



# ASSOCIATION FOR IRANIAN STUDIES

انجمن ایران پژوهی

<http://associationforiranianstudies.org>

AIS Newsletter | Volume 43, Number 1 | Summer 2022

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

I hope this finds you in good health and spirits despite the ongoing challenges posed by the global pandemic and the terrible consequences of the Ukraine war, there, in Iran, and elsewhere. That art can bring respite in challenging times is powerfully evoked in the current issue of the newsletter, which draws our attention to two outstanding exhibitions, one at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the other at the Chester Beatty Museum in Dublin. Further, we are offered a close-up of the Islamic manuscripts –on loan from the British Library– that were on view at the Epic Iran exhibition of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Several universities share their exciting Iranian Studies program and dissertation news, and we can read of the inspiring work done by artist Raheleh Filsoofi, as well as an interview with the writer Zara Houshmand about composing the memoir of Monir Farmanfarmaian.

In association news, last fall, AIS held elections for the position of president-elect and members of the AIS council. Congratulations are in order to Firoozeh Kashani Sabet who has been elected AIS President (beginning her term after MESA 2022), to Nahid Siamdoust and Assef Ashraf as new individual AIS Council members, and to Layah Ziaii-Bigdeli as new student council member.

Please take note of the important information conveyed on the next page by AIS Conference Chair Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo. We look forward to seeing you all at the AIS conference in Salamanca in August!!

I thank all contributors for their thoughtful submissions to this issue and wish everyone a healthy and fulfilling summer 2022. As always, please do get in touch, so that we can feature your exciting research, training and program news in future issues.

Best wishes, Mirjam Künkler

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NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION

MESSAGE FROM THE AIS CONFERENCE PROGRAM  
CHAIR

Dear AIS Members and Friends,

It is my great pleasure to announce that the preliminary program of the AIS2022 Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies, which will take place at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Salamanca from August 30 to September 2, 2022, is available online on our website: <https://associationforiranianstudies.org/conferences/2022>

Please kindly check it to be sure you are among the more than 350 participants in the program!

On the previous link you will also find more details about our conference venue, accommodation and travel information. Apart from the panels, roundtables and special sessions of the conference, a sightseeing tour of Salamanca is planned on the evening of August 31 (registration on <https://associationforiranianstudies.org/conferences/2022/information>) and a concert of the Spanish-Iranian ensemble Badieh on the evening of September 1.

Participants who decide to reach Salamanca by train ([www.renfe.com/es/en](http://www.renfe.com/es/en)) will get a discount of 5% on the total amount with the authorization number 052207172, Congress/Fair: 13th Biennial Iranian Studies Conference (AIS2022).

The AIS2022 will primarily be an in-person event, but some participants, whose paper is marked in yellow in the program, are expected to present online. We will carefully take into account all the health measures in place at the time and the maximum capacity of each room available, always prioritizing health and security for all participants.

I look forward to welcoming you in Salamanca at the end of August 2022.

Sincerely yours,  
**Miguel Ángel Andrés-Toledo**  
(Program Chair / Conference Chair)

JOURNAL NEWS

Volume 55 of Iranian Studies, Issues 1 and 2, January and April 2022, have been published! Please see the [Table of Contents](#):

ISSUE 1, 2022

Editor's Note  
*Sussan Siavoshi*

ARTICLES

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*Mette Hedemand Søltoft*

Observing Iran from Baku: Iranian Studies in Soviet and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan  
*Zaur Gasimov*

From Ethnic Nationalism to Cosmopolitan Mysticism: The Life and Works of Hossein Kazemzadeh Iranshahr (1884–1962)  
*Ata Anzali*

“Ascertaining the Truth about the Religion and Ways of the Deifiers of ‘Alī”: The Qajar Elite and the Ahl-e Ḥaqq  
*Gennady Kurin*

Ismā‘īl al-Qasrī, Kubrawiyya, and Sufi Genealogies: “Deep-Dark Transmissions” in Medieval Iran  
*Aydogan Kars*

The Reluctant Warrior: Semiotic Notes on the Story of Zāl in the Shāhnāme  
*Mahmoud Omidshah, Mohammad Afshinvaia*

The Sultan's Life as a Tragedy? Zeyā al-Din Barani, Mo‘ezz al-Din Keyqobād, and the Performance of Tārikh  
*Tilman Tausch*

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## JOURNAL NEWS CONT'D

### Review Essays

*Under the Waves: The Many Lives of* Moniru Ravanipur's *The Drowned*  
Fateme Shams

*Letting Live in Revolutionary Iran*  
Milad Odabaei

### Reviews

### ISSUE 2, 2022

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Sussan Siavoshi

### ARTICLES

#### FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

##### Articles

"Betrayed into the Hands of the Enemy": The 1795–96 Russian Investigation of the Death of Hedayat-Allah Khan of Gilan  
Kevin Gledhill

Performative Diplomacy: Iran–Republic of China Relations, 1920–1949  
William A. Figueroa

#### POLITICS AND HISTORY

##### Article

Select Tribes and Smugglers in Iran's Eastern Borderlands, 1921–41  
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The Hero of "the Noble Afshar People": Reconsidering Nader Shah's Claims to Lineage and Legitimacy  
Ali Aydin Karamustafa

#### ART HISTORY AND LITERARY STUDIES

##### Article

The "Kāmūsī Corpus": A Case Study in Manuscript Production and Knowledge Transmission in Ilkhanid Iran  
Bruno De Nicola

Pictorial Modernity and the Armenian Women of Iran  
Houri Berberian, Talinn Grigor

A History of Style and a Style of History: The Hermeneutic of Tarz in Persian Literary Criticism  
Shahla Farghadani

The Qalandar King: Early Development of the Qalandariyyāt and Saljuq Conceptions of Kingship in Amir Mo'ezzi's Panegyric for Sharafshāh Ja'fari  
Matthew Thomas Miller

The Poet Nef'ī, Fresh Persian Verse, and Ottoman Freshness  
Sooyong Kim

### IN MEMORIAM: BERT G. FRAGNER

Birgitt Hoffmann

### Reviews

## AIS COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM

On January 14, 2022, the AIS Committee for Academic Freedom issued a letter to express its deep sorrow and outrage regarding the tragic death of Mr. Baktash Abtin, the Iranian poet and board member of the Iranian Writers' Association, due to delays in receiving medical treatment after contracting COVID-19 in Evin prison.

The letter can be found at:

<https://associationforiranianstudies.org/sites/default/files/AIS-CAF%20Statement%20on%20Recent%20Events%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>

AIS-CAF also issued a letter on March 7, 2022 to express its concern for the violations of academic freedom in Iran in light of a spate of dismissals of university faculty, including the dismissal of Professor Arash Abazari, Department of Philosophy of Science, Sharif University of Technology, Professor Mohammad Fazeli, Department of Sociology, Shahid Beheshti University, and Professor Reza Omid, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran.

The statement can be found at:

<https://associationforiranianstudies.org/sites/default/files/Afghan%20bombing%20Letter%20CAF.pdf>

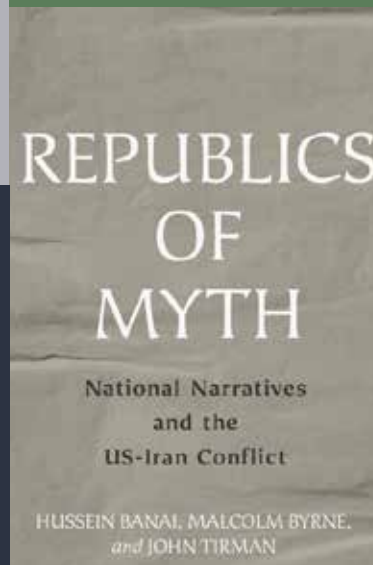
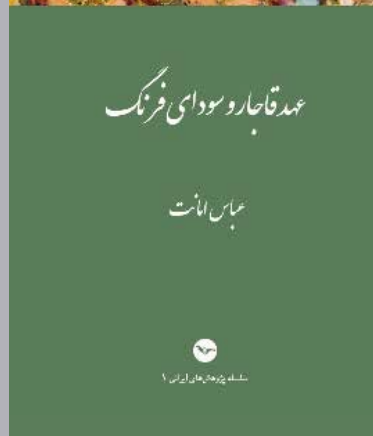
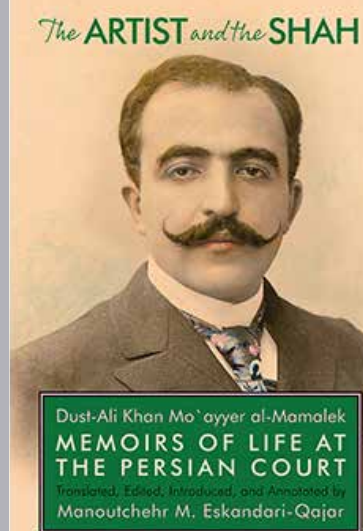


## MEMBER NEWS

**Abbas Amanat** (of Yale University) has published the book *'Ahd-e Qajar va Sawda-ye Frang* (عهد قاجار و سودای فرنگ), London: Mehri Publication, 2021, 333 pages, 19 illustrations. It consists of an introduction, seven chapters, and an epilogue. The book looks at various aspects of the Qajar era and its interactions with European modernity. The book can be acquired through [customercare@iranfarhang.com](mailto:customercare@iranfarhang.com) and [mozghan@iranfarhang.com](mailto:mozghan@iranfarhang.com).

**Mohsen Ashtiany** (of the Yarshater Center at Columbia University) has received an honorary doctorate in the field of Civilizations of Asia and Africa from the University of Rome La Sapienza. On 19 October 2021, a ceremony was held in the Senate Room of the University's Rectorate to confer it. The honorary degree recognizes the service Mohsen Ashtiany has rendered to Iranian Studies throughout his life's work, as well as for the wide recognition of his contributions in the scholarly community and among the Iranian intellectual diaspora. Speakers at the ceremony included Antonella Polimeni (Rector of La Sapienza University), Federica Casalin (Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in Civilizations of Asia and Africa, Sapienza University), Carlo Cereti (Professor at Sapienza University), and Elton L. Daniel (Yarshater Center and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*). The ceremony can be viewed in full at the institutional link: <https://youtu.be/otfY-fGfjsk>.

**Hussein Banai** (of Indiana University) announces the publication of his book *Republics of Myth: National Narratives and the US-Iran Conflict*, co-authored with **Malcolm Byrne**, and **John Tirman**, Johns Hopkins University Press, April 2022.



**Mehrzad Boroujerdi** (of Virginia Tech University) has been appointed **Vice Provost and Dean** of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education at Missouri University of Science and Technology. He has also been awarded one of three inaugural Scholar Rescue Fund (SRF) Vartan Gregorian Research Grants. The grants honor the life and legacy of Dr. Vartan Gregorian, a champion for global peace and academic freedom, who worked throughout his life to expand access to education, to promote international exchange, and to preserve the lives and work of threatened scholars. The grants, each in the amount of \$25,000, fund original research and projects that deepen knowledge of the threats faced by academics in diverse contexts across the globe and explore innovative ideas for supporting these scholars. Dr. Boroujerdi's qualitative research project, involving in-person interviews and surveys, will catalogue the conditions that have impeded scholarly inquiry in Iran and Afghanistan and have led many scholars to leave their countries of birth. It will explore how displaced Afghan and Iranian scholars assess the measures that Western governments, universities, and civic and advocacy organizations have adopted to help them and will share these scholars' ideas for the most effective support mechanisms. Dr. Boroujerdi is interested in talking to Afghan and Iranian academics and scholars who have been forced to leave their countries about their experiences. He can be contacted at [mehrzad@vt.edu](mailto:mehrzad@vt.edu).

