieval woodworks from Iran have mostly been lost and woodworkers remain anonymous, these lineages are of great interest for understanding the legacy of a master, as it was passed on to his son(s), journeymen, and assistant(s). In some cases, the remaining pieces of work also offer a rare opportunity to analyze the evolution of a single woodworker over the course of his professional life.

In this way, the two aforementioned articles evidenced the strong homogeneity that prevailed within the decorative repertoire employed among each lineage – presumably family workshops. These two lineages give examples of repeated compositions, design and of course technique. Fashionable models evolved little and were transmitted over generations. Developing an individual artistic style was clearly not the purpose of artistic expression in this context. But this coherent style is incontestably impregnated by fifteenth-century regional trends. Several of the decorative models observed were transmitted across Mazandaran from one workshop to another. Most mazandarani woodworks known from this period share a similar repertoire, illustrated – among other examples – by a specific kind of friezes of interlaced braids with dots, by peculiar “fishscale” background decorations, or, for example, by a particular type of heart-shaped trefoils or quatrefoils. These forms are not found in Timurid or Turkmen repertoires. Despite some features that occasionally appear to be more specific to some family ateliers, the typology developed on mazandarani woodworks consequently owes more to a regional style than to a workshop.

A strong regional style prevails also for funerary architecture in fifteenth-century Mazandaran. The monuments where woodworks were initially standing present a consistent typology. Around fifty mausoleums have already been identified. Three kind of plans are observable: the square-type<sup>3</sup>, the octagonal-type<sup>4</sup>, and the circle-type. But all these mausoleums share the same architectural typology: a centered-plan, blind arches, a pyramidal roof with a very specific muqarnas cornice, and discreet light-blue tile decorations. Interestingly, this architectural model is so closely repeated that it is sometimes possible to find several mausoleums sharing exactly the same plan (including same size and proportions). This is illustrated, for instance, with the square-type model that is minutely repeated in the plans of the Gonbad-e Gabri in Āmol, the Zayn al-Ābedin Mausoleum in Sāri and the Emāmzāde ‘Abd al-Šāleh in Marzrud (all dated to the fifteenth-century). The specific Mazandarani typology is not found in other regions. Some centered mausoleums with pyramidal roof remain, for instance, in the neighboring region of Gilan, but with a much more simple elevation and without the specific muqarnas cornice and decorations.

<sup>3</sup> See its presentation in Sandra Aube, “Le mausolée Zayn al-Ābedin à Sāri: Contribution à l’étude des tours-tombeaux du Māzanderān au XVe siècle,” *Studia Iranica* 44/1 (2015): 33-54.

<sup>4</sup> See Sandra Aube, “Le mausolée d’Āqā Shāh Bāluzāde à Āhudasht (Iran). Architecture et décors des structures funéraires dans le Māzanderān au XVe siècle,” *Studia Iranica* 47/2 (2018) [forthcoming].



Left:  
Mausoleum of Zayn al-Ābedin, Sāri

Right:  
Mausoleum of Āqā Shāh Bāluzāde,  
Āhudasht.

Photos: Sandra Aube 2014

The Timurid or Turkmen architectures also do not feature this precise architectural typology. The fifteenth-century Mazandarani type of mausoleums is thus very distinctive. Both Mazandarani wooden works of art and architecture clearly present strong regional features all along the fifteenth century.

Ongoing research in this area still has a lot to discover. The architectural typology deserves to be minutely analyzed. The position and extension of the three types of plans across Mazandaran sketch a network of regional workshops. Concerning wooden works of art, many inscriptions still have to be transcribed and translated, in order to complete an important repertoire of woodworkers in Mazandaran during the fifteenth century. Other lineages of woodworkers have to be studied. Furthermore, much complementary woodworks are waiting to be identified. I have not discussed one the difficulties of such a study, which is the state of preservation of these mausoleums (many having been heavily restored) and the scattering of their previously associated woodworks. Despite this fact, the ongoing study of fifteenth-century woodworks in Mazandaran already sheds light on a new regional corpus, developing its own typology. The number of woodworkers’ signatures is remarkable, allowing the study of an outstanding network of woodworkers with family lineages. Medieval craftsmen have long been considered to have had a rather modest social status and to have remained mostly anonymous. In some ways, the remarkable prevalence of Mazandarani woodworkers’ signatures might illustrate the social recognition of the corporation during this period.

This research was conducted within the research program DYNTRAN: “Dynamics of Transmission: Families, Authority and Knowledge in the Early Modern Middle East (15th-17th centuries),” a collaborative project of the CNRS Mondes iranien et indien and the Philipps Universität Marburg, with the partnership of the Institut français d’archéologie orientale (IFAO, Cairo). It was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) (2015-2018, ANR FRAL-14-009-01).



## RESEARCH REPORT

### Amulets from Early Islamic Iran

Sarah Kiyanrad (University of Heidelberg, Germany)

Some eighty years after the publication of Bess Allen Donaldson's pathbreaking monograph *The Wild Rue*, which devotes a chapter to "Talismans and Signs", the research in Iranian amulets is still in its infancy. While a number of studies on aspects of both pre-Islamic and Islamic amulet culture(s) in Iran has appeared since then,<sup>1</sup> a "History of Iranian Amulets" is still lacking – if such an undertaking is actually possible and desirable, given the diversity of the field – and we are in great need of further in-depth analyses of regionally or historically confined amulet environments.

Although the *material turn* has left its imprint on Iranian Studies, it is a major challenge, particularly in historical research, to bring together descriptions of objects in written sources and the evidence provided by remaining artifacts (and, if acquired in *situ*, their archaeological contexts). One usually is either trained as a historian or an archeologist and thus lacking one set of requisite skills necessary to the investigation of a given text or object (or: text-bearing object). Besides, it should also be mentioned that Iranian amulet culture was never confined to only (pre-Islamic) Zoroastrian/Mazdean or later Islamicate amulet culture respectively, but literally merged a large number of traditions and languages, while at the same time allowing for distinct amulet subcultures. Moreover, many objects hitherto at our disposal had been purchased on the art market and are of unknown provenance, and this situation is aggravated by a lack of editions (of both the objects' inscriptions and manuals).

<sup>1</sup> For example: A. D. H. Bivar, "A Parthian Amulet," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London Vol. 30, No. 3 (1967), 512–525; Philippe Gignoux, *Incantations magiques syriaques*, Louvain, 1987; P. O. Harper et al., "A Seal-Amulet of the Sasanian Era: Imagery and Typology, the Inscription, and Technical Comments," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute New Series*, Vol. 6 (1992), 43–58; Shaked, "Notes on the Pahlavi Amulet and Sasanian Courts of Law," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute New Series*, Vol. 7, *Iranian Studies in Honor of A. D. H. Bivar* (1993), 165–172; Rika Gyselen, *Sceaux magiques en Iran sassanide*, Paris, 1995; Christa Müller-Kessler, "A Mandaic Gold Amulet in the British Museum," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* No. 311 (Aug., 1998), 83–88; Kamyar Abdi, "Bes in the Achaemenid Empire," *Ars Orientalis* 29 (1999), 111+113–140; idem, "Notes on the Iranianization of Bes in the Achaemenid Empire," *Ars Orientalis* 32, *Medes and Persians: Reflections on Elusive Empires* (2002), 133–162; Sheila S. Blair, "An Amulet from Afsharid Iran," *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* Vol. 59, *Focus on the Collections* (2001), 85–102; Venetia Porter and Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, "Silberamulette mit Inschriften aus Iran und Afghanistan," in: Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, ed., *Die Aura des Alif. Schriftkunst im Islam*, München et al., 2010, 192–209; Ziva Vesel, "Talismans from the Iranian World: A Millenary Tradition," in Pedram Khosronejad, ed., *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism. Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, New York, 2012, 254–275; Dāriyūsh Raḥmānīyān and Zahrā Ḥātāmī, "Siḥr va jādū, ṭilism va ta'wīdh, va dunyā-yi zanān dar 'aṣr-i qājār," *Justārḥā-yi tārikhī* 3/2 (1391), 27–44; Ḥamīd-Riḏā Khvārazmī and Ḥusain-Allāh Tavakullī, "Ṭilism va ṭilism-shikanī dar farhang-i 'amma-yi Jibāl-bāriz-i Jīruft," *Farhang va adabīyāt-i 'amma* 5/16 (1396), 137–160; Sarah Kiyanrad, "Sasanian amulet practices and their survival in Islamic Iran and beyond," *Der Islam* 95 (2018), 65–90; Tobias Nünlist, "Devotion and Protection: Four Amuletic Scrolls from Safavid Persia," in: Yuka Kadoi, ed., *Persian Art: Image-Making in Eurasia*, Edinburgh, 2018, 78–101.

