



ASSOCIATION FOR IRANIAN STUDIES

انجمن ایران پژوهی

www.societyforiranianstudies.org

AIS Newsletter | Volume 37, Number 2 | October 2016

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

We hope you will enjoy the new edition of the Association's newsletter. Apart from reports about the Eleventh Biennial Conference that was held in Vienna in August 2016, the following pages feature exciting news on the awards bestowed this year, an article about Sultan Muhammad the painter and a new film that has been produced about his work and life, a report about the conference convened in Delhi earlier this year on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the publication of Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*, as well as a moving obituary of Abbas Kiarostami.

The newsletter will also be posted at <http://societyforiranianstudies.org/about/newsletters> where the entire archive of the Association's newsletters published throughout the years can be found.

I thank all contributors for their thoughtful submissions to this issue. The next newsletter shall appear in April 2017, and I once again look forward to exciting contributions. All submissions are welcome, in particular reports of recent field and archival research, as well as dissertation news.

Mirjam Künkler, the University of Göttingen

NOTE OF THE PRESIDENT

We add another significant page to the long history of our society. The Eleventh Biennial Conference of the International Society for Iranian Studies was another successful conference that brought a large number of our members together from 3rd to 5th August 2016 in Vienna. This conference was undoubtedly one of the best attended conferences with over 500 participants and presenters from all parts of the world.

Before revisiting and reviewing our accomplishment in Vienna, I would like to bring to the attention of all our members, especially those who could not join us at the conference, the news of the name change of our society. On the final day of the conference, the General Meeting unanimously voted for changing our society's name to **Association for Iranian Studies (AIS)** (انجمن ایران پژوهی).

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE CONT'D

We have been very proud to alternate our biennial on both sides of the Atlantic. What made the Eleventh Biennial Conference of AIS different was that it was held in a European country with a long history of political, economic and cultural interaction with Iran. The move of the Biennial Conference of AIS to Vienna had a twofold target. Firstly, we wished to highlight the transcontinental and inclusive dimension of our society, going once more beyond the North Atlantic world. Secondly the society wanted to draw attention to the unique status of Austria as a major Germanophone country with a long standing history of bringing East and West together, even before the time of the Habsburg Empire.

The Austrian venue provided opportunities for conference participants to become more acquainted with the academic research activities of scholars in Europe in general and the Germanophone countries in particular. It thus fills me with great joy that our colleagues at the Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences agreed to host this conference and share their scholarship with us at this conference.

This conference would not have been possible without the unstinting support of the Austrian Academy of Sciences for which I would like to express my gratitude. I need also to thank Iran Heritage Foundation, Roshan Institute, Roxcel Group of Companies, and Simorgh Foundation for their generous support.

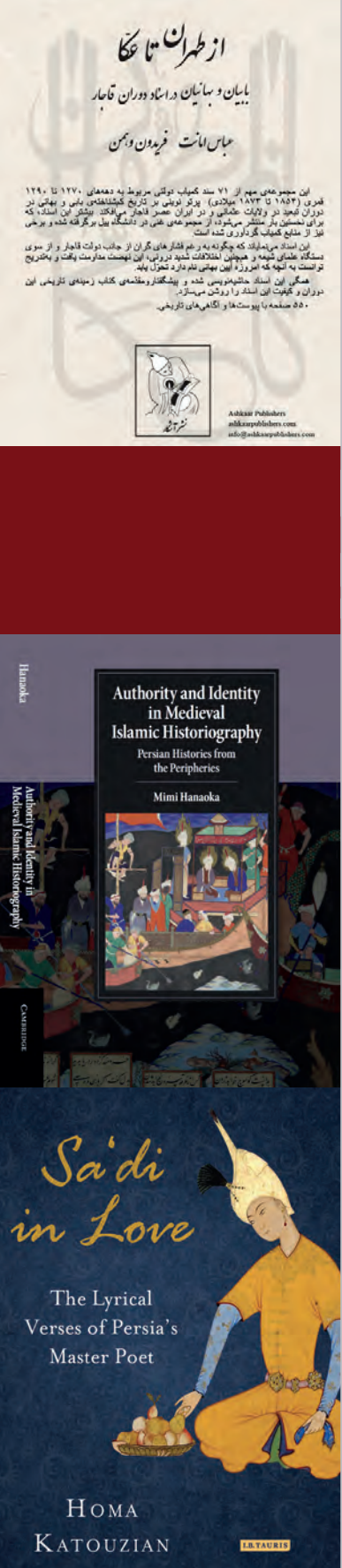
The organization of the Eleventh Biennial Conference was the result of the assiduous endeavor and devotion of many colleagues. In addition to Florian Schwarz, the Conference Chair; Camron Amin, the Programme Committee Chair; and Rivanne Sandler, our Executive Director, other colleagues both in Vienna and beyond significantly contributed to the admirable organization of this conference. Pendar Yousefi and Hamoun Hayati and Siavush Randjbar-Daemi made every effort to bring the conference to cyberspace, enabling people around the world to follow selected panels of the conference. The presence of all major publishers in the field of Iranian Studies at the conference should also be mentioned with appreciation.

I am sure our next AIS conference, which will be held in 2018 at the University of California at Irvine, will be as successful as our conference in Vienna and our previous conferences.

Touraj Atabaki, President of Association for Iranian Studies

MEMBER NEWS

- Abbas Amanat and Fereyduun Vahman have coauthored *Az Tehrān tā Akkā*, Copenhagen and New Haven: Ashkaar Publishers, 2016, 550 pages.
- Syracuse University's Maxwell School and Syracuse University Press have received a 20,000\$ grant from *The Violet Jabara Charitable Trust* to support the print and digital publication of *Post-Revolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook*, a large-scale reference work by Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Professor and Chair of the Political Science Department, and Kourosh Rahimkhani, Iranian scholar at the Binghamton University.
- Vera Basch Moreen has published *The Bible as a Judeo-Persian Epic: An Illustrated Manuscript of 'Imrānī's Fath-Nāma*, Jerusalem: The Ben Zvi Institute, 2016.
- Mimi Hanaoka's book, *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography: Persian Histories from the Peripheries* has been published by Cambridge University Press, 2016, in the Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization series.
- Homa Katouzian has published *Sa'di in Love*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, July 2016.



REPORT BY THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

The 2016 ISIS Biennial Conference was held at the University of Vienna, August 2-5, 2016. If you really want to appreciate an Iranian Studies conference, volunteer to help organize it. I'm not just saying that because I hope to recruit some of you to serve on the program committee for our next conference. Seeing all the attendees in Vienna and hearing so many wonderful papers, my time as program chair has been one of the great joys of my professional life. In addition to the panels, round tables, special sessions and other events, we got to re-name our organization at a general meeting. Conference Chair Florian Schwartz and I very much appreciate the feedback we received about the conference. In particular, we heard your revolutionary message about wanting a later deadline for the next conference. As we look forward to the next conference at UC-Irvine, we will be working with our web administrators to improve our website's conference management tools. With those improvements, a later deadline for abstracts should be quite feasible. In the end, the success of the next conference will depend, as the University of Vienna conference did, on your efforts as individual participants – presenters, chairs, discussants, and, most especially, panel organizers. We hope to make life easier for panel organizers as well by providing clearer processes to evaluate roundtable proposals and special panel proposals.

Camron Amin, Program Chair



Video Streaming

For the first time, parts of the conference were video streamed. The plenary panels and the opening ceremony, which also features an awards ceremony and a musical performance by Sima Bina, are accessible through the Association's website, <http://www.societyforiranianstudies.org> and through the Association's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSocietyForIranianStudies>.