**Peyman Eshaghi** (of the BGSMCS, Berlin) has published the chapter "Mapping the trends in Iranian social, cultural, religious, and political thought from the post-1979 era to the present" in *The Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Muslim Socio-Political Thought*. Routledge, 2021, pp. 450-463.

**Manoutchehr Eskandari-Qajar** has published a new book, titled *The Artist and the Shah*, Mage Publishers, 2022. The book contains the first-ever translation of two of Dust-Ali Khan's memoirs as well as 280 photographs taken from public archives and private collections. The memoirs and most of the photographs are presented here for the first time in their proper context.

**Bill Figueroa** (of the University of Pennsylvania) has been awarded a 2-year position as Research Associate at Cambridge University's Centre for Geopolitics to work on historical and contemporary Iran-China relations. He has recently published "China and the Iranian Revolution: New Perspectives on Sino-Iranian Relations, 1965–1979" in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 53, 2022 (1), pp. 106-123 and "Performative Diplomacy: Iran-Republic of China Relations, 1920–1949" in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 55 (2), pp. 379–403.

**Raheleh Filsoofi** (of Vanderbilt University) has received the 2021 Helene Zucker Seeman Curatorial Fellowship for Women for her curatorial exhibition "Reinterpreted/ Reimagined" to be held September-December 2023 at the Fine Art Gallery at Vanderbilt University. The curatorial exhibitions, along with lectures and panel discussions, are designed to provide a unique opportunity to engage with the many voices and perspectives of notable contemporary women, queer and non-binary artist/scholars - ultimately building bridges between concepts, cultures, and communities.



## MEMBER NEWS CONT'D

**Ali Gheissari** (of the University of San Diego) published an expanded Persian version of “*Khatt va Rabt: The Significance of Private Papers for Qajar Historiography*,” in *Ayneh-ye Pazhoohesh*, No. 191 (32/5), Azar-Dey 1400 (December 2021 – January 2022), pp. 51-67. He also delivered the 2022 Ann Lambton Memorial Lecture, on “Unequal Treaties and the Question of Sovereignty in Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran,” hosted jointly by the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Durham University, and the British Institute of Persian Studies, on April 06, 2022.



**Carole Hillenbrand** and **Robert Hillenbrand** have each been awarded the Royal Asiatic Society Medal. During the award ceremony, which took place on the 7th of April 2022 in London, the recipients delivered two lectures, respectively: “The Golden Age of the Turks? The Seljuqs in the World History of Rashid al-Din” by Prof. Carole Hillenbrand, and “Ilkhanid Images of Majesty: the Seljuq monarchs in the World History of Rashid al-Din” by Prof. Robert Hillenbrand.

**Peyman Jafari** (of the University of Amsterdam) has been awarded a VENI grant by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) for a project titled “Oil Frontiers in the British and Dutch Empires: Land, Labour and Environment in the Making of an Imperial Oil Regime, 1890-1940.” The global history project compares and connects two case studies: southern Iran while under the influence of the British Empire and the Dutch East Indies. It offers a bottom-up perspective on how oil frontiers transformed the countryside in these regions and integrated them into a global system through the movement of people, ideas and technologies. The project will be hosted at the International Institute of Social History at the University of Amsterdam as part of the Commodity Frontiers research group.

**Rudi Matthee** (of the University of Delaware) has published “Introduction: Alcohol Production and Consumption in the Modern Middle East,” special issue on alcohol of *Middle Eastern Studies* 58:2 (2022), pp. 245-55; and “Epilogue,” in Elife Bicer and Philippe Bourmaud, eds., *Alcohol in the Maghreb and the Middle East since the Nineteenth Century: Disputes, Policies and Practices* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), pp. 209-24.

**Leila Papoli-Yazdi** and **Maryam Dezhmakhoo** (in cooperation with Omran Garazhian, Hassan Mousavi-Sharghi, Gohar Soleimani Rezaabad) have published *Homogenization, Gender and Everyday Life in Pre- and Trans-modern Iran. An Archaeological Reading*, Waxmann Publishers, 2021. The editors give an interview about the book [here](#).

**Lara Parodi** (of the University of Rotterdam) has won the 2022 Hasan-Uddin Khan Article Award, presented by the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* (IJIA), for her article ‘Kabul, a Forgotten Mughal Capital: Gardens, City, and Court at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century’, published in *Muqarnas* 38, 2021, pp. 79-118. The award involves a cash prize of \$1000 and a 2-year subscription to IJIA.

**Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi** (of the University of Chicago) is the 2021 winner of the Lois Roth Prize for Literary Translation from Persian, for her co-translation of *Hafez in Love: A Novel*, originally titled: *Hafez-e Nashenide Pand* by Iraj Pezeshkzad, Syracuse University Press (2021). Together with **Prashant Keshavmurthy**, she has also published *The Eight Books: A Complete English Translation* (of Sohrab Sepehri’s *Hasht Ketab*), Brill 2022.

**Ahmad Shahvary** (formerly of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran) announces the publication of several books on Iranian culture and history (among them “Decline of the Sassanian Empire”, “History of Parthian Empire”, “World Outlook of Omar Khayyam”). The books are available in pdf format free of charge [here](#).

**Elizabeth M. Thelen** (of the University of Exeter) has published *Urban Histories of Rajasthan. Religion, Politics and Society (1550-1800)*, BIPS Studies in the History and Culture of the Persianate World, Gingko Library, 2022.



## OBITUARY

### Julie Scott Meisami, 1937-2021

With her insightful contributions to the study of Persian literature, Arabic literature, and comparative literature, our colleague Julie Scott Meisami has left us with many treasures. One of her monographs, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Court Poetry: Orient Pearls*, was titled tongue-in-cheek to refer to her challenge to claims that this poetry was somehow deficient due to some modern scholars' perception that its structure is too fragmented. In this book, Meisami delves into an astonishing range of poetic genres and their intersection with one another in Arabic and Persian poetry and criticism in order to assess each genre in connection with the historical, aesthetic, and religious aspects of the poets' worldview, while engaging with colleagues in each of these fields and drawing on her ample knowledge of medieval European cultures for comparison.

In every topic of her scholarship, we gain access to the depth of Julie Meisami's understanding of Persian and Arabic literature. Her article "Places in the Past: the poetics/politics of nostalgia" reveals the layers of meaning in the depiction of locations from gardens to palaces while she leads us in an exploration of the way that poets expressed their desire and devotion, whether to a beloved or a patron. In the article "The Body as Garden: Nature and Sexuality in Persian Poetry," she demonstrates that the sensual description of the object of desire gives insight as much on that objectified person as on the poet's own situation and mood. Meisami guides us through ideas about separation, union, and loss, the relationship between the body and the garden, and the vicissitudes of patronage. As she leads us in our examination of this topic in the *ghazal*, *qasida*, and *masnavi*, we begin to realize how the patterns of Persian literature fit together in a rich texture.

Like many scholars of Persian literature, Julie Meisami first studied Arabic literature, which enhanced her extensive expertise in Persian literature, and she was also committed to the study of Arabic literature for its own sake. In her book chapter "Arabic Mujun Poetry: the literary dimension," she builds on her knowledge of a range of Arabic poetry to investigate this important yet often misunderstood genre and comments on a wide range of scholarship. She illustrates the ways in which poets parody conventions in this genre. Her article "Ghaznavid Panegyrics: some political implications," on a genre that demands a strong foundation in Arabic poetry, offers an ethical perspective that draws a contrast between ideals of monarchy and the portrayed experiences of rulers that may revolve around allusion, irony, or criticism.

Meisami offered her leadership in scholarship of both poetry and prose writing. In her chapter "Rulers and the writing of history," as with her study of the *qasida*, she pursues an ethical approach, and concludes that historiography may play a role similar to mirrors for princes, insofar as it seeks to educate rather than celebrate the rulers that it depicts. In this chapter, she follows the arc of legendary, historical, and literary writing from the *Shahnameh* to Persian chronicles and the genre of the *qasida*, and

identifies the quest for government that integrates Islamic and Iranian priorities. In her chapter "Writing Medieval Women: representations and misrepresentations," Meisami unpacks the problems of scholarship that presents generalizations about the depiction of women instead of examining this issue in different types of sources on their own terms.

An ethical perspective on the intersection of literature, religion, and history in Persian (and Arabic) literature, combined with the investigation of genre, tone, and imagery is a hallmark of Meisami's interdisciplinary approach to medieval culture, including *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, a number of articles, and her work as co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. This approach also informs her choices and style in her translations of Nizami's mystical romance *Haft Paykar* and the mirror for princes *The Sea of Precious Virtues*. Her translation of Nizami remains indispensable for teaching Persian and comparative literature. Meanwhile, she provides new approaches to the depiction of sensuality and the body in articles that consistently emphasize the use of imagery to imply the interconnections among sensual, emotional, political, and religious aspects of experience. These dimensions of her work--the focus on ethical implications and the multiple meanings of sensuality--can be viewed as a background for current research interests in the role of allusions to multiple genres, Islamic thought, erotic experience, and history in medieval Persian and Arabic literature.

Julie Scott Meisami pursued her brilliant career as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, where she received a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature in 1971, then as a scholar and teacher at the University of Tehran (1971-1980), and at Oxford University, where she was appointed University Lecturer in Persian in 1985 and taught until her retirement in 2002. After moving back to California, she continued to work as a scholar and shared her guidance and advice with colleagues, and gave a public lecture at the University of California, Berkeley. She was unique in the breadth and depth of her knowledge of genres of poetry and prose in medieval Persian and Arabic literature as well as her incisive yet fair and objective assessment of the benefits and shortcomings of modern scholarship in these fields. She enriched our understanding of medieval Persian and Arabic literature and responded to the many cross-cultural misunderstandings about it in her scholarship that is always a pleasure to read and an inspiration to students and scholars. Julie Meisami's leadership in the field continues to pave the way for Persianists and Arabists alike whenever they set out to begin a new research project in the field of literature.

Jocelyn Sharlet  
University of California, Davis



## DISSERTATION NEWS

**Foundation for Iranian Studies**  
**Announcement of the Recipients of Award and Honorable Mention**  
**Best Ph.D. Dissertations on a Topic of Iranian Studies, 2021**  
**Foundation for Iranian Studies**  
**November 15, 2021**

The Foundation for Iranian Studies is pleased to announce that the Committee on Selection of the Best Ph.D. Dissertation of the Year on a Topic of Iranian Studies of the Foundation for Iranian Studies has chosen Paul Gerard Anderson's dissertation "A Deluge of Tears: A Conflux of Persian Shi'i Literature, Ritual, and Identity in Martyrdom Narratives," submitted to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, as the recipient of the Foundation's annual Ph.D. dissertation award for the academic year 2020-2021.