Amulets are still being perceived in some publications as forming a part of 'magic', a notion that somewhat serves as a terminological category for 'strange' practices (and what is considered as strange is, of course, both influenced by cultural conceptions of the 'normal' and the eye of the beholder). Having said that, it has been demonstrated that 'magic' is a "floating signifier" and while we can of course analyze "first-order" discourses on magic and should do so, the term itself is no appropriate "second order" scientific category.<sup>2</sup>

In the following, I will briefly introduce some findings about amulet culture in Early Islamic Iran.<sup>3</sup> These are based on written sources as well as 155 script-bearing amulets (pendants [66], amulet cases [86] and amulet scrolls [3]) dating from the 8th through early 13th century CE and kept in museums and collections mostly in Europe and the United States – and thus representing doubtlessly only a very small, but still relevant percentage of what has come down to us. As I am no archeologist, I have usually relied on the information supplied on the artifacts' provenience and dating. Furthermore, for sake of feasibility, I decided to focus on specimens inscribed in Arabic and/or Persian. Last but not least, although lapidaries elaborate on properties ascribed to certain gems, it is usually hard to judge whether a given, non-script-bearing object was used as amulet, mere adornment, or fulfilled one of countless other uses... (hence the restriction to script-bearing artifacts; but since we are no more able to observe how a person used a given object, here too one can only talk about a likely possibility of amuletic use – based on cultural patterns of amulet usage).

To some extent in contrast to pre-Islamic specimens, remaining Arabic and Persian amulets from Early Islamic Iran only seldomly reveal in their text how they were denoted; but one observes a whole array of different notions in religious, geographical, historical, lexicographical writings etc. (while unfortunately their divides often remain unclear). Among the 36 terms used to denote amulets we find for example *'azīma*, *chishm-panām*, *ḥadīd*, and *ta'līqa*. In general, the terms either mirror the objects' materiality (*ḥadīd*), their function/mode of action (*'azīma*, *chishm-panām*) or the way of wearing them (*ta'līqa*). Furthermore, some notions also point to the phenomenon of cultural transfer and (terminological) continuities in Iranian amulet culture. For instance, *apsūn/afsūn* and *nīrang/nīranj* in the Early Islamic centuries could be used in order to refer to amulets. These last notions also reflect the oral-written continuum: both a spoken prayer and a written amulet could be referred to as *nīrang*, for example. This aspect furthermore indicates that amulets – small objects, usually worn on the body and effective by mediation of a higher power – were well conceived as being part of religious practice.

<sup>2</sup> Bernd-Christian Otto, "Magie im Islam. Eine diskursgeschichtliche Perspektive," in: Sebastian Günther and Dorothee Pielow, eds., *Die Geheimnisse der oberen und der unteren Welt. Magie im Islam zwischen Glaube und Wissenschaft*, Leiden/Boston, 2019, 517–519.

<sup>3</sup> As examined in my PhD thesis, published under the title *Gesundheit und Glück für seinen Besitzer. Schrifttragende Amulette im islamzeitlichen Iran (bis 1258)*, Wiesbaden, 2017.

## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

It comes as no surprise then that during the investigated centuries, many script-bearing amulets contain Qur'anic verses or even whole surahs. The last three surahs – actually quite often surah CXII, *al-Ikhlāṣ* – are found very frequently on amulets. Surah CXII is, for example, the only surah traceable on amulet cases in our sample (five specimens). Other common textual elements are (all or a number of) the 99 names of God (*al-malik*, for instance), personal names (both of the wearer or producer), blessing formulae, often already pointing to a kind of standardized, non-personalized amulet production (e.g. *al-salāma wa-l-sā'ada li-ṣāhibihī*), the *shahāda*, names of the zodiac, and deliberately applied Pseudo-script as well as undeliberately applied degenerated script (which probably hints at the scribe having copied the text from some manual or model). Pseudo-script is an element considered to be especially effective: strange signs and script, no longer understandable presumably even for the producers were thought to be endowed with a special efficacy. We hence often encounter the idea of deploying ancient scripts such as Syriac or Hebrew on the amulets, or for example *charaktes* / *Brillenbuchstaben* / the Seven Seals. Even well-known inscriptions, for example the *shahāda* with its numerous *alifs* and *lāms*, occasionally were alienated on amulets and reduced to vertical strokes (Fig. 1) – was this a way of rendering the inscription even more effective or simply due to the respective copyist, who was not quite acquainted with the script, or did he make use of an already degenerated “master copy”?

Apart from the textual content, amulets can contain iconographic elements such as borders/lines, floral and vegetal decoration, animals (birds, lions, dogs etc.) and humans. The form of the object itself may also be relevant to the intended purpose; a fish shaped amulet, for instance, could be an indication of an alleged wish for fertility. Although manuals, elaborating either on the qualities of Qur'anic verses (*khawāṣṣ al-āyāt*) or on amulets in general (such as al-Būnī's [d. 1225] famous *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*) can give a hint as to the function of amulets with certain verses on them, and although different sources – from poetry to historiography – tell us a lot about potential functions of amulets, unless an amulet does not indicate its proper function, we can often only guess what it was made for. Here, amulet scrolls offer invaluable help, since they often precisely elaborate on their functions – thanks to the large space available (scrolls can measure more than 10 meters in length). The number of amulet scrolls hitherto attributed to pre-Mongol Iran with certainty is very small; yet, examples from neighboring cultures can give insight into the diverse aims these multifunction amulets were intended to serve (purposes also being found in amulet manuals). For example, a block-print amulet, probably from Egypt, has the following functions written on it:<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Karl R. Schaefer, *Enigmatic Charms. Medieval Block Printed Amulets in American and European Libraries and Museums*, Leiden/Boston, 2006, 105–106 (Arabic), 109 (English translation).

This is a magnificent amulet [hijāb] / and the impervious fortress that suffices, by the grace / of Allah, the Sublime, for the eye and the vision, / for fever, for rash, migraine, / beatings, for asthma, / splenitis, difficulty in childbirth, / crying children, female jinn; / for love, for obedience, for acceptance; / for admission to (the presence of) kings / and notables; for difficulty in speaking, / for thwarting of witchcraft and for the resolution of difficulties; / and for the liberation of prisoners and for procuring / livelihood; for the drawing of lots / and for the casting of arrows; for the racing / of horses; for travel in daytime / and by night; for every illness and symptom.