The full content of the livestream is as follows:

1. IRAN AND THE FUTURE OF OIL:

Convenor: **Bijan Khajepour** | Managing Partner, Atieh Group

Featuring:

- **Djavad Salehi-Isfahani** | Professor of Economics, Virginia Tech University
- **Helmut Lananger** | Chairman of the Board of Directors, Serinus Energy
- **Jafar Haghpahan** | University of Tehran
- **Javad Yarjani** | Former National Representative of Iran at OPEC
- **Bijan Khajepour** | Managing Partner, Atieh Group

2. OPENING AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Featuring a Musical Performance by Sima Bina

3. VIENNA NUCLEAR TALKS: 1 YEAR LATER

Convenor: **Mehrzad Boroujerdi** | Syracuse University

Chair: **Touraj Atabaki** | International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

Featuring:

- **Roham Alvandi** | London School of Economics and Political Science: *The United States and the Shah's Nuclear Programme*
- **Mohsen Milani** | University of South Florida: *The Impact of the Nuclear Deal on Iran's Regional Policies*
- **Jonathan Tirone** | Bloomberg News: *The Iran Nuclear Deal: Observations from the Newsroom Floor*
- **Mehrzad Boroujerdi** | Syracuse University: *Reception of the Nuclear Deal in Iran*

4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES IN IRAN

Convenor: **Nayereh Tohidi** | California State University Northridge

& **Ata Hoodashtian** | Umef University

Chair: **Touraj Atabaki** | International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

Featuring:

- **Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari** | Independent Scholar: *Is Islamic Science Possible?*
- **Nayereh Tohidi** | California State University, Northridge: *Women's Studies in Iran's Universities: A Display of the Paradox of Islamic Republic*
- **Ata Hoodashtian** | Umef University: *Human Science, Critical Thought, and Iran*
- **Saeed Paivandi** | University of Lorraine: *The Meaning and Trajectory of Islamization of the Humanities in Iran*
- **Mohammad-Reza Nikfar** | Independent Scholar: *On Fortunate and Unfortunate Aspects of Social Sciences and Humanities in Iran*

AWARDS

2016 YARSHATER BOOK AWARD

The purpose of the Yarshater book award is to advance the scholarship on Ancient Iranian Civilization and its cognate fields. Professor Ehsan Yarshater is an internationally recognized scholar whose major contributions to the field of Iranian Studies are known by all; he was proclaimed an honorary member of the Council for the International Society for Iranian Studies in 1999.

The Jury is pleased to announce that the 2016 Yarshater Book award has been unanimously awarded to Richard E. Payne for his *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press: Oakland, 2015).

Using Syriac sources (Christian martyrdom narratives, civic histories and legal literature), as well as recent archaeological and sigillographic evidence, Payne presents an innovative and carefully constructed argument about the evolving relationship between Christianity and Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian period. Scholarship has tended to imagine that the Zoroastrian elites in Sasanian Iran viewed Christians as a non-Iranian and potentially traitorous fifth column of Rome who were therefore heavily taxed, violently oppressed, and even persecuted when not extended the protection of a foreign Christian king. This new work shows that a careful demarcation of secular and spiritual spheres allowed Christians to integrate into the Iranian court and state institutions by emulating the Zoroastrian elites, adopting the mode of dress and dining of the dominant political class to the point where the layout of churches (built in great number) were modelled on those of Iranian palaces. As Christians, many of them newly arrived in Iran after deportation, joined the ranks of the bureaucracy and military, the Sasanian state found it advantageous to harness this new manpower to build its military and administrative manpower, and augment its tax revenues. Christians thus became subject to the same system of rewards and retributions meted out by the rulers to their own not always quiescent Zoroastrian elite families to enforce compliance to the ruling dynasty. In elegantly readable style, Payne thus persuasively revamps our understanding of a much-debated question of Sasanian political culture and how ethnic identity, imperial ideology, and the self-representation of noble houses were constructed in the Sasanian era from the fifth century to the fall of the dynasty.

Iranian Studies Vol. 49, issue 4, July 2016 has been published: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cist20/current>. The contents of Vol. 49, issue 4 are posted on the homepage of the AIS website. 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.

Honorable Mention:

The jury would also like to make honorable mention of Mahnaz Moazami, *Wrestling with the Demons of the Pahlavi Widēwdād. Transcription, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), a soundly structured and interesting classical philological study of an important Zoroastrian text.

The jury consisted of Professors Franklin Lewis (University of Chicago), Amélie Kuhrt (Professor emerita, University College London), Carlo Cereti (Professor, Sapienza University, Rome), and Zohreh Zarshenas (Professor, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran).

2016 Rahim M. Irvani Dissertation Award

The Rahim M. Irvani Dissertation Award is presented biennially to the author of an exceptional Ph.D. dissertation on Persian literature and its cognate fields, written in any language. Established by Zinat Irvani in memory of her philanthropist husband, in addition to a cash prize, this award also includes the option of a contract for the publication of the revised and peer-reviewed manuscript by I.B. Tauris.

The Rahim Irvani Dissertation Award (2016) was presented to Kevin Lewis Schwartz for his dissertation *Bâzgasht-i Adabî (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Iran, India, and Afghanistan*, submitted to the University of California, Berkeley, Department of Near Eastern Studies, 2014.

By fulfilling a task too long unattended, and by offering fresh solutions to settle an old case, Kevin Schwartz's brilliant dissertation achieves two goals at once. Mohammad Taqi Bahâr's authoritative depiction of Persian literary history, and his "theory of styles" in particular, was in dire need of revision. With this large-scale generic and geographical reassessment of the early modern literature produced in Persian across the borders of Iran, India and Afghanistan, Kevin Schwartz acknowledges the challenge.

What is more, to focus on the *Bâzgasht-e adabî* – or "literary return" – as a notion, as a period, and as a movement, is to attend to the unloved, destitute child of Persian literary history. The author is well aware of this fact. For reasons yet fully to be unfolded, the literature of the *Bâzgasht* never attracted much scholarly solicitude. Often defined as self-contained and maybe a little vain, its aesthetics a mere reaction to the florid "Indian style," it was also afflicted at birth with an ungracious nationalistic stigma, one strongly dismissive of other contemporaneous literatures.

In this respect, the thoroughness of Kevin Schwartz's response is exemplary. Sorting out the conflation of a literary revival with the Iranian self-portrayal as a modern nation-state, his dissertation is, first and foremost, a patient work of disappropriation. His clear, well-argued and elegant prose soon convinces the reader that the heated, albeit subtle, poetic debates among the Isfahânî Circle of poets in Iran, at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot, and in the interstices of the Afghan *jangnâme*-s (battle-poems), were far more crucial to their times than Bahâr's categories suggest.

In sum, Kevin Schwartz's dissertation is informative, critically engages with the field of Persian literary history, explores the literary traditions in India and in Afghanistan in addition to those of Iran, and works intelligently with data found in tazkirahs. The dissertation is thus innovative both in its topic and in the sources it examines and compares. Kevin Schwartz's study is a major contribution to Persian and Persianate literary history.

The jury for the 2016 award consisted of Professors Houchang E. Chehabi (Boston University), Justine Landau (Harvard University), Kamran Talattof (University of Arizona), and Christine van Ruymbeke (University of Cambridge).

The 2016 Mehrdad Mashayekhi Dissertation Award

The Mehrdad Mashayekhi Dissertation Award is presented biannually to the author of an exceptional Ph.D. dissertation dealing with the broad themes of politics and the public sphere in Iran, written in Persian or English. Dissertations written in other languages are accepted, if they are accompanied with condensed translation of chapters into English or Persian. This award is established by the Mehrdad Mashayekhi Foundation in memory of his dedication to the cause of democracy and social justice in Iran.

The 2016 Mehrdad Mashayekhi Dissertation Award has been awarded to Pouya Alimagham for his dissertation "Contesting the Iranian Revolution: The Green Uprising," submitted to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2015.

The committee found Dr. Alimagham's dissertation to be analytically strong, clearly focused, and methodologically sound. His analytical arguments are built upon detailed examination of an array of primary written material, eyewitness accounts, State Department cables originating in Dubai, internet exchanges among religious and secular leaders, political slogans and street arts produced by activists during their protests, and symbolic rituals and slogans from Shi'i repertoire and the Palestinian struggle for a homeland. His fascinating analysis and meticulous use of diacritical marks conveying political and rhythmic efficacy of slogans used during street demonstrations reflect his sensitivity to details and importance of public moods and feelings as source data.

Dr. Alimagham's thesis is an articulate work explaining the rise of the Green Movement during the contentious 2009 election - a movement that crystallized in a presidential campaign and morphed into a protest movement after the election. He sees the rise of this movement as a direct outcome of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the current Islamic ideology embodied in the mass movement within Iran's lower and middle classes. He examines the ways in which this movement creatively subverted the discourse, history, and symbolisms of the 1979 revolution for challenging the legitimacy and conducts of the state for its own purpose.