In making its decision, the Committee, following the criteria established by the Foundation's Board of Directors, noted that Paul Anderson has made an "exceptional contribution to the field of Iranian and Middle Eastern Studies by, among other achievements, "stating clearly the study's problematic ... constructing an adequate and efficient theoretical framework ... developing and using successfully a rigorous methodology to bring together a significant array of primary and secondary sources ... securing a judicious and affective connection between the immaculate history of Husayn Ibn 'Ali, Martyred grandson of the Prophet of Islam, and Hoseyn Beyhaqi Kashefi, creator of Rowzat ol-Shohada, an exceptional narrative of Imam Husayn's life and death produced in Persian ... adopting intellectually and practically an innovative approach to demonstrate the effect of Rowzat not only on the Safavid dynasty's palpable commitment to the expansion of Persian culture, but also on the evolution of Shi'a Islam for the next centuries in Iran ... demonstrating originality in approach, balance in reaching conclusions, adeptness in conjoining thought, literature, and ability to relate and conjoin needed aspects of art, literature, and history ... excellent organization of the work."

The Committee also cited Thomas Blair Benfey's dissertation "The Scholars of Sasanian Iran and their Islamic heirs," submitted to Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, and Tanvir Akhtar Ahmed's dissertation "Radical Shadows of God: Islam and Sociopolitical Dissent, 1240-1600," submitted to the Department of Religion Studies, Brown University, with Honorable Mention for superior scholarship, originality, clarity, and significant contribution to the field of Iranian Studies. Notice of the awards will appear in the Foundation's interactive web,

in MESA and AIS journals, and in various Persian and English language academic publications.

Gholam Reza Afkhami  
 Chair, Ph.D. Dissertation Awards Committee  
 Foundation for Iranian Studies

**Diplomatic Construction of Selfhood: Qajar Elites, Transimperial Hajj and the Iranian-Ottoman Relationship (1789-1925)**

On-going dissertation project by Peyman Eshaghi, Ph.D. student of Islamic Studies at the Free University of Berlin, Germany.

The dissertation focuses on the hajj made by Iranian political elites in the late modern era. The importance of elites' hajj lies in the fact that they constituted a large group of hajj pilgrims, especially before introducing current means of transportation that have made the hajj journey much more affordable. These elites' pilgrimages were generally considered not just a personal religious experience, but a phenomenon with considerable communal implications. Thus, communities often experienced the hajj indirectly through the hajj observations and stories of their elites.

From a material point of view, Iranian political elites differed from the other pilgrims in terms of the travel routes chosen, the travel facilities and logistics, and body policies. On the other hand, the elites' mentality of the hajj, the unofficial diplomatic representation of state with many implications, the compulsory responsibilities over grassroots Iranian hajj pilgrims, and the distinct Shiite identity of Iranian political elites were the most critical non-material elements of hajj culture to the Iranian political elites.

In addition to providing a case study of hajj among elites in the Shiite and Iranian contexts, the dissertation also connects a religious pilgrimage to notions of politics, personhood, and diplomacy in the late modern Middle East. The primary sources of this study are some hundred hajj travelogues written by Iranian elites and the Ottoman and Iranian decrees and documents about these pilgrims passing from the Iranian territories to the Ottoman ones.

In this dissertation, I argue that:

1. Different conditions of traveling to Mecca for elites versus ordinary has led to different self-fashioning processes and personhood formation. This provides a new lens to understanding the non-religious and spiritual changes to hajj pilgrims.

## DISSERTATION NEWS CONT'D

2. Hajj provided the Iranian state with a unique chance to test, develop and modify its relationship with the Ottomans. This happened partly to the Qajar elites who traveled to Mecca through Ottoman territories in an informal, non-official and even unintended way.

3. International politics in Qajar Iran was created not only by formal policy, negotiations, and contracts but also by a wide range of informal communications in which hajj played an important role. As the Iranian political elites informally held the position of Iranian pilgrims' administrators, they simultaneously proceeded with the Iranian state's hajj administration and developed the presence and diplomacy of Qajars. In other words, I show that a part of the Iranian Qajar state's trans-imperial, cultural, and international presence and influence was developed and guaranteed by the pilgrimages of its high-ranking officials.

4. Despite the conventional understanding that the creation of Iranian modernity in the late modern period is majorly based on traveling to the West and reading Western travelogues, the Iranian hajj, especially pilgrimages made by influential elites and notables, played an essential role in connecting Iranians to the outside world and thus contributed to Iranian modernity. The evolution of this "non-westward modernity" unfolded in close contact with the hajj, as an essential Muslim ritual and was constituted by getting in touch with the modality of dealing with modernity by fellow Muslims in different parts of the world, especially in the Ottoman lands and getting in contact with the Ottoman officialdom. It also helped them witness the Ottoman and other Muslims' experience with modernity in terms such as political freedom, constitutionalism, human rights, technological changes, and industrial modernity. Hajj provided a brilliant opportunity for the conservative strata of the Iranian political elite to have close contact with ordinary and elite fellow Muslims from abroad and be influenced by their fellows' understanding of modern concepts in Istanbul, Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo, Alexandria, and Cairo. Thus, beyond traveling to Europe and writing travelogues about the changes that happened there in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, which is generally considered the primary sources of inspiration for political and intellectual changes in Iran, this study shows that traveling to Mecca, observing the changes underway in the Arabian Ottoman provinces, negotiations of Muslim elites and non-elites and "living" with other fellow Muslim political elites have significantly contributed to "Iranian modernity."

5. The hajj was an important site of negotiations in terms of power, state, and sectarian identities and thus enjoyed a diplomatic essence to the Muslim political elites who made the hajj. This dissertation elaborates that their journey from the beginning until their return happened in a setting fully affected by elites' pilgrimage political position and background. I call this phenomenon "diplomatic hajj," showing an aspect of this religious pilgrimage that elite and non-elite Muslims joined.

## PROGRAM NEWS

### The University of Arizona

Persian and Iranian Studies at the University of Arizona are offered through the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS) and the Roshan Graduate Interdisciplinary Program in Persian and Iranian Studies (Roshan GIDP). Both units are supported by the Title VI Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES).

Among the tens of lectures and events organized by the Roshan Graduate Interdisciplinary Program and cosponsored by all three units this academic year, one was a seminar with Marzieh Vafamehr, an actress, filmmaker, woman activist, and author from Iran. As an introduction, Kamran Talattof, the director of the program, placed Vafamehr's work, which is often co-produced with Granaz Moussavi, in the juncture between cinematic, poetic, and feminist discourses. The three of them are among the most revered and enduring cultural phenomena developed in Iran. The director discussed her short and rarely screened film, *Ten-Year-Old* as well as *My Tehran For Sale* and pointed to her coproduced (with Moussavi) movie *When Pomegranates Howl* which was submitted to the Academy Awards (Oscar 2022) by Australia for best international feature film category.

*My Tehran For Sale* is replete with poetic significations. When Marzieh is in a refugee camp in Australia awaiting the hearing of her case, she is depicted in her bed reading the translation of a collection of poetry by Sylvia Plath. Yet, in another scene, Marzieh is sitting on a staircase, very depressed. Above her, a portrait of Forough Farrokhzad is hanging against the faded color of a wall. The picture, taken by Naser Taqva'i, was published in the 1960s in a journal called *Arts and Literature of the South*, edited by Mansour Khaksar. In the background, we hear a song by the underground group of Babak Mirzakhani. Marzieh Vafamehr's *Wind, Ten-Year-Old* exemplifies Iranian poetic pictures in its sense of elusiveness and urgency. It is one of the few exceptions in which the Iran Iraq war is addressed beyond the dominant and official war narrative. It reminds us of Fellini's style on the one hand and the 1978 documentary *Le Vent des Amoureux* by Albert Lamorisse on the other. By featuring a day in the life of a 10-year-old girl, the film reimagines the Iran-Iraq war, its effects on children's lives, and how the related cultural propaganda instilled turmoil, fear, and doubt in the minds of an entire generation.

University of Arizona's CMES Persian & Iranian Studies Events during March 2021-March 2022 include additional unique items. After a pandemic-related deferral, the University of Arizona (UA) Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) will implement the Fulbright-Hays Group Project Abroad, "Persianate Cultures in Central Asia," in Summer 2022. The project to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is designed to increase K-12 teacher and community college faculty participants' knowledge of Central Asia, the



## PROGRAM NEWS CONT'D

greater Persianate world, and the Persian language. Twelve teachers/educators will create curricular materials on these subjects to implement in their classrooms. CMES will assure national dissemination of the materials. The project will be co-led by CMES Associate Director, Dr. Julie Ellison-Speight and School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies Assistant Professor Austin O'Malley. The team will be assisted by artist and community college educator Nazafarin Lotfi. The project benefits from co-sponsorship by the American Institute of Iranian Studies and the UA Roshan Graduate Interdisciplinary Program.

The spring 2022 MENA Colloquium included three virtual presentations in which F-H-GPA participants joined: "The Persianate World: What is It? How Did It Appear? Why Did It Collapse?" by UA historian Richard Eaton; "Gardens and Landscapes: Origins and Evolution in Central Asia" by Mohammad Gharipour, Morgan State University; and "Late Persianate/ Late Soviet: The Poeticity of Poetic Cinema from Parajanov to Makhmalbaf" by Samuel Hodgkin, Yale University.

Additional events related to Iranian and Persian studies over the last year included three MENA Colloquium lectures: Niloofar Haeri, Johns Hopkins University, "Say What Your Longing Heart Desires: Women, Prayer, and Poetry in Iran;" Hosna Sheikholeslami, Denison University, "Translation Infrastructures and the Politics of Publishing Western Theory in Iran;" and Reza Hadisi, UA Philosophy, "Between the Universal and Particular: Lessons from Suhrawardi."

CMES also features Iranian studies content in outreach activities. Among these over the past year were a screening of director Massoud Bakhshi's film, "Yalda: A Night of Forgiveness;" a virtual presentation to AP Comparative Government teachers about relations between Iran and the US by Faten Ghosn, University of Essex, UK; and a two-part summer course on Iranian art—ancient, classical, and modern--presented to UA Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Green Valley. Most recently, CMES' director did a virtual reading of Mina Javaherbin's book, *The Secret Message*, based on a poem by Jalal al-Din Rumi, to 5th graders during Tucson Unified School District's Love of Reading Week.

Graduate students in MENAS And Roshan GIDP have had a productive year. Mojtaba Ebrahimian (Ph.D.) received a teaching position at Harvard University. Lexie Palmer, Andrew Zonoozi, received FLAS. Gianni Izzo, and Shabbir Agha Abbas received Roshan GIDP or Taleghani Fellowships. Sajedeh Hosseini received a highly competitive dissertation grant award from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Shahram Parastesh has defended his MA thesis and will graduate this term. Robin Lesley Brackett, who had received her MA degree from Roshan GIDP, is continuing her doctoral studies at the University of Oregon.