The amulet displays a range of different application fields (diseases, childbirth, upbringing, love, obedience, acceptance, fight against witchcraft, gambling, travel) which demonstrate that such an object could be used by men and women likewise. The fact that we find similar lists of purposes on later Iranian artifacts, dating for example to the Safavid era,<sup>5</sup> makes it highly probable that these are common aims amulets addressed not only in theory (as mirrored in manuals) but also in practice.

On the basis of manuals, certain textual elements typical of amulets can be identified: Especially longer amulet texts mention 1) the client; 2) the purpose; they 3) repeatedly evoke God; and 4) feature a certain formula at the beginning/end. However, small size amulets made from metal or stone usually display only one or two of these elements.

The remaining Early Islamic amulets are made from quite diverse materials such as stone, metal, and paper. Whereas for example Mandaean scrolls were usually fabricated from lead or gold, the producers of Arabic and Persian specimens preferred paper and parchment. While manuals often instruct the reader to use sophisticated materials, such as gazelle parchment or silk, respective specimens have seldomly come down to us. All investigated amulet cases consist of metal (Fig. 2), most of them of gold (50 objects). The three amulet scrolls are made from paper. Most amulet pendants, too, consist of metal, though five specimens are carved from stone. Four of these stone pendants imitate the form of cylindrical amulet cases. Besides the technical aspects of amulet production (revealed by the objects themselves), one can trace the rituals of amulet production in written sources.

<sup>5</sup> A Safavid amulet scroll (Nünlist 2018, 90) gives its purposes in Persian; among them are the warding off the plague, animals and ferocious beasts, the Evil Eye, defamers, enviers, and calamities, as well as the wish for fortune, help to be received by a high-ranking person, and luck in war against the unbelievers.

Fig. 1: Silver pendant;  
Nishapur, 10th c.; diam. 1.9 cm

Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
40.170.246





## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

Among the important determining factors for the production of an effective amulet (obviously, not all amulets helped the wearer to reach his/her aim, thus there must have been reasons for the failure) were the identification of an appropriate time (day, hour, astrological constellations) and place; a state of ritual purity, recitations, and fumigations. Certainly not everybody had the financial means to approach a professional amulet scribe commanding the wittiest techniques; those who did not had to make do with prefabricated amulets available on the bazaar or ask some literate person to write down verses s/he considered effective. Once a temporarily employed amulet had met its purpose – or failed to do so – amulets had to be disposed. Although their physical destruction was the best option to render them “harmless”, we may imagine that this often was not the first choice, because, as said before, many amulets contained religious inscriptions. As a result, they were often either buried or deposited in a safe place.

Despite all obstacles mentioned above, it is worthwhile researching Iranian amulet cultures further. First of all, amulets have the potential to contribute to the writing of a history of the subaltern – where other texts keep silent about the needs and sorrows of “ordinary people”, certain amulets may tell history from below. Since life confronted humans with numerous challenges, amulets meeting different purposes virtually accompanied people (of course, not *all* people) from the cradle to the grave; they reflect on temporary hardships, feared sicknesses, and unfulfilled desires. Changes in amulet culture display altering historical circumstances. This statement is trivial, but its implications become vivid when observing, for example, a shift from parchment to paper as starting material, or a replacement and redefinition of pre-Islamic iconographies with Islamic symbols. Furthermore, new techniques, such as the block print, allowed for changes in amulet production and thus the textual content of the objects. One could also dwell on the socio-economic aspect of amulet production, with a continuum of cheap ready-to-wear objects purchasable on the bazaar on the one hand, and highly professionalized and personalized objects, written by amulet experts on the other hand – and the respective power relations, as well as the fear of malicious amulets fabricated by hostile persons, which had to be countered with other amulets time and again (a phenomenon recently coined as “economy of fear”)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Johanna Schott, “Ökonomie der Angst. Nordafrikanische und westafrikanische Magie im Vergleich,” in: Sebastian Günther and Dorothee Pielow, eds., *Die Geheimnisse der oberen und der unteren Welt. Magie im Islam zwischen Glaube und Wissenschaft*, Leiden/Boston, 2019, 476–511.

Fig. 2: Silver amulet case;  
Iran, 11th c.; 3.2 x 2.9 cm

*Metropolitan Museum of Art,*  
1978.415



The **HaftCraft Music Ensemble**, made up of members of the Belgian National Orchestra is crowdfunding its new CD featuring *Compositions by Iranian Composers*, including Mahdis Golzar Kashani (The Little Black Fish, for string quartet and bassoon), Ali Radman (Masnavi, for bassoon, string quartet, and soprano), Idin Mofakham (Homage A'Abolhasan Saba, for duo violin and cello), Mahdis Golzar Kashani (This is Crime / Jorm In Ast, for bassoon, string quartet and soprano), Vahid Taremi (Khamoosh, for string quartet), Vahid Taremi (“O People” for bassoon, string quartet, and soprano), Bahram Osqueezadeh (Changi, for bassoon, string quartet, and soprano).

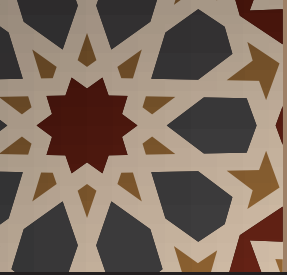
Please consider donating at:

<https://www.voordekunst.nl/projecten/6010-debuut-cd-variations-on-a-persian-theme-1>

**Iranian Studies Vol. 52, Number 1, May 2019** has been published:  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cist20/current>.

AIS members are able to access the current as well as all back issues of the journal by logging into their membership account and visiting Publications/Journal/Journal Archives.





# TAQ KASRA

*Wonder of Architecture*

The first-ever documentary film on the largest brick vault in the world  
and a symbol of the Persian Empire in the Sasanian era (221-654 AD)



## “TAQ KASRA: WONDER OF ARCHITECTURE” ON DVD

“Taq Kasra: Wonder of Architecture” is the first-ever documentary film on the world’s largest brick vault. Taq Kasra, also called the Archway of Khosrow, was built between the 3rd and 6th century BCE as a Sasanian-era Persian monument. It is the only visible remaining structure of the ancient city of Ctesiphon, located in today’s Iraq, which served as a royal capital of the Persian Empire in the Parthian and Sasanian eras for over eight hundred years, and remained the capital of the Sasanian Empire until the Muslim conquest of Persia in 651 AD.

Taq Kasra was in serious danger of ISIS attacks in 2014–16 and this was the main motivation for documentary-maker Pejman Akbarzadeh, based in the Netherlands, to travel to Iraq at that time and film the arch before it would potentially be destroyed.

The 30-minute documentary explores various aspects of the site and also portrays the enormous impact of the 20th-century wars and ideological policies on this ancient structure. The film is produced by the “Persian-Dutch Network”, funded by the Soudavar Memorial and Toos Foundations.

10 Internationally recognised scholars and architects are interviewed in the film (in order of appearance): Mr. Hossein Amanat, Persian-Canadian architect; Prof. Ed Keall, former director of Royal Ontario Museum’s Near Eastern Department; Prof. Touraj Daryaee, director of the Center for Persian Studies at the University of California; Dr. Ute Franke, State Museums of Berlin; Dr. Vesta Sarkhosh-Curtis, British Museum; Dr. Ali Mozaffari, Australian Research Council, Deakin University; Dr. Mahmoud Mullakhalaf, Iraqi Ambassador to UNESCO; Dr. Qais Huseen Rasheed, Head of Iraqi State Board of Antiquities; Dr. Miroslav Zeman, ProjektyZeman, Prague; and Prof. Robert Hillenbrand, University of Edinburgh.

The film premiered at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS) in February 2018 and subsequently screened at various international conferences, museums and universities including the Smithsonian Institution’s Freer/Sackler Gallery in Washington DC, Penn Museum, Yale University, the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne and the 12th Conference of the Iranian Studies Association at UC Irvine.