He deals with the state suppression of the movement with care and meticulousness and demonstrates the challenges the movement has posed for the state ideological narratives, strategies, and tactics. As his dissertation advisor Dr. Juan Cole has noted, "his reading of the YouTube protest videos is among the more convincing uses of such material... in a work on contemporary history.... He adopts a genealogical approach to historical narrative, using contemporary marches and slogans as a starting point to explore the modern history of Iranian activism."

In short, the committee was impressed with the quality and quantity of work put into this research and believes that it will contribute to the general understanding of modern Iranian social movements and of the specific conditions of the contentious 2009 presidential election which gave rise to the Green Movement. The committee congratulates Dr. Alimagham and wishes him a successful scholarly journey ahead.

The jury for the 2016 award consisted of Professors Ali Akbar Mahdi (California State University, Northridge), Afshin Matin-Asgari (California State University, Los Angeles), Ali Mirsepassi (New York University), and Dr. Thomas M. Ricks (Independent Scholar in the Social and Cultural History of Iran).

The 2016 Saidi-Sirjani Book Award

The Saidi-Sirjani Book Award is granted biennially by the Association for Iranian Studies on behalf of the Persian Heritage Foundation. Established in 1995, the purpose of the Award is to recognize and promote scholarship in the field of Iranian studies, as well as to honor the memory of Ali-Akbar Saidi-Sirjani (1931-1994), the noted Iranian historian, literary critic, and author, in appreciation for his scholarship, his courage, and his indefatigable struggle for freedom of expression.

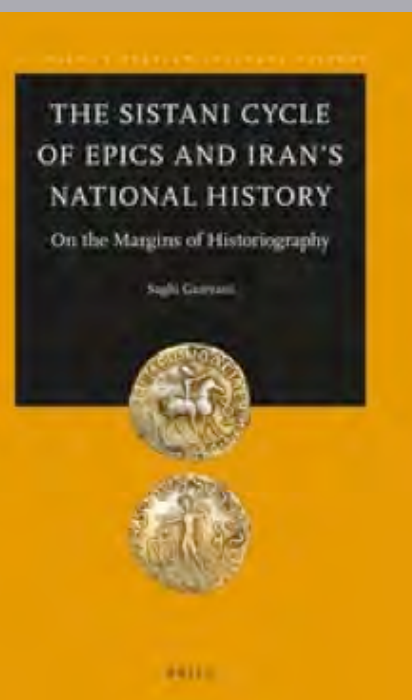
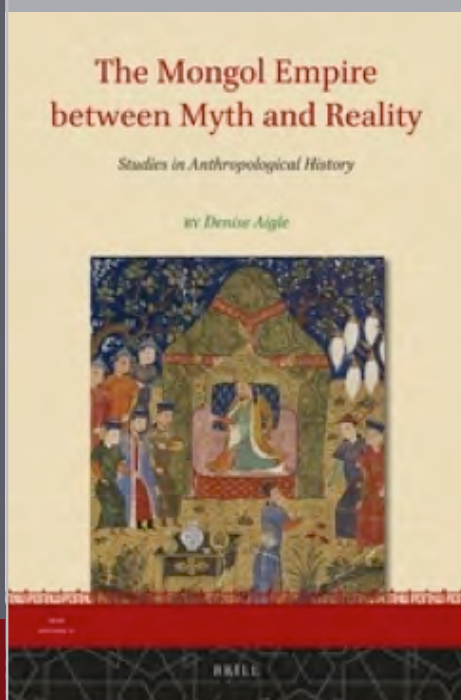
The Award is given to original studies or syntheses in the field of Iranian Studies, critical editions of significant texts in Iranian Studies, or translations from an Iranian language, accompanied by scholarly annotations and extensive research. This year the Committee had a particularly difficult task, given the exceptional caliber of works published by both eminent scholars as well as promising first books by a new generation of specialists in the field.

Among the former, two significant studies by Professor Jean-Pierre Digard, *Une épopée tribale en Iran. Les Bakhtyâri* (A Tribal Epic in Iran: The Bakhtyari), Paris, CNRS, 2015; and by Professor Angelo Michele Piemontese, *La Persia istoriata in Roma* (The Story of Persia in Rome), Vatican, 2014; deserve to be singled out and they have deservedly received many accolades.

With the above observations in mind, and with its unanimous vote, the Committee was pleased to present this year's award to Professor Denise Aigle for her book on *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History*, published by Brill, 2014.

Also with unanimous vote, the Committee is further pleased to present an Honorable Mention to Dr. Saghi Gazerani, for her book on *The Sistani Cycle of Epics and Iran's National History: On the Margins of Historiography*, also published by Brill, 2015.

In *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality*, Denise Aigle offers a series of rich and novel observations of the Mongol empire as a moment of contact between political ideologies, religions, cultures, and languages, within a broad analytical canvas of reciprocal representations between the Far East, the Muslim East, and the Latin West. The book opens by exploring the memory and recollections of the Mongols in historical and literary sources, and examines how the Mongol rulers were perceived by the peoples with whom they were in contact. In subsequent sections the book offers further innovative analyses of perceptions of shamanism by Muslim authors and their attempts to integrate Mongolian elements into an Islamic framework, to geopolitical questions involving the Ilkhans, the Mamluks, and the Ayyubids.



In *The Sistani Cycle of Epics and Iran's National History*, Saghi Gazerani examines the rich corpus of the Sistani Cycle of Epics, including the parts that were included in Ferdowsi's Shāhnāme and those that appeared in other manuscripts. Through an outstanding scholarly approach and highly original style, Gazerani argues that the so-called "epic literature" of Iran constitutes a kind of historiography that reflects crucial moments of Iran's antiquity and captures polemics of political legitimacy, religious conflict, and historical memory.

The 2016 Saidi-Sirjani Book Award Committee consisted of Professors Ali Banuazizi (Boston College), Sheila Blair (Boston College), M.R. Ghanoonparvar (University of Texas at Austin, Emeritus), Yann Richard (Sorbonne Nouvelle, Emeritus), and Ali Gheissari (University of San Diego, Committee Chair).

The 2016 Latifeh Yarshater Award

The Latifeh Yarshater Award was instituted by the Persian Heritage Foundation to honor the memory of Latifeh Yarshater and her lifelong dedication to the improvement of Iranian women's human rights. The purpose of the award is to encourage scholarship in Iranian Studies focused on the condition of women in Persian-speaking societies and to promote women's rights in these societies. The award, in the amount of \$3,000, is biannually granted to a work of superior scholarship published within two years prior that will satisfy the following criteria of eligibility:

- Cover one of the areas of women's studies related to Persian-speaking societies and make a direct or indirect contribution to the improvement of the status of women in those societies.
- Be innovative in subject matter and approach and expand the parameters of the field.
- Works in English are the primary focus of the award. Persian, French, and German works are considered only exceptionally when there is unanimous agreement on their high merit.

There were several outstanding nominees for this year's award. From among them the committee chose *Mirrors of Entrapment and Emancipation* by Leila Rahimi Bahmany and *When They Broke Down the Door* by Fatemeh Shams, translated exquisitely by Dick Davis, as the joint recipients of the award. Both works represent significant insight into the psychology of the struggle to be female and free in modern Iran and both make significant roadway toward connecting feminist Iranian literary production to similar international endeavors.

Mirrors of Entrapment and Emancipation places modern female Iranian writers and poets within a global literary framework, and by so doing, offers a thicker and richer reading of that literature. It juxtaposes the highly ambivalent essence of the mirror metaphor in the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad with that imagery in the oeuvre of Sylvia Plath, pointing to uncanny similarities in the deployment of the mirror metaphor in two fundamentally distinct cultural and literary contexts. Yet, in spite of the myriad divergences, including the fact that no overt influence can be traced between the two corpuses, the interpretive prowess of the study successfully reinforces the inseparable dynamics of the culturally established configuration of woman's self-image, and her voice, and by so doing, testifies to the immense rewards of comparative literary criticism. *Mirrors of Entrapment and Emancipation* elucidates the universal experience of modern life by women from disparate cultures and social contexts, and as critique of current perceptions of peripheral and nonwestern traditions, strives to integrate the works produced by Persian writers in the grand narrative of world literature.