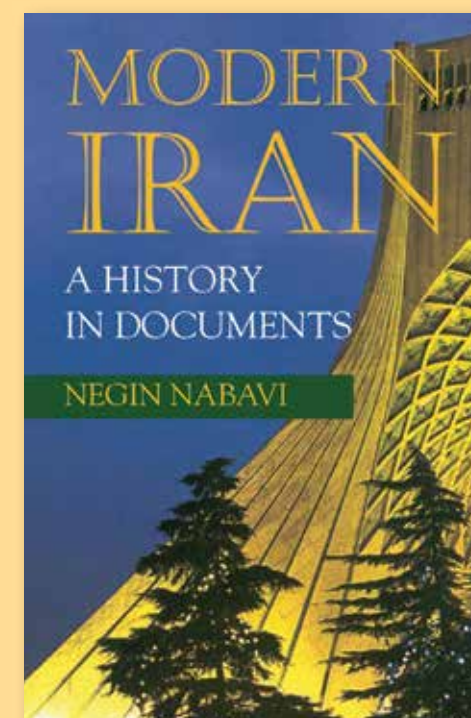
# MODERN IRAN A HISTORY IN DOCUMENTS

Edited, translated, and introduced by Negin Nabavi

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



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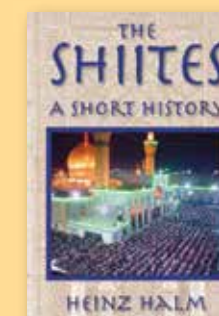
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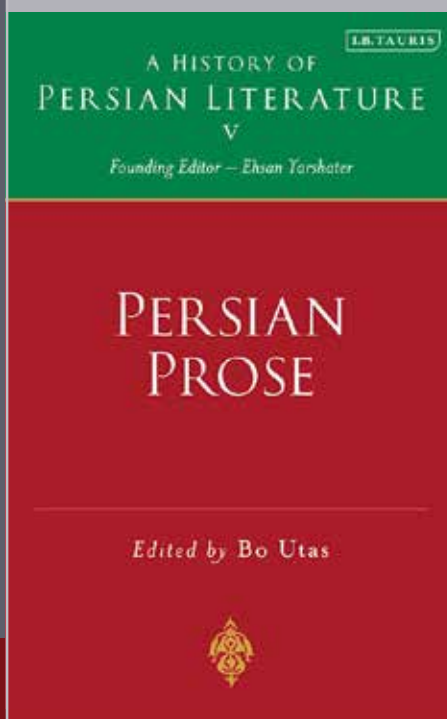
## PROGRAM NEWS CONT'D

The Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies at Columbia University is delighted to announce that the first fascicle of Volume XVII of *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, the Yarshater Center's flagship publication, has been published. The printed Fascicle 1 of Volume XVII contains entries from "Khorasan XV" to "Khotan III" and concludes the series of entries on Khorasan that began in Volume XVI. For continued updates on the availability of this fascicle, as well as the complete and revised Volume XVI, please visit Brill Publishers' website at [www.brill.com](http://www.brill.com).

### *History of Persian Literature V: Persian Prose Published, August 2021*

Volume V of A History of Persian Literature presents a broad survey of Persian prose: from biographical, historiographical, and didactic prose, to scientific manuals and works of popular prose fiction. It analyzes the rhetorical devices employed by writers in different periods in their philosophical and political discourse; or when their aim is primarily to entertain rather than to instruct, the chapters describe different techniques used to transform old stories and familiar tales into novel versions to entice their audience.

Many of the texts in prose cited in the volume share a wealth of common lore and literary allusions with Persian poetry. Prose and poetry frequently appear on the same page in tandem. In different ways, therefore, this creative interplay demonstrates the perennial significance of intertextuality, from the earliest times to the present; and help us in the process to further our understanding and enhance our enjoyment of Persian literature in its different manifestations throughout history



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**CHAPTER 10:** THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN PERSIAN PROSE: FROM THE NINETEENTH TO THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY (Iraj Parsinejad)

Copies are available to order from Bloomsbury [here: https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/persian-prose-9781845119065/](https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/persian-prose-9781845119065/).

### **Agreement of Cooperation between Ehsan Yarshater Center and Sapienza University of Rome**

The Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies is pleased to announce the signing on 13 May 2022 of a Letter of Cooperation between the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sapienza University of Rome and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Columbia University to promote academic work of mutual benefit to both institutions in the field of Iranian Studies. Specifically, the agreement enables faculty and advanced students from Sapienza University to collaborate in the editorial work of the Yarshater Center, thus actively contributing to the activities of the Yarshater Center. It provides a framework for the reciprocal exchange of visits by scholars, research and training programs, organization of meetings and seminars, and other programs under the auspices of the Yarshater Center and the Department of Ancient World Studies at Sapienza University.

The staff of the Yarshater Center look forward to working with their colleagues at Sapienza University to promote and develop the Center's current projects, the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and the *History of Persian Literature* series, and they believe that this collaboration will strengthen and enrich these endeavors.

### **News from the Persian Heritage Foundation**

The Persian Heritage Foundation is pleased to announce that the following academic projects have been approved for funding in the most recent funding cycle:

- Tamar Abuladze, Helen Giunashvili, Mohsen Heidarnia (Consultant), and Kioumars Ghareghlou (Consultant), publication support for their book project, *Persian and Georgian-Persian Historical Documents in the National Archives of Georgia: A Critical Edition of One Hundred Unpublished Safavid-Era Edicts, Letters, and Deeds*.

- Denise Aigle, publication support for her book, *Iran under the Mongols: Ilkhanid Administrators and Persian Notables in Fars*, to be published by I.B. Tauris/Bloomsbury.



## PROGRAM NEWS CONT'D

- Abbas Amanat, publication support for the new book series, “Sources for the Study of the Persianate World,” to be published by Brill.
- Ali Banuazizi and Foundation for Iranian Studies, publication support for a collection of Ehsan Yarshater’s Persian essays and shorter writings.
- Habib Borjian, publication support for his book project, *The Central Plateau Language of Varnusfaderan*.
- Maryam Borjian, publication support for her book project, *The Ancient Persian Calendar*.
- Brill, support for Open Access to *Storey Online*, a new online publication of Charles Storey’s *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*. The first part of this important reference work is now freely available at <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/storey-online>.
- Sinem Arcak Casale, publication support for her book, *Gifts in the Age of Empire: Ottoman-Safavid Gift Exchange, 1501-1650*.
- Mahdi Ganjavi, publication support for his book project, *Persian Prosody: Southeastern Iran*.
- Jane Lewisohn and the Golestan Project, support for “Archiving Persian Performing Arts 1880-1980.”
- Lynn Gumpert, Persian Heritage Foundation Curatorial Fellow for research, conservation, and exhibition of Modern Iranian art works at New York University’s Grey Art Gallery.
- Mazda Publishers, publication support for a reprint of Dr. Khalegi Motlagh’s edition of the *Shahnameh*, with a new introduction by Dr. Khalegi Motlagh.
- Parvaneh Pourshariati, publication support for her book project, *Bahram Chūbīn*.
- Yael Rice and Amherst University, support for the project “Digitizing the *Taza Akhbar*, an Illustrated History of the Kings of Kabul.”
- Yale University, Program in Iranian Studies, full support for the PHF-Ehsan Yarshater Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies.

The Persian Heritage Foundation extends its congratulations to the recipients of the awards and looks forward to the successful completion of all their projects and publications.

The British Institute for Persian Studies (BIPS) will host the following webinars:

**Roi sur son Trône: the Achaemenid royal audience in late Qajar media**  
with Lindsay Allen

29 June 2022, 5PM BST

[REGISTER HERE](#) for the Zoom Webinar

This lecture aims to advance the case for specific patterns of neo-Achaemenid citation in the late 19th century by scrutinising selective Qajar-era appropriations of the royal audience scene. The scene, itself an archaising adaptation of pre-existing stagings of imperial kingship in ancient Western Asia, was visible (at the time) only on surviving door jambs at Persepolis. Redeployed in specific locations in the house of Qavam al-Molk in Shiraz, the scene also became for a while the most prominent neo-Achaemenidism in elite carpet production, seemingly signalling spatial and tribal as well as royal affinities. Allen argues that detailed multi-media mapping allows us to both refine and diversify our understanding of the intended meanings of pre-Islamic “influence” in the context of nineteenth-century Iran.

**The Mobility of Persian Artefacts: The Sanguszko Carpet in Motion**  
with Dr Yuka Kadoi

20 JULY 2022, 5PM BST

[REGISTER HERE](#) for the Zoom Webinar

Originally woven in Iran during the sixteenth century, one of the most celebrated classical Persian carpets to survive today — the “Sanguszko Carpet”, currently housed at the Miho Museum in Japan — made an extraordinary intercontinental journey. It found its way to Europe during the early modern period and continued its journey across the Atlantic Ocean in the early twentieth century; furthermore, it went on an odyssey across the Pacific Ocean afterwards. In this illustrated talk, Yuka Kadoi makes a fresh analysis of the sociocultural migratory journey of the Sanguszko Carpet, while shedding new light on the mechanisms of cross-continental object sharing and networking across different oceanic spheres.

Please register for the webinar using [this button](#).

RECORDINGS OF PAST EVENTS CAN BE ACCESSED [HERE](#)

## PROGRAM NEWS CONT'D

### **Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran at UCLA educates, connects Iranian diaspora** By Anna Feng.

A bilingual lecture series on Iran at UCLA has allowed the Iranian community of Southern California to further learn about their roots in their native language.

The series, sponsored by UCLA's Program of Iranian Studies and supported by the Center for Near Eastern Studies, offers lectures in both English and Persian and primarily focuses on modern Iranian culture, politics and society, according to organizer Nayereh Tohidi.

The program is structured so most lectures are split into two days, one for each language, with each lecture followed by a Q&A panel, said Tohidi, a research associate in the Program of Iranian Studies and a gender and women's studies professor at California State University, Northridge. Sundays are often reserved for lectures in Persian, while Mondays are mostly reserved for the same lecture in English.

Although there are occasionally lectures in only one language, Tohidi said she tried to invite lecturers who are comfortable with lecturing in both languages.



A cross-campus collaboration between professors from UCLA and California State University, Northridge created the Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran in 2003. Since then, the series has hosted a variety of speakers to provide lectures in Persian and English about topics such as Iranian politics, culture and society. (Constanza Montemayor/Daily Bruin senior staff)

A lecture on Nov. 7 discussed women, public spaces and social participation in Iran and was presented by Masserat Amir-Ebrahimi, a researcher studying women and youth culture in Iran who also held the 2006 to 2007 and 2011 Nikki Keddie Balzan Fellowship at UCLA.

Tohidi has been coordinating the Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran at UCLA since its inception in 2003. She said the inspiration for the series came from Leonard Binder, the former director of UCLA's Center for Near Eastern Studies. Binder wanted to create a program that reflected the growing diaspora of Iranians in Southern California and would make UCLA an attractive academic center for that community, Tohidi added. Tohidi now works with Marissa Stevens, the assistant director of the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World, to coordinate the lectures, as well as Rahim Shayegan, the director of the Pourdavoud Center and the Program of Iranian Studies.

Stevens, an Egyptologist, said she particularly resonated with the non-Western approach to the study of Middle Eastern societies. During her own studies, Stevens said she had to learn French and German, but not Arabic, despite Egypt's status as an Arabic-speaking country.

"I think that allowing various communities to reclaim their academic and social identity is incredibly important," Stevens said. "Not all scholarship needs to be done, written and spoken in English, French or German, as was my case for my studies, but those venues of dialogue need to be open for everybody."

In addition to uplifting Iranian scholarly works, the Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran also aims to connect second-generation Iranians to their native language.

"Many parents are keen on making sure the second generation – their children, their grandchildren – don't lose the language. So they appreciate this program," Tohidi said. The series has now grown to include an audience of Iranians from all over the world.