Cited as an “Impressive film” by the BBC Persian Service, the film is essential for viewers interested in Ancient Near Eastern, Persian and Sasanian history, art, archaeology or architecture. Please consider organizing a screening in your community, university or museum.

More at [www.TaqKasra.com](http://www.TaqKasra.com)

## THE PERSIAN REGION OF LARISTAN AND ITS ROLE IN INDO-AFRICAN CULTURAL TRANSFERS

*Iván Szántó, Department of Iranian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest)*

This research project attempts to re-evaluate the intermediary role of the so-called Kazaruniya, a religious organization with a strong economic leverage in the Indian Ocean trade, during its heyday in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Dating back to the last decades of the first millennium CE, this Sufi order came into being in Kazarun, a town on the crossroads between the Southern Iranian mainland and the Persian Gulf. While its early history remains obscure, it seems to have played an active role in the conversion of local Zoroastrians to Islam and later in the spread of Islam in South Asia and beyond, by virtue of its diffusion along the land and maritime routes linking Iran with the Indian Ocean coasts. After the Mongol conquest of Iran, the center of gravity of the order shifted to India, but its links to Kazarun via Laristan remained vital.



Tomb of Shaykh Umar al-Kazaruni, ca. 734-1333.  
Friday Mosque, Khambhat, Gujarat, India.

Photograph Szalome Szántó





## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

By drawing attention to a group of portable architectural elements originating from Khambhat, Gujarat, and scattered between Khambhat, Lar, Mogadishu, Kilwa, and Southeast Asia, one may recontextualize the material within the network of the Kazaruni order. It can be suggested that the Indian and Iranian occurrences of these prestigious marble items frequently overlap with the documented branches of this institution; and, to further develop this postulation, it is reasonable to suggest that in those African locations where similar objects are attested without any affiliation, such vestiges may be all that is left of an otherwise vanished Swahili presence of the Kazaruniya. This assumption is substantiated by written accounts which are our main sources about the activities of the order and whose authors outline a remarkably close itinerary to the distribution of this type of artwork. In other words, even in the absence of details regarding the living conditions of African seafarers, our textual sources may implicitly refer to the indispensability of the Kazaruni order in overseas travel. Conversely, this suggestion may explain and contextualize the concomitant East African availability of this portable architecture the prestige of which was otherwise unparalleled in the region, and this may substantiate the more generalized statements in earlier literature about late Mediaeval art patronage across the Indian Ocean.

A Kashan luster ceramic mihrab, incorporated in the Gujarati marble carving at Mogadishu, Somalia, adds an extra layer to these maritime convergences. Together with a very similar mihrab from Lar (now in Shiraz), it points to the intermediary role of the Kazarun-Laristan-Hormuz link in the Gujarat-East Africa network. Resident Gujarati merchants in Lar, probably affiliated to the Kazaruniya, may have shipped such ensembles from Iran to Africa. In an earlier contribution by the present author, a group of mid-fourteenth-century (Inju) brass bowls have also been linked to the same religious order. At this period, the Mongols may have pushed the main thrust of Kazaruni activity out of Iran, strengthening its Gujarati leg, but by the late Ilkhanid "Pax Mongolica", especially during the Inju Dynasty of Fars province, a new equilibrium is created whereby an Iranian renaissance lured many Gujarati businesses back to Iran. The name of 'Abu Ishaq Inju (1343-1357), invoking 'Abu Ishaq Kazaruni (963-1035), the founder of the order, is symbolic in this respect.



Marble gravestone from the Sul tans' Cemetery, 14th century, Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania, Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum.

Photo: Ethnologisches Museum

## RESEARCH REPORT

### Escape from Isolation: Iran-Malaysia Relations during the Mahathir Years, 1981-2003

Rowena Abdul Razak, University of Oxford



Rouhani and Mahathir discuss bilateral ties at the UN General Assembly in New York, September 2018

In July 2016 during an interview with the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA), Mahathir Mohammad (not in government at that time) spoke of the good relations of his country with Iran, citing the many Iranians living in Malaysia as an indicator.<sup>1</sup> A majority-Sunni nation that considers Shi'ism a heresy does not seem the likeliest of havens for Iranians. And yet, Malaysia and Iran have enjoyed close relations since the 1979 revolution. In October 2016, Iranian President Hasan Rouhani paid an official visit to then Prime Minister Najib Razak in Malaysia, with the promise of deepening bilateral trade ties. Every Iranian President since Hashemi Rafsanjani's visit in 1994, has made an official visit to Malaysia.

What explains the "special relationship" between the two nations? In the early 1980s, soon after the revolution overthrew the Shah, the new republic's interests and world views converged with Malaysia's in an almost serendipitous way. Under Mahathir's premiership at the time (1981-2003), Malaysia, a former British colony, underwent an identity makeover, using rhetoric akin to the Islamic Republic's vision of its own political future. But this relationship that had roots in anti-Western posturing, would develop into a deeper connection, primarily in the field of trade and economic cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> Siavash Edalat, "ISNA Exclusive interview with Mahathir Mohammad," *Iranian Students' News Agency*, 9 July 2016, Accessed 10 May 2017, <http://en.isna.ir/news/95040110208/ISNA-exclusive-interview-with-Mahathir-Mohammad>

## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

In an academic environment that is mainly interested in Iran's relations with bigger powers, an examination of its relationship with smaller nations like Malaysia imparts a fuller picture of Iran's position in the world.<sup>2</sup> This research report will begin with a discussion of why the relationship evolved to become relatively close in the first place, which will then be followed by an examination of how it consolidated, diplomatically and economically. I will then address the question of the two countries' relationship in light of the Sunni-Shi'a schism, where ultimately political and economic benefits outweighed sectarian considerations. The ability of Iran to enjoy a close relationship with a Sunni nation like Malaysia raises the question whether its rivalry with its Arab neighbours is perhaps more regional than sectarian, allowing the Republic to develop stronger ties with the non-Arab Islamic world. This at least appears to be the case especially in two instances: in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution and after 9/11.

### Malaysia's Foreign Policy under Mahathir (1981-2003)

One of the reasons why the bilateral relationship developed relatively closely during the Mahathir years, was his decision to embrace the Islamic Republic, and his ability even to ride on the popularity of the Iranian revolution in Malaysia. This is not to say that there has not been tension between the two nations, especially with surges of Sunni chauvinism in Malaysia. Similarly, Iran has been apprehensive of the spread of Sunni ideology from Malaysia and Indonesia that could potentially damage Iranian revolutionary dogma.<sup>3</sup> These issues moved into the foreground in the post-Mahathir era (since 2003), as was evidenced by the increase in anti-Shi'i fatwas issued in Malaysia and the general increase of suspicion over Iranians' intentions in Malaysia, which did result in some souring of Tehran-Kuala Lumpur ties. Another key issue in the relationship is the drug trade, but that is beyond the scope of this research report.

