



# INAUGURAL AIS ONLINE SYMPOSIUM

October 21-22, 2023



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

---

Accessing the symposium

2

---

Welcome from the  
Organizing Committee

3-4

---

Schematic Schedule

5-22

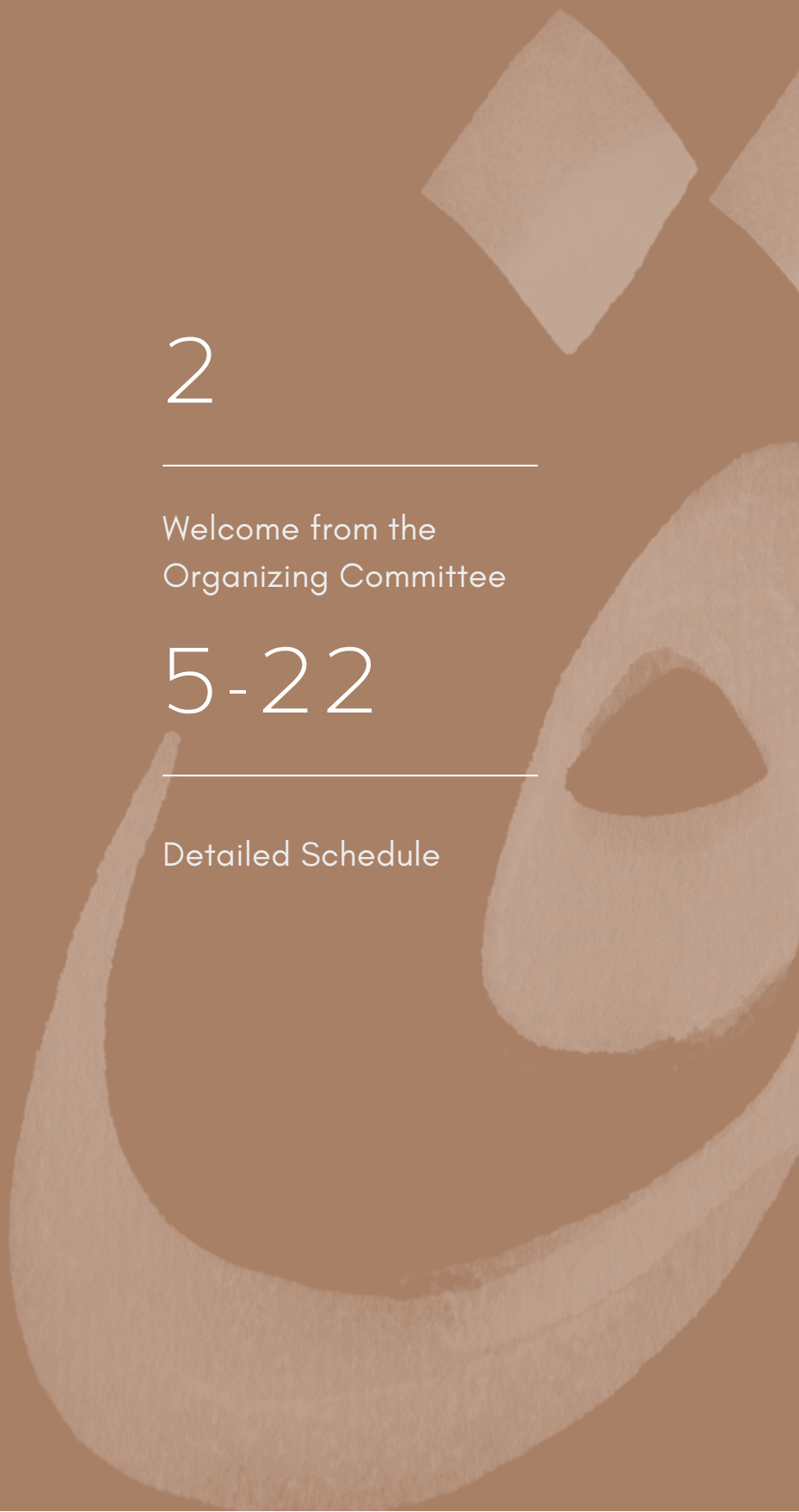
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Detailed Schedule

23-77

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Abstracts



# ACCESSING THE SYMPOSIUM

The events general registration and attendance link is:

[https://events.zoom.us/j/AsZaMITIUbBjo0XO2\\_3cy71fOFmXu4xeZ7jm82DuGGFQof9ZRiMa~ArQUIUUiC5slpZVKkdUFwFOX5maEmQ\\_R3wxBlplj2Zp3uqctoT9spCEdw](https://events.zoom.us/j/AsZaMITIUbBjo0XO2_3cy71fOFmXu4xeZ7jm82DuGGFQof9ZRiMa~ArQUIUUiC5slpZVKkdUFwFOX5maEmQ_R3wxBlplj2Zp3uqctoT9spCEdw)

Please note that the Symposium is set up as a series of webinars, with each panel being assigned a specific Webinar ID. This means that if you are in more than one session (for example, presenting in one and chairing the other), you will have to log-in to each session separately from the "Lobby" of the events. Presenters have already received invitations for this event and need to register for the event at the above link, or connect it to already existing Zoom accounts in order to be able to attend the event.

Presenters will have access to each session in full and be able to share slides and do what is necessary for their session. Presenters are also all co-hosts of the session, so in case the main host (the Chairs) lose their internet connection, the session will remain active.

The audience members will be able to access the panels/webinars, but will not be able to use video or audio and can only submit questions via the Q&A function. So, the Chairs and the Speakers will need to pay attention to the Q&A session.

**Each presenter has 15 minutes to present (or 20 minutes for three-person panels).**

This allows for 10-15 minutes of questions and discussion for each presentation. The exact format of each panel is at the discretion of each chair. The panels run for 90 minutes each, with 15 minutes of extra time if needed. However, please bear in mind that the sessions will end at **105 minutes (1 hour and 45 minutes)**.

Please note that there are a few book exhibitors with curated sales pages in the conference. Links to these pages will be available both on the website and on the Symposium's event page on Zoom.

Please note that there are a few book exhibitors with curated sales pages in the conference. Links to these pages will be available both on the website and on the Symposium's event page on Zoom.

[https://events.zoom.us/j/AsZaMITIUbBjo0XO2\\_3cy71fOFmXu4xeZ7jm82DuGGFQof9ZRiMa~ArQUIUUiC5slpZVKkdUFwFOX5maEmQ\\_R3wxBlplj2Zp3uqctoT9spCEdw](https://events.zoom.us/j/AsZaMITIUbBjo0XO2_3cy71fOFmXu4xeZ7jm82DuGGFQof9ZRiMa~ArQUIUUiC5slpZVKkdUFwFOX5maEmQ_R3wxBlplj2Zp3uqctoT9spCEdw)

# WELCOME FROM THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Welcome to the Inaugural AIS Online Symposium! As the Symposium's Organizing Committee, we would like to welcome you to the first of these fully online biennial meetings. We hope that future online symposia will be offered in the years when there is no in-person, biennial conference. The AIS Online Symposium was initiated by the Council of the Association for Iranian Studies with the expressed purpose of creating more opportunities for inclusion among the AIS membership. To address the limitations for in-person conference attendance faced by many of our members, our term president, Prof. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet suggested the Online Symposium to provide an opportunity for the membership to present their work virtually and benefit from the feedback and support of the other scholars in our community. The inaugural symposium committee defined the themes of this first conference in the spirit of maximizing fruitful interactions and dialogue among the presenters and participants.

Together with the President and the AIS Council, we are delighted to offer this opportunity for participation to AIS members and we thank all those who submitted panels, roundtables, and individual papers for the Inaugural AIS Online Symposium. We look forward to listening to over 50 exciting presentations, and also to hearing your feedback about this new, scholarly venue. Your feedback and participation will be vital to improving the AIS Online Symposium in its future iterations.

Thank you for your participation and support.

## **The Organizing Committee of the Inaugural AIS Online Symposium**

Khodadad Rezakhani (Chair)

Niki Akhavan

Amir Moosavi



# SCHEMATIC SCHEDULE

DAY 1

ALL TIMES ARE GMT

SESSION  
1/I

**17:00-18:30**

PANEL 1/I/1

ART & VISUAL  
STUDIES

SESSION  
1/II

**17:00-18:30**

PANEL 2/I/1

IRAN'S METOO  
MOVEMENT

SESSION  
1/II

**18:30-20:00**

PANEL 1/II/1

ALTERNATE  
VISIONS OF  
MODERNITY

SESSION  
2/II

**18:30-20:00**

PANEL 2/II/1

THE CONVERSION  
CAUCUS  
(ROUNDTABLE)

SESSION  
1/III

**20:00-21:30**

PANEL 1/III/1

IRAN AND  
THE WORLD

SESSION  
2/III

**20:00-21:30**

PANEL 2/III/1

SOCIAL  
EXPRESSIONS

SESSION  
1/IV

**21:30-23:00**

PANEL 1/IV/1

GENDER,  
CHOICE,  
AND POWER

SESSION  
2/IV

**21:30-23:00**

PANEL 2/IV/1

MEDIEVAL  
ARTS AND  
SCIENCE

SESSION  
1/V

**23:00-00:30**

PANEL 1/V/1

SELF-  
DEFINITION,  
BELONGING &  
EXCLUSION

# SCHEMATIC SCHEDULE

DAY 2

ALL TIMES ARE GMT

SESSION  
1/I

**17:00-18:30**

PANEL 1/I/1

IRANIAN  
MYTHS AND  
RELIGION

SESSION  
1/II

**17:00-18:30**

PANEL 2/I/1

ILLUMINATING  
NEGLECTED  
GEMS  
(PRE-ORG PANEL)

SESSION  
1/II

**18:30-20:00**

PANEL 1/II/1

DISCOURSES  
AND  
PRACTICES

SESSION  
2/II

**18:30-20:00**

PANEL 2/II/1

QAJAR  
IMAGES:  
HISTORY AND  
CONTEXT

SESSION  
1/III

**20:00-21:30**

PANEL 1/III/1

HISTORICISING  
THE  
METOO  
MOVEMENT  
(PRE-ORG PANEL)

SESSION  
2/III

**20:00-21:30**

PANEL 2/III/1

VISUAL  
CULTURE & REP  
RESENTATION

SESSION  
1/IV

**21:30-23:00**

PANEL 1/IV/1

VISUALIZING  
WOMEN'S  
HISTORIES  
(PRE-ORG PANEL)

SESSION  
2/IV

**21:30-23:00**

PANEL 2/IV/1

PUBLISHING  
IN IRAN  
(ROUNDTABLE)

# DETAILED PROGRAM



DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
OCTOBER 2023

**16:30-17:00:** Welcoming Addresses and Opening  
Presidential Welcome by **Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet** (16:30-16:40)  
Welcome and Opening: the AIS Online Symposium Committee –  
**Khodadad Rezakhani** (Chair); **Niki Akhavan**; and  
**Amir Moosavi** (16:40-16:50)

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION I, 17:00-18:30  
PANEL 1/I/1: ART AND VISUAL STUDIES

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Amir Moosavi** (Rutgers University, Newark)

Participants

**Mandana Naviafar** (Duke University)

Radiographic Vision and Politics of Visuality in Radiograph of a Family

**Negar Habibi** (University of Geneva)

The Splendour of Persian Art in Geneva: A Forgotten Heritage

**Shima Boka** (Independent Scholar/University of Art)

Establishing a Modern Style in Contemporary Iranian Architecture as Reflected in the Writings of Architect Vartan Hovanessian

**Katy Shahandeh** (SOAS, University of London)

The Semiotics of Subversion: Iranian Women and Contesting Orientalist Tropes



DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION I, 17:00-18:30  
PANEL 2/I/1: IRAN'S #METOO MOVEMENT:  
CONFLUENCES OF POWER AND PRIVILEGE

Organiser: **Maryam Zehtabi** (University of Virginia)

Chair: **Maryam Zehtabi**

Participants

**Yalda N. Hamidi** (Minnesota State University (MNSU) Mankato)  
Rhetorical Listening to the Iranian #MeToo Movement in  
Diaspora

**Dilyana Mincheva** (McMaster University) & Niloofer Hamoon  
(McMaster University)

The Iranian #MeToo and the Double Bind of Iranian  
Feminism: Between Religion, the Global Gender Struggle  
and Liberal Feminism

**Paria Rahimi** (Western University)

#Unveiling\_the\_Iranian\_MeToo\_in\_Three\_Acts:

Symptomatic Reading of Iranian MeToo through the Lens of  
Political Economy

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION II, 18:30-20:00 GMT  
PANEL 1/II/1: ALTERNATIVE VISIONS  
OF MODERNITY

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Robert Steele** (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

Participants

**Boshra Moossavi** (Independent Scholar)

The Idea of Heritage in Nineteenth-Century Iran: Nādir Mīrzā's  
Account on Tabriz

**Ida Meftahi** (Boise State University)

Rape on Lalehzar Street: Gendering Allied Occupation of  
Iran, 1941-1945

**Pouran Lashini** (University of Texas, Dallas)

The Artistic Influence of Āshūrā in Iran Since the Nineteenth Century

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION II, 18:30-20:00 GMT  
PANEL 2/II/1: ROUNDTABLE ON THE  
CONVERSION CAUCUS