Throughout the years, the Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran has become an academic niche for the Iranian community in Southern California. Tohidi attributes part of its success to the broadness of the program. The series not only brings people from around the world together for discussion, but it is also a cross-campus collaboration between UCLA and CSUN, she said.

"(It) provided a safe space for learning how to have healthy and friendly civil dialogue among different views," Tohidi said. "So people gradually learn to accept diversity, to be tolerant, to listen (and) to be less partisan."



## EXHIBITION REPORT

### Listening: The Fourth String Report on an Artistic Collaboration: **Artist + Musician + Community = SOCIAL AWARENESS + SOCIAL CHANGE**

Visual Artist: Raheleh Filsoofi <https://www.rahelehfilsoofi.com>

Musician: Reza Filsoofi <http://www.historymiami.org/reza-filsoofi/>

*Listening: The Fourth String* is a series of interactive multimedia installations and public performances that re-imagine the silenced existence of the Iranian musician and Sufi, Moshtagh Ali Shah (18th century) and emphasizes his historic contributions to music. The project addresses the concept of sound, suggesting the act of listening can nourish community engagement, promote social change, and contribute to a better future. The exhibition has been set via various events and the first phase was recently exhibited in The New Gallery at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN.

*The Fourth String* is a reference to the traditional Iranian instrument *setar*. Literally translated from Persian, *setar* means three (*se*) strings (*tar*), and the Iranian *setar* is a three-stringed instrument. However, centuries ago, the Iranian Sufi musician Moshtagh Ali Shah added a fourth string. This dramatically changed the instrument from its original configuration, enhancing the sound and allowing musicians to explore more complex compositional and performance possibilities while retaining the traditional capabilities of the three-stringed instrument.



Shah's contribution to musical culture, despite its historical significance, remains obscure as he has been deliberately excluded from the majority of textbooks and research articles. His religious beliefs of Sufism, combined with his use of the *setar* in the recitation of the Qur'an, led to his tragic death by stoning and his elimination from Iranian musical history. Ironically, although his name has ceased to exist, the fourth string remains on the *setar* to this day as an invisible but manifest testament to Moshtagh Ali Shah's contribution, one that resonates in more than one way as a reminder of cultural innovation and courage.

The installation and performances intend to facilitate positive social change by educating those in attendance about Middle Eastern music, art and history through interaction and direct participation. It is also meant to serve as a tribute not only to Moshtagh Ali Shah, but to the many silenced and censored artists throughout history who have remained obscure. The installation endeavors to explore listening both as a concept and an act — through sounds, voices, instruments, perspectives, etc. — and highlight the null of the listening experience -- that which typically is unheard and often ignored in a performance. The goal is to challenge Middle Eastern stereotypes and broaden the participants' knowledge and understanding. Music and art have the potential to expand cultural awareness, acting as a bridge to thoughtful listening to each side of the cultural divide.

There are three components to this exhibition:

#### 1) Installation and Performance

A Kermani rug that traditionally serves as a gathering place is transformed into a four-string instrument where artists and community members can experience sound and music together. In addition to community participation, local musicians have been invited to collaborate in an experimental performance with this instrument.



Pictures by Amirasoud Agharebparast

## REPORT CONT'D

### 2) An Installation – Artists as Witnesses

In a multi-channel video, this installation provides an opportunity for underrepresented artists to collectively come together as witnesses and participants of social change in action. Close-ups of over 30 Middle Eastern musicians peer back at exhibition viewers.

### 3) Installation as a Platform for Learning and Engagement

An educational and interactive installation allows individuals to sit and play the *setar*. Three video monitors provide step-by-step instruction on a few basic strumming and picking techniques.

The installations, performances, and artists' lectures intend to broaden participants' knowledge and understanding of Middle Eastern music and its ethos. They provide unique educational and performance opportunities for the community. The exhibit showcases the dynamic aspects of Middle Eastern music, its capacity to integrate with other musical genres, and the potency of its contribution to the soundscape of the United States.



### About the artists:

**Raheleh Filsoofi** is a multidisciplinary Iranian American artist based in the United States. Her work synthesizes sociopolitical statements as a point of departure and further challenges these fundamental arguments by incorporating ancient and contemporary media such as ceramics, poetry, ambient sound, and video to create a holistic sensory experience. Her interdisciplinary practices examine the literal and figurative contexts of border, immigration, land, and ownership. Raheleh is an assistant professor in Ceramics at Vanderbilt University.

**Reza Filsoofi** is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, and composer born in Tehran, Iran. Reza's versatile musical styles combined with his expansive knowledge of different classical instruments have given him opportunities to collaborate with numerous artists and musicians in a variety of projects.

For over six years Raheleh's and Reza Filsoofi's socially engaged practices as visual artist and musician have brought groups of people together from diverse cultural backgrounds in South Florida and South Texas. They currently live and practice in Nashville, Tennessee.



Close-up of musicians Golnar Shahyar and Kourosh Taghavi, from the Installation "Artists as Witnesses"





## EXHIBITIONS

The **Getty Museum in Los Angeles** is currently featuring the exhibition **Persia: Ancient Iran and the Classical World** (April 6–August 8, 2022, GETTY VILLA). It includes over 200 objects from ancient dynasties of Persia/Iran.

Ancient Iran, historically known as Persia, was the dominant nation of western Asia for over a millennium (about 550 BC–AD 650), with three native dynasties controlling an empire of unprecedented size and complexity. This exhibition, part of the Getty Museum's program The Classical World in Context, explores the artistic and cultural connections between the rival powers of Iran, Greece, and Rome. Works on view include royal sculpture, spectacular luxury objects, religious images, and historical documents assembled from major museums in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. The exhibition is supported by an immersive film presentation exploring the site and palaces of the ceremonial capital of Achaemenid Persia, Persepolis.

Also available is a website experience allowing for in-depth exploration of the magnificent palace complex of Persepolis and objects featured in the exhibition.



*Drinking Horn (Rhyton) with a Stag, Parthian, about 100 BC. Silver with gilding and glass inlay. Getty Museum, 86.AM.753*



*Vessel Handle in the Form of a Winged Ibex, Achaemenid, 400–350 BC. Silver, with gilding. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, Misc. 8180a.*



*Seal with a Bust of Queen Yazdān-Frīy-Shābuhr, Sasanian, AD 383–388. Banded agate. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Seyrig.1974.1080*

The **Chester Beatty Library in Dublin** is currently featuring the exhibition **Meeting in Isfahan: Vision and Exchange in Safavid Iran** (April 4–August 28, 2022). As the global silk trade boosted Iran's economy, the popular rhyme observed: "Isfahan, nesf-e jahan" – "Isfahan is half the world". In 1598 the city of Isfahan became the new capital of Iran, signalling a vibrant transformation of political, spiritual and cultural life under the Safavid dynasty. Wealthy, successful and ostentatious, Safavid Isfahan was a hub for dazzling urbanity throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. New vistas opened up as a modern urban layout was drawn across this ancient city, and European merchant travellers published breathless accounts of their experiences. Bringing together the internationally celebrated collections of the Chester Beatty with generous loans from the National Museum of Ireland, Meeting in Isfahan explores this cosmopolitan urban centre of trade, ideas and visual culture. With 65 works from the Chester Beatty's Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Armenian collections, as well as early printed books and maps from Europe, this exhibition features paintings and drawings by the most renowned artists of the Safavid period: Reza 'Abbasi, Muhammad Zaman, Mu'in Musavvir, and many others. Much of the exhibition can be visited online [here](#).

## EXHIBITIONS CONT'D

Designed to enhance the exhibition, an academic conference, titled *Seeing Isfahan: Perspectives on the Safavid Image*, was convened May 27-28, 2022 which examined an illuminating cross-section of visual and intellectual culture in Isfahan. The keynote lecture, given by Massumeh Farhad (National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.), titled *Towards a New Pictorial Language: Painting and Patronage in Seventeenth-Century Iran*, can be viewed online [here](#).

Pejman Akbarzadeh reports from the exhibition and his interview with curator Moya Carey, produced for Voice of America's Persian Television:

Seventy works are on display; mostly from the Chester Beatty collection and some on loan from the National Museum of Ireland. Visitors have a special opportunity to look closely at magnificent examples of Persian paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries. Of these, the museum is particularly proud of a 1675 work by Muhammad Zaman, which describes the birth of Rostam, the legendary hero of Ferdowsi's Book of the Kings [*Shahnameh*]. Curator Moya Carey comments: "The scene is very dynamic and cinematic. It shows us the labour of princess Rudabeh who is suffering a difficult childbirth. Her worried husband Zal is nearby. Years beforehand, Zal himself had been fostered as an infant by Simorgh, the wise magical bird of Persian mythology. Before they parted, Simorgh gave one of its feathers to the young Zal, to burn whenever he needed help. Now, Zal is in fear that his wife will die in childbirth, and so he finally burns Simorgh's feather. The artist's beautiful scene shows the bird arriving, and perfectly shares the dramatic urgency of Ferdowsi's story."

The art of Safavid Isfahan contains many examples of cultural exchange: references to India, China, Europe and the new Armenian population are visible. This confirms Isfahan's famous cosmopolitan atmosphere. Moya Carey believes Isfahan's cosmopolitanism can be seen even in the objects that people owned there: "One example might be a *qalian* which is on display in the exhibition. It was produced in Isfahan but follows the style of Chinese porcelain. Its tobacco was probably imported by Dutch traders. For all that, it is inscribed with 16th-century Persian verses by Ahli Shirazi. This shows an interesting mix of older heritage, new ideas and consumer tastes, and a cosmopolitan and lively outlook on the world."

To support the exhibition, the Chester Beatty has organised a programme of virtual lectures and events on the history and art of Safavid Isfahan, listed on the museum website. "Meeting in Isfahan" will be open to the public until 28 August 2022. Watch highlights of the exhibition, produced by Pejman Akbarzadeh here: <https://youtu.be/IXjx8ogoGrQ>



Portrait of a Safavid official  
(artist unknown)



Old man with a small child, by Šadiqī (d. 1610)



Seated young man offering fruit and wine  
(artist unknown)



The astrolabe is an adjustable instrument that maps the stars, and has many other functions. The device can be set to the user's location on earth, and to the correct time. On the front, the curling pointers on the openwork plate (al-'ankabut in Arabic, or spider) are each labelled with a star's name. Invented in late classical times, the astrolabe was perfected in the early Islamic period. Astrolabe, brass, with incised text, mapping lines and decoration, instrument with six latitude plates, openwork rete ('ankabut), sight-rule (alidade), wedge (faras) and pin, dedicated to Safavid shah Sultān Husayn, produced and decorated by 'Abd al-Husayn ibn 'Abd al-A'imma', Isfahan, Iran, dated 1120H, 1708-1709.



## EPIC IRAN: MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE ISLAMIC ERA

The Fall 2021 edition of the AIS newsletter featured a presentation of **three Zoroastrian treasures** of the British Library which were part of the *Epic Iran* exhibition organised by the Victoria & Albert Museum in London with the Iran Heritage Foundation in association with The Sarikhani Collection. The following text reviews the manuscripts of the Islamic period that were part of the exhibition. It is **reprinted** with kind permission by the author, Ursula Sims-Williams, Lead Curator of the Persian collections at the British Library:



The exhibition *Epic Iran*, organised by the V&A with the Iran Heritage Foundation in association with The Sarikhani Collection, was organised into broad themes, the first four on Iran up to the advent of Islam, the fifth section, **The Book of Kings**, acted as an introduction to Islamic Iran primarily through the epic *Shahnamah* (Book of Kings) completed by the poet Firdawsi around AD 1010.