Before the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, Pahlavi Iran enjoyed close relations with Malaysia. Iran has a long and complicated relationship with the British, while Malaysia had a similar experience as a former British colony. It should not be ignored that the latter policy was characteristic of Iran's efforts to support the latent decolonisation movement, as embodied in the UN Resolution 1514 passed in December 1960.<sup>4</sup> Both were monarchies – in the case of Malaysia, several sultans rotating their terms to serve as the King (*Agong*) of Malaysia. At the infamous 2,500th

<sup>2</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics, The Question of the Islamic Republic*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Shireen T Hunter, *Iran and the World, Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 163; In 1996, the Fatwa Committee for Religious Affairs in Malaysia branded Shi'ism as deviant, which overturned a 1984 decision saying that it was acceptable. Under the Internal Security Act, several Shi'a Malaysians were placed under arrest. Roger Shanahan, "Malaysia and its Shi'a Problem" in Middle East Institute, 25 July 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/malaysia-and-its-shi%E2%80%98%E2%80%9Cproblem%E2%80%9D>

<sup>4</sup> Shireen T Hunter, *Iran and the World, Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 165

year celebration of the Persian Empire held in Persepolis, the Malaysian *Agong* at the time, Tunku Abdul Halim, was in attendance, not long after diplomatic relations were officially established between Iran and Malaysia.<sup>5</sup> Foreign policy under the last Pahlavi shah was coloured by its special relationship with the US, its need to maintain national cohesion, and to play a key regional role.<sup>6</sup> As such, the Iranian-Malaysian relationship never achieved any particular depth. It was only really during the 1990s that Kuala Lumpur and Tehran enjoyed a closer working relationship.

### Escape from Isolation via the East

In the wake of the 1979 revolution, Iran underwent changes in its political identity that affected its foreign policy, grounding its political system in an Islamic doctrine that coloured how its foreign relations would be shaped.<sup>7</sup> Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini focused on exporting the Islamic revolution, which saw the replacement of the country's diplomats with Islamist ideologues.<sup>8</sup> One of the principal pillars of Iran's revolutionary ideology included solidarity with Third World countries, and with this, the enhancement of South-South relations.<sup>9</sup> This converged with a change in Malaysia's own outlook on the world and also made it a prime candidate as the new Iran's international ally.

Mahathir is known to have globalised Malaysian foreign policy. He also created a foreign economic policy that mainly relied on three norms: firstly, that it was principled; secondly, that it was reliable and thirdly, that it was pragmatic as well as flexible.<sup>10</sup> Prior to this, Malaysia had remained conservative, keeping to its colonial regional neighbours. Under Mahathir, Malaysia began to promote itself as a dynamic country with an advanced developing economy that required foreign direct investments as well as greater access to the wider world. His charisma cannot be denied as a key component of his foreign policy, one that has left a lasting impression on the Muslim world. He made pan-Islamism a pillar of his policy, attracting non-Western countries even more strongly through championing the "underdog." However, there was a subtle underlying distinction in this pan-Islamic outlook: the centrality of Malaysia's Sunni identity was never ignored. Below the surface lay a fundamental weariness and suspicion of Shi'ism.<sup>11</sup> Such a distinction would result in a generally friendly but cautious attitude towards Iran.

<sup>5</sup> Shireen T Hunter, *Iran and the World, Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 161

<sup>6</sup> Alidad Mafinezam and Aria Mehrabi, *Iran and its Place Among Nations*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 45; 47-49

<sup>7</sup> Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics, The Question of the Islamic Republic*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 32

<sup>8</sup> It is suggested that is the cause of the negative effect on the knowledge that Iranians possess about the world. Alidad Mafinezam and Aria Mehrabi, *Iran and its Place Among Nations*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 49

<sup>9</sup> Shireen T Hunter, *Iran and the World, Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 166

<sup>10</sup> Syed Hamid Albar, Defence and Foreign Minister under Mahathir, interview with the author, 26 December 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>11</sup> Syed Hamid Albar, Defence and Foreign Minister under Mahathir, interview with the author, 26 December 2018, Kuala Lumpur.



## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

As a reaction to the fall of the shah, Mahathir (then deputy prime minister) spoke of his government being unsure as to the direction of the revolution, thinking it would have a socialist outcome.<sup>12</sup> But when the Islamic government was established, Malaysia professed its admiration for Iran's "return to Islam," and opened its doors. One of Mahathir's ministers, Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar described the Iranian revolution as "attractive," where Khomeini was regarded as a bold figure of anti-imperialism.<sup>13</sup> Hashemi Rafsanjani first made a trip to Kuala Lumpur as speaker of the house in 1981. A year later the Iranian embassy was reopened in the Malaysian capital. Since then, the relationship has manifested in several official visits, and many trade and economic agreements – everything from oil, carpets to non-alcoholic beers. Mahathir also regarded Iran as an important market for Proton, the national car company that he established. After the 1979 revolution, he recognised an opportunity to seek a new market and move away from heavy reliance on Western markets.<sup>14</sup>

Since his appointment as Prime Minister in 1981, Mahathir had a reputation for being deeply anti-colonial and firmly rejecting any fragments of neo-colonialism.<sup>15</sup> His almost authoritarian style of governing led to the successful launching of several campaigns that not only endeared him to the non-western world but made him its shining prince. In retaliation to the increase of fees for international students in the United Kingdom, many of whom were Malaysians, Mahathir launched his "Buy British last" campaign. Mahathir's standing up to London was attractive to Thirdworldists worldwide, including in Iran, where it struck a deep sense of historical resentment.

Iran was thrown into turmoil for most of the 1980s due to its war with Iraq. Yet some key developments occurred during this period, that further helped to endear Malaysia to Iran. Launched in 1982, Mahathir's "Look East" campaign sourced new markets and trading partners within Asia.<sup>16</sup> This complemented many of the outlooks of the Islamic Republic. Whereas the US used to be the closest ally of the Shah's regime, the Islamic Republic sought closer relations with the rest of the world. In his campaign, Mahathir aimed to curtail intellectual and commercial dependence on the

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Dr Mahathir Mohamed.

<sup>13</sup> Syed Hamid Albar, Defence and Foreign Minister under Mahathir, interview with the author, 26 December 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>14</sup> Syed Hamid Albar, Defence and Foreign Minister under Mahathir, interview with the author, 26 December 2018, Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>15</sup> Unlike the previous Prime Ministers, who were British-educated, Mahathir studied medicine in Singapore, and had a different trajectory that was more Malay based. Alan Chong, K S Balakrishnan, "Intellectual iconoclasm as modernizing foreign policy: the cases of Mahathir bin Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew" in *The Pacific Review*, 1 March 2015, 29:2, 239

<sup>16</sup> Alan Chong, K S Balakrishnan, "Intellectual iconoclasm as modernizing foreign policy: the cases of Mahathir bin Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew" in *The Pacific Review*, 1 March 2015, 29:2, 241-243

West and to develop the economy through alternative sources, which fitted in well with the new republic's own outlook. For example, by looking to Japan, Mahathir successfully developed the technology for Proton.<sup>17</sup> Iran also enjoyed close relations with Japan in economics and trade, even after the revolution. Japan's appreciation for Iran's geopolitical position in the gulf encouraged bilateral closeness.<sup>18</sup>

In the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran was in a better position to consolidate the relationship with Kuala Lumpur. In 1994, President Hashemi Rafsanjani made an official visit to Malaysia to focus on bilateral relations and enhancing trade agreements. This was a follow-up trip from Mahathir's own visit to Iran a year before. The two countries exchanged petroleum, commodities and manufactured products, with a volume of trade now amounting to US\$120 million.<sup>19</sup>

Another key reason that Iran began to look eastwards in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war was because approaches to the West had been rebuffed. Rafsanjani tried to attract large-scale investment from the US, even offering a contract to an oil company amounting to US\$1 billion. However, in the same breath, Rafsanjani said that the US government owed Iran apologies, calling out the US' bullying of Iran.<sup>20</sup> The deal was rejected by the Clinton administration in March 1995, which was followed a few months later with the executive order banning any US trade with Iran. The Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) was passed in August 1996,<sup>21</sup> affecting trade with Malaysia, one of the countries that also enforced the ban. The trade ban compelled Iran to deepen its economic relationship with China, Russia and Europe, which it did well into the Ahmadinejad administration.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Alan Chong, K S Balakrishnan, "Intellectual iconoclasm as modernizing foreign policy: the cases of Mahathir bin Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew" in *The Pacific Review*, 1 March 2015, 29:2, 240