Fatemeh Shams' *When They Broke Down the Door*, too, expands the borders of Persian poetry in original and significant terms. Following in the footsteps of Simin Behbehani, many of Shams' poems exhibit a studied effort to transform classical themes, elements and attitudes traditionally associated with the genre of the *ghazal*. Her poetry oscillates between the personal and the political, mixing self-reflection with contemporary political critique. This unique combination of public and private in the form of a traditional *ghazal* allows for a personal perspective on contemporary sociopolitical realities to permeate its fantastical universe and even circumvent its conventions. To borrow from Dick Davis, Shams' approach to politics is "inward and personal rather than public and propagandistic," enhancing its appeal to a global audience that although removed in numerous ways from Shams' immediate context, shares nevertheless many of the same concerns.

Members of the award committee were Mahnaz Afkhami, Shahla Haeri, Azar Nafisi, Houra Yavari, Nasrin Rahimieh, Mohammad Tavakoli Targhi, and Massumeh Farhad.

The 2016 Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts

The 2016 Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts was awarded to Sima Bina in acknowledgment of her enduring artistic achievement, and pursuant to the resolution endorsed by the Council of the International Society for Iranian Studies.

Please note that the Association's web address has changed to
<http://societyforiranianstudies.org/>

Please update your bookmarks.

New Honorary Member

In acknowledgment of his enduring academic achievements, and pursuant to the resolution endorsed by the Council of the International Society for Iranian Studies, the Association's Honorary Membership and Lifetime Achievement Award Committee conferred upon Professor Bernd Fragner the status of ISIS (now AIS) Honorary Member. He joins a list of eminent scholars in our field.

A statuette for the Association's Award Recipients

The Association decided earlier this year to commission a statuette which shall be handed to the Association's awards recipients together with their prize. To this effect, a call for submissions was publicly commissioned and a committee consisting of Sussan Babaie, Taraneh Yalda, Mazdak Daneshvar, Rivanne Sandler and the Association's president Touraj Atabaki constituted to determine the winning candidate. The committee chose the work of Mr. Kambiz Sabri, which is based on the windtowers of Yazd (Badgir-e Yazd).



Mr. Sabri was born in 1967 in Iran and holds a BA in sculpture and an MA in graphic design. He is teaching at a number of art faculties in Tehran, among them Tehran University. Kambiz has held various solo exhibitions and participated in many group exhibitions in contemporary art museums and galleries. He has won prizes from the 3rd Sculpture Biennial and the 2nd Sculpture Symposium of Iran. He is also a winner of the Emirates Airlines Skywards Future Artists competition of 2011. International activities include being the coordinator for the Iran pavilion in the 51st Venice Biennial and participation in the Toyomora Sculpture Biennial 2007 in Japan, Art Dubai 2011 and 2016, Art Paris 2011 and 2012, the Bangladesh Biennial 2012, Art 13 London, the Florence Biennial 2013 and the Venice Architecture Biennial 2016. He also has been a judge three times in the Persbook competition, and at several Biennials and art competitions, among them the Tehran sculpture symposium 2016. In December 2015, one of his sculptures was selected and installed in the garden of the "Asian Art and Culture Museum" in Chiayi, Taiwan, alongside artworks by Yayoi Kusama and Hiroshi Senju.

A REPORT ON A RECENT CONFERENCE

THE BLIND OWL: HOOTING FOR 80 YEARS

Nadeem Akhtar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

On 17-18th February 2016 in Delhi, the Institute of Indo Persian Studies (IIPS) and the India International Centre (IIC) commemorated Sadeq Hedayat's 113th birthday and the 80th anniversary of the publication of Hedayat's masterpiece *The Blind Owl* or *Buf-i-Kur*.

The IIPS is a non-governmental and academic organization formed by young scholars with the aim to preserve and promote Persian studies in the Indian subcontinent. Among its recent activities were commemorating Abdur Rahman Jami on his 600th anniversary, and honouring Sadeq Hedayat at the recently discovered house in which he lived in Mumbai on the 112th anniversary of his birth (see Marta Simidchieva's report in the ISIS Newsletter of May 2015, Volume 36). The IIPS has played a vital role in promoting Persian literature in India by extending support to Persian literary activities undertaken by the University of Delhi and the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan delivered the presidential address and expressed her amazement to see that a single slim novel attracted so many people from all around the world who represented Iranian studies from and beyond Iran. Professor Houra Yavari of the Encyclopaedia Iranica at Columbia University, New York, gave the keynote speech, in which she highlighted the way in which the plot of the novel bridged the gap between the time and space of pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran.

Professor Emeritus of Iranian Studies and Editor of the Encyclopaedia Iranica Professor Ehsan Yarshater, sent a message on the occasion which was read by Dr. Syed Akhtar Husain from Jawaharlal Nehru University. Dr. Yarshater admired the Indo-Iran relations through the ages and congratulated the IIPS and IIC-Asia Project on their initiative.

The academic sessions of the conference extended over two days, as speakers from Bangladesh, Canada, Iran, the USA and different corners of India presented their research papers. The presentations covered the following general themes: *Reception of The Blind Owl beyond Iran* (in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Arabia); *Intertextual, Critical and Comparative Analysis of The Blind Owl*; *Violence as a theme*; and *Characters and Images in The Blind Owl*.

On the second day of the conference, Dr. Husain moderated a special panel discussion entitled *Novel: A Canvas with Hues of Our Lives*. The valedictory session of the conference consisted of *Shab-e Bukhara* (or Bukhara Night: A tribute to Sadeq Hedayat). The *Bukhara* is a bi-monthly Persian journal of literary studies published

in Iran which organizes various academic and cultural programmes in Tehran. The editor of the journal, Mr. Ali Dehbashi, expressed his enthusiasm at holding the first event of *Shab-e Bukhara* in collaboration with IIPS at the IIC, in New Delhi, India. Mr. Dehbashi presented a recently published collection of postal cards of Hedayat entitled *Az Marz Inzewā*, compiled and edited by Mr. Jahangir Hedayat.

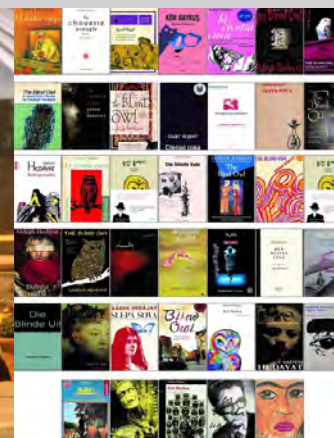
The conference made the audience realize that India has opened a new chapter on Sadeq Hedayat and his Indian connections. The scholars extended their sincere gratitude to Dr. Syed Akhtar Husain for being a great admirer of Hedayat in India. This was the third international conference in the last four years he had organized on Sadeq Hedayat in three different cities of India: Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi. India was a place that Hedayat always admired and Dr. Husain wants to see *The Blind Owl* translated in all the 28 official languages of India. Dr. Husain also expressed interest in hosting a future conference on Sadeq Hedayat in Paris, the eternal resting place of the novelist.



Poster announcing the Conference



Mr. Ali Dehbashi, editor in chief, Bukhara Journal, Tehran, Iran, speaking at the event, Shab-i-Sadeq Hedayat. This was the first time that Hedayat has been celebrated on the floor of the series of events called Shab-i-Bukhara organized weekly in Tehran.



The posters showing the cover pages of different translations of *The Blind Owl* prepared on the occasion of the conference. IIPS is indebted to Dr. Marta Simidchieva, York University, Professor Michael Beard, University of North Dakota and Ms. Marija Ivanovic from Serbia for helping the Institute in making the poster.



Dr. Husain and Ms. Miad Rashedifar from Tehran who has sketched this beautiful depiction of the Indian elements of *The Blind Owl* in her painting. She gifted her work to the Institute of Indo Persian Studies.



The participants of the conference visited the tomb of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib at the vicinity of Nizamuddin Auliya, a Sufi saint of the Chisti order and the tomb of Amir Khosrow, a Sufi musician, poet and scholar. They are famous personalities of 20th and 13th century India.



Special Panel: *Novel: A Canvas with Hues of our Lives*. Speakers, from right to left, Professor Houra Yavari, Professor G.J.V Prasad, Dr. Rakshanda Jalil, Dr. Khaterreh Sheibani and Dr. Syed Akhtar Husain.



Opening Session of the Conference, from right to left, Dr. Syed Akhtar Husain, Mr. Syed Shahid Mahdi, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Professor Houra Yavari, Professor Aleem Ashraf Khan and Professor Chander Shekhar.



Dr. Khaterreh Sheibani and Ms. Meenakshi Choudhary, a student of Persian Language and the Photographer of the conference.