This detail from Firdawsi's *Shahnamah* shows the Sasanian ruler Bahram Gur (Bahram V, r. 420-38) hunting with the slave girl Azadah. Iran, 1486 (BL Add MS 18188, f. 353r). Public Domain

Tracing the history of the Iranian people from the beginning up until the defeat of the Sasanian ruler Yazdegird III in 651, the *Shahnamah* combines myth and tradition in what is perhaps the best known work of Persian literature. Many hundreds of illustrated copies survive today dating from the Mongol period onwards. The story depicted here, in a manuscript dating from the Turkman/Timurid period shows Azadah, a slave-girl who was a fine harpist, riding behind Bahram on his camel on a hunting expedition. On this occasion Bahram performed the remarkable feat of shooting two arrows into one gazelle's head, cutting off the antlers of another and hitting a third as it raised its foot towards its ear. When Azadah expressed sympathy for the gazelles instead of praise for Bahram's skill, he took offense, flung her to the ground, and let his camel trample her.

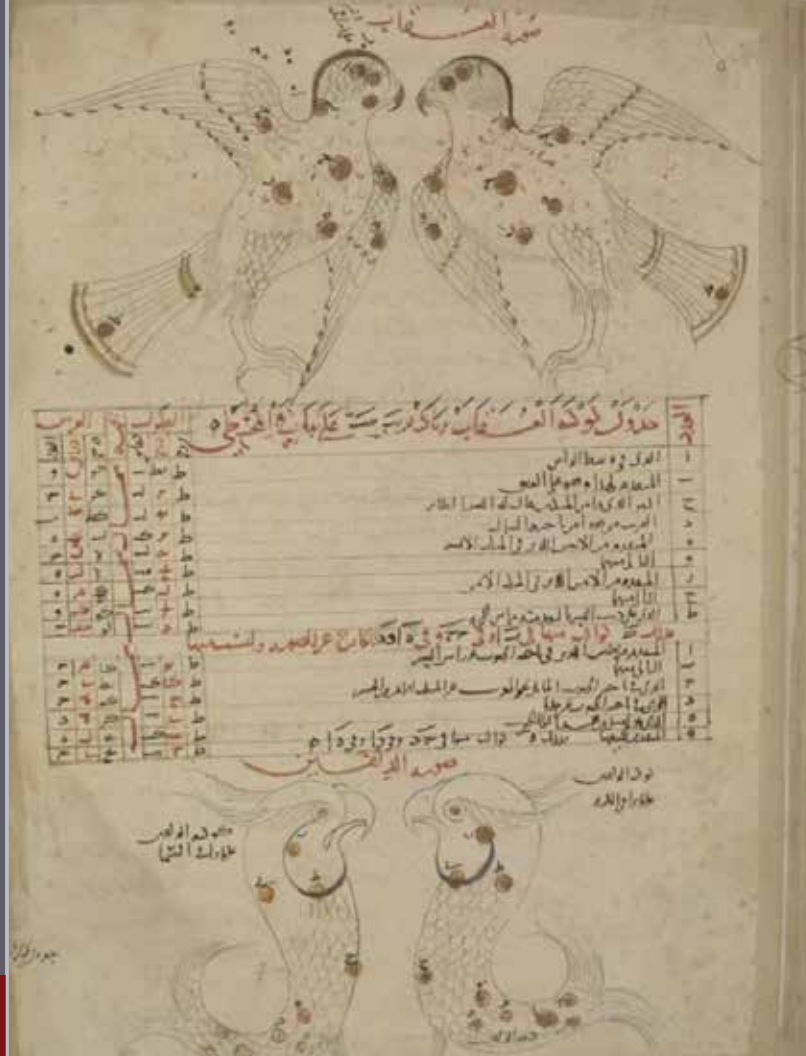
The sixth section, **Change of Faith** explored Islam in Iranian culture, the transition from Arabic to Persian and the important Iranian contribution to Islamic science.

There are several different collections in Arabic and Persian with the title *Qisas al-anbiya*, stories adapted from the Qur'an and other Islamic literature. One of the best-known and most illustrated is the collection composed in Persian by the 12th century writer Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Naysaburi. Add MS 18576 illustrated here is one of several known illustrated copies of al-Naysaburi's compilation, all produced in Safavid Iran between 1565 and 1585. The portrayal of Adam and Eve agrees with a passage in the Qur'an (*Surah* 20, verses 120-21) 'So the two of them ate of it, and their shameful parts revealed to them, and they took to stitching upon themselves leaves of the Garden.' Their fiery haloes, however, indicate that they still had some prophetic status.





The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Pursued by a figure with a club, Adam and Eve are accompanied by the peacock and dragon who, at Satan's instigation, had been responsible for their fall. From the *Qisas al-anbiya* (Stories of the Prophets) by al-Naysaburi. Shiraz, Iran, 16th century (BL Add MS 18576, f. 11r) Public Domain



The constellations Aquila and Delphinus from the *Kitab suwar al-kawakib* (Book of the Images of the Fixed Stars) by al-Sufi. Iran, possibly Maragha, 1260-80 (BL Or 5323, f. 28v). Public Domain

The tenth-century Iranian astronomer 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (903–86) is the author of several important Arabic texts on the stars and is regarded as one of the greatest Islamic scientists. His most important text, represented here, is the *Kitab suwar al-kawakib al-thabitah*, based on Ptolemy's *Almagest*, in which he gives a full description of the classical system of constellations, observed both from the earth and from outside the celestial globe. The outlines of each constellation and the stars belonging to it are therefore drawn twice, their image mirrored in the second drawing.

Describing the rise of Persian poetry, the seventh section, **Literary Excellence**, was devoted to how Persian emerged as a literary language from the tenth century onwards. As a result of royal patronage poets flourished at court and workshops developed in which calligraphy, illumination and painting were practiced at the highest levels.



Lyrical poems of Adib Sabir, the panegyrist of the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar (r. 1118-57). Tabriz, 1314 (BL IO Islamic 132, f. 49r) Public Domain

This manuscript, an anthology of poetry by Mu'izzi, Akhsikati, Adib Sabir, Qamar, Shams Tabasi and Nasir Khusraw, was very likely copied in Tabriz in the scriptorium of the Ilkhanid historian and vizier Rashid al-Din. Copied by 'Abd al-Mu'min al-'Alavi al-Kashi between Dhu'l-qa'dah 713 and Dhu'l-qa'dah 714 (February 1314–February 1315), it closely resembles other secular manuscripts prepared for Rashid al-Din during the same period. The manuscript contains altogether 53 illustrations in a simplified Mongol style, mostly depicting, as here, the poet receiving a robe of honour from Sultan Sanjar.





Facing pages of the Divan of Hafiz on Chinese paper. Possibly Herat, Afghanistan, 1451 (BL Add MS 7759, ff. 60v-61r). Public Domain

This early copy of the Divan of Hafiz (d.c.1389) was copied by Sulayman al-Fushanji in Ramazan 855 (October 1451). Although no place is mentioned in the colophon, the name of the scribe may be connected to Fushanj in the province of Herat, Afghanistan, possibly suggesting Herat as a place of origin. The paper is unusually heavy and includes 31 pages decorated with Chinese ornamentation containing designs of bamboos, pomegranates and other plants while twelve show Chinese landscapes and buildings. The decorated Chinese paper had originally been in the form of large sheets which were painted on before being cut up. The paper is dyed various shades of orange, pink, blue, yellow/green, grey and purple.



Humay arrives at the gate of Humayun's castle. From Humay u Humayun (*Humay and Humayun*) of Khvaju Kirmani. Baghdad, Iraq, late 14th century (BL Add MS 18113, f. 18v). Public Domain

Add MS 18113 contains three poems from the *Khamsah* (Five Poems) by Khvaju Kirmani (1290-1349?). The first, the story of the lovers Humay and Humayun, was completed in 1331 in response to a request to enchant Muslim audiences with a supposed 'Magian' theme. The poems were copied by the famous calligrapher Mir 'Ali ibn Ilyas al-Tabrizi al-Bavarchi in 798 (1396) at the Jalayirid capital Baghdad. The paintings most probably belonged to another copy and were added afterwards. The artist of one of them was Junayd, a pupil of Shams al-Din who worked under the Jalayirid sultan Uways I (r. 1356-74), who inscribed his name on an arch in an illustration on folio 45v. The manuscript stayed in royal hands at least until the Safavid era when it was refurbished for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza (1517-49), the youngest of the four sons of Shah Isma'il (r. 1501-24).



The building of the palace of Khavarnaq. From Nizami's *Khamsah*. Painting attributed to the master-painter Bihzad. Herat, late 15th century (BL Or.6810, f. 154v). Public Domain

This beautiful copy of the *Khamsah* (Five Poems) by the 12th century Persian poet Nizami entered the Mughal Imperial Library in Akbar's reign and was regarded as one of the most treasured possessions in his collection. Its importance lies chiefly in its decoration and illustrations which include paintings by the master-painter of Herat, Bihzad (flourished during the reign of the Timurid Husayn Bayqara, 1469-1506). 'The building of the palace of Khavarnaq,' ascribed to Bihzad in a note underneath, shows the structure of the pavilion: the scaffolding, a ladder, men chipping bricks, transporting them and actually positioning them on the building.





The opening of Nizami's *Makhzan al-asrar*, one of the five poems forming his *Khamsah*. Tabriz or Qazvin, (BL Or.2265, ff. 2v-3r). Public Domain

Or.2265, a 16th century copy of Nizami's *Khamsah* (Five Poems), is perhaps the most spectacular of our manuscript loans. Originally copied between 1539 and 1543 for the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-76), it was augmented by the addition of 14 full page illustrations by some of the most famous court artists of the mid-16th century. Further pages were inserted probably during the 17th century, and again at a later stage, perhaps when the manuscript was rebound in the early 19th century at the court of Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797-1834) who in 1243 (1827/28), according to a note inside, presented it to his forty-second wife Taj al-Dawlah.

The ninth section **The Old and the New** focussed on the Qajar dynasty (1789-1925), introducing an element of modernisation and developing new relationships with Europe.