Organiser: **Ruzbeh Hodiwala** (SOAS, University of London)

Moderator: **Ruzbeh Hodiwala**

Participants

**Ana Maria Raietparvar** (Universidade Federal Fluminense)

**Benedikt Römer** (Bundeswehr University, Munich)

**Edith Szanto** (University of Alabama)

**Navid Fozī-Abivard** (Bridgewater State University)

**Ruzbeh Hodiwala** (SOAS, University of London)

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION III, 20:00-21:30 GMT  
PANEL 1/III/1: IRAN AND THE WORLD

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Rowena Abdul Razak** (Queen Mary)

Participants

**Denis Volkov** (HSE University) and **Mojgan Samadi** (HSE University)

The Modern Persian vs the New Soviet Man

**Matteo Miele** (University of Florence)

An Unofficial Chinese Mission to Afghanistan in 1939

**Sara Zanotta** (Università degli Studi di Pavia)

Iranian Constitutionalists in an Italian Archive

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION III, 20:00-21:30 GMT  
PANEL 2/III/1: SOCIAL EXPRESSIONS,  
FROM DISCONTENT TO ANGER

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Janet Afary** (UC Santa Barbara)

Participants

**Marie Ostby** (Connecticut College)

Translating Iranian Anger

**Pouya Nekouei** (University of Texas, Austin)

Gender and Singing in Iran During the Pahlavi Period (1940 – 1960)

**Navid Zarrinal** (Stanford University)

West Asia, Colonialism, and Intellectuals: The Origins of Iran's Discourse of Misery

**Farinaz Kavianfar** (École Pratique des Hautes Études – Université PSL)

**Jami's Golden Chain**

The Role of Timurid Kingship in Human Felicity



DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION IV, 21:30-23:00 GMT  
PANEL 1/IV/1: GENDER, CHOICE, AND POWER

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Lior Sternfeld** (Pennsylvania State University)

Participants

**Mary Elaine Hegland** (Santa Clara University) and  
**Maryam Karimi**

Widows' Self-Sufficient Lives in an Iranian Village

**Yasmine Ansari** (University of Edinburgh)

Contraception in Modern Iran

**Razieh Araghi** (University of Michigan)

Translated Role Models for Iranian Women

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21

SESSION IV, 21:30-23:00 GMT

PANEL 2/IV/1: MEDIEVAL ARTS AND SCIENCE

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Khodadad Rezakhani**

Participants

**Ali Olomi** (Loyola Marymount University)

A Persian Apocalypse: Astral Sciences, History Writing, and Identity Formation in the Abbasid Dynasty

**Kaveh Niazi** (Independent Scholar)

A 13th Century Astronomical Compendium: Athīr al-Dīn Abharī's Summary of Ptolemy's the Almagest.

**Seddigheh Kardan** (McGill University)

Passionate Scribe and Prudent Author: 'Aṭṭār-i Tūnī and His Identity

**Márton Székely** (Eötvös Loránd University)

Beyond Dīvān and Tazkira: Ghaznavid Court Poetry in 14-15th Century Jungs

DAY 1: SATURDAY, 21  
SESSION V, 23:00-00:30 GMT  
PANEL 1/V/1: SELF-DEFINITION, BELONGING,  
AND EXCLUSION

Organizer: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **James Gustafson** (Indiana State University)

Participants

**Kevan Harris** (University of California, Los Angeles)

Linguistic Homogenization Contra Ethnic Self-identification:  
New Evidence from the Iran Social Survey

**Mert Aydemir** (Bogazici University)

An Alternative Vision for Iranian Identity: The Case of Āsār-e  
'Ajam by Forsat al-Dowle Shirazi

**Olivia Glombitza** (Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Salam Farmamdeh: Identity Prescription & Youth Mobilization  
Through Pop Culture

**Mehrdad Rahimi-Moghaddam** (University of New South Wales)

Debating Azerbaijan's Identity

DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023

SESSION I, 17:00-18:30 GMT

PANEL 1/I/2: MYTHS AND RELIGIONS OF IRAN

Organizer: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Khodadad Rezakhani**

Participants

**Gad Barnea** (University of Haifa)

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

**Taylor Nasim Stone** (San Francisco State University)

Sacred Snake Blood: The Dualism of Serpent Symbol  
Context in the Shahnameh and Kurdish Folklore

**Farmehr Amirdust** (Concordia University)

When Nothing Existed Except Darkness: Temporality In The  
Third Book Of Dēnkard

DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023  
SESSION I, 17:00-18:30 GMT  
PANEL 2/I/2: ILLUMINATING THE NEGLECTED  
GEMS: UNVEILING UNTOLD ASPECTS OF THE  
KALĪLA WA DIMNA

Organiser: **Hamed Nayyeri Adl** (University of Göttingen)  
Moderator: **Hamed NayyeriAdl**

Participants

**Hamed NayyeriAdl** (University of Göttingen)  
Fictionality of a Preface, its Features and Functions

**Hossein (Kaveh) Kardgar** (University of Göttingen)  
Kalīla wa Dimna in Nizami's Romance Khosrow wa Shīrīn

**Mohammad Golshan** (University of Göttingen)  
Kalīla wa Dimna in Nizami's Romance Khosrow wa Shīrīn



DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023

SESSION II, 18:30-20:00

PANEL 1/II/2: POLITICS: DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Niki Akhavan** (the Catholic University of American)

Participants

**Samaneh Oladi** (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Faith-based Activism in the Iranian Sociopolitical Discourse

**Cameron Amin** (University of Michigan-Dearborn), **Julio Borquez** (University of Michigan-Dearborn) and **Razieh Araghi** (University of Michigan)

Iran Specialists in the US Respond to the Muslim Ban, Covid, and Women, Life, Freedom

**Parisa Delshad** (University of Valladolid)

"So, You Wanna Be Free?": A Rhetorical Analysis of Roya Hakakian's Neoliberal Conceptualization of Freedom

**Omer Carmi** (Tel Aviv University)

"There is No Such a Thing as Shooting an Arrow in the Dark": Khamenei's Concept of Flexibility

DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023

SESSION II, 18:30-20:00

PANEL 2/II/2: QAJAR IMAGES: HISTORY  
AND CONTEXT

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Negar Habibi** (University of Geneva)

Participants

**Staci Scheiwiller** (California State University, Stanislaus)

Harem Politics and Photography: The Photographs of Khanom Bashi

**Haleh Hajyasini** (University of Art, Tehran)

Emergence of Iranian Architectural Historiography in the Qajar Era

**Hossein Nakhaei** (University of Pittsburgh)

Persian Pavilion and British Petroleum

DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023

SESSION III, 20:00-21:30

PANEL 1/III/2: HISTORICIZING THE #METOO  
MOVEMENT IN IRAN AND BEYOND: CULTURAL  
PRODUCTIONS AND DIGITAL MEDIA

Organiser: **Claudia Yaghoobi** (UNC Chapel Hill)

Moderator: **Claudia Yaghoobi**

Participants

**Esha Momeni** (University of California, Los Angeles)

Like a Wrapped Chocolate: The Islamic Republic's Politics of Hijab and the Normalization of Sexual Harassment

**Golnar Gishnizjani** (University of Turku)

Whose Voice Is Missing? MeToo Digital Storytelling on Instagram and the Politics of Inclusion

**Yasamin Rezai** (University of Miami) &

**Mehdy Sedaghat Payam** (University of Maryland)

Exploring #MeToo in Iran: Computational Analysis of Twitter Data and Cultural Implications

**Janet Afary** (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Patriarchalism, Male Abuse, and the Sources of the #Me Too Movement in the Muslim Middle East

DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023  
SESSION III, 20:00-21:30  
PANEL 2/III/2: VISUAL CULTURE AND  
REPRESENTATION

Organiser: **ALS Symposium Committee**

Chair: **Mira Xenia Schwerda**

Participants

**Navid Darvishzadeh** (Georgia State University)

Gilles Deleuze and Iranian Modern Cinema: Powers of the False and the Practices of Dissimulation

**Maryam Zehtabi** (University of Virginia)

Hush! Girls Don't Scream (2013) by Puran Derakhshandeh and the #MeToo Movement in Iran

**Joanna Azami** (Ohio University)

Manijeh Hekmat's Women's Prison: An Unofficial Adaptation of Yilmaz Guney's The Wall

**Asal Rashid Mahmoodi** (University of New South Wales)

"Vaghti Mardi Gham Dare, Ye Kooh Dard Dare": Gheyra't's Effects on the Lives Of Iranian Men and Women

DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023

SESSION IV, 1:30-23:00

PANEL 1/IV/2: VISUALIZING WOMEN'S  
HISTORIES IN IRAN FROM THE LATE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY UNTIL TODAY

Organiser: **Belle Cheves** and **Mira Xenia Schwerda**

Chair: **Amy Motlagh** (University of California, Davis)

Participants

**Belle Cheves** (Harvard University)

Sitting on the Peacock Throne: The Queen Mother and Kin(g)ship in the Naseri Era

**Natasha Morris** (SOAS/Courtauld, University of London)

The Bibi-Lakkat Complex: Representations of Femininity and Female: Responses to Vice in the Ludic Arts of Qajar Iran

**Mira Xenia Schwerda** (University of Edinburgh)

The Counterimage: Visualizing Resistance in Virtual and Physical Space

**Claudia Yaghoobi** (UNC Chapel Hill)

Women's "Micro-rebellions" via Cultural and Artistic Productions



DAY 2: 22 OCTOBER 2023  
SESSION IV, 21:30-23:00  
PANEL 2/IV/2: ROUNDTABLE ON  
PUBLISHING IN IRAN

Organiser: **Laetitia Nanquette** (University of New South Wales)

Moderator: **Laetitia Nanquette**

Participants

**Laetitia Nanquette** (University of New South Wales)

**Farshad Sonboldel** (University of California, Santa Barbara)

**Mahdi Ganjavi** (Northwestern University)

**Borna Izadpanah** (University of Reading)

**Hosna Sheikholeslami** (Denison University)

## Janet Afary

(University of California, Santa Barbara)

### *Patriarchalism, Male Abuse, and the Sources of the #MeToo Movement in the Muslim Middle East*

The #MeToo movement exploded on the American scene in 2017 with the desperate hope that women who had been sexually harassed, molested, or violated would finally be heard in the public sphere. Women hoped to change both male behavior and the law to protect them from men's sexual aggression. It has since become a transnational feminist movement. In 2018, just after the #MeToo movement burst onto the scene in the Middle East, we surveyed tens of thousands of primarily younger adults about their intimate lives, including their experiences with molestation and violence. Using Facebook (FB) banner ads in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Palestine, Tunisia, and Turkey, we were able to garner a large number of men who recounted whether they participated in these acts and women who reported such experiences. This chapter first reviews the #MeToo movement in the countries we surveyed and then analyzes both the extent of and the kinds of men most likely to engage in public molestation and domestic violence.

## Camron Michael Amin

(University of Michigan-Dearborn)

### *Iran Specialists in the US Respond to the Muslim Ban, Covid, and Women, Life, Freedom*

We report results from a 2023 Qualtrics survey of Iran specialists working in American academia. This survey follows up on our 2016 survey. New questions in the 2023 survey asked scholars how events in Iran, US-Iran relations, and the COVID-19 pandemic have affected their research. We also added new questions about media outreach and interaction with journalists. Our 2016 results picked up references to JCPOA and the 2016 presidential election, but the survey methodology did not allow us to follow up on those results. The 2023 survey results point to a similar awareness and sensitivity to developing events, namely the Women. Life. Freedom. protests. In fact, the 2023 results show a heightened level of political activism among Iranian/Iranian American-identifying Iran specialists. Increases were especially notable for protest activity and public outreach. The increase in civic engagement tracks with comparable surveys of political attitudes among Iranian-Americans more broadly and sets Iran specialists apart from the general US public.

In contrast to the 2016 survey, we are better able to build upon our basic survey findings. First, the 2023 questionnaire included additional open-ended questions that produced useful comments from survey respondents. Second, we followed up with a subset of our 2023 survey respondents in focus group sessions over the course of this summer. Our paper will focus on lines of inquiry that we could not explore in 2016 and integrate the survey data with more finely-grained information from the focus groups. In many cases, the 2016 survey data provide an important baseline and context.

Overall, the combined survey and focus-group data provide strong evidence of a distinct civic identity and public engagement among US-based Iran specialists who also identify as Iranian or Iranian American. There are contrasts within those categories based on other factors, notably gender and stage-of-career. These will also be highlighted.

# Farmehr Amirdust

(Concordia University)

## *When Nothing Existed Except Darkness: Temporality in The Third Book Of Dēnkard*

Zoroastrian theological thought intertwines with its creation myth (Hintze). However, could it be argued that certain rhetorical perspectives influenced the latest permutation of the creation myth?

Ninth-century Zoroastrian mythology in particular lends itself to millennial rhetoric – an apocalyptic view of the world where good and evil prepare for their final battle.

Millennial rhetoric constructs a temporal framework to present the dichotomy of good and evil (O'Leary). By postulating the end of time, when evil is vanquished, millennial rhetoric persuades by addressing issues of time, evil, and authority (O'Leary).