Mateo M. Farzaneh wins Phi Alpha Theta Book Award

Phi Alpha Theta, the international honor society for History students and professors, has awarded Northeastern Illinois University Associate Professor Mateo M. Farzaneh the 2016 Best First Book Award.

Farzaneh's book, "The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani," was published in March 2015 by Syracuse University Press. The book provides an overview of the political history of Iran in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the ideas of the renowned cleric Mulla Muhammad Kazim Khurasani. The Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) was the 20th century's first such political movement in the Middle East. Khurasani, a Shiite jurist, scholar and spiritual leader, was a leading advocate of constitutionalism.

"As a Western concept, constitutionalism found many enemies in the Iranian traditional camp but their most notable leader, Khurasani, found it to be extremely helpful. That alone adds more to the perplexity of Iranian history and its contemporary behavior," said Farzaneh, who engaged on a nationwide campus tour to promote his book after its publication. "But with Khurasani's Islamic justification and friendly disposition toward constitutionalism, the Revolution succeeded in a historically significant period in the region."

Farzaneh's research interests are constitutionalism and Iranian Shiism. However, he's taking his knowledge in a different direction for his next book about Iranian women in the Iran-Iraq War. "A Bangle Today, A Son Tomorrow: The Role of Iranian Women in the Iran-Iraq War" will be published in Summer 2018 on the occasion of the 30-year anniversary of the end of that conflict. Farzaneh continues to travel nationally and internationally to promote his book and his upcoming publications.

Farzaneh is the recipient of a COR grant, which he used to travel to Iran to examine a recently opened archive in Tehran for a project that explores the last years of the Pahlavi regime before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and will spend part of his sabbatical leave in 2017 to conduct research for his current project.

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LIBRARIES AND COLLECTIONS

The **Iran Data Portal** is delighted to announce the following recent additions:

Review of Elections

To facilitate easier comparison of the number of eligible voters, number of votes, turnouts and number of candidates registered to run in elections, a review of all elections held after the 1979 revolution has been added. ([Link](#))

Labor Force

Building on data published by the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare and the Management and Planning Organization, the section on the Labor Force has been updated. These updates include numbers for employment by industry sector (1956–2011), employed population by gender (1966–2011), labor force participation rate for urban and rural areas by gender (2005–2014), and labor force by occupation and gender in urban and rural areas (2005–2014). ([Link](#))

Statistical Yearbooks

Access to the website of the Iran Statistical Center has frequently been interrupted in recent months. To ensure that the Center's most recent data is always accessible, the two last Statistical Yearbooks (2013–2014 and 2012–2013) have been placed on the IDP. ([Link](#))

Budget Law

The Budget Law of 2016–2017 (1395) has been put on the IDP. Since the Budget Bill and its appendices had been added before, it is now possible to study which budgets of which organizations have been changed by the Parliament. ([Link](#))

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation

Annual reports of the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation (IKRF) from 2008 to 2013 have been added to the IDP. These reports include data such as the numbers of people supported by the IKRF and the amount of money collected by Sadagheh boxes in each province. Number of persons and households supported by the IKRF in Lebanon can be found in these reports as well. ([Link](#))

Speakers of the Parliament

A list of the speakers of the Parliament after the 1979 revolution has been added to the IDP. The number of votes each speaker received to be elected and the total number of votes can be found in this section as well. ([Link](#))

Legislative decisions of the Parliament

Reviews of legislative decisions of the eight parliaments since 1979 have been put on the IDP. The reviews pertain to economic legislation, social and cultural legislation, and political legislation, and include information regarding the date of approval, and the category (for example, in the realm of economic legislation: laws have been added that pertain to financial markets, trade, the labor market, welfare and economic justice, economic security and anti-corruption measures, privatization and taxation). [\(Link\)](#)

The Rules of Procedure of the Parliament

The rules of procedure of the Parliament of Islamic Republic of Iran have been added to the IDP. This section includes the rules on different procedures of the Parliament such as the legislative structure of the Parliament, committees and sub-committees, procedure of investigation and ratification of ordinary bills and motions and investigation of the annual budget. [\(Link\)](#)

Internet Penetration Rates

Internet penetration rates from 2008 to 2013, as well as number of internet users and internet penetration rates for different age groups by province for 2013 have been put on the IDP. [\(Link\)](#)

Life Expectancy

Numbers of life expectancy of Iranians for both genders from 1960 to 2013 have been added to the IDP [\(Link\)](#)

Ministries and Related Organizations

Numbers and titles of ministries have been changing frequently since 1979. Therefore the IDP section featuring information on the ministries has been reviewed and updated, accounting for all changes in the name of ministries, their affiliated organizations and their web addresses. [\(Link\)](#)

Wheat Production

Data regarding wheat production since 1977 to 2013 has been added to the IDP. [\(Link\)](#)

In case of any questions or suggestions, please contact Arash Pourebrahimi, Webmaster of the Iran Data Portal.

THE PAINTER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

How Sultan Muhammad became the most influential painter of the Safavid era

In 1568, the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp I presented a Shāhnāma to the court of the Ottoman empire, a book that was not only regarded as a treasure in its time but also is still considered one of the masterpieces of Iranian paintings and manuscripts. A folio of it has been labeled as one of the most valuable Islamic works of art.¹

The decree to write this Shāhnāma was issued in 1515 by Shah Ismaeil I (Canby 2015, pp. 14), whose admiration for and interest in painting and calligraphy and his patronage of the arts made the Savafid era a highpoint in Iranian painting and calligraphy. During his reign, the work on the Shāhnāma remained unfinished and it was only completed under his son Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1524–76) who acceded to the throne at the tender age of ten. As a child, Tahmasp had been sent to Herat, not only to rule but also to learn painting and calligraphy from one of the most important painters of the time, Kamāl ud-Dīn Behzād. When Tahmasp was summoned back to Tabriz, the first Safavid capital, at the age of six, he brought some painters and calligraphers along with him, including Behzād.

Behzād was appointed as the head of the royal library, where artists were working on illustrating precious manuscripts. Thanks to this companionship, some Tabriz-based artists were influenced by the style of artist of Eastern Persia and that is how the second Tabriz school of painting was formed.

Shah Tahmasp I ordered the recommencement of the work on the Shāhnāma (it later came to be called the Shāhnāma-yi Shāh Tahmāsbī (King Tahmasp's Book of Kings). The manuscript took many years to complete, by one account fifteen (Canby 2015, pp.16). Three prominent painters supervised the process: Sultan Muhammad until about 1527, Mir Mosavvir until about 1532, and Aqa Mirak until 1537 (Canby 2015, pp. 16).



“The Court of Kayumars”

Sultan Muhammad was one of the greatest painters of the Savafid era and he influenced many painters for generations to come. He was born in Tabriz, though the exact date is unknown. He started painting in the court of the Aġ Qoyunlu and as such his earlier works were influenced by the Turkman school of painting, though his later works reflect the influence of other schools, notably the Timurid style associated with Herat. Turkman illustrations are more expressive with a particular attention to landscape painting so that it can be said that in their works, landscapes have supremacy compared to humans.

In Sultan Muhammad's folios, all components are inextricably interwoven. His dexterity in illustrating landscapes enabled him to create divine, numinous backgrounds, as if they belonged to another world, and to narrate the story against this background with humans who have delicate bodies and relatively large heads.

In one of the folios of the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, "*The Court of Kayumars*" known as a masterpiece of Sultan Muhammad, we face an otherworldly scene: rocks colored by dazzling cobalt-blue and violet in which faces of unknown creatures can be discovered. A gilded sky, intertwined trees – which might bring Chinese art to mind – and luminous yellow and orange colors on the rocks insist that these landscapes do not belong to the earth.

The spirituality of Sultan Muhammad can be observed in his folios in which the margins are broken repeatedly, although this had not been a prevalent practice before him: as if all components are in the middle of salvation and redemption. This can also be observed in *The Court of Kayumars*, whose arresting landscape painting goes beyond the margins. As a fastidious artist who connected even tiny trees to the rock, Sultan Muhammad created a balanced motion such that eliminating just a small component of the folio makes the whole image imperfect.

The composition and the way in which the figures are formed are spiral. Humans dressed in leopard skin along with animals such as lions and deer guide the viewer towards the center, where the main character of the narration, Kayumars, is found sitting, donning a dress made of leopard skin. He has been informed by Sraosha the angel about the impending death of his son, turning his face to the son who is sitting on the right side of the image. By applying intensive and expressive palette, Sultan Muhammad was able to convey the drama of the narration. The well-calculated placement of human figures in this folio is an indication of Behzād's influence on Sultan Muhammad (Canby 2015, pp. 17).