Left: Khusraw listens to the minstrel Barbad. From Nizami's *Khusraw Shirin*, one of the five poems forming his *Khamsah*. Painting ascribed to Mirza 'Ali (BL Or.2265, f. 53v). Public Domain

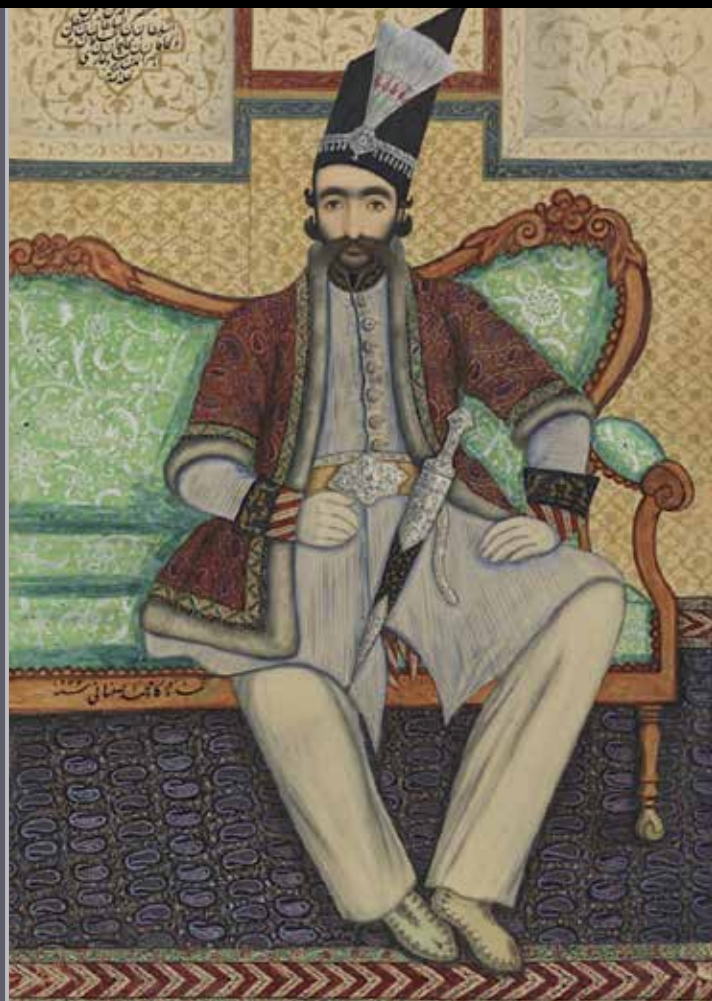
Right: Prince Khusraw spies Shirin bathing. From Nizami's *Khusraw Shirin*. Painting ascribed to Sultan Muhammad (BL Or.2265, f.77v). Public Domain



Fath 'Ali Shah's heir 'Abbas Mirza about to slay the Russian general Gazhadand with the Russian army in flight. From the *Shahanshahnamah* by Fath 'Ali Khan Saba. Iran, 1810 (BL IO Islamic 3442, f. 387v). Public Domain

With Firdawsi's *Shahnamah* as a model, Fath'Ali Shah commissioned the *Shahanshahnamah* (Book of the King of Kings) by the court poet Fath 'Ali Khan Saba. Presented to the East India Company, this was one of several equally sumptuous copies given as diplomatic gifts to various European dignitaries.





Portrait of Nasir al-Din (r. 1848-1896), seated on a European style sofa, by Muhammad Isfahani. Iran, 1856 (BL Or.4938, f.4r). Public Domain

Although the exhibition has now closed, the published catalogue of *Epic Iran* is available by the three curators: John Curtis, Ina Sarikhani Sandmann and Tim Stanley [Epic Iran: 5000 years of culture](#).

Ursula Sims-Williams, British Library, Lead Curator Persian CCBY

#### Further reading

Most of these manuscripts have been digitised and can be explored by following the hyperlinks given above or by going to the British Library's [Digital Access to Persian Manuscripts](#) page. The following blogs also give further information:

An illustrated 14th century Khamsah by Khvaju Kirmani  
The archaeology of a manuscript: the Khamsah of Khvaju Kirmani  
Two Persian 'Ming' manuscripts on view at the British Museum  
A Jewel in the Crown: A 15th century illustrated copy of Nizami's Khamsah (Or.6810)  
The Khamsah of Nizami: A Timurid Masterpiece

## INTERVIEW

### The Mirror Garden: Interview with Zara Houshmand, author of Monir Farmanfarmaian's memoir

In 2021, the AIS newsletter featured an overview of the life and work of world-renowned artist Monir Farmanfarmaian. Delaram Hosseinioun, PhD candidate in Art History at Leiden University, has now interviewed Zara Houshmand, the biographer (and a lifelong friend) of Farmanfarmaian.

Zara Houshmand's *The Mirror Garden* exceeds the norm of a memoir. It situates Monir Farmanfarmaian in the context of her time, following the cultural transformation of Iran from the modernization policies of the 1930s to the days of multi-party democracy in the 1950s, to the 1979 revolution, war and exile. Houshmand gives voice to Farmanfarmaian's reflections on how she carved a path for herself, from the Tehran Museum of Art to the 2015 exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum New York, as the century's foremost Persian female artist. Cherishing the distant but dear memories of her family and friendships with Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock, turning the anguish and the loss of her beloveds to elegant mirrors, Farmanfarmaian is portrayed not only as a remarkable artist but a woman who did not cease to confront and challenge contemporary norms both in Iran and abroad.



Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian in her studio in Tehran. Photo courtesy of Rose Issa Projects.





## INTERVIEW CONT'D

Delaram Hosseinioun: Can you tell us more about how you met Monir Farmanfarmaian, how she chose you to write her memoir?

Zara Houshmand: The very first time was when my family was living in the Philippines and she was on a visit in the 1960s. As we were the only Iranians living there at the time, she was invited to a gathering in our home. When I was living in Iran from 1970 until 1977, I was working with a group of photographers, including Bill Wright whom I later married, and who was very close to Monir. He travelled with her on some of her trips to the Turkoman region, photographing for her. Later we would go and retrace their steps and I was introduced to the things he discovered with Monir. She knew about my work with Bijan Mofid and our translation projects, and she knew about my aspirations as a writer, so when she was living in New York, she suggested that I might be interested in writing her story. I see a memoir just as a different art form, and that's how it started.

D: How long did it take you and Ms Farmanfarmaian to craft this memoir?

Z: It took about two years, perhaps a bit longer. We started the interviews without any planned method. I had never done such interviews, but, as she would often wander with her memories, I had a sense that rather than organizing the interviews in advance it would be easier to let her just carry on. If there was repetition it would be interesting to see how she would narrate it differently on different occasions. She had an almost photographic memory, visual and precise, so that made it easier. After hours of recording and transcriptions, we had to organize it chronologically and of course to be selective to maintain the narrative. Nevertheless, she gave me a tremendous degree of freedom, partially due to her limited experience with written English, although she had been living here for decades and her English was very comfortable conversationally. She always said, "I am an artist, you are an artist, I trust you, take the material and make it into art in your way." This was a wonderful gift of freedom. I recognized what I needed to do: to convey her sheer liveliness, to find the equivalent voice that expressed that personality in writing, and a style that matched what she was able to do visually.

D: Was this in Persian or English?

Z: Both. The interviews were mostly in English but sometimes she would switch to Persian and I could follow, back and forth, whatever she was comfortable with that day.

D: The memoir was published in 2007. Why did she decide to publish her memoir in that moment, after all these decades?

Z: I am not completely sure. She asked me before the death of her husband, though we did most of the work after his death. It wasn't necessarily related to that context originally, although memories of their life together became an important part of it. I think she thought about writing it for a long time, and there were many considerations.

D: Have you heard the news of the publication of the translated version in Tehran a week ago?

Z: I just heard about it. They did not ask for permission.

D: There are many flowers and birds, miniature illustrations at the end of each chapter. Are they drawn by Ms Farmanfarmaian especially for the book? Did she mention the story or the inspiration behind each?

Z: I think many of them she drew for the book when the editor suggested the possibility of it. She went back to her notebooks and also drew new ones, but she didn't decide where in the book they should go. In fact, each time we would finish a chapter, I would read it to her over the phone and she might suggest some corrections about the facts but aside from that, I don't think she ever read the paper version.

D: Who chose the title of the book and how so?

Z: The working title we had in mind was slightly different, something like Mosaic Mirrors. The Mirror Garden was suggested by the editor George Andreou.

D: Reading through the memoir, we understand that the cover picture is Ms Farmanfarmaian posing for a Vogue photo shoot. How come this picture was chosen, a docile and submissive pose, with her gaze downward, imbued in pink, which is rather the opposite of her rebellious character, especially as a revolutionary woman who always confronted cliché and was avantgarde? As a child, she even shaved her hair to be able to play with the boys and run freely. What did she think of this picture as the cover image?



Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian.  
Photo courtesy of the Third Line, Dubai

Zahra Houshmand



## INTERVIEW CONT'D

Z: As a matter of fact, when they sent us that photo cover, which was a slightly different version, Monir and I both hated it, for different reasons. She was furious and angry about it. In my view, it portrays her as extremely submissive, that downward-looking gaze. It almost looks like she is in bondage. One aspect that I did like about that cover was the shadow, projecting her presence.

As one of the most prestigious publishers in America, they made their decision and as a graphic designer in the past, Monir also had her own views, of course. She also designed some other samples for them, but the editors were adamant. After reducing some decorative, orientalist aspects, we ended up with the current version.

D: After all these years, if you could rewrite or change some aspect of the book, what would it be?

Z: What I would change almost has nothing to do with the facts but the style perhaps. If you pay attention, it begins in an old-world style, evoking a fairy tale, and it becomes more modern as she becomes more modern. It makes sense logically, but personally, I don't like the orientalist flavor of the beginning and it starts very slowly. It's playing into a taste for orientalism which I am not happy about in retrospect.

D: Talking about her family and roots, from Qazvin to Tehran and then to Brooklyn, the initial narrative seems almost mystical, in the next chapters her words reveal the metamorphosis she is going through. If Ms Farmanfarmaian was alive today, would she change some aspects of this book?

Z: Probably not. Only the ending, meeting Prince Philip... all that happened after we finished the first draft. She wanted to highlight that, as it was something she was very proud of and, of course, she would have wanted to include her Guggenheim exhibition. This was the crowning of her career. I was more concerned about her personal story instead of the artistic career. It's the question of whether a memoir is more the historical record of her accomplishments or the story of her life.

D: Which parts and aspects of her life moved you personally?

Z: Writing about her husband's death and the memories that sparked, like a series of photographs. I remember when she told me that part of the story. She postponed it for a long time. We were in Berkeley when it came pouring out. I had to help her let off steam, so we got into the car and I drove into the mountains, just to let the words sit, and to let it rest. It was very moving to be with her when she told her story, and I don't think she talked about it to many people. It was a challenge to record.

Also, the parts that responded to my own memories. The scene in the coffee house or the Turkoman material—that was very close to me. In theory, I was writing from her voice, but I was also writing my own memories of Iran in that period and my own explorations. When I first went back to Iran after I graduated from University, I was working with a company that did public relations, such as slide shows for the museums, for Kanoun Parvaresh Fekri Koudakan, so it involved travelling all over the country doing photography. We went way off the beaten track, it wasn't just tourist stuff. It was a wonderful way to learn about Iran, to see the country, to interact with people. It was similar to a lot of what was reflected in her own travels. So, I could really relate to that. I remember, for example, there is a scene in the Turkoman stories, about the children bouncing on the carpet they were weaving, that was something I had seen and she had not seen. I inserted it like a small signature of my own.



Monir Farmanfarmaian with her relief work, 1970s.  
Photo: Courtesy of the Artist and The Third Line.



Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: Lightening for Neda, 2009. Mirror mosaic, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood.  
Queensland Arts Gallery Foundation.

## INTERVIEW CONT'D

D: Have you seen the museum dedicated to Ms Farmanfarmaian, the first-ever preeminent museum named after a female artist in Iran, at Negarestan Palace? She donated 51 of her artworks to this museum.

Z: No, That is much more recent.

D: After her final visit, she decided to stay in Iran?