<sup>18</sup> Shireen T Hunter, *Iran and the World, Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 162

<sup>19</sup> "Iran president visits Malaysia," UPI, 17 October 1994, Accessed 30 May 2017, <http://www.upi.com/Archives/1994/10/17/Irans-president-visits-Malaysia/2897782366400/>

<sup>20</sup> Elaine Sciolino, "Iranian Leader Says US Move on Oil Deal Wrecked Chance to Improve Ties" in *The New York Times*, 16 May 1995, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/16/world/iranian-leader-says-us-move-on-oil-deal-wrecked-chance-to-improve-ties.html>

<sup>21</sup> Alidad Mafinezam and Aria Mehrabi, *Iran and its Place Among Nations*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 50

<sup>22</sup> In July 2005, Iran was invited by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), first as an observer and now as a member. The SCO is an attempt to counterbalance the expansion of US economic and military influence in Central Asia. Alidad Mafinezam and Aria Mehrabi, *Iran and its Place Among Nations*, (Connecticut: Praeger, 2008), 50-51

LIKE OUR AIS FACEBOOK PAGE!

[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ASSOCIATIONFORIRANIANSTUDIES/](https://www.facebook.com/associationforiranianstudies/)

## RESEARCH REPORT CONT'D

Despite adherence to the ILSA, Malaysia did not entirely stop its trade with Iran, especially with regard to oil. In April 1998, Malaysia's national oil company PETRONAS, together with France's Total and Russia's Gazprom, went ahead with a US\$2 billion gas project in Iran. In an act of defiance, the head of PETRONAS refused to meet with the US assistant secretary of energy.<sup>23</sup> Years later, when Prime Minister Najib Razak temporarily halted the export of gas to Iran, Mahathir publicly spoke of his disagreement. His vision helped Iran establish economic ties with a major oil country. Furthermore, Mahathir has publicly supported Iran's nuclear programme, often calling out the US on its double standards.<sup>24</sup>

However, it would be nearly a decade before a head of state came to Kuala Lumpur. President Mohammad Khatami, who spoke of a "Dialogue among Civilisations" rather than a clash, made his first trip to Malaysia in June 2002. The late 1990s had seen Iran improve its international image, particularly towards the end of the Clinton presidency, culminating in the US government's acknowledgement of its involvement in the 1953 coup. In the wake of 9/11, high on the agenda was terrorism and a special meeting was held to discuss how the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) could tackle this issue. At the meeting in Putrajaya, Mahathir's new administrative capital, leaders from across the Muslim world gathered. President George W Bush in January 2002 named Iran a member of the "axis of evil" and it was imperative to start seeking out old friends and allies. Malaysia's minister of foreign affairs at the time Syed Hamid Albar said that it did not pay any heed to Bush's classification of Iran and reinforced Malaysia's free hand in dictating its own foreign policy. The Iranian ambassador to Malaysia, Mohamed Qasim Moheb Ali, declared that Tehran was willing to cooperate with Kuala Lumpur to show a united "Islamic" front.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, with regards to the anti-Shi'a movements that did emerge during the Mahathir years, Iran chose to ignore them out of the greater need for a strong outward relationship with Malaysia.<sup>26</sup> The current Iranian ambassador to Kuala Lumpur, Marzieh Afkham, also has stressed the need to look beyond the Sunni-Shi'a schism and to focus instead on the commonalities of the two countries.<sup>27</sup> The ability of Iran to enjoy a close relationship with a Sunni nation like Malaysia paints its rivalry with its Arab neighbours as likely more regional than sectarian.

<sup>23</sup> BBC World Service, "Malaysia to Press Ahead with Iran Gas Deal" in BBC News, 8 April 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/75818.stm>

<sup>24</sup> Most recently, Voice of America, "Mahathir: US has double standard concerning Muslims", 27 October 2009, <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2005-02-16-voa27-66376582/547356.html>; See also, Tehran Times, "Iran is important to us, says Malaysian ex-Primier", 25 April 2010, <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-2005-02-16-voa27-66376582/547356.html>

<sup>25</sup> Payvand News, "President Khatami arrives in Malaysia for a three-day visit", 21 July 2002, <http://www.payvand.com/news/02/jul/1041.html>

<sup>26</sup> Roger Shanahan, "Malaysia and its Shi'a Problem" in Middle East Institute, 25 July 2014, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/malaysia-and-its-shi%E2%80%98%E2%80%99Cproblem%E2%80%9D>

<sup>27</sup> Marzieh Afkham, "Iran-Malaysia Ties: To Strengthen Commonalities" in *New Straits Times*, 5 November 2016, <https://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/11/186135/iran-malaysia-ties-strengthen-commonalities>

The years of Mahathir's first premiership (1981-2003) saw the establishment and deepening of Iran-Malaysia ties. While foreign policy under Najib Razak (2009-2018) saw closeness to the West and Saudi Arabia, there has been a recent turn of outlook. Mahathir made a surprising return to power in 2018, being elected Prime Minister again at the age of 93. In September 2018, he met with president Rouhani at the recent UN General Assembly session, reinforcing the closeness between Malaysia and the Islamic Republic. With the re-imposition of sanctions, Iran is also forced to seek new markets and economic partners – a role that Malaysia is not unhappy to embrace.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the religious differences, Iran placed its economic interests with Malaysia above the fact that Malaysia regards Shi'ism as deviant. The foreign policy and eastward vision under Mahathir's terms in office in the 1980s and 1990s provided the right conditions for Iran's escape from isolation. Malaysia has been a reliable ally for Iran when it needed to improve its international standing: in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution and again after 9/11. Mahathir's policies and his strong position within the OIC and in South-South relations was an important factor for Iran to develop the relationship. Iran's close ties with a deeply Sunni and friendly nation like Malaysia during this period has helped enhance its position within the wider Muslim world.

<sup>28</sup> Bernama, "Mahathir meets three world leaders ahead of UN general assembly," 27 September 2018, <https://www.thesundaily.my/archive/mahathir-meets-three-world-leaders-ahead-un-general-assembly-updated-GUARCH580819>

In AIS newsletter Fall 2018, the film maker Vahid Nami (director of "Sultan Mohammad the painter") introduced his new project on Hamadani's *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, which examines the impact of the first Tabriz schools of painting during the Ilkhanid period (1256–1353) on miniatures in *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*. Despite the fact that the research and preparations are completed for the planned film, Vahid Nami is not able to produce the film for lack of funds. Please consider contributing to make the production of this film possible.

The filmmaker can be contacted [here](#).





## THE 2,500<sup>TH</sup> YEAR CELEBRATION OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE: A RECOLLECTION OF RECENT IRANIAN HISTORY

*Franklin T. Burroughs, Ed.D.*

The year was 1971, the occasion the 2,500-year Celebration of the Persian Empire and the site was historic Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the 6th-century-B.C. Achaemenid Empire.

At the time of the Celebration, UNESCO had not declared the ruins of Persepolis a World Heritage Site but did so in 1979, the same year the Islamic Revolution destroyed the monarchy and established the Islamic Republic. The UNESCO declaration increased the number of World Heritage Sites in Iran to nineteen, and the sites continued to encourage tourism, particularly European tourism, even after the Revolution. The U.S.-Iran nuclear deal could probably have increased the number of American tourists substantially had President Donald Trump not withdrawn from the agreement.