Another marvelous work of Sultan Muhammad is a folio in Khamsa of Nizami. *The Prophet Muhammad's Ascent (Mi'raj)* has inspired many artists from different schools of painting to create artworks on the theme. It reached its zenith in the painting of Sultan Muhammad (Azhand 2005 and Mehdizadeh 2014). Similar to the other folio, *The Court of Kayumars*, a spiral can be observed in this painting and this

time the prophet is located in the center, on his steed Buraq. Depicted against a cobalt background above clouds, the Prophet appears hovering. All nineteen angels surrounding the Prophet are dressed in different motifs and colors that make the composition of the painting more dynamic.

Sultan Muhammad's works created about five centuries ago have attracted much research. The *Shāhnāma* of Shah Tahmasp that includes many of Sultan Muhammad's masterpieces has been published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2014 and 2015). Publications by Yaqub Azhand (2005), Alireza Mehdizadeh (2014) and Habib Ayatollahi (1996 and 2010) are among the resources in which the life and works of Sultan Muhammad have been examined.

One of most recent attempts to highlight Sultan Muhammad's work and legacy is a **documentary** made by Seyyed Vahid Hoseyni Nami, in which scholars discuss various aspects of Sultan Muhammad's works. The film was produced by The Documentary and Experimental Film Center, and researched by Navid Nami. The documentary includes motion pictures made with figures originally created by Sultan Muhammad – figures that never seemed static even when they were illustrated on paper. Another fabulous part of the documentary is a comparison of Sultan Muhammad's *Mi'raj* with paintings of the same theme created by other painters, which underlines how Sultan Muhammad uniquely elevated Iranian painting. The documentary is freely available by accessing this **link** and entering password 1717.

Mohadeseh Rahimitabar

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¹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-sothebys-islamic-idUSTRE7353LZ20110406>

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"The ascent of Muhammad to heaven (mi'rāj)"



OBITUARY

The Living Abbas Kiarostami

The excellent becomes the permanent.
Aristotle

Film auteur-director, photographer, and poet Abbas Kiarostami left us in early July of this year. He was one of the most well-known and revered contemporary Iranian artists worldwide. His transcendent artistic imagination was unique. It resided in the spontaneous capture of visual and lingual images as they appear in human consciousness. Taken from proliferating webs of unlimited lived experiences, Kiarostami's creative imagination transformed these images into unrestricted interpretive possibilities. His triadic and often aesthetically intertwined arts of the cinema, photography, and poetry effected this transformation. As much as possible, he divested his multiple artistic creations from prejudices, prejudgments, and preconceived notions. Inevitably, his artistic activities appear as images of acute states of consciousness of things observed. He recreated what he experienced as such with no popular or traditional trappings, flourishes, or ornamentations. Those interested in seeing these experiences as cinematic, photographic, or poetic images would be free to perceive and interpret them anew, creating worlds of meaning of their own.

Accordingly, audiences and readers understood Kiarostami's visual or poetic images in the light of their own discrete consciousness with its attendant individual desires, knowledge, culture, educational formation, and understanding. They would then experience true recreations of their own arising from an implied invitation by Kiarostami to do so with no preconditions whatsoever. To realize its full potential, Kiarostami's art exigently requires something akin to active democratic participation in them. He asks us all to serve voluntarily as dynamic explorers and interpreters of his experimental art. Even a misunderstood or flawed interpretation of an active participant in Kiarostami's art signifies possible ways of perceiving and experiencing our lifeworld as it transforms itself into art.

From my perspective, I imagine Kiarostami counseling us: "My brothers and sisters, I ask that you be open-minded and brave; maximally exercise your freedom and take responsibility for it by participating in my art as you see fit; contribute to it by your own particular mode of comprehending it from your own perspective. I freely give you my work; be hospitable to it; make my art your own flesh and blood in any manner you consider appropriate. Explore my work and create new emotional, intellectual, and conceptual meanings, according to your own comprehension of it; indeed take possession of it in as many ways as you desire and are able to do so.

Take your new acquisition and go as far with it as you can -- preferably far beyond anything I ever envisioned. Take it beyond from what you know to the unknown and contemplate the unknowable. Do so without let or hindrance, for I veritably intended my work to be unbound, to be a vehicle of your own successive exegeses. Thus, you would be taking part in recreating an ever-expanding empire of active reimagining, even reshaping our everyday lifeworld. I shall unfailingly be with you as a fellow traveler on your long journey, because I am familiar with the territory, and I will be with you for good and keeps."

Kiarostami's relationship with those who choose exposure to his works is far-reaching. It establishes the foundation for a serene but lively comprehension of our experiential world afloat on intentional interpretations of lived experiences. Above all, it makes manifest the artist's open metaphysics of democratic judgment in matters artistic, which he based on the experience of individual freedom and responsibility. In turn, such endless revelatory undertakings set in motion other signifying interpretive acts. In due course, they make available further explications, reflections, and revisions – theoretically, ad infinitum. In that sense, one might go as far as to say Kiarostami was an exceptional type of Socratic teacher as well as a first-rate artist. The ensemble of open-ended accumulation of individual questions and answers surfacing from the depths of Kiarostami's art make for the considerable extent and wealth of his legacy. To use the more technical language of the twentieth century philosophy, one is tempted to call Kiarostami's approach phenomenological. This method bases itself on individual lived experiences as they appear spontaneously in our consciousness and their subsequent description as such. It provides its own investigative techniques (heuristics) and interpretive methods (hermeneutics). One might add, however, that Kiarostami's phenomenological approach ends up as imaginative descriptions of the human lived experience. The imaginal space-time played a magical role in his artistic creations and gave his images a thoroughly poetic quality. For him, it represented the fertile land of innovations. Rather than merely representing his lived-world, he visually and linguistically opened it up to recreations rather than mere representations and gave it a lasting life of its own. Together these creative and conceptual considerations constitute the remarkable originality of Kiarostami's multiple intellectual and artistic visions.

Kiarostami was fundamentally an educator as well as an artist, with his own particular pedagogy. He considered it his responsibility to initiate self-enlightening creative activities in others. Directly or indirectly, Kiarostami influenced many of his fellow artists, not only in Iran but internationally as well. Thoughtful colleagues and film critics revered him. He received popular plaudits as well as high critical acclaim for his film *Where Is the Friend's House?* (1987), which drew serious and widespread attention by discerning audiences and critics, and won several awards. The film's plain visual narrative of a childhood friendship put across as nascent human empathy, responsibility, decency as human solidarity made it enchanting and subject of keen reflection.

Then in 1997 came *Taste of Cherry*, with the anguish of its existential dialectic of being and nonbeing, of *hasti va nisti*. Stylistically, this film conforms to Kiarostami's aesthetics of using sharp-edged, simple images etched on the invisible and dialogues framed by silences. The film's main character, Mr. Badi'i, having dug his own grave, awaits his death as meticulously preplanned suicide. As he does so, he experiences an acute sense of authenticity and purposefulness that Martin Heidegger refers to as "being-toward-death." The only pre-condition he imposes upon himself is to hire someone to bury him properly. The burial rite is a serious spiritual matter in all cultures, and he insists upon it. Burial signifies the end of a finite journey and the beginning of an eternal one. In other words, Badi'i wishes to go through his last living act appropriately and well. He will then, and only then, entrust himself to Mother Earth, the mother of us all. His attempts to hire someone to entomb him repeatedly fail. Finally, he meets an Azari compatriot, a taxidermist, who himself has contemplated suicide but the taste of cherries, a symbol of sensuality and life, prevented him from doing so. Finally, he agrees to bury Badi'i the next day.

The final visual disclosures of the film render Badi'i's death a mystery. The viewer realizes that Badi'i's adventure might have just been an intimation of a sophisticated work of cinematic imagination. After a brief blackout, the appearance of Kiarostami and his film crew at work on the scene implies that the whole enterprise was real but nonexistent, as works of art and literature inevitably always are. For the audiences, Badi'i stands for all the binary vagaries, ambiguities, and contradictions of truth in our everyday life encounters. One never knows the entire truth in advance in any serious new undertaking.