Such rhetoric was prevalent in Zoroastrian theological thought, which addressed the issue of authority by arguing a divine design that transcends the hierarchical organization of the universe and encountered the problem of evil similarly to its monotheist counterparts. Zoroastrians responded to this epistemological dilemma by relinquishing Ahura Mazda's omnipotence while retaining his omniscience and omnibenevolence (Vevaina).

I will argue that this rhetorical move was connected to a millennial perspective that instigated a developing understanding of temporality as the intermediate step to the final cause. Evidence of such development can be found in Essay 27 of DKIII. Here, an alternative interpretation of the Zoroastrian creation myth is proposed, suggesting that Ahura Mazda imbues time with both good and evil qualities. Since it is a fundamental Zoroastrian tenet that Ahura Mazda cannot be the origin of evil, Zaehner considers this essay, among others, to be a Zurvanite interpretation incorporated into Zoroastrian orthodoxy. Another perspective suggests that this essay reflects an older interpretation, considering the circumstantial evidence of Zurvanism's dominance during the Parthian period (de Jong). Consequently, within this essay, two possible permutations of the creation myth coexist: one where Time is the progenitor of good and evil (efficient cause), and another where the creator's wise design imparts time with good and evil attributes (final cause).

# Yasmine Ansari

(University of Edinburgh)

## *Contraception in Modern Iran*

At the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, delegates from 179 countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), signed a Program of Action that recognized reproductive health as a human right for the first time. By adopting the ICPD Program of Action, the IRI is committed to ensuring that women and girls have access to reproductive health information and services and are able to make informed decisions about their reproductive bodies and lives, free from violence, discrimination, and coercion. However, eighteen years after ICPD, in response to rising concerns over the declining trend in population growth, the state-funded family planning program was repealed. Furthermore, in the past decade, three controversial bills that outlaw the free distribution of contraceptives, prohibit voluntary sterilization, and expand the role of security agencies in monitoring the reproductive practices of the populace, among other measures, were ratified.

In this context, this paper investigates the transformations of reproductive politics in post-revolutionary Iran. In doing so, the framework of reproductive governance as an analytic tool for tracing the Islamic Republic's shifting political rationalities within the domain of population and reproduction is applied. Moreover, three distinct periods in the history of reproductive politics since the establishment of the IRI in 1979 are delineated. Accordingly, the objectives and provisions of population and reproductive policies along with the Islamic Republic's various strategies for managing population size and controlling women's reproductive practices in each period, are discussed. In particular, this paper assesses the current and potential impacts of the brand new pronatalist policies of the last decade on women's reproductive health and lives, demonstrating how the proposed restrictions and punitive measures will disproportionately jeopardize the health of low-socioeconomic status women who already have limited choices when it comes to their reproductive health and controlling their bodies. It also argues that while anti-natalist and pronatalist regimes of reproductive governance appear opposite, they contain similar goals (defining and regulating desired and undesired population growth) and are not motivated by a concern for women's autonomy.

# Razieh Araghi

(University of Michigan)

## *Translated Role Models for Iranian Women*

Towards the end of the 19th to mid-20th centuries, the process of modernizing and westernizing began in Iranian society. The Qajar monarchs and aristocrats invited European politicians, travelers, and artists to their court, and sent several groups of students to France to study. With their attention fixated on European culture, they started opening European-style schools in Iran, hiring European teachers, importing new inventions, translating books, and even wearing European-style clothing. As they became more exposed to the European style of education, they came to understand that they should also value the education of women, who were limited to the world of *Andarunis*. One of the first steps in educating Iranian women was creating role models for them through translation. Different translators translated books from French, Ottoman, and English into Persian that recounted the story of famous women.

One of these role models for the Iranian woman to imitate was Jeanne d'Arc of France who was famous for her patriotism. The popularity of Jeanne d'Arc continues in Persian Literature from the 1930s in the works of Sadeq Hedayat, and Bozorg Alavi to the 1960s in Iraj Pezeshknia's translation. In this paper, I will focus on different major works on Jeanne d'Arc written by authors like Friedrich Schiller, George Bernard Shaw, and Nancy Wilson Ross that got translated into Persian. My aim in this study is to explore how the figure of Jeanne d'Arc was molded into a Persian role model for the modern Iranian woman to admire and follow, and in contrast what role models Iranian women chose for themselves in women's periodicals.

## Mert Aydemir

(Boğaziçi University)

### *An Alternative Vision for Iranian Identity: The Case of Āsār-e ‘Ajām by Forsat al-Dowle Shirazi*

Iranian identity started to be redefined in the 19th century. A handful of dissident intellectuals, such as Mirza Fath ‘Ali Akhundzadeh, Jalal al-Din Mirza, and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, assumed anti-Arab and anti-Islamic stance and considered the pre-Islamic period as the golden age of Iran. Obsession with pre-Islamic Iran became one of the main characteristics of Iranian nationalism since that time. It seems that the path opened by these intellectuals became mainstream in the Pahlavi period. As mainstream nationalism has been extensively documented and discussed by many scholars, looking at alternative sources can offer significant insight into the making of the modern Iranian identity. In this regard, I will focus on Forsat al-Dowle’s *Āsār-e ‘Ajām*, written during the 1890s. Although the book shares some of the characteristics of ancient revivalism in the Qajar period, it differs from the foundational texts of Iranian nationalism in different ways. First, Forsat does not share the anti-Islamic stance of the nationalists mentioned above. Second, he embraces traditional literature and knowledge as the main components of Iranian identity. He also sincerely shows his commitment to the Islamic faith and ethos on almost every page of I. Third, he does not share the racist views of the intellectuals like Kermani. *Āsār-e ‘Ajām* proves there were different visions for Iranian identity in the Qajar period. However, the secondary literature often considers all the sources dealing with ancient Iran in the same line. This study aims to criticize the teleological interpretation of Iranian nationalism and offers a broader view of the identity debates of the Qajar period.

Joanna Azami

(Ohio University)

***Manijeh Hekmat's Women's Prison: An Unofficial Adaptation of Yilmaz Guney's The Wall***

This paper discusses Manijeh Hekmat's first film *Women's Prison* (2002) and how it is an unofficial adaptation of the work *The Wall* (1983) by Yilmaz Guney, and how the political climate of Turkey and Iran are represented in these films. There are many instances in which *Women's Prison* reminds the audience of *The Wall* (Duvar) (1983), the masterpiece by Guney made nearly twenty years before *Women's Prison*. Aside from the similarities in the themes between *The Wall* and *Women's Prison* films, one can argue that *Women's Prison* is an unofficial sequel to—or, perhaps an adaptation of—*The Wall*. Although Hekmat never admitted to referencing Guney's film, the connections are evident. One reason for not addressing Guney could be the political aspect of Guney's life. *The Wall* was banned in Turkey for seventeen years, and this detail could have caused Hekmat's film to face more obstacles than it already had. In Guney's film, the harsh conditions of the prison force the Turkish teenagers to revolt against the violent guards. Consequently, *Women's Prison* starts with the revolt having already taken place. An all-men prison is depicted in *The Wall* with the same storylines as *Women's Prison* with an all-women prison and cast. Guney comments on rape and assault in the prison with the difference that the rapist in Guney's prison is one of the guards. Hekmat in this sense is careful not to provoke any sensitivity from the Islamic Republic which would have resulted in her film being banned. Therefore, the rapist in *Women's Prison* is one of the inmates. As mentioned by Zeynabadi-Nejad, considering the prison a metaphor for Iran, if the rapist is one of the inmates, then that means she was a member of the society and not one of the authorities because of the way that the film has separated arranged the authorities from the rest of the society.



# Gad Barnea

(University of Haifa)

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

Ever since its preliminary publication in 1936, Xerxes' "Daiva" inscription (XPh) has been seen as an important and unique witness to early Achaemenid Mazdean orthopraxy and cultic propaganda. This royal inscription describes a liturgical reform or, at least, the enforcement of such a reform, targeting and condemning the cult of the daivā –a designation describing competing deities. The key to decoding this reform hinges upon an obscure expression that appears thrice in the document–normalized as a-r-t-a-c-a : b-r-z-m-n-i-y–the meaning of which is yet to be fully understood. Close to nine decades of research into the meaning of this syntagm have made significant strides towards helping us understand it but have yielded only partial and unsatisfactory results. The methodology followed in this article analyzes and synthesizes the previous attempts and offers a new and systematic approach to considering and evaluating all the parameters involved. It looks separately at each component of the expression through the careful consideration of a number of Avestan sources, combined with etymological, onomastic, epigraphic and even archeological data to produce a broad and more comprehensive annotated translation. It shows that the expression ʔtācā brzmniy was more widely adopted than previously thought and its most probable interpretation–taking all available datapoints into account–is that ʔtā refers to the yazata representing the cosmic concept of "Order/Truth" with an enditic "-cā", i.e. "and," and brzmniy refers to the concept of height/exaltation–a concept physically symbolized by the barsom twigs.

## Jim Bunton

(Des Moines Area Community College)

### *Trauma and Memory in Christian Iranian Women's Memoirs*

This paper will discuss the work of Bessel A. van der Kolk and Judith Herman on trauma and Viktor Frankl's work on the importance of meaning as a means of transforming suffering, logotherapy. Going beyond Frankl's work of how purpose allows us to redefine and thus endure suffering, purpose also enables us to recreate memories. That sense of purpose transforms the memory of trauma into agency. In particular, the role of faith as unique and powerful means of purpose and agency. Examining memoirs written by Iranian Christian women, *Prisoner of Tehran* and *After Tehran: A Life Reclaimed* by Marina Nemat and *Captive in Iran* by Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh will demonstrate how the authors reconstruct their memories to correspond with their sense of purpose and will argue to also correspond with Christian martyr stories. Although different, each memoir seeks to turn its trauma into agency by actively reconstructing its story through the memoir. The prison experience, in hindsight, is seen as an opportunity for exercising power in the present by allowing their voices to be heard and their purpose to be articulated through the memoir, granting them agency. This comparative approach will give new insight into the role of faith as a source of meaning in overcoming trauma and recreating memory.

## Omer Carmi

(Tel Aviv University)

### ***“There is No Such a Thing as Shooting an Arrow in the Dark”:* Khamenei’s Concept of Flexibility**

The Islamic Republic of Iran has long been characterizing its foreign policy as a culmination of three principles - Honor (عزت), Wisdom (حکمت), and Expediency (مصلحت). On May 20, 2023, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei explained that the last principle means identifying flexibility components and when to use them.

While the scholarly discourse has focused on Khamenei’s 2013 “Heroic Flexibility” speech (widely seen as a green light for negotiating with the United States), the supreme leader’s concept of flexibility is broader and much more rooted than this. The suggested presentation comprehensively discusses Khamenei’s notion of flexibility and how it has evolved over the last five decades since the first documented reference of Khamenei to flexibility in 1969.

By using various primary Farsi sources, including speeches delivered by Khamenei and articles and commentaries published by his office, I carefully portray how the ayatollah considers flexibility as another tool in the Iranian Islamic toolbox, one which is not inferior to other approaches like resistance, steadfastness, and self-reliance. This interpretation of flexibility is strongly connected to how Khamenei perceives the model set by the twelve Shiite Imams. In his view, each Imam represents a different feature of human life, and their sum should be considered as a wholesome “250-year-old person” This line of thought suggests that by following this meta-Imam, the Shi’i leadership can “increase their maneuvering potential and dynamism” by taking different actions and tactics per the needs of the time.

The suggested presentation deep dives into the relationship and interconnections between Khamenei’s religious philosophy and his strategic theory of flexibility and illustrate how it has allowed him to balance between the Islamic revolution’s dogmatic principles and the need to sometimes compromise for the sake of the “interest of the regime.”

# Belle Cheves

(Harvard University)

## *Sitting on the Peacock Throne: The Queen Mother and Kin(g)ship in the Naseri Era*

A photograph from the mid-nineteenth century features a figure sitting on the Peacock Throne. However, unexpectedly, it is not Nasir al-Din Shah, the longest-reigning king of the Qajar era, but his mother, who occupies the seat of power. This photograph explicitly depicts Mahd-e'Ulya, one of the most important and influential women in Qajar history, as the power, not merely "behind the throne," but literally upon it. Below Malek Jahan, known as Mahd-e 'Ulya, on the steps of the throne, sit the Shah and his only full biological sibling - his sister 'Izzat al-Dowleh. In this paper, I ask how the symbolic composition of this image and its sociopolitical interpretation relate to textual sources from the period, reflecting the ways in which elite women occupied royal spaces, exerted influence, and affected power in unanticipated ways through marital practices in the mid to late Qajar era. Mechanisms of state power were inextricably intertwined with the politics of marriage, and it was often the women of the Imperial Household, rather than the Shah himself, who played the decisive role in coordinating marriage and sustaining kinship alliances in the Qajar era. Using the image alongside letters Mahd-e 'Ulya wrote to Nasir al-Din Shah and three of her daughter's husbands, I examine the powerful and crucial role such women played in cultivating the kinship ties on which the Qajar system of kingship depended. I demonstrate how the competition for power and control between Nasir al-Din Shah and Mahd-e 'Ulya took place in the context of the triangulation of their respective relationships with 'Izzat al-Dowleh, specifically in terms of coordinating her marriages (and divorces) to (and from) prominent political figures for their own personal and political gain.