Planning for the Celebration began in the early 1960s and involved the improvement of the airport in nearby Shiraz, the construction of a highway to Persepolis, the establishment of an elaborate Tent City on site and a tremendous amount of publicity, much of which was prepared in or translated into the English language. My participation in the Celebration focused on the English-language translations and publications.

The translation and publication activities were assigned to the Ministry of Court, a unit of government serving primarily Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979). The specific department within the Ministry was the Department of Protocol, which had responsibility for not only the publications related to the Celebration but also for planning and arranging the incoming and outgoing court visits as well as the accreditation of foreign ambassadors and consuls. The unit to which I was assigned focused on the English-language publications related to the Celebration and the invited heads of state and/or their representatives.

The setting for the activities related to publications and visiting dignitaries was a relatively new, multi-story building not far from the royal palace in North Tehran. The nearby homes reflected affluence and social status. On clear days, Mount Damavand, the second highest volcano in Asia, was visible from many of the windows.

The staff was small and consisted primarily of carefully selected Iranian nationals. The ages of the group members ranged from the mid-twenties to the late-sixties. To my knowledge, I was the only non-Iranian staff member.

I joined the staff in 1970, approximately one year prior to the celebration. The planning had already been underway for some nine years, and I had just returned from Saudi Arabia where I had served as a consultant to the Saudi Government and had assumed the position of Professor of English at the National University in Tehran (now Shahid Beheshti University).

Throughout the work day, an armed guard stood watch at the entrance to the building, and a second guard remained at all times in the room where we worked. The only individuals other than the staff members allowed in the work area were the Chief of Protocol and members of the Royal Court.

My work day began in the afternoon and extended into the evening, sometimes late into the night. Upon arrival at the office, I would generally find several English-language manuscripts on my desk with notes attached. The notes would most often state that “review and editing” were needed. I would read the manuscripts, make the corrections I felt were necessary and submit the corrected documents to a particular gentleman. At times, that same gentleman would sit with me and discuss a particular document as I reviewed it. He usually asked a plethora of questions. Most of the manuscripts assigned to me were short and related to some phase of Iranian history or culture. I assumed they were being prepared for use during the Celebration.

One evening the gentleman, whom I came to refer to as my ‘work partner’, presented what appeared to be the outline of a program. I glanced at the document and immediately asked, “Is this the schedule for the Celebration?”

“Yes,” the gentleman replied. “And His Majesty the Shah is eager to look at it once you have reviewed it and made the necessary corrections. He is asking that the corrections in the English translations be made immediately and the corrected document be submitted to him before the end of the evening.”

Needless to say, excitement as well as apprehension set in. I reviewed and corrected each line with great care. I definitely wanted to please His Majesty. At that time, the Shah’s approval meant a lot if one planned to spend considerable time in Iran and wanted to progress professionally. I completed the review early in the evening and turned the corrected document over to my ‘work partner.’ I left work that night with both elation and trepidation. I hardly slept. I had just served as editor for His Majesty the Shah of Iran.

The next afternoon, I entered the work area with some excitement but also uncertainty. Had the Shah approved of my work, or had it not met his expectations? And when my ‘work partner’ approached me, I posed that very question to him. He merely looked at me and smiled. “His Majesty very much liked the translation and asked me to congratulate you on a job well done.” I wanted to jump for joy but realized that I needed to keep my composure if I were to enjoy any prestige among my rather conservative officemates.

## REPORT CONT'D

Over the next few weeks, my co-workers and I continued to refine the program in accordance with the suggestions and updates provided by His Majesty and/or the Minister of Court. The Celebration schedule as well as the guest list became increasingly complicated; our workflow increased substantially. By October 1, we were working late into the night.

Early in September, each of us was assigned dignitaries for whom we were to prepare and monitor schedules. We would not necessarily be in direct contact with the assigned heads of state or their representatives but would be required to make certain their requests were fulfilled and their needs met. The dignitaries to whom I was assigned were the First Lady of the Philippines Imelda Marcos and her daughter as well as Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Anne of the United Kingdom. Both the Duke and the Princess represented Queen Elizabeth II, who was advised not to attend because of security concerns.

Preparing and revising the schedules as well as carrying out the dignitaries' requests proved to be quite challenging. For example, Princess Anne wanted to go horseback riding immediately after arriving in Tehran, and Prince Philip liked to find a bit of vodka and strawberries at his bedside each evening. The requests were successfully met, and all the dignitaries seemed to enjoy themselves.

My wife, Mahin Molavi, and I were not included in the list of dignitaries but were invited to travel to Persepolis by air with a group of Iranian diplomats. We, of course, accepted the invitation and had the pleasure of observing the military parade with its historical gear and armaments on display.

We arrived at the site of the parade early in the afternoon and returned to Tehran early in the evening after the parade. We attended the event as the guests of the Royal Court. The day proved to be memorable.

Queen Farah arranged a number of musical and theatrical events for the Celebration, but some of them were not really appropriate for Iran or acceptable to the more religious members of the population. Reports indicated that some of the events bordered on the tawdry and offended the more religious citizens, particularly the residents of Shiraz and the surrounding areas.

Throughout the Celebration, security was a major concern. The Shah chose Persepolis as the preferred site for the festivities because of its isolation, and Iran's security services took into custody anyone who seemed to be a potential troublemaker.

At the end of the Celebration, the Shah issued awards known as "neshans", and I was honored to receive one such award as well as a formal statement of recognition for my work on the Celebration. Both documents grace a wall in my home office.

The Celebration was intended to showcase Iran's long monarchical history and the country's advancements under Mohammad Reza Shah. Perhaps it achieved that objective, but it also served as a precursor of the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979.

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### MUSTAFA BARZANI SCHOLAR FOR GLOBAL KURDISH STUDIES, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (WASHINGTON, DC)

The School of International Service (SIS) at American University (AU) invites applications for a full-time, non-tenure track faculty appointment for Fall 2019. Rank is dependent on experience and stature in the field. This appointment is a 9-month term position with successive renewable re-appointment for additional one-year term and will commence on Monday, August 26, 2019 and run through May 31, 2020.

The decision to create this position was a result of the School's experience with several prominent practitioners, one of whom is retiring at the end of this Academic Year. The position will require the incumbent to teach the equivalent of one undergraduate or graduate course in the second semester, and if renewed, for each semester of the following year. Fellows are required to be in residence at AU and to make a presentation of research in progress to the AU community. All faculty are expected to hold office hours and participate in School and University activities and service. Applicants should share the School's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

We are seeking candidates at all career stages who have a PhD or its equivalent, and who specialize in one or more of the following thematic areas:

- 1. Kurdish history, culture, politics, and international relations;**
- 2. Peaceful coexistence between the global Kurdish community and other states and peoples; and**
- 3. Cooperation and conflict resolution within the global Kurdish community.**

The successful candidate will assume duties as early as July 1, 2019 but no later than August 26, 2019. We will give first consideration to applications received by April 1, 2019, but will consider applications until the position is filled. Candidates should submit the following materials on Interfolio at <http://apply.interfolio.com/60489>. A comprehensive *Curriculum Vitæ*, a personal statement outlining relevant scholarship or experience, a plan for research while holding the fellowship, and teaching experience. Candidates will be asked to submit the names and contact information for three professional references who will receive from Interfolio a request for a confidential letter of recommendation. If applicable, we encourage applicants to submit any sample teaching materials and student evaluations from courses the applicant has taught in the past.

Compensation and benefits are competitive. Queries about the search may be sent to [sisfacultyaffairs@american.edu](mailto:sisfacultyaffairs@american.edu). Queries about the online application system may be sent to [help@interfolio.com](mailto:help@interfolio.com).



