



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

مرکز شرین و بیشن مصور رحمانی برای مطالعات ایران و خلیج فارس



 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

It is a great pleasure to be writing the second annual Director's report of *The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies* (hereinafter the Mossavar-Rahmani Center), first because of the simple fact that this was our first full year of academic and scholarly activities, and a very successful year it has been; and secondly because of the enormous progress we have made as a research Center and as a team towards meeting the goals of our mission: to support teaching and research on all aspects of Iran and Persian Gulf studies at Princeton University, to advance the understanding of Iran and the Persian Gulf, with special attention to the region's role and significance in the contemporary world, to support scholarship and teaching in a broad range of topics covering the history, politics, economics, religion, literature, art and culture of the region, from ancient Persia to the modern states that border the Persian Gulf, and to create and support productive and innovative connections to departments throughout the University.

In the following, I will outline briefly our achievements this year, beginning with organizational and management matters, followed by comments on the work of our associated researchers, progress on our major Mossavar-Rahmani Center-funded research projects, and concluding with news and the events the Mossavar-Rahmani Center has sponsored or otherwise supported in the course of the academic year 2014-2015.

Mossavar-Rahmani Center staff

Since November we have had a fully-staffed office managed by **Reagan Maraghy**, formerly Assistant Director for Alumni Education at Princeton and before that Graduate Program Administrator for the History Department. Reagan has been the mastermind behind the Center's administration and financial management and it would be fair to say has really set the Center on a firm financial and administrative footing. She is closely supported by **Mona Rahmani** (no relation!) as research associate and administrative assistant, responsible for

academic support of our research projects and postdoctoral associates. Again, it would be fair to say that without Mona's hard work and excellent input, the research projects would not have progressed as rapidly or as effectively as they have done. In addition, Mona was responsible for selecting and organizing the display of artwork in the Center's space in Green Hall, where we are now well-established in our suite of offices, seminar room and social areas. Together, Reagan and Mona have also been largely responsible for the numerous academic and social events that the Center has organized this year, events that have really put the Mossavar-Rahmani Center on the map not just in Princeton but nationally and internationally in the field of Iranian Studies.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee met once each semester to review progress, confirm or suggest policy, review Center finances and support the work of the Director, researchers and staff. The non-voting membership of the Committee changed at the end of this academic year as Dr. Dan Sheffield took up a post elsewhere. He has been replaced by Dr. Stefan Kamola for the year 2015-2016. [See attached roster for the 2015-16 Executive Committee]

Finance

The Mossavar-Rahmani Center budget is healthy and continues to expand as the gift from the Mossavar-Rahmanis continues to accrue. In addition the Center manages the Pahlavi funds, collaborating with the Department of Near Eastern Studies in supporting Iran-related courses and activities in that department, and received two generous gifts in 2014-15 from Mr. Alexander Farman-Farmaian '87 and Dr. Anahita Naficy Lovelace '75. The Mossavar-Rahmani Center has developed specific strategies to enrich its resources and recruit academic talent with the help of the recent gifts. [See Resources and Postdoctoral research positions]

Mossavar-Rahmani Center space



Our Center office location in Green Hall continues to evolve with new Persian maps and art installations, office and research equipment, refreshment stations, and expanded occupancy. The Center seminar room served as the meeting place for two weekly graduate classes and the Pahlavi reading group this spring, in addition to multiple Mossavar-Rahmani Center-sponsored talks and meetings. The social

lounge served as the home of a 2015 Nowruz celebration for the campus community and

inaugural Reunions event for alumni and friends (photo featured on preceding page). Beyond the main office and those of our postdoctoral researchers, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center also provides dedicated office space to an affiliated faculty member, visiting fellow, and doctoral candidates, the latter through its graduate study room.

Webpage

www.princeton.edu/iran Our webpages are now fully functional, as you will see when you click on the URL. Here you can find all our upcoming events as well as past events, news and updates, and information about the Mossavar-Rahmani Center's projects, faculty, researchers, and associated courses. We are constantly building on our offerings, and provide a mailing list sign-up page, where visitors can subscribe to receive email updates and news about the Center's activities. In the course of the coming academic year the University is beginning the process of transferring all of its webpages and related electronic points of access to a new campus-wide system, but we hope that this will entail as little disruption to our website as possible.

Researchers

For the academic year 2014-2015 we had two full-time researchers appointed by the Mossavar-Rahmani Center. **Dr. Kevan Harris** is a sociologist whose main research interest is contemporary Iran, but he has a wide range of interests in the other subjects, in other parts of the Middle East as well as in the history, political science, especially political economy, and international politics of the wider Gulf/Iranian region. He has published numerous important articles on topics such as "The Rise of the



Subcontractor State," "The Brokered Exuberance of the Middle Class," and "A Martyr's Welfare State and its Contradictions" linking both careful empirical research in the field and in archives with subtle and sensitive theoretical reflection. His forthcoming book, *The Martyrs Welfare State*, will undoubtedly have a major impact of the field. There is no doubt that Kevan has been the major driving force behind the Mossavar-Rahmani Center's suite of research projects, and we would not have had the impact in terms of research and academic standing that we have achieved to date had it not been for Kevan's extraordinary hard work, dynamism and vision. Sadly for us, but very welcome news for Kevan – he has been appointed to a tenure-track faculty position at UCLA as Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology; he has also been selected to join the organizing committees of UCLA's Program on Central Asia, Center for Near Eastern Studies, and the Center for Social Theory and Comparative History.

Congratulations! The Mossavar-Rahmani