# Navid Darvishzadeh

(Georgia State University)

## *Gilles Deleuze and Iranian Modern Cinema: Powers of the False and the Practices of Dissimulation*

This paper argues that in Abbas Kiarostami's cinema and his protégé's— Jafar Panahi's films, notably a series of his films which Lúcia Nagib calls "forbidden tetralogy,"— the filmmakers benefit from different aspects of the Deleuzian powers of the false to produce a unique cinema that corresponds with dissimulation practices and other modes of indirect communication that are prevalent in Iranian society. I build my arguments upon Gilles Deleuze's theories regarding the affirmative power of the false discussed in *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense*, and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, to claim that similar to the indirect interpersonal communication of contemporary Iranians, Abbas Kiarostami and Jafar Panahi disguise some thoughts, emotions, and affects while offering the spectator an external indication of their intentions in their cinema. Deleuze reminds us that in Modern cinema, where the narration is no longer a truthful narration but "falsifying," the forger becomes the character of the cinema. I argue that by becoming the protagonist of their (non)films, Kiarostami and Panahi benefit from the affirmative power of the false to extend the Iranian Islamic practices of dissimulation to both form and content in their cinema.

## Parisa Delshad

(University of Valladolid)

### *“So, You Wanna Be Free?”: A Rhetorical Analysis of Roya Hakakian’s Neoliberal Conceptualization of Freedom*

This paper takes as its point of departure the incompatibility of the ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ movement with neoliberalism. The intersectional nature of the movement’s demands are at odds with neoliberalism’s role in perpetuating the subjugation of women (Crenshaw, 2017; Rottenberg, 2018). Grounded in this perspective, the paper aims to shed light on the neoliberal conceptualization of freedom in the discourses of diaspora writers active in representing the movement. For this purpose, it focuses on Roya Hakakian’s most recent texts and speeches, paying special attention to the author’s narrative strategy in her latest book, *A Beginner’s Guide to America: For the Immigrant and the Curious* (2021). Here, a second-person narrator addresses a newly-arrived, generic migrant to the United States and guides her through the peculiarities of American society. Recounting a tale of historical progress woven through anecdotes of violence and injustice against marginalized communities throughout American history, the narrator represents these episodes as essential milestones on the path to the triumph of ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ (Reddy, 2011; Melamed, 2011). Mirroring neoliberal ideology (Hayek, 2020), the narrator teaches the unknowing migrant addressee that struggles for freedom throughout US history were endeavors to submit to the rule of law and the Constitution. The narratee is then invited to stoically and resignedly wait until her naturalization ceremony, when her liberties will be protected by the Constitution. In line with Mohammad Maljoo’s assertion that political Islam is the Iranian face of neoliberalism (2023), the paper argues that Hakakian’s discourse is reflective of American exceptionalism. This is due to its inconsistency evident in its repudiation of the Iranian mode of neoliberalism as oppressive, while conflating American neoliberalism with liberty.

## Hossein (Kaveh) Kardgar

### *Kalīla wa Dimna in Nizami's Romance Khosrow wa Shīrīn*

This project examines the inclusion of the *Kalīla* in Nizami's romance, *Khosrow wa Shirin*. I explore Nizami's purpose in incorporating the narrative from *Kalīla* and investigate the structure and function of this chapter. Additionally, the project explores the version of *Kalīla* accessed and utilized by Nizami and compares this narrative with other translations of *Kalīla*. I also delve into the concept of the mirror of the prince, the role of the Vizier, and the function of *Kalīla's* narration within this context.

## Farinaz Kavianfar

(École Pratique des Hautes Études - Université PSL)

### *Jami's Golden Chain: The Role of Timurid Kingship in Human Felicity*

In this paper we will be examining the premier text of 'Abd ar-Rahmān Jāmi's (D. 1492) *Haft Awrang* (Seven Thrones), entitled *Silsilat al-Dhahab* (Golden Chain) in looking at the question of felicity in relation to society and governance. Throughout the aforementioned mathnawī, there is a constant emphasis on the theme of mirror for princes in which Jāmi not only criticizes the Timurid political system, but also proposes a tripartite model for just governance. Such model is composed of a king (Sultan Husayn Bāyqarā (D.1504)), a state minister ('Alī-Shir Navā'ī (D.1501)), and a scholar (Jāmi). One might say that this political model is not novel to Jāmi but has often been promoted by the Naqshbandi Sufi Order, in particular by Jāmi's spiritual master, Khawjah 'Ubayd Allāh Ahrār (D. 1490). Through an intertextual lens and close reading of Jāmi's poetic corpus, we will aim to answer the following questions: Can virtuous governance contribute to one's felicity and happiness? How proximate or distant is the outcome of an individual's felicity in accordance to the doing of his or her government? Furthermore, how does Jāmi's model of governance aid and pertain to the attainment of felicity? Although the *Silsilat al-Dhahab* was produced during the Timurid Era, one should not neglect its universal message and applicability to modern context. Moreover, this study will provide a vital example of Jāmi's political role and capabilities, one that has been less considered in the academic milieu.

# Golnar Gishnizjani

(University of Turku)

## *Whose Voice Is Missing? MeToo Digital Storytelling on Instagram and the Politics of Inclusion*

In August 2020, Iranian women took to social media to raise their voices about the rampant sexual harassment they are prone to in their everyday lives. The moment people decided to break their silence and share experiences of sexual violence was a breaking point for the Iranian women's rights movement. Among all the testimonials on social media, many stories depict the angst, distress, and shame individuals encountered by taking part in this online campaign. This issue indicates the emotional and psychological costs of engaging with digital feminist activism. However, social media is not necessarily an equitable space for voicing painful truths. Given that, the question is, whose voices become visible and whose remain on the margins? As Instagram has become a significant conduit for sharing the experiences of sexual harassment, this study examines the formation of MeToo on this platform, considering the affordances of visibility, connectivity, anonymity, and storytelling. This qualitative research draws on digital storytelling as the main framework and discursive textual analysis to highlight the structures of marginalization and privilege that emerge on the local level. I selected Bidarzani, Harasswatch, and `me_too_movement_iran` accounts on Instagram as three study cases, since they regularly shared exposed cases and generated much debate. While an intersectional critique often pinpoints racism and whiteness that suppress marginalized groups in western contexts, this work emphasizes the most circulated voices of MeToo in the non-western context. It contributes to further understanding the power dynamics within digital feminist networks in Iran with its unique attributes.



# Olivia Glombitza

(Autonomous University of Barcelona)

## ***Salam Farmamdeh: Identity Prescription & Youth Mobilization Through Pop Culture***

Created in accordance with the Supreme Leader's wish of an attractive and memorable theme, the song 'Salam Farmandeh' (Hello Commander) was quickly spread through the Islamic Republic's media channels, public events, and performances in schools. While aiming at increasing the popularity of the Islamic Republic on a broad scale, the song is explicitly targeting the country's youth. With the education of the next generation being one of the fundamental anxieties of the Islamic Republic, the paper argues that 'Salam Farmandeh' is a means of symbolic politics that aims at building and strengthening a common national identity in line with the Islamic Republic's ideological values among the country's youth while at the same time aiming at creating an attractive image of the Islamic Republic among the broader population.

Approached from a constructivist perspective, the paper studies the song's audio and visual discourse and demonstrates how the song is used to create emotional appeal to reach the hearts of the Iranian youth and how it acts as an instrument of identity building and mobilization. The paper relies on theories and concepts of rhetoric and visual rhetoric, focusing particularly on the concept of pathos or emotional engagement.

# Mohammad Golshan

(University of Göttingen)

Medical Hints in Kalila wa Dimna

This project focuses on the medicinal hints found within the Kalila. Golshan addresses two perspectives: the source of medical remarks and the function they serve within the text. By examining diverse medical manifestations, including ophthalmology, gynecology and obstetrics, gastroenterology, humors, dentistry, and pharmaceuticals, the project explores the controversies surrounding the provenance of these medical motifs. The origin of a specific remedy, *zāmahrān*, is discussed, consulting Arabic and Persian medical treatises produced before and after Kalila. Furthermore, Golshan argues for the various roles the science of medicine plays within Kalila.

# Negar Habibi

(University of Geneva)

## *The Splendor of Persian Art in Geneva: A Forgotten Heritage*

From the end of the nineteenth century, European private and public collections were enriched by Persian arts; ceramics, tiles, manuscripts, textiles and carpets adorned the salons, theatres and ballets. For their part, the collections of Persian arts in Geneva were enriched regularly during the twentieth century, most often by the Genevans, of whom we have sometimes lost track today. Geneva's Persian collections are diverse and rich, though not well known to scholars and even less to the public. The most important collections are to be found in four major museums: the Ariana Museum, with around 600 ceramics and tiles from the twelve to the twentieth century; the Museum of Art and History, with 600 manuscripts and album folios from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva with around 400 objects mainly from Qajar period, and the Martin Bodmer Foundation, which holds some of the oldest Persian illustrated bound manuscripts among its 30 Persian manuscripts. Among these collections, only the Ariana Museum has been so far examined by scholars and exposed to the public in the twentieth-first century.

While several museums and academic institutions worldwide explore, invest in and expand cultural diversity, Geneva remains unaware of its Persian treasures and has yet to invest sustainably in scholarly projects. Nevertheless, Geneva has always been at the heart of the political and commercial relations between Iran and the West. Once studied and known to the public, the Persian treasures of Geneva can make a significant and lasting contribution to academic research. By reviewing each collection's highlights, this paper examines their invaluable historical and artistic significance and analyzes to what extent and in which cultural and societal dimensions they are ignored and, so far, very little explored.

Haleh Hajjasini  
(University of Art, Tehran)

### *Emergence of Iranian Architectural Historiography in the Qajar Era*

This article explores the emergence of Iranian architectural historiography as a field of inquiry in the early 20th century, with a focus on the role of modern Iranian historiography and its changing perceptions of architecture. Through interpretive analysis of modern histories written during the second half of the Qajar era, the evolution of architecture's role in historiography is traced from a mere setting for events to a specialized, independent field of academic research.

In pre-modern histories, the built environment was primarily utilized as a backdrop for events and a means to assess the accomplishments of rulers. However, with the advent of modern historiography, historians began to rely on reliable evidence, including material remnants of ancient times such as coins and decorative objects, and later on, more significant archaeological findings like buildings. Although initially perceived only through inscriptions or ornaments of the structures, ancient architecture gradually became a source for obtaining knowledge of the past.

As the scope of general histories expanded to encompass a range of historical subjects complementary to political chronicles, freestanding chapters were dedicated to architecture. Historians consulted western architectural surveys and visited historical sites to study and measure the buildings, using technical terminology to describe their physical and spatial aspects. Illustrations and detailed plans were used to provide further information, presenting architecture as a subject of historical inquiry.

This approach paved the way for a new generation of researchers to view the history of architecture as an independent field of study. The first independent pieces on the history of Iranian architecture were articles written by art historians or archaeologists working as delegates for western research centers and introduced to Iranians through newly-founded cultural institutes such as Anjoman-e-Athar-e-Melli. The accumulation of these efforts over the following decades led to the publication of the first surveys of Iranian architecture.

# Yalda N. Hamidi

(Minnesota State University, Mankato)

## *Rhetorical Listening to the Iranian #MeToo Movement in Diaspora*

During the last few months, stories of the Iranian #MeToo movement exploded over social media. However, Iranian academic feminists were involved lightly in this ongoing battle. This presentation explains why gendered violence has become less than a favorite subject of study for Iranian academic feminists in the diaspora and proposes a methodological intervention for rapprochement.

On the one hand, transnational feminists are more interested in the global dynamics of race, location, and citizenship. It creates a barrier between them and local feminism in addressing gendered-based violence. On the other hand, within the four trends of transnational feminism, including targeting neoliberal economic policy agenda, exposing the danger of fundamentalisms, addressing conflict, war, and empire issues, and human-rights-based feminism, only the latter pays attention to gendered-based violence. Therefore, Iranian transnational feminists who primarily focused on the first three trends and avoided the humanitarian approach fall short in gendered-based violence advocacy; even though they mostly do so to avoid “saving brown/ Muslim women” propaganda of liberal feminism.

In this paper, I borrow the four-step methodology of rhetorical listening from feminist literary studies to reconcile Iranian transnational feminism with local issues of gendered-violence activism. I propose that the first step of “promoting the understanding of self and other” requires acknowledging the differences between Iranian feminism inside and outside Iran. “Locating identifications across commonalities and differences” should rely on structural analysis of gender violence in local and transnational scales. “Analyzing claims and cultural logics” becomes a vehicle for communicating similarity, but not sameness, of the issues in the lives of Iranian women in and out of Iran. Finally, “proceeding within accountability logic” invites Iranian academic and transnational feminists to utilize some of their intellectual privileges to raise the voice of the Iranian #MeToo Movement.