Z: For her exhibitions, she visited New York, but she did return to Iran and she was busy working, making art till her final days. Due to an accident in her apartment, she broke her shoulder, which slowed her down. She was immobile for a long time, but she kept herself busy with her art, both in the US and Iran. She never had that much dealing with the press, she wasn't verbal in her expression.

D: What is your favourite work between all her collections?

Z: That's an interesting question. It's subjective, of course. Many pieces are my favourites for different reasons, but the memory box is one I lived with for thirty years. She gave it as a gift to my ex-husband, in thanks for the photography work he had done with her, and we carried it around the world, so it was the most familiar piece of art to me. I have another piece she gave me much later, that I am very fond of. Also, a lot of the old ones I had seen decades ago, before she left Iran in the 1970s—I saw some of those works at the Guggenheim after not seeing them for many years, and those I love. Very abstract, clean, with the white plaster and the geometric mirrors. I'm not a fan of the newer, very heavy ones looking like giant jewellery. But there was a series of new work she created quite recently, about the garden, which includes garden imagery, Chahar Bagh, and painting behind glass. They are more feminine and more like her older pieces, but with a fresh slant, and I think those are my favourites among them all.

D: Did she ever manage to retrieve her collections?

Z: Most got confiscated, in the past decades some of them were surfacing in Canada. There was a clear channel of the confiscated art, and at one point somebody tried to sell her art back to her, a sad story.

D: A century after her birthday, what makes her such an icon?

Z: If you knew her, because she had such a social life, travelling and being connected to many people and younger artists around the world, she had this presence, that helped to make her an icon. That presence of personality, she was larger than life and just entertaining to be around. She was always the centre of attention, but for good reason. You wouldn't sense she was being narcissistic. She gave so much life and energy, and fascination. I think that is important, combined with her pivotal position of being both extremely modern and plugged into tradition.

D: In your view, what inspired her to confront and surpass obstacles?

Z: I think even as a child she recognised that she was larger than life. She talks about some of the impressions her elder relatives had of her as a child. I think that strength was just who she was. I don't think she even thought of it as fighting. For a time after the revolution, it was very hard for her to keep going. She often had opinions about why and how she was not being treated as well as she should be, but I think the fighting instinct was so native to her that she was not even conscious of how different she was from the rest of the world.

D: As she was experiencing the socio-cultural transition of her era, the reader also witnesses her tendency towards modernism. Through her witty expressions, she recites how crude she used to be, or believing in old sayings, how she overcomes the embedded sense of tradition in her. Do you think she had to adopt a different persona based on American culture?

Z: I think at the time the biggest changes were happening, she was very young. She had just come to America and she was learning her way around a new world. I think at that point she was not self-conscious. There was an incident where somebody describes her as a Persian princess, and she resists the implied orientalism. But mostly, I think she was just doing what any immigrant in this country does, learning a new culture and the business of maintaining her pride. There is a reversal when she goes back to Iran and she marries, dealing with her husband's family, and the fact that she has very modern tastes and they are old fashioned, so a lot of her sense of self-identity comes in opposition to the family's sense of importance, their social status and conservatism. Who she became and who she was, her sense of pride, comes in opposition to that. It probably would have happened less if it wasn't such a powerful family she was dealing with. Also, because she was in New York and connected with the art scene that became very famous later, she had a sense at that time, that all the people she was meeting were important, but nowhere near the awareness of how actually important that time was seen in retrospect, with an historical view.

D: Did she ever mention her biggest dream that she never accomplished?

Z: I think it would have been the Guggenheim, but in the end she did accomplish it, after the book was finished.

D: Did she ever mention any regrets?

Z: A lot of regrets about serving other people when she should have just been doing her own art, nothing unusual.

D: If you want to describe Monir Farmanfarmaian, which words would you choose?

Z: There would be so many words, I don't want to simplify her, I don't want to sum it up.

D: She is beyond words indeed. Thank you for giving me this chance. It was an honour to get to know you and to see and understand Monir Farmanfarmaian from your perspective.



### A Century of Cello Music from Persia: 1921-2021

2021 marked the 100th year since the appearance of the first Persian composition written for the cello. The piece, entitled “Tchahargah”, was written in 1921 by Souren Arakelian, a professor at the Tehran Conservatory of Music. To commemorate this anniversary, the Persian Dutch Network in Amsterdam has published an anthology which includes cello works by four generations of Persian composers between the years 1921 and 2021.

Compiled by Pejman Akbarzadeh, these compositions have mostly been collected and restored from private archives in Tehran, Paris, and Montreal.

It is hoped that by publishing the anthology, “public awareness will be raised of Persian cello music, a genre that has been ignored until now in the world of music. Another goal is to encourage the cellists around the world to perform these neglected but amazing pieces. Most of the compositions in this anthology have never previously been published and, in addition to their historical value, they demonstrate how the use of Persian (Iranian) elements in cello compositions has evolved throughout the years”, Akbarzadeh points out in his introduction to the accompanying booklet.

Although the cello is a Western instrument, it shares several structural characteristics with a number of ancient Persian instruments - *kamancheh* in particular - giving composers and performers a useful tool for the expression of Persian musical idioms.

“A Century of Cello Music from Persia: 1921-2021” includes the following pieces:

1. **Tchargah** (1921) Souren Arakelian
2. **Poem in Shur** (1953) Hossein Nassehi
3. **Sonate** (1965) Alireza Mashayekhi
4. **Dialogue** (1975) Sheida Gharachedaghi
5. **Persian Song** (1984) Iradj Sahbai
6. **Oriental** (1992) Mehran Rouhani
7. **Elegy** (1998) Behzad Ranjbaran
8. **Sonata for Cello and Piano** (2003) Mohammad-Reza Tafazzoli
9. **Sonata for cello and Piano** (2012) Rebecca Ashooghian
10. **Persian Folk Songs** (2017) Reza Vali
11. **A capella** (2017) Alireza Farhang
12. **Rapture** (2017) Kaveh Mirhosseini
13. **Avaz-e Jaan** (2019) Shahab Paranj
14. **Persian Suite** (2021) Kazem Davoudian

Watch BBC’s special programme on the anthology here: <https://youtu.be/po-QdJl8p4E> (produced by Majid Afshar)

## A Century of Cello Music from Persia 1921-2021

Works by

Arakelian, Nassehi,  
Mashayekhi, Gharachedaghi, Sahbai,  
Vali, Ranjbaran, Rouhani, Davoudian,  
Tafazzoli, Ashooghian, Farhang,  
Paranj, Mirhosseini

Compiled by Pejman Akbarzadeh

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### Seeking science books in Persian or Dari

Brattleboro Union High School, a rural school in southern Vermont has experienced a recent addition of several Afghan students who are in need of resources to support them, specifically biology, chemistry and other science books in Persian or Dari.

If you have information about purchasing such resources, please be in touch with the Librarian [Marilee Attley](#) at Brattleboro Union High School.

Brattleboro Union High School, 131 Fairground Road, Brattleboro VT 05301 The telephone number can be viewed [here](#).

## CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies and the Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies at San Francisco State University are pleased to open a call for paper submissions to their conference, "The Iranian Diaspora in Global Perspective." The conference will be held on **February 16–17, 2023** at the University of California, Los Angeles and aims to support the growing field of Iranian Diaspora Studies by sharing new research and scholarship.

The conference will bring together senior scholars, mid-career scholars, and emerging researchers in any discipline who are contributing to and developing this emerging and transnational field. Panels and speakers are encouraged to showcase work on the Iranian diaspora in a global context, including but not limited to:

- Histories of Iranian migration and diaspora formation
- Sociological and cultural dimensions of Iranian diaspora communities
- Comparative studies, whether comparing across Iranian diaspora communities or between Iranian and other immigrant groups in differing locations
- Research on Iranian communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania; especially South-South relations
- Studies that cast light on the heterogeneity of Iranian diaspora communities and their migration experiences

The conference is also interested in creative expressions such as documentary film, fiction films, photography, and/or animations related to themes and experiences of the Iranian diaspora.

This conference will build and sustain a stronger academic community, draw attention to increasingly transnational elements of the Iranian diaspora, and highlight the importance of cross-disciplinary research and collaboration. Additionally, we will draw from selected 2023 conference presentations to invite papers for an edited volume that will be made available in open access format through an academic publisher such as University of California Press.

While we aim to hold the conference in person to benefit from the incomparable experience of in-person exchanges, we are taking COVID-19 into consideration as we plan possible modalities for the conference. Conference presentations will be in English. Travel and lodging will be covered by the conference.

Organizers:

Kevan Harris, Department of Sociology, UCLA

Persis Karim, Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies, San Francisco State University

Amy Malek, Department of International Studies, College of Charleston



## CALL FOR PAPERS

### Ninth Biennial Convention of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies in Yerevan, Armenia

May 30-June 3, 2023

The *Association for the Study of Persianate Societies* (ASPS) calls for the participation of its members in its Ninth Biennial Convention, to take place in Yerevan, Armenia, May 30-June 3, 2023. Our meeting will be hosted by [the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian-Armenian \(Slavonic\) University](#).

The Deadline for **Submission of Abstracts** is September 30, 2022.

**Please note that you must be a current (2022) ASPS member in order to submit your abstract. Otherwise your submission will not be considered. You must be a 2023 member to register and participate in the conference.** To become a new member or renew your ASPS membership please proceed to our [membership page](#). We will likely have a limited number of fellowships available for participants from Afghanistan and Central Asia, and for graduate students from the US. Details TBA.

All humanities and social science disciplines related to Persianate Societies are welcome. Pre-organized panels are strongly encouraged. Submissions for pre-organized panels must include a panel abstract of no more than 300 words plus individual abstracts of no more than 300 words for each panelist. Panels must be limited to a minimum of three panelists and a maximum of four.

**Submissions for pre-organized panels and individual papers can be made by clicking [here](#).**

For those of you who were registered for the cancelled 2020 convention in Delhi, your registration has been automatically switched to the 2023 convention in Yerevan. You will also have the opportunity to present your previously submitted paper or submit a new proposal as part of the general CFP. If you are submitting a previously approved abstract from the cancelled Delhi convention, please indicate this in your new abstract submission.

We are very excited about the forthcoming Ninth Biennial Congress of the Association in Yerevan. One of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, Yerevan has connections to the Persianate world stretching back to antiquity and to the ASPS going back to 2004 when the city hosted our Second Biennial Congress. Yerevan's rich history and cultural heritage offers many opportunities for visitors and provides a wonderful setting for our congress.

We look forward to an exciting ninth convention in Yerevan. Past conventions of ASPS have been held in Dushanbe/Tajikistan (2002); Yerevan/Armenia (2004); Tbilisi/Georgia (2007), Lahore/ Pakistan (2009), Hyderabad/India (2012); Sarajevo/ Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013); Istanbul (2015), and Tbilisi/Georgia (2018). We invite you to review our [past programs](#). The ASPS Congresses have provided a rare and valued opportunity for scholars from across Asia, Europe and North America to participate in an interdisciplinary dialogue. The interchange of ideas has also found its place in our publication, the *Journal of Persianate Societies*, published by Brill Academic Publishers. We encourage you to take the opportunity to participate in this unique gathering.

For questions, please contact the Chair of the Convention and ASPS Secretary, Rob Haug at [haugrt@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:haugrt@ucmail.uc.edu).