In *Taste of Cherry* Kiarostami's cinematic metaphysics, stylistics, and aesthetics result in a marriage of thought and art, folding and unfolding in his maximally restrained and austere but gravid style. In 1998, after a standing ovation, *Taste of Cherry* received the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. In retrospect, it foreshadowed his other complex experimental works to come: *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), *Ten* (2002), *Certified Copy* (2010), *Like Someone in Love* (2012), just to mention a few.

As we know, Kiarostami led an active and peripatetic life. He traveled often, far and wide. We always knew he would return from his actual and artistic journeys and would bring us valuable presents or *rahâvard*, as the Persian language so cogently and poetically express it. We eagerly looked forward to his gifts of cinematic, photographic, and poetic images, even his forewords. Alternatively, he might surprise us with conceptual nuggets of his creative thought as conversations, presentations, and interviews. Now he has made his final foray into that infinitely mysterious and faraway "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns," as Hamlet reminds us. Rightly or wrongly, affectively we experience that "undiscovered country" as the realm of nothingness, of nonbeing, of *nisti*, of absolute negation. So when we

think of Kiarostami now, immediately his irrevocable disappearance evokes a sense of an irredeemable loss, of a chasm opening up in our everyday life, of an endless absence. It gives us a particular sense of an ending to the life of an honorable man of exceptional integrity and remarkable artistic vision. We feel it as it resonates in various registers of our consciousness as unavoidable emptiness.

Yet I would not equate his absence with oblivion -- not in the least, not at all. After all is said and done, Kiarostami, a veritable visionary artist of vast powers, taught us the seemingly contradictory truth that the void is in itself a matrix of creativity. One might think of it as a potential province of space-time where our imagination resides and images thrive. Is he not with us every time we see the fractal shape of branches of a lone tree standing in the wide expanses of empty fields and reaching up to the sky as it sketches out a visual poem? Is he not there when we see real or imaginary human figures just clearing the top of a faraway hill on the way down? Can we ever eat a handful of cherries the same way after seeing *Taste of Cherry*? Hence, he is with us as he stands in the light of our imagination. In no small measure, our everyday life offers us the marvel of sudden disclosures of truth, which bears out the reality of Kiarostami's complex ontology of creative nonbeing as real if nonexistent art. He shall always be with us in creations he so generously bestowed upon us. As long as we are capable of resurrecting things past, how can we fail to find Kiarostami's presence among us?

I would like to conclude this homage to Kiarostami on a more personal note, even though it will be somewhat wistful. I had the pleasure of meeting him several times in July 2006 in London. The first time, we met at the exhibition of his arboreal photography, "Forest without Leaves," at the Victoria and Albert Museum. I recognized him immediately. I had seen photographs of him. I approached him and introduced myself. At first, wearing his signature dark sunglasses, he appeared reticent. A sense of quiet and composure emanated from him. I told him I wanted to give him a copy of my recent article "Getting at the Primordial Roots of Being: Abbas Kiarostami's Cinematic and Poetic Vision." I handed it to him and he began looking intently at it. All of a sudden, I had the impression that he might have found the title too academic, too austere. Then he looked up, smiled, and thanked me. I considered the conversation to be over. I wished him well with his work, shook hands, and walked away.

Before leaving the room, I turned around and waved to him. He waved back. Holding the review and standing against the background of gigantic reproductions of his photographs of leafless trees, he appeared pensive. There was even a touch of forlornness about him in the gloom of the museum's fading light. He looked urbane and somewhat remote.

The next day, I was happy to see him in our session on his cinematic and photographic works at The Sixth Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies. The title of my presentation was “Abbas Kiarostami: Portrait of the Artist as Tutor and Tyro.” Afterward, a mutual friend said Kiarostami liked what he had heard. I was naturally delighted. He was as gracious as well as an honorable man of genius.

The last time I saw him was at an Italian restaurant, a short taxi ride from our hotel at Earl’s Court. There were many conference attendees at the dinner. I saw Kiarostami among them. The conversations were loud and lively. He looked slightly melancholy again in the restaurant’s dim light. Occasionally, he would briefly answer questions put to him by various people, but mostly he remained silent.

After dinner, I felt the presence of someone standing behind me. I looked back and saw Kiarostami with a shy grin on his face. I immediately stood up. We greeted each other amiably and shook hands. What followed was a somewhat long and more or less personal and fraternal conversation. We discovered we were both born in Tehran. He told me how his collection of poetry had been translated into English and published as *Walking with the Wind*. I had read and reviewed it with sincere admiration, finding its minimalist poetics a triumph. He told me he had initially jotted down the poems from time to time as a form of relaxation with no intention to publish them. A friend who accidentally discovered his scribbles on his desk and read some of them had insisted that he publish them. He spoke plainly, merely wishing to state facts and share them without any aggrandizement. With the considerable sophistication of his artistic creations, Kiarostami remained desirous to articulate details incisively and as simply as possible. It fascinated me to no end. He spoke in modest terms of his achievements without a trace of grandiosity, narcissism, or self-importance. His enormous dignity held at bay any possible ostentation. At a certain point in our conversation, I asked Kiarostami if he would care to meet my wife, Jeanne, who was sitting at the far end of the long dining table. “Of course,” he said. After a brief introduction, Jeanne said to him, “I have loved trees all my life. But looking at your photographs of trees I have learned to see each of them differently from the others.” I translated what she had said for Kiarostami. He looked at her, with a bit of astonishment in his eyes. That pensive look was upon him again. He reached into his pocket and brought out a piece of bark. “Tell her,” he said, “it is a piece of bark from one of those trees. I want her to have it.” He extended the dark little piece of bark to her. All three of us were suddenly silent and meditative.

Jeanne looked at the bark for some time. “I can’t possibly accept it,” she said to me. “It must mean so much to him. He has brought it along so far with him and has kept it all this time.” Again, I translated. But Kiarostami insisted that she should have it. Jeanne then put her hand in her pocket and took out a small Petoskey stone. She had picked up it up years earlier walking on the shores of Lake Michigan. It was her so-called “lucky stone,” worn smooth and shiny by frequent rubbings. I explained

all this to Kiarostami. He looked at the stone, held it for a moment then put it in his pocket and promised her to carry it with him. On our return from London, we framed the tree bark where it remains ever on the wall of our living room.

If I have said anything of any value at all in this homage to Abbas Kiarostami, it should contain the unexpected disclosure of the truth of the exchanged rahâvard. It ought to evoke the primeval mysteries carried by a sliver of bark from a solitary unknown and perhaps now unknowable tree in the heart of an ancient land and a Petoskey stone from the shores of Lake Michigan, formed thirty-five million years ago. We would then really begin to understand what Kiarostami was trying to intimate to us all those years with his depictions of the natural world as our home in the unimaginable vastness of the universe surrounding us.

Erik Nakjavani

Professor Emeritus of Humanities, University of Pittsburgh

HANDS-ON CINEMA VERITÉ

Academic Participation in the 10th Iran International Documentary Film Festival

(Tehran, Iran, 4–11 December 2016)

The Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies (IPGS) program at the Oklahoma State University is presenting its first Hands-on Cinema Verité, an academic visiting program for participation in the 10th Iran International Documentary Film Festival, to be held from 4-11 December 2016 in Tehran, Iran.

The program is open only to registered students (from all around the globe) who are studying or carrying out research on any aspects of Iranian documentary film: history, production and industry, or practicing filmmaking. Students will join an exciting and creative academic package which includes participation in the film festival and academic activities organised by the program.

For further information and to register, please visit: <https://ipgs.okstate.edu/cinema-verite>

THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA MUSIC FORUM

The next meeting will take place Monday 7th November 2016, 10am-6pm Music Department, SOAS, University of London, Room G52, SOAS Main Buildings, Thornhaugh Street, WC1H 0XG

Speakers: Cristina Moreno Almeida (LSE), Julian Harris (KCL), Erum Navqi (Temple University), Laudan Nooshin (City University London), John O'Connell (Cardiff), Ilana Webster-Kogen (SOAS), Baha Yetkin (independent scholar/performer)

With music from the SOAS Middle East Ensemble, led by Maya Youssef.