# Kevan Harris

(UCLA)

## *Linguistic homogenization contra ethnic self-identification: New evidence from the Iran Social Survey*

The field of Iranian studies has benefited from a new wave of scholarship examining the categories and boundaries of ethno-racial identity inside of the country. Yet far too often, researchers still conflate the concepts of language and ethnicity in their analysis of social affairs. This conflation arguably masks a key process that has been ongoing in Iran for some time. This process is the homogenization of linguistic practice towards usage of Persian along with the rise in self-identification with one or more ethno-racial minority groups. While rarely analyzed in the Iranian case in a comparative framework, linguistic homogenization along with rising ethnic self-identification over time is a common process in postcolonial nation-states (Brubaker, 2015). Given that the Iranian census collects no information on household language usage and/or ethno-racial identity, along a highly politicized debate over the content and boundaries of ethno-racial groups vis-à-vis the concept of Iranian nationality, most scholarship relies on outdated measures of language usage across Iranian villages from the 1970s-80s to make claims about ethno-racial identity in the present. Not only is this empirically questionable, but it is also conceptually suspect given that ethnicity and language in Iran are not necessarily overlapping and mutually enforcing processes of identity or community formation (Elling 2013). Building on previous work using the Iran Social Survey (Elling and Harris 2021), which provided evidence of how ethno-racial self-identification varies in Iran today, including the wide presence of multi-ethnic identity among individuals, this paper provides new survey evidence on how household language usage has changed over time within families. The paper also adds new evidence on variation of ethno-racial identification across Iranian society, including identification with and across majority and minority group categories.

## Mary Elaine Hegland and Maryam Karimi (Santa Clara University)

### *Widows' Self-Sufficient Lives in an Iranian Village*

Maryam's mother's mother, mother, and she herself were all widowed as young women and left to support and care for their children in situations where men were to provide for and take charge of wife and children. Women in the village of Aliabad were not literate during their times and did not have any work experience other than housework, care of animals in their courtyards, and knotting the cotton uppers for home-made shoes. Due to modesty requirements, they could not work outside of their own homes. Through ethnic/oral history, Mary and Maryam present stories of how these women suffered the loss of their husbands at early ages and went on to support themselves and their children. Widows worried and worked hard managing their lives. They sold cloth out of their homes, sewed clothing, first by hand and then later by machine, lent money, knotted and sold the uppers for handmade shoes, earned a little by baking bread and other domestic work for others, and received assistance from brothers and sons. These personal stories show the poverty, suffering of women from child marriage, and precariousness of life for rural women, men and children during the early half of the 20th century. Men and widows combined a number of economic pursuits to support themselves and families, trying out new possibilities. This memoir reveals Aliabad as a center of regional trade in Fars, with itinerant traders and shopkeepers from Aliabad traveling between Shiraz and outlying regions of Beyza, Konfiruz, and Sepidan, to gather produce of these rural areas in exchange for goods from elsewhere including abroad. This memoir sheds light not only on Maryam's and other widows' lives, but also on local, regional, and even international social and economic interaction.

# Seddigheh Kardan

(McGill University)

*Passionate Scribe and Prudent Author: 'Aṭṭār-i Tūnī and His Identity*

On the second of Rajab 883 AH/ October 8, 1478 CE, at the Sultān Ulugh Beg Mirzā School in Samarkand, the Sunni ulema set a book on fire and sentenced its scribe to death. The book was provocatively Shī'ī. Only with the intercession of Qutb al-aqṭāb of Samarkand and Sheikh ul-Islām of Herat could the scribe, who was indeed the very author of the book, ultimately flee to Herat. In safety there, he penned a new book, describing his suffering and boldly reaffirming his Shī'ī allegiance.

The refugee was a shadowy Persian literary figure, scholars of the last century have dubbed "Aṭṭār-i Tūnī". Born in Neyshābūr to a family of Tūnī (Firdawsī) extraction, the mysterious 'Aṭṭār-i Tūnī introduced himself in his writings as Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār-i Neyshābūrī, claiming all the prominent works of this celebrated author for himself, and ascribing his own works to the gnostic master who had lived some 250 years earlier.

This paper addresses the following questions: what was 'Aṭṭār-i Tūnī's precise religious affiliation that caused him such grief? Why did he disguise his identity and assume the persona of Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, taking him as a co-religionist? Examining 'Aṭṭār-i Tūnī's own poetic works - *Mazhar al-'ajā'ib*, to which the aforementioned narrative refers, *Jawhar al-dhāt* and *Lisān al-ghayb* - along with available contemporary historical sources, including extant Ismā'īlī source materials, I argue that 'Aṭṭār-i Tūnī was influenced by, and likely even affiliated with esoteric traditions of Shī'ī Islam, particularly Ismā'īlism. Drawing on the methods of intellectual history, the paper will demonstrate how literary legacies can help inform historical research, particularly when researching little-known figures of Persian literature throughout history. It will also explain why understanding these figures is so important for recapturing the stories of marginalized groups in the Muslim world.



# Pouran Lashini

(University of Texas, Dallas)

## *The Artistic Influence of Āshūrā in Iran Since the Nineteenth Century*

In Iran, the practice of Āshūrā sparked numerous social and political movements over five centuries and evolved into a symbol for justice. Scholarship ignores the significance of this annual epic Shia ceremony in the evolution of many different visual arts in nineteenth-century Iran. During this time, the Qajar dynasty transformed this religious ritual ceremony into entertainment for the general population. Although the majority of Āshūrā scholars focus on the religious significance of this ceremony on sociopolitical movements in the Shia culture, this paper argues that the Āshūrā ritual has deeply influenced not only Iranian ideology but also artistic perspectives as a metaphor for standing against injustice. Therefore, the energetic message of Āshūrā spread throughout Iranian cultures, inspiring movements against injustice and oppression through the use of rich narratives and symbols. During the annual event of Āshūrā, people attend street festivals to see beautiful and historical visual elements of the ceremony and to listen to narratives of the Battle of Karbala, dramatizing the event. As access to public places, radio, and newspapers expanded for Iranian citizens into the twentieth century, the festival audiences pushed this ritual into a new era.

This study explores the public performances of Āshūrā in three different art forms: performances (Ta'zieh), rhythmic reciting (rawzeh khani), and songs of lamentation (nohas). Under the influence of political and social pressures, visual artists created the new artistic movements of Qahveh-khaneh and Saqqa-khaneh, establishing solidarity in restricted social spaces for Iranian people. These artworks mixed metaphors of freedom and justice for a new wave of audiences in the twentieth century who were very familiar with traditional Āshūrā symbols and icons.

# Asal Rashid Mahmoodi

(University of New South Wales)

## ***“Vaghti Mard Gham Dare, Ye Kooh Dard Dare”*: Gheytrat’s Effects on the Lives of Iranian Men and Women**

*Gheytrat*, a concept describing a male’s sense of honour and possessiveness regarding women in his life, obliges him to control her behavior and perceived modesty. It is deeply embedded in Iranian culture, permeating the lives of both Iranian men and women. It structures everything from a woman’s bodily autonomy to the nature of their relationships, restricting their control over their own person. *Gheytrat* also creates societal pressure for men to act out a sort of hypermasculine show of honor, or otherwise be derided for their lack of *gheytrat* and be labelled as “less than a man”, essentially shackling the lives of Iranian men in a different, yet no less important, way.

While critical attention has been given to the way *gheytrat* shapes women’s lives within Iran, less focus has been given to the way its permeation in Iranian society also has negative impacts on a man’s life. Focusing on Sadegh Hedayat’s short story “Dash Akol” (1932), and its two film adaptations, released in 1971 and 2018, this paper investigates how the conditions of life in modern Iran, for both men and women, are and have historically been deeply tied to a culture of masculinity and male honor. It will also look at how as the role of women has developed in Iranian society, so too has it manifested differently in each adaptation.

# Ida Meftahi

(Boise State University)

## *Rape on Lalehzar Street: Gendering the Allied Occupation of Iran, 1941-1945*

The Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran and her enforced agreement to the Tripartite Treaty of Alliance are often narrated as sidelines to the history of the World War II. Viewing Iran merely as a strategic Allied supply line for the transportation of British and American ammunition and military technology to the Soviet Union, these accounts often neglect the impact of the war on the livelihood of Iranian people, let alone the locals' visceral experience of the occupation and particularly that of the Iranian women. Focusing on central Tehran, mainly the Lalehzar Street and its vicinity, and deploying an analytical lens of feminist and urban geopolitics, this paper closely investigates the day-to-day episodes of egregious antics and sexual misdemeanors of foreign troops resulting in the suffering of the Iranian subjects. These include robberies, hit-and-run car accidents, physical assaults due to intoxication, murder, sexual offences, and even abduction and rape of young girls and women. Although censored by the Allies, the periodicals of the time were one of the means to voice Iranians' frustration with these devastating circumstances. The legal avenue to pursue these cases, however, was through diplomatic channels with the respective Allied legations, those of which often denied the involvement of their troops in these incidents due to a lack of proper evidence. My cross-examination and analysis of over three thousand documents and diplomatic correspondences, retrieved from archives of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Majlis as well as the National Archives of Britain, United States, and Iran, illuminates acute details on the frequency and severity of these atrocities as were reported by the Tehran police on the ground or the citizens' themselves. Furthermore, it brings to light a darker reality, which will also be discussed in my presentation: having full knowledge of the criminal conduct of their troops and despite the Tripartite Agreement, the Allied governments pursued a camouflaged capitulation policy that sabotaged Iranian sovereignty and the authorities' quest to protect the rights of Iranian subjects and bring about justice for the people of Iran.

## Matteo Miele

(University of Florence)

### *An Unofficial Chinese Mission to Afghanistan in 1939*

The Second Sino-Japanese War marked China's diplomatic redemption after the military defeats and treaties of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In particular, inter alia, the Nationalist government worked to build a diplomatic network with the countries of the Saadabad Pact. The Middle East was seen as a space to redefine the diplomatic role of the Republic. China's old subordination was emphasized by the unilateral extraterritorial rights guaranteed by treaties to the Western powers. Already in 1920, a first treaty with Persia had instead denied extraterritorial rights to the citizens of the two countries. Reevaluating that treaty and signing new ones was crucial in the new context. Indeed, another purpose of this network was to counter the Japanese influence in the region and seek Asian allies against Tokyo. One of the informal diplomatic missions fielded by the Chinese is that of two Chinese Muslims sent to Turkey and then, who on the way back, visited Kabul. The presentation will therefore provide some details relating to the mission, within the framework of the broader strategy of the Nationalist government.

# Dilyana Mincheva & Niloofar Hamoon

(McMaster University)

## *The Iranian #MeToo and the Double Bind of Iranian Feminism: Between Religion, the Global Gender Struggle and Liberal Feminism*

The #MeToo **من هم** movement in Iran has its own locally specific yet globally significant trajectory. It started in the August of 2020, initially as a feminist reaction against the unwanted sexual advances of Morteza Sayidi. In a few months the hashtag grew into a social media-driven conversation around the stakes and states of feminism in Iran, which involved a medley amalgam of interlocutors: ordinary Iranian women sharing in a very public way stories of sexual abuse and thus initiating a historical break from the codes of honour and silence imposed on them by patriarchal, social, family and religious structures; religious and cultural authorities; diasporic Iranians; human rights activists and global feminists. Through close readings of publicly available Twitter testimonies of ordinary Iranian women, and mediated reactions to these testimonies provided by clerics, feminists and Iranian intellectuals, both domestic and diasporic, we aim to provide a nuanced account of the Iranian iteration of the #MeToo movement as, on the one hand, a familial yet distinct chapter of the global, networked feminist struggle for gender justice. On the other hand, we would like to situate the Iranian #MeToo movement particularly within the feminist debate and praxis in Iran. The argument in this book chapter is that the Iranian #MeToo movement constitutes a significant epistemological challenge for religious-based Islamic feminism in Iran by first, being a direct import of feminist topics and agencies that originate in non-Muslim environments, and second as the public appropriation of religion as a state-sponsored ideological practice that sustains patriarchy through an elaborate apparatus of surveillance, policing and normative disciplining of the female body and sexuality. Since the #MeToo movement in Iran exposes the religious state as complicit in the suffering and abuse of women, it also, naturally pushes Islamic feminism to reassess and redefine its commitments to religion as politics.

# Esha Momeni

University of California, Los Angeles

*Like a Wrapped Chocolate: The Islamic Republic's Politics of Hijab and the Normalization of Sexual Harassment*

The history of modernization and the enforcement of heteronormativity in Iran has been a project of 'reshaping the visual field.' In 1928, to make a modern nation, Reza Shah ordered all urban-dwelling men, except for clerics, to replace their traditional attire, including their hats, with European clothing. In 1936, he banned women from wearing the veil, naming the project "Women's Awakening." After the 1979 Revolution, the state segregated the public space based on sex and made veiling mandatory for women as a symbol of the Islamic Revolution and a marker of its identity.

In a study of the relationship between visibility, power, domination, and control, Gil Hochberg argues that the visual field is the outcome of specific visual arrangements "created and sustained through particular configurations of space and various processes of differentiations along national, ethnic, racial, religious, gender, and sexual lines." In the proposed paper, I will examine the relationship between structural violence and interpersonal violence regarding sexual harassment in the public space in post-revolutionary Iran. I will locate the female body and its representations in the visual arrangement of public space. I will investigate the relationship between these arrangements with power, control, gender, and sexuality. I argue that the gendered arrangement of the visual field has oversexualized the female body, thus making it vulnerable to sexual harassment.

## Natasha Morris

SOAS/Courtauld, University of London

### *The Bibi-Lakkat Complex: Representations of Femininity and Female: Responses to Vice in the Ludic Arts of Qajar Iran*

The poker-like *As nas* was one of the most popular card games in Qajar era Iran. Played primarily in coffeehouses (*gaveh khaneh*), where men could socialise within the urban environment of nineteenth-century towns and cities, games also took place closer to home within the otherwise chaste domestic environment. This was much to the chagrin of wives and mothers, with outspoken Bibi Khanom Astarabadi describing even the most dignified of men as becoming "common and worse than animals" at the games table in her scathing *Ma'ayib al-rijal* (Vices of Men) in 1894, a response to the chauvinistic advisory text *Ta'dib al-nisvan* (The Discipline of Women). Each deck held in a man's hand consisted of five suites of five identical cards, each bearing figurative motifs depicted under a lacquer finish. Two suites were illustrated with the female figures of the yellow-hued queen (*bibi*) and the vibrant crimson courtesan (*lakkat*), with the image of 'woman' therefore oscillating between the realms of the pedestal and the profane. This dichotomy of imagery, where the queen and the harlot differed not only in colour and pose but also in the value of the card within the deck, doubtless reflected contemporary social attitudes towards women. Questions of female agency are implicit to gender roles both within and without Qajar game-culture: women can be seen to be quite literally 'played with' and exchanged between different men as expendable effigies on a games piece. Although they may look on gambling nights scornfully - excluded from the social life of men - wives, mothers, nurses, and daughters were covert witnesses to male behaviour and provide the most thorough and wry written responses to men's pastimes. Women's unfavourable opinions can be seen to inform the period's lampooning of vice and male sociability in satirical cartoons found in publications such as *Molla Nasraddin*. This paper aims to both trace and uncover how women's attitudes towards men, and vice versa, were as much of a battle of the sexes as the competitive metaphor of a game of *As nas* can provide.

# Hossein Nakhaei

(University of Pittsburgh)

## *The Persian Pavilion and British Petroleum: Art and Oil in the Last Concession of Antoine Kitabgi Khan*

During the nineteenth century, Persia participated at several world fairs, but the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle marked a turning point in its presence at this global event. General Antoine Kitabgi Khan, an Armenian-Ottoman trader, broker, and director general of customs, served as the commissioner of Persia at that exhibition. He was well known for obtaining concessions for European financiers in Iran during the late nineteenth century. Following several failures, his last and most significant concession, D'Arcy's oil concession, was achieved shortly after the exhibition in Paris. By analyzing the process of organizing Persia's pavilion and deciphering the meaning behind its exterior and interior decorations, this research uncovers how Kitabgi utilized the exhibition as an opportunity to pave his way toward obtaining a concession that ultimately impacted the future of Iran and led to the formation of British Petroleum.

The findings of this study reveal that the pavilion itself was the most significant piece that Kitabgi exhibited in Paris. With mesmerizing mirror-works and an extravagantly decorated throne, he aimed to draw the attention of wealthy Europeans and the king of Persia, both sides of the upcoming concession. His desire to make the most attractive structure in the exhibition also led him to reconstruct incredible replicas of Iran's lost treasures in Paris, ranging from Achaemenid glazed bricks from Susa to mirrored columns from a demolished Safavid palace in Isfahan. He also demonstrated his ability to achieve the impossible by displaying rare objects that some of them were forbidden to export. Kitabgi's role in collecting Persian art objects for the exhibition opens new horizons for understanding how the world fairs and the network of involved people facilitated the exportation of Iranian cultural materials in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



# Mandana Naviafar

(Duke University)

## *Radiographic Vision and Politics of Visuality in Radiograph of a Family*

The woman's body is the primary locus of politics in *Radiograph of a Family*, an experimental autobiographical documentary by Firouzeh Khosravani. The movie is simultaneously concerned with the very visual technologies that render the woman's body visible. This paper explores the significance of radiographic visuality as a distinct mode of imagining the body that allows the director to reimagine and reclaim the highly politicized and confiscated body of her mother. The movie begins with the wedding photographs of the director's mother and concludes with a freeze frame of an X-ray of the mother's spine. In the interval, through a juxtaposition of countless family photos and archival historical footages, Khosravani reconstructs the journey of her mother, Tayji, from the time she is an alienated young woman in Switzerland, until she becomes a devoted Islamic revolutionary activist, and then an agent of state oppression in post-revolutionary Iran. I will first demonstrate the connection between photographic vision and the violence of the encounter with the colonial other in the experience of young Tayji. It is through the logic of the photograph that Tayji first finds herself split and deprived of a stable sense of self. Like many women of her generation coming from an educated middle-class background, Tayji then finds recourse in the lectures of Ali Shariati, one of the prominent thinkers of the Iranian revolution. Tayji becomes an embodiment of Shariati's philosophy of "return to self" (*Bazgasht be Khishtan*) through Islamic revolutionary practices. This paper argues that the very idea of the self as the basis of an anticolonial revolutionary philosophy follows a narcissistic visual logic. Since the visual logic of narcissism necessarily needs a ground of projection, it posits the woman's body as such ground and in this way reproduces the very colonial relationship with the woman's body that it attempts to transcend. I will then interpret the daughter's turn to the "radiograph" as a desire for an alternative mode of visuality, imagination, and embodiment that subverts the narcissistic visual logic of the mother's philosophy of "return to self."

# Hamed NayyeriAdl

(University of Göttingen)

## *Fictionality of a Preface, its Features and Functions*

This project examines the role of one of the introductory chapters in the Persian versions of Kalila which recounts the process of bringing the book to Iran from India by Borzūy, the famous Iranian physician. Through an analysis of narratological aspects, this paper explores the fictional features of this chapter, and provides hypotheses about its function for the book.

# Pouya Nekouei

(University of Texas, Austin)

## *Gender and Singing in Iran During the Pahlavi Period (1940 – 1960)*

This article examines the question of gender and vocal music in Iran during the Pahlavi period from the early 1940s until the 1960s. By focusing on vocal music genres in Iranian music, this article shows how the performances of different genres of vocal music became subject to a male-female gender dichotomy and segregation. Women during the Pahlavi era increasingly appeared in spaces such as new sound media, concerts, and public halls. Despite the increasing presence of women in public musical life, Iranian vocal music from the late 1940s became subject to gender segregation and dichotomy in performance. With the expansion of popular culture, specifically from the early 1940s, the high-art Iranian music community restricted women's vocal performance choices. Women's images in popular magazines, movie halls, and cinemas and female artists' performances of popular songs became the Other to the cultural values of high-art musicians. To counter popular culture, the male vanguards of Iranian music deployed sexist language against female artists in the late 1940s and during the 1950s. They ultimately adopted restricting policies against female performers in the 1960s in radio's most popular program of Iranian music, i.e., the *Golha*. This process led to a distinction between styles of vocal music performance based on gender within the high-art Iranian music community. The performance of *avaz* gradually became limited to male performers, while official policies in radio expected women to increasingly perform rhythmic vocal music such as *tasnif* and *tarane*. This article shows this gender segregation was a product of modernity during the Pahlavi period.

## Kaveh Niazi

(Independent Scholar)

*A 13th Century Astronomical Compendium: Athīr al-Dīn Abharī's Summary of Ptolemy's the Almagest.*

Athīr al-Dīn Abharī (d. circa 660 AH/1263 CE) is a notable intellectual figure of the 13th century, who composed works on astronomy, mathematics, and other subjects. His treatises on philosophy and logic were well regarded enough to have been used in the madrasa curriculum of his own era. In *Irshād al-qāṣid ilā asnā al-maqaṣid* Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 749/1348) lists Abharī's works under logic and polemics (al-jadal). Ibn al-Akfānī includes as well one of Abharī's scientific works, referred to by Ibn al-Akfānī as *al-Majisṭī*, and described by him as belonging to the set of concise works (sing. *al-mukhtaṣar*) on astronomy. Though often missing in modern references that list Abharī's books, this treatise survives in several manuscripts. Abharī dedicated this work to his protegee Najm al-Dīn Kātibī Qazwīnī (d. 675/1276), himself a noted scholar, and one of the key scientists at the Maragha observatory. A survey of the topics that Abharī chose to include in his *al-Majisṭī* reveals his debt to Ptolemy while highlighting, as well, sections that are not directly derived from the *Almagest*. As such, Abharī's *al-Majisṭī* is different in conception from works such as the celebrated and roughly contemporary *Taḥrīr al-Majisṭī* by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (653/1274). Abharī organized his *al-Majisṭī* in twelve sections as compared to the *Almagest*'s thirteen and included such central discussions as the notion of the concentric heavenly orbs, which is largely absent from Ptolemy's eponymous work. As such, an examination of the *al-Majisṭī* highlights the concerns of its author with the then current concepts and formulations that were used to model the motions of the heavenly orbs. More importantly, the material that Abharī chose to include in his *al-Majisṭī* offers a window to the techniques and concepts that were deemed important for the education of astronomers in Abharī's era.

# Samaneh Oladi

(Virginia Commonwealth University)

*Faith-based Activism in the Iranian Sociopolitical Discourse*

This project provides a unique perspective on Iranian women's religious activism and their attempts to reform women's legal status. It focuses on the prominent Iranian women's coalition E'telaf-i Islamiyyih Zanan (EIZ) and its use of faith-based activism to advance women's rights within Shi'i Iran, through individual empowerment and institutional reform. My research utilizes a combination of detailed case studies, ethnographic research methods, and textual analysis to shed light on debates on indigenous reformation within the Islamic tradition and the nature of female religious activism in this context. The project examines the extent to which Muslim women are bridging the gap between Islamic law and gender justice in Iran by engaging in faith-based activism.

This project unravels the complexities Iranian women encounter in challenging deeply ingrained cultural and religious beliefs. Important questions driving this project are: What are the basic premises of the Islamic constructions of gender and justice? What are the possibilities and limits of achieving gender justice within a Shi'i Islamic framework? Is the conventional discourse of Islamic law receptive to influence from bottom-up faith-based activism? In analyzing women's legal status through EIZ members' activism, I tackle these complex questions relating to the status of women in Iranian society.

The central aim of the project is to examine the extent to which women's involvement in faith-based activism and their contribution to the production of religious knowledge transforms patriarchal interpretations of Islamic scriptures and institutions. To analyze Iranian women's sacred activism, I examine the social, political, and faith-based activism of EIZ members, through interviews, textual analysis, and participant observation. Using interdisciplinary research methods, drawing on works in religious studies, gender studies, and anthropology, I scrutinize women's sacred activism textually and contextually as well as in practice.

Ali Olomi

(Loyola Marymount University)

*A Persian Apocalypse: Astral Sciences, History Writing, and Identity Formation in the Abbasid Fynasty*

Establishing and fostering an imperial ideology which naturalized their rule was an essential component of the Abbasid project. To do this, the Abbasids co-opted conjunctionalism into their chronologies which posited their dynasty as the natural inheritors of the Persian past. This paper will examine the use of Persian conjunctionalism among Abbasid sympathetic writers from Ma'shallah through Abu Ma'shar and al-Biruni in their world chronologies. In addition, the paper will examine how conjunctionalism provided the logic of resistance and challenge to Abbasid rule. Through a close reading of competing interpretations, we detail how a grand historical narrative was constructed by Abbasid sympathizers and how in turn a similar narrative was deployed by others in millenarian movements to declare the time of the Abbasids over. By putting Sarah Savant's *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran* with A. Azfar Moin's *Millennial Sovereign*, we can explore the nuances of identity formation in the medieval Perso-Islamic world. Conjunctionalism as history-writing is situated at the intersection of premodern astral science and millenarian religious movement and is a constitutive element in constructing "Persianness" as an identity at the center of imperial imagination and in resistance to it.

## Marie Ostby

(Connecticut College)

### *Translating Iranian Anger*

This paper seeks to focus on recent diasporic works—possibly including Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, Shahriar Mandanipour’s *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, Négar Djavadi’s *Disoriental*, Solmaz Sharif’s *Customs*, and Kaveh Akbar’s *Pilgrim Bell*—that engage with the affect of anger in moments of translation between Persian and Western languages (specifically English and French). In a recent interview, Akbar states: “A lot of what manifests in my life today as rage comes from a surfeit of compassion, a surfeit of imagination, my ability to fully—or at least fully enough—apprehend the interiority of the harmed ... That anger ... feels instructive—born of willful attempts to make myself permeable to the energies that surround me, whether they’re civic or social or metaphysical” (Poets & Writers, 2021). He speaks about the impact of Forugh Farrokhzad’s righteous anger as she worked on *Khāneh Siyah Ast* [The House is Black] as making possible the real social justice that the film produced: “improv[ing] the material conditions of her subjects and expand[ing] the aesthetic possibilities of the field.” I am interested in moments of enraged linguistic excess in the diasporic imagination, in which the poised elision or comforting disguise of code-switching for the benefit of monolingual hegemony is consciously or unconsciously dropped. In this examination, I plan to use Sara Ahmed’s recovery of feminist anger on its own terms (against the idea of resentment) as well as Emily Apter’s ideas of the untranslatable. Sometimes a translator’s anger is released as a private satisfaction, as in Satrapi’s invective against the nuns in her boarding-house in *Persepolis* (see image below). Sometimes it is wistful and bitter, as with Akbar’s preoccupation, in his poem “Reading Farrokhzad in a Pandemic,” with the untranslatable Farrokhzad verse on loss: “mā har che rā keh bāyad az dast dādeh bāshim az dast dādeh-im.” Overall, I aim to theorize what role anger plays in translation and its moments of inadequacy in ways that are specific to the Iranian diaspora and its rich, complex relationship to language.

# Paria Rahimi

(Western University)

## *#Unveiling\_the\_Iranian\_MeToo\_in\_Three\_Acts: Symptomatic Reading of Iranian MeToo through the Lens of Political Economy*

Since 2006, the #MeToo movement has embarked on its journey and traversed different platforms and borders. In this book chapter, I study the Iranian MeToo from the perspective of political economy. Coming from the same tradition, I respond to Marxists' criticisms of #MeToo. Despite the fact that the campaign was generally welcomed by intellectuals, academics, and activists, the #MeToo has been criticized by a number of Marxist thinkers and Marxist feminists for being a powerful spark that has not gone far enough and has been perverted to meet bourgeois feminism's needs. I suggest #MeToo is a feminist practice, and every feminist issue is a question of the political economy per se. I draw upon examples from Iranian #MeToo that vividly spotlight the intersection and coalition of patriarchy and capitalism. I particularly single out the case of Keyvan Emamverdi as the paradox of the Iranian MeToo as the only person who never had fame and symbolic capital before #MeToo out of the many figures accused of sexual rape, sexual assault, and harassment. Interestingly, he is also the only one prosecuted legally and convicted in court. I study the singularity of Emamverdi's case by deploying Bourdieu's Theory of Capital as my theoretical framework and Althusser's Symptomatic Reading as my methodology. In light of this exception, I suggest in all the cases except that of Emamverdi, the path has been paved, and the scene has been set for the sexual assault by the masked instance of economic capital that serves both capitalism and patriarchy, to wit, symbolic capital.



# Mehrdad Rahimi-Moghaddam

(University of New South Wales)

*Debating Azerbaijan's Identity: Polemical Encounters between Iranian and Ottoman Intellectuals (1912 - 1924)*

The heated debates that erupted in the aftermath of World War I between Iranian and Ottoman intellectuals about the history and identity of Iranian Azerbaijan is a key chapter in the history of modern Iranian nationalism. Notable and well-known intellectuals from both sides were among the figures whose writings influenced, either overtly or subtly, the context of these debates: Mahammad Amin Rasulzade, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Süleyman Nazif, Ruşeni Bey from the Turkish side, and Arif Qazvini, Husayn Kâzım'zâdah Irânshahr, Sadiq Rizazadeh Shafaq, Mahmud Ghanizadeh from the Iranian side. Among the varied Iranian responses and reactions, two short pamphlets written in Ottoman Turkish by Rizazadeh Shafaq (titled *Türk Mütefekkirinin Nazarı İntibahına*) (1924) and Mahmud Ghanizadeh (titled *Ruşeni Beye Cevap*) (1924) and published by Kaviyani and Iranshahr publishing in Berlin, are particularly noteworthy in that they were specifically addressed to the Turkish intellectuals. In this talk, after providing a general account of these contentions, I will closely examine these two pamphlets, situating their arguments within the rising tides of nationalism among expatriate Iranian intellectuals. To conclude, I will briefly illustrate how these debates influenced and intensified the discourse of Iranian nationalism.

# Yasamin Rezaei & Mehdy Sedaghat Payam

(University of Miami - University of Maryland)

## *Exploring #MeToo in Iran: Computational Analysis of Twitter Data and Cultural Implications*

The #MeToo movement, born online to encourage women to speak out against sexual assault, has gained momentum worldwide. This chapter focuses on #Me,too,Iran or #من.هم a relatively new movement among Persian-speaking users on Twitter. Tracing its origins and online discussions, we explore the cultural implications and the urgent need for scholarly attention.

Using the Tweepy library in Python, we collect and analyze tweets containing the #me,too,Iran hashtag. By examining the scraped tweets, we identify contextual patterns and thematic categories, gaining statistical insights into topic distribution, user engagement, and the prevalent vocabulary used by Iranian participants when discussing sexual assault.

Through a literature review on computational analysis of Twitter data and the study of the Me Too movement in different regions, we develop a methodology suited for this research. Adopting a computational approach, we investigate various hashtags used in relation to the Me Too movement in Iran. Specifically, we examine the presence of contextual patterns within tweets and explore their potential classification.

Furthermore, this paper sheds light on the cultural aspects of feminism in Iran by analyzing Twitter discussions surrounding sexual assault. It raises critical questions about the role of online platforms in hosting and shaping the movement, the impact on feminist discourse and vocabulary, and the platform's significance in empowering activists and marginalized individuals to discuss sexual abuse and power dynamics. Ultimately, this paper provides valuable insights into the #MeToo movement in Iran, its cultural implications, and its contribution to amplifying the voices of historically silenced communities. By employing computational analysis and delving into these important topics, we contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding digital activism and its role in promoting social change.

## Staci Scheiwiller

(California State University, Stanislaus)

### *Harem Politics and Photography: The Photographs of Khanom Bashi*

In the 1890s, during the later years of the harem photograph oeuvre in the Golestan Palace archives before Nasir al-Din Shah's assassination in 1896, the presence of the shah's *sigheh* Khanom Fatemeh Soltan Baghbanshi (d. 1957), commonly known as "Khanom Bashi," is quite noticeable. In these photographs, the matronly Anis al-Dowleh in her early 50s presided as the "Queen of Iran" and head of harem, while Khanom Bashi assumed the role of the attractive, youthful favorite at court. Yet, according to Taj al-Saltaneh's memoirs, Khanom Bashi was also one of the accomplices in the shah's death. She had coveted the title Forough al-Saltaneh, which was only bestowed onto the shah's late beloved wife Jayran; thus, he had denied Khanom Bashi this most precious designation.

By the time Khanom Bashi arrived at the shah's court, the harem's relationships to the camera and photography had become very sophisticated. Photography was a permanent staple of court life and part its culture, thus creating and determining social relationships—not only how the shah interacted with the women of the court but also how they behaved with each other. In this way, photography established certain hierarchies, relations, and conditions of the royal harem. In this presentation, drawing on Azoulay's argument that photography is an act or event, I focus on the photographs of Khanom Bashi, considering the social and political dynamics of the harem presented in these images, as well as how she participated in the production of these photographs as part of her acculturation to harem life and power. I suggest that by emulating the visual examples of Anis al-Dowleh, she sought photography as a strategy to consolidate a permanent place at court, even attempting to rise in ranks to sequester Jayran's prized title, which would have permanently enshrined her legacy above all others.

# Mira Xenia Schwerda

(University of Edinburgh)

*The Counterimage: Visualizing Resistance in Virtual and Physical Space*

Photography continues to play a critical role in the politics of bodily autonomy in Iran and especially in the recent protests, which were sparked by the death of the 22-year old Jina Mahsa Amini at the hands of the morality police in September 2022. In the protests, the serial, mediated reproduction of specific photographic images has led to an iconization which visualizes the ongoing struggle through focusing on the likenesses of concrete figures and memorializes those who have been murdered by the regime. These photographic likenesses transgress the regime's rules of comportment, and the making and circulation of the images of the protests and of those injured or killed, both online and in print, must be understood as an act of resistance in the context of visual and photographic censorship by the Iranian regime. It can also be seen as a counterweight to the state-sponsored imagery of religious leaders and war martyrs in the public sphere. Furthermore, photography has been used to visualize the possibility of a different present and future, and seemingly quotidian photographs have integrated protest into the everyday and have moved resistance from the public into the private space. Thereby, at times, photographic acts of resistance have not only accompanied protest on the street, but also continued or sometimes even replaced it. The existence and reproduction of these photographs in Iran is therefore not just an illustration in a media article or a simple post on a social media profile, but rather a refusal to capitulate or to be made invisible.

# Katy Shahandeh

(SOAS, University of London)

## *The Semiotics of Subversion: Iranian Women Artists Contesting Orientalist Tropes*

The Oriental woman, a fabrication of colonial fetishization and distortion of the East, has long been the subject of Western Art History and desire. This construct has recently been addressed by "Oriental" women themselves and the imagery and tropes contested and deconstructed in order to re-establish agency for women. Iranian women artists are amongst those who have addressed this issue, which has resurfaced, in another guise, after the Iranian Revolution (1978-79), and 9/11, whereby Iranian women have once again been "othered" whilst still retaining the Orientalist distinction. Iranian women have, thus, had to struggle with stereotypes and ideologies waged against them by both the Iranian regime and the West, which are fought on the battleground of women's bodies and have resulted in a crisis of identity which is both individual and cultural. This paper will explore post-revolutionary works produced by Iranian women artists who use Western symbols and signifiers to challenge both Orientalist tropes and stereotypes, as well as those of the Iranian state and society by emphasizing women's bodies as sites of social contention whereupon discordant visual signifiers (both Iranian and Western) compete. By resisting these prescribed narratives and deconstructing conventional interpretations, they make us question the veracity of such historical categorizations and instead proffer a hybrid (Iranian) female identity that is polysemous, fragmented and, at times, schizophrenic, simultaneously adhering to and resisting the paradigms constructed by both Iran and the West and showing the paradoxical and often problematic reconciliation of these competing mores in contemporary Iranian society.

## Shima Boka

(Independent Scholar/University of Art, Tehran)

### *Establishing a Modern Style in Contemporary Iranian Architecture as Reflected in the Writings of Architect Vartan Hovanessian*

During the Pahlavi period, a "modern style" emerged and prevailed in Iranian architecture. Prior to the establishment of this style, and as cultural and social changes occurred in Iranian society, a "revivalist style" had been gradually invented which intended to create a new identity based on the heritage of ancient Persia to broadcast a new image of the country both domestically and internationally. The architects of this movement principally adapted the forms and symbols of past Iranian architecture in designing buildings for newly established institutions such as offices, banks, and schools; a style that was reminiscent of the past while occupying a new body. Gradually, a parallel trend emerged in the country's architectural scene that opposed drawing upon the past and sought to realize the ideals of modern architecture and establish a modern style to build a new identity aligned with the progressive Western world. This paper examines the mechanism with which the modern style replaced the previous revivalist one by reviewing the critical articles written by Vartan Hovanessian, one of the most prominent and active architects of the time, and examining them in the context of other contemporary documents of the period. Vartan's unique position compared to his contemporaries arises from three decades of his diverse and active involvement in fields of criticism and authorship, guild activity, and building design. His thoughts and experiences have accumulated in the form of fourteen published articles. This paper attempts to go beyond the pervasive cliché in existing historiographies that acknowledges the vague statement that "Iranian architecture was influenced by architects educated in the West" and come up with a narrative of the effective network of individuals, events, connections, and contexts that have contributed to the establishment of a modern Style and Modern identity in Iran.

# Taylor Nasim Stone

(San Francisco State University)

## *Sacred Snake Blood: The Dualism of Serpent Symbol Context in the Shahnameh and Kurdish Folklore*

Within recent protests in Iran and among the Iranians who have been uprooted, there are images of a man with serpents on his shoulders being used to exhibit the evil of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic. Though the images themselves convey negativity, only viewers who are familiar with Iranian mythology will understand the reference to Zahhāk, the demon king of the Shahnameh (Book of Kings). In this literature, Zahhāk had an oppressive thousand year reign over Iran, shedding blood everywhere he went. Nearby in Turkey, images of the Shahmaran (Queen of Snakes) are displayed in universities to protest violations in human rights against LGBTQ communities. The Shahmaran is a half woman-half serpent figure rooted largely in Kurdish folklore, representing goodness and protection in the face of evil.

Both of these figures have serpents at the center of their character, but the serpent symbol is seemingly inverted between the two. I intend to argue that gender expectations, ancient religions, and the concept of evil play significant roles in defining the serpent symbol in the two literatures that these characters appear in. Zahhāk as a mythological character predates his appearance in the Shahnameh and occurs much sooner as an evil figure in the text of an ancient religion, Zoroastrianism. In the Shahnameh, he begins as a human prince who is led to evil by a demon. As his evil deeds increase and he becomes king, the demon kisses his shoulders and a snake appears from each kiss. This gives Zahhāk the appearance of Azhi Dahāka, the evil three-headed dragon that he is echoing from Zoroastrianism. The character of Zahhāk and all his serpent symbolism is firmly seated within the religious framework of Zoroastrianism where serpents are considered to be evil beings.

In contrast, the femininity of the Shahmaran is historically what informs her positive association with the serpent symbol. In the Kurdish legend of the Shahmaran, this Queen of Snakes lives underground in her own kingdom. Through the betrayal of humans into the hands of a greedy magi, the Shamaran is murdered and her body produces three elixirs: one that kills, one that heals, and one that provides eternal wisdom. Depending on the version of this oral literature is how the elixirs are divided up. The Snake Goddess archetype, hybrid women and snake figures, have been consistently portrayed from the seventh millennium B.C. and throughout Neolithic times. I argue that the ancient serpent mythology and geographical context of the feminine goddess figure in West Asia is how we understand that the Shahmaran is an agent of good rather than destruction, unlike Zahhāk.

In the present day, both groups are currently expressing their protest with historical and culturally specific visuals. The purpose of investigating the particular factors that shape these serpent symbols in Zahhāk and the Shahmaran is to better understand the impact current protesters are seeking to express about their circumstances. Essentially, Iranians and Kurds are using their roots to defy those who violently uproot them.

## Márton Székely

(Eötvös Loránd University)

*Beyond Dīvān and Tazkira: Ghaznavid Court Poetry in 14-15th Century Jung*

This paper aims to investigate the earliest manuscript sources of Ghaznavid-era panegyric poetry. Classical authors such as Farrukhī, 'Unṣurī, and Manūchihri are known from manuscripts as late as the 19th century. Often the textual basis of the late canon formation can be traced back to the Timurid and Safavid periods and a systematizing effort manifesting itself in the appearance of the first large *tazkiras* and the first complete *divans* of several early poets. However, the sources beyond these collections are often under researched or even unknown to scholarship. The investigation of literary sources called *jung* (and often alternatively *safīna*, *bayāz*, etc.), for example, the 15th-century anthology called *Majmu'a-yi laṭā'iyif va safīna-yi zārāyif*, suggests that anthologists and biographers such as Dawlatshāh or Taqī Kāshī drew on texts circulating in a geographic area ranging from the Indian subcontinent to Anatolia. The results point toward the possible preservation of some of the early classics of Persian literature outside of Iran in a broader Persianate cultural sphere.



# Denis Volkov & Mojgan Samadi

(HSE University)

## *The Modern Persian vs the New Soviet Man*

Iran and the USSR shared a number of characteristics in the process of identity construction during the 1930s. Both, Reza Shah and Stalin succeeded in establishing a strong centralized state, pursuing the emphasized policies of nationalism and modernization. Both regimes' educational systems aimed at forging a model citizen, namely the New Soviet Man and the Modern Persian. The school instruction materials under both regimes were devised and organized in an ad-hoc way to become instrumental in the process. The early 1930s evidenced the return to Russian nationalist feelings, patriotism, and love for the Motherland (Duncan, 1998) which functioned as 'an instrumental complement to official Soviet ideology,' and declined 'proletarian internationalism' in favor of Stalinist 'national Bolshevism' (Brandenberger, 2012). On the other hand, the establishment of modern educational system in Iran followed three main principles of Reza Shah's regime, namely centralization, modernization, and nationalism (Ansari, 2012). Similar to the role of Russian language and pre-revolutionary Russian culture in the formation of the New Soviet Man, the internalization of being Persian and belonging to the glorious pre-Islamic Persian culture were central in the definition of the Modern Persian, and Persian language became the symbol of national unity (Devos and Werner, 2014).

Methodologically drawing on Norman Fairclough's intertextuality, discourse and socio-cultural practice, this research studies materials including state documents regulating instruction in primary and secondary schools, as well as relevant textbooks in literature certified in both countries during the period under study. The paper argues that Stalinist Socialist Realism drew on the Russian Orthodox traditionalism in producing a new role model of self-sacrifice for the sake of the Father (Stalin), 'national Bolshevism', and the Motherland. Instead, Reza Shah's educational system appealed to pre-Islamic mythic history to weaken the established power of Shi'a clergy, and to awaken self-consciousness in the individual, making of him a Modern Persian possessing the skills necessary for adult life. In so doing, the paper examines and analytically juxtaposes the identity construction mechanisms employed in school instruction by both regimes.

## Claudia Yaghoobi

(UNC Chapel Hill)

### *Women's "Microrebellions" via Cultural and Artistic Productions*

In this talk, I intend to examine the ways that Iranian women have continued asserting themselves in public spaces designed to exclude them, and have faced targeted violence (sexual, gender, verbal, etc) aimed at disqualifying them from accessing public spaces. Focusing on decades of women's right activism, I will analyze cultural productions such as multimedia installations, photograph, painting, and fiction, as effective tools in women's movements to fight targeted violence. I consider this artistic form of activism what Zakia Salime (2014: 16) terms "microrebellions."

## Sara Zanotta

(Università degli Studi di Pavia)

### *Iranian Constitutionalists in an Italian Archive*

During the Constitutional Revolution, several anjomans contributed to the constitutional cause across Iran. Some of them also emerged among the Iranian communities outside the borders of the Qajar empire and represented a channel in connecting the constitutional developments inside Iran with neighboring territories. While this theme has received some scholarly attention, much remains to be studied. In particular, this paper aims at investigating the diplomatic activities of the Iranian anjomans thanks to the original letters and telegrams addressed to the Italian government that are held at the Historical Diplomatic Archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Only a few scholars in Iranian studies have so far conducted research in Italian archives, but an in-depth analysis of these documents reveals a peculiar zeal of Italian diplomats in Iran and the Ottoman Empire in reporting the diplomatic activities of the Iranian anjomans and the connections of Iranian constitutionalists with other Asian populations. Therefore, using these almost untapped archival sources, this paper explores the activism of Iranian constitutionalists in spreading news abroad and looking for foreign support during the Constitutional Revolution. It examines how Iranian anjomans, including the women's one in Istanbul, got in touch with diplomats and the Italian government, raising grievances, proposing solutions and stressing the necessity of a constitutional government. Then, it investigates how Italian diplomats perceived and reacted to them, demonstrating the existence of differences based on the gender or timing of the telegram. Finally, it shows that Italian diplomats also devoted attention to the transborder network that Iranians had managed to establish with other Asian populations and the entanglements between the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and other contemporary developments.

## Navid Zarrinal

(Stanford University)

### *West Asia, Colonialism, and Intellectuals: The Origins of Iran's Discourse of Misery*

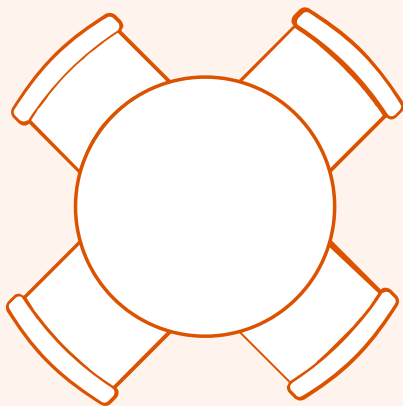
In this article, I provide a historical and textual analysis of an Iranian intellectual discourse, which following the Persian nomenclature, I call the discourse of misery ("badbakhti"). I argue that throughout the nineteenth-century, the perception of Iranian intellectuals changed, rather drastically, from self-confidence to self-immiseration. This historical argument is grounded in a close textual comparison between early nineteenth-century texts, representing confidence, and mid-late nineteenth-century texts that for the first time articulated the idea of an incomparable Iranian misery. The first pair of texts representing self-confidence were two early nineteenth-century travelogues. These were Mirzā Ṣālih Shirāzi's *Safar-nāmah* (1815) or the "Travelogue" and Mir 'Abdul Laṭīf-Khān Shūshṭarī's *Tuhfat al-'ālam* ("The Gem of the World") (1801-02). I contrast this pair with two reformist texts of the later Qajar years that, for the first time, articulated the idea of an incomparable Iranian misery. The first text was entitled *Maktūbāt* ("Letters") (1860), written by Mirzā Fath 'Alī Ākhund-zādah. The second text was a fictional travelogue, entitled *Siyāhat-nāmah-i Ibrāhīm Bayk* or "The Travel Diary of Ibrahim Beg" (1895). Although the aforementioned four texts were all written in the context of European colonialism, they differed in one major respect: the former pair viewed Iran with confidence; the latter pair viewed it with embarrassment. I contextualize the analysis of self-immiseration in two sets of literature. First, I engage the conceptual debates on cultural imperialism in Middle Eastern Studies/West Asian Studies. Second, I add to emergent Iranian Studies scholarship that has examined the same intellectual discourse under consideration. The conclusion connects history to the present. The reformist conception of self-immiseration entered popular culture in the Pahlavi period (1925- 1979) and intensified in the Islamic Republican period (1979-present). This discourse has captivated modern Iranian consciousness, but without necessarily corresponding to social reality.

# Maryam Zehtabi

University of Virginia

**Hush! Girls Don't Scream (2013) by Puran Derakhshandeh and the #MeToo Movement in Iran**

The act of writing about one's private life becomes a statement of rebellion in a context which forcefully stifles any expressions of the self in individuals. So, in choosing to write—to tell the story of their private lives and struggles Iranians have to defy aspects of their history, culture, and politics which espouse silence in the face of all calamities. The dearth of (auto) biographies, testimonials, and memoirs and why Iranians do not easily gravitate toward these genres of writing can be attributed to different modes of censorship which are at work in Iran and are masterfully explained in the works of Farzaneh Milani. For Iranian women, in particular, writing about their lives is deemed not only a breach of their family's privacy, but also an unforgivable act of cultural insubordination. In a culture where the family's honor is inextricably intertwined with the chastity of its women, talking of sexual encounters with the opposite sex, whether voluntary or not, is bound to bring shame on the family. It is against this backdrop that the outpouring of stories by female survivors of sexual assault in Iran gains extraordinary significance. The #MeToo movement, which has recently taken Iran by storm, has exposed multiple personalities for their depravity but has once again underlined the long-standing, multifaceted inhibitions at work that prevented these crimes from being reported earlier. Normalizing the act of speaking openly about sexual assault, however, did not start with the #MeToo movement. For years, Iranian women activists, writers and filmmakers have been advocating for it. In this paper, I will discuss how *Hush! Girls Don't Scream* directed by Puran Derakhshandeh paved the way for the outpouring of support for the #MeToo movement in Iran



ROUNDTABLES DISCUSSIONS

# The Conversion Caucus: A Roundtable

*Participants: Ana Maria Raietparvar (Universidade Federal Fluminense); Benedikt Römer (Bundeswehr University, Munich); Edith Szanto (University of Alabama); Navid Fozi-Abivard (Bridgewater State University); Ruzbeh Hodiwala (SOAS, University of London)*

The socio-political and economic ramifications of the 1979 Revolution in Iran, followed by the Cultural Revolution and Iran-Iraq War resulted in large scale migration of Iranians to the West in the last quarter of the twentieth century. This migration was further augmented by the occurrence of the Green Revolution in Iran and the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in the past decade. The latter was particularly difficult for the Kurdish minorities who were compelled to leave their homeland in large numbers to avoid persecution and for economic opportunities. This mass exodus of people from the Iranian Cultural continent has led to the stemming of political and religious movements in the diaspora communities, particularly in parts of Europe and Americas. Globalization and the advent of the digital revolution have propelled these movements and given them a transnational character.

One of the phenomenon has been renouncing Islam and accepting alternate religious identities by undergoing a formal passage of conversion. Whereas, this phenomenon can be argued as a post-migratory phenomenon among the members in the diaspora, the practice has been publicly recorded in the Autonomous Region of Iraqi Kurdistan where conversions have received political support and the legal framework governing religious freedom is not as stringent as in neighboring Iran. Predominantly espousal of Christian and Baha'i identities is widespread due to the favorable infrastructure within the Church and the Baha'i community towards the new-adherents. Also, there has been an increase in the number of individuals from the Persianate societies identifying as Zoroastrians, a community that is averse to conversion and, as a result, lacks infrastructure.

The proposed roundtable would include researchers who have conducted studies on the phenomena of conversion in parts of Europe, North America, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. The discussion will delve into the ethnographic experiences of the researchers while working on and off the field, including navigating the insider-outsider problem in the study of religions; the doctrinal and non-doctrinal appeals and applicability of globalization, identity, and feminist theories in change of religious affiliation; the socio-religious and cultural capital as identification markers for conversion; how different Iranian conversion experiences can be categorized and placed on the trajectories of conversion, reaffiliation, and reversion; and evaluating the cost of conversion considering the socio-legal implications of apostasy from Islam. The roundtable aims to be a collaborative exercise to bring together PhD, Early Career, and established researchers from different global institutes who have amassed knowledge in the area of conversion with regard to the Persianate world.

# Roundtable on Publishing in Iran

*Participants: Laetitia Nanquette (University of New South Wales); Farshad Sonboldel (University of California, Santa Barbara); Mahdi Ganjavi (Northwestern University); Borna Izadpanah (University of Reading); Hosna Sheikholeslami (Denison University)*

The medium of print is a powerful tool that shapes public opinion. This roundtable proposal aims to explore the evolution of publishing in Iran from the Qajar period to the present day, examining its modes of interaction with society and the state. The Iranian state has taken many forms during this extensive period, but there has consistently been an interest in influencing and using the publishing sector. This is indeed partly through the medium of print that the state conveys its ideology and contributes to the construction of its identity. Publishing thus serves as a focal point to think about the power of writing and how books, whether in print or digital format, have influenced and transformed Iranian society and politics from the Qajar period to the present day.

Scholars in this roundtable will address the following themes and questions:

- The evolution of publishing at critical historical moments, such as the Constitutional Revolution, the Pahlavi era, and the Islamic Revolution.
- Case studies of specific publishers.
- The links between publishing and the state, and the ways in which the state has sought to control or influence the publishing industry. How have publishers responded to the challenges of censorship and political repression? Alternatively, what role has the state played in the development of the publishing industry?
- The influence of publishing on society, and the ways in which books have shaped Iranian thought and culture. How has publishing shaped Iranian society and politics over time, and what are the future prospects for publishing in Iran?

Iranian publishing offers a way to think about some challenges encountered in print culture in recent decades and a vantage point to discuss the significance of culture in Iran's social and political transformations.