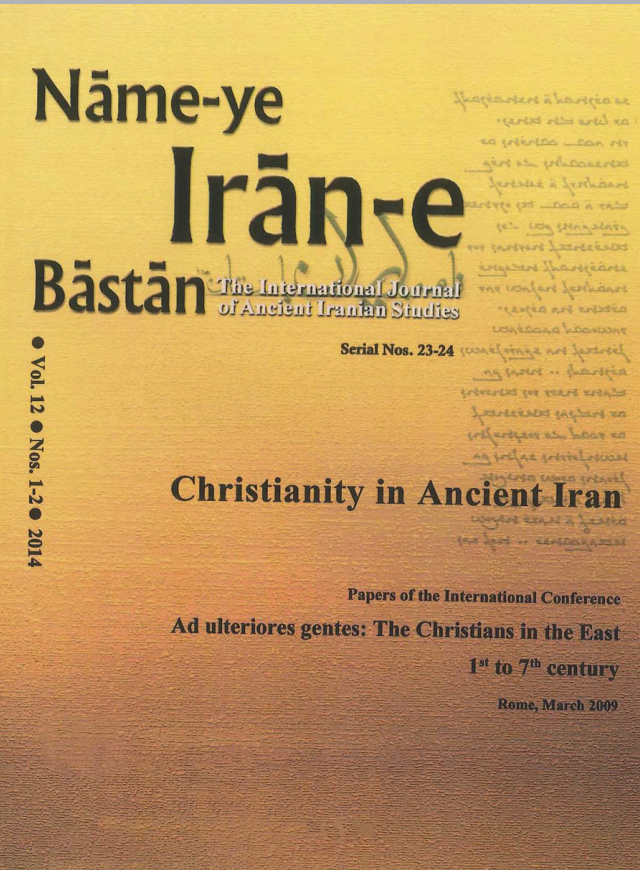
CALL FOR APPLCIATIONS CONT'D

American University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases under federal or local laws (collectively Protected Bases) in its programs and activities. American University is a tobacco and smoke free campus.

American University is an AA/EO employer. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.

Digital Research Archives

In collaboration with the University of California, Irvine's Jordan Center for Persian Studies, the OU Farzaneh Center has launched an initiative to digitize the print-run of the *Nameh-ye Iran-e Bastan: The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies*. This bilingual English-Persian journal, specializing in the history, culture, languages, and archaeology of ancient Iran, was published from 2001-2014, under the editorship of Dr. Touraj Daryaee, at the University of California, Irvine. The digitization of this journal will be accompanied by an online platform, making this resource available to students, scholars, and the general public from around the world.



MEJLIS INSTITUTE SUMMER SCHOOL IN LANGUAGES (ARMENIAN, PERSIAN, TURKISH) AND CONNECTED HISTORIES

Yerevan, Armenia

July 15 - August 15, 2019

Mejlis Institute is pleased to announce the opening of applications for the 2019 intensive summer program that will take place between July 15 and August 15, lasting four weeks. The program will consist of three parallel language courses – Armenian, Persian and Turkish – and a series of seminars devoted to topics in connected histories of Armenia, Iran and Anatolia from the medieval period onwards.

The program is primarily, though not exclusively, targeted at advanced undergraduate and graduate students wishing to study either Armenian, Persian or Turkish and interested in topics of intercultural connections. While applicants of different levels will be considered, preference will be given to those who have already achieved the intermediate or advanced levels. Apart from learning in the classroom, students will be able to practice their language skills in conversations with fellow participants from Armenia, Turkey and Iran.

MA and PhD students engaged in research and interested in working on particular sources will also be given an opportunity to receive additional guidance on individual basis.

Application deadline: May 1, 2019, Program fee 1400 USD, financial aid options are available. For more information please visit <https://mejlisinstitute.org/overview-1>

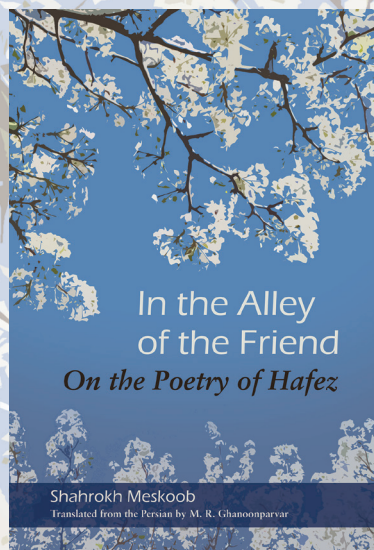
Gingko publications is delighted to announce the recent publication of the following three volumes in its series:

- 1. *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change* (by Ali M. Ansari)
- 2. *The Age of Aryamehr: Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global Entanglements* (by Roham Alvandi)
- 3. *Javanmardi: The Ethics and Practice of Persianate Perfection* (edited by Lloyd Ridgeon)

More information on all Gingko titles can be found here: <https://www.gingko.org.uk/publishing/our-titles/>

— New from —

# Syracuse University Press



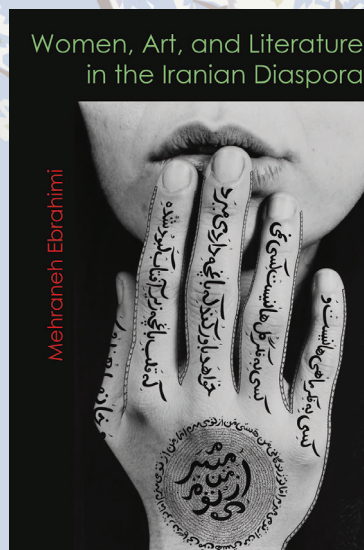
**“One of those rare books that gives profound insight into a very different culture.”**

—Geoffrey Squires, translator of  
*Hafez: Translations and Interpretations of the Ghazals*

**“Meskoob was and is, through his writing, one of the most influential scholars and public intellectuals of Iran.”**

—Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami,  
New York University

**Paper \$24.95s** 978-0-8156-3617-5  
**ebook** 978-0-8156-5460-5



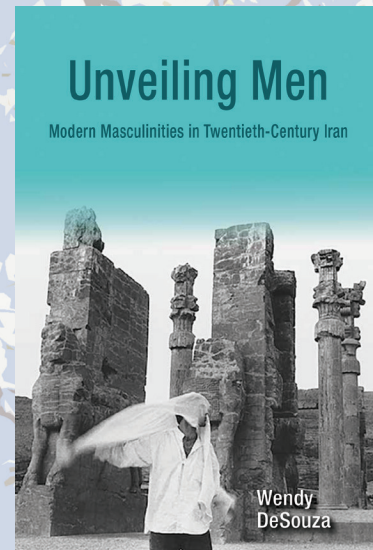
**“Ebrahimi’s compelling analysis of graphic novels, photography, and film by diasporic Iranian women offers a refreshing perspective on how artistic expression disrupts the vilification and dehumanization of Iranians.”**

—Nasrin Rahimieh, University  
of California, Irvine

**“An important contribution to cultural studies in that it steers us away from only making a paranoid critique of our world and instead reaches to the possibility of ethical democracy.”**

—Dina Georgis, author of  
*The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East*

**Paper \$24.95s** 978-0-8156-3655-7  
**ebook** 978-0-8156-5482-7



**A unique foray into cultural attitudes on Iranian masculinity and sexuality, *Unveiling Men* argues that a discussion of gender and sexual transformations during the interwar period is crucial for understanding debates on Orientalism, Aryan nationalism, Iranian feminism, and secularism.**

**Paper \$24.95s** 978-0-8156-3603-8  
**ebook** 978-0-8156-5449-0

Order online at  
**SyracuseUniversityPress.syr.edu**  
or call: **800-848-6224**