The full schedule is available here: <http://www.city.ac.uk/arts-social-sciences/music/middle-east-and-central-asia-music-forum>

The Middle East and Central Asia Music Forum has been running since 2007 and is open to researchers, students, and anyone interested in the music and culture of the region. In the spirit of fostering dialogue and interdisciplinarity, we hope that the issues discussed at the forum will be of interest to a broad audience, including musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and other researchers in the arts, humanities and social sciences. In addition, we welcome those working on other aspects of Middle Eastern and Central Asian culture broadly speaking (dance, visual arts, media, film, literature, etc.). The Forum is run in conjunction with the Institute of Musical Research and the convenors are Dr Laudan Nooshin (City University London) and Dr Rachel Harris (SOAS).

For more information on this event, please contact Dr Rachel Harris (Reader in the Music of Central Asia and China), Rachel Harris: rh@soas.ac.uk

JOBS

The School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS) at the University of Arizona invites applications for a tenure-track position in Persian and Iranian Studies at the Assistant Professor level, to begin in the fall semester 2017.

For a full copy of the job ad as posted on the University of Arizona Human Resources website and application form, please see: <https://uacareers.com/postings/13768>

The UA features an extensive program in Middle Eastern and North African Studies, with scholars located across the university. MENAS is home to an Arabic Flagship program. SBS departments currently offer Persian and Iranian Studies courses related to anthropology, cinema, Persian language, literature, and linguistics. Also located in SBS are the American Institute of Maghrib Studies; Arizona Center for Judaic Studies; Center for Middle Eastern Studies, a Title VI National Resource Center; and the Middle East Studies Association. Tucson features a vibrant Iranian community in addition to a strong Iranian student organization.

The successful candidate will join interdisciplinary communities of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) and Middle East and North African studies specialists, including Persian and Iranian Studies. A Ph.D. upon date of hire is required, as is a demonstrated potential for excellence in research and teaching; the areas of specialization and discipline are open. However, scholars of Iranian history and literature are particularly encouraged to apply. The School seeks to hire a candidate who is able to work with diverse students and colleagues and one who is familiar with a variety of teaching methods. She/he will play a key role in developing the newly established Roshan Graduate Interdisciplinary Program in Persian and Iranian Studies at the University of Arizona. Review of application materials will begin October 14, 2016 and continue until the position is filled.

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The Association for Iranian Studies gratefully acknowledges the generous donation by **Professor Renata Holod**.

University of Oklahoma

Farzaneh Family Assistant Professor of Persian Language and Literature (Tenure Track)

The University of Oklahoma's Department of International and Area Studies, a thriving academic department in the expanding College of International Studies invites applications for a tenure-track assistant professorship in Persian literature, funded by the Farzaneh Family Foundation. Applicants' primary research focus should be in the field of modern Persian literature. Candidates with additional teaching and research expertise in classical Persian literature and language pedagogy are also encouraged to apply. Teaching responsibilities will include advanced Persian language instruction, as well as survey courses in Persian literature in translation. Candidates will also be expected to offer thematic courses in literature and culture that contribute to the comparative, global, and transnational curriculum of the Department of International and Area Studies.

The successful candidate will join a growing and vibrant program in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma, with two tenure-line faculty already present, and searches for three additional tenure lines forthcoming. Native or near-native fluency in Persian and English, and demonstration of an active research agenda, are also required. We hope to welcome a new colleague with a demonstrated commitment to fostering inclusivity and mentoring members of underrepresented groups.

The Department of International and Area Studies (IAS) offers seven undergraduate degrees to approximately 350 majors, and an MA in International Studies with 40 students enrolled. The Department has approximately 20 full-time faculty with collective research strengths in the areas of development, security, and national identity. For more information, please visit the IAS website at <https://www.ou.edu/content/cis/ias.html>. The University of Oklahoma (OU) is a comprehensive public research university with a Carnegie classification of very high research activity known for excellence in teaching and research. OU enrolls over 30,000 students and has more than 2700 full-time faculty members in 21 colleges. Norman is a culturally rich and vibrant town located just outside Oklahoma City. For more information, visit <http://soonerway.ou.edu> and <http://www.ou.edu/flipbook>. Applicants should have a Ph.D. in hand by the time of appointment. The teaching load will be two courses per semester (2-2). Salary is competitive. The appointment will begin on August 16, 2017. Applicants should submit a letter of application, statements of teaching and research interests, curriculum vitae, three letters of recommendation, transcripts, complete sets of teaching evaluations, and a writing sample. Submit all materials electronically at: <https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/7640>. Review of applications will begin October 17, 2016 and will continue until the position is filled. We especially encourage applications from underrepresented groups as we continue to build a diverse faculty. The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution (www.ou.edu/eeo).

Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Open call to candidates for a tenure-track position in modern Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (open rank). The position is open to individuals who hold a doctorate degree and for advanced doctoral students whose PhD will be conferred no later than July 1, 2017.

Job requirements: Candidates are sought for a tenure-track position in modern Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (from the 19th to the 21st century). Responsibilities include the teaching of required and elective courses in the candidate's field(s) of specialization (at B.A. and M.A. degree levels). Successful candidates are expected to conduct independent and original research at the highest academic level, demonstrate academic leadership, compete for Israeli and international research grants and have the ability to cooperate with colleagues within the Faculty of Humanities and beyond. The Language of instruction is Hebrew, but candidates not fluent in the language will be given the time to reach proficiency in Hebrew during the initial years of their appointment. Qualified candidates will be invited for a job talk and interview.

For more information please contact Prof. Meir Hatina, Head of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, at: meir.hatina@mail.huji.ac.il

The Roshan Institute for Persian Studies of the University of Maryland proudly announced a new position made possible with a generous gift from the Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute:

Ms. Sussan Moinfar has been appointed Roshan Lecturer in Persian Studies. Ms. Moinfar will teach Core Courses in Persian Reading, Composition, and Cultural Literacy.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Stony Brook Linguistics First North American Conference in Iranian Linguistics (NACIL1) <http://www.stonybrook.edu/nacil/>

To be held at Stony Brook, NY, April 27-30, 2017.

Deadline for abstract submissions: November 30, 2016. Decisions on submitted abstracts: February 10, 2017. Conference program posted online: April 20, 2017.

CONTACT: nacil1@stonybrook.edu

The conveners warmly welcome abstracts on all topics related to Iranian languages and linguistics. Submissions are invited for 20-minute talks (plus 10 minutes for discussion) and/or posters (posters should measure approx. 3ft x 4ft or 90cm x 120cm) on any aspect of Iranian Linguistics.

Abstracts are invited from all areas of grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) and their interfaces. Abstracts on language acquisition, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, sociolinguistics and computational linguistics are also encouraged. Contributions exploring approaches to language diversity and typological works (including but not limited to sign languages, under-represented languages and comparative studies) are strongly encouraged.

Submissions can be made at: <http://linguistlist.org/easyabs/nacil1>

Auto Biography Studies

CFP: Special Issue of a/b: Auto/Biography Studies on "Embodiment"
Guest Editor: Sarah Brophy, McMaster University

a/b: Auto/Biography Studies seeks original articles for a special issue on "Embodiment" to be published as volume 33.2. Embodied lives, in all their corporeal, social, sensory, affective, political, economic, and technological dimensions, are the primary grounds for auto/biographical production. Building on the groundbreaking feminist work of the 1980s and 90s that brought embodied subjectivity to the fore, research in the field of life writing continues to generate powerful insights into the constitution, inscription, chronicling, narrativization, and performance of multiple embodiments, including an expansive and nuanced engagement with illness, disability, gender, grief, and trauma. Open to a wide variety of critical work on embodiment and auto/biography from a range of humanities and social science inter/disciplines, this special issue highlights two emergent areas demanding attention: 1) the biopolitics and necropolitics of race and disability, considered dialectically together with resistant acts, practices, and movements; and 2) the intensified, shifting relationships among auto/biography, embodiment, and mediation in the era of digital communication.

The special issue is imagined as an opportunity to bring auto/biography studies into generative dialogue with critical interdisciplinary fields that are asking urgent methodological, historical, material, and philosophical questions about embodied lives, including but not necessarily limited to: migration, citizenship, social justice, Black studies, Indigenous studies, Asian and Asian diaspora studies, mixed race studies, disability studies, crip/queer studies, mad studies, trans studies, women's

and gender studies, fat studies, sexuality studies, child and youth studies, aging, ecocriticism, animal studies, and narrative medicine.

Send original articles of 6,000-8,000 words (including works cited and notes) to Sarah Brophy (brophys@mcmaster.ca) on or before December 15, 2016. Inquiries also welcome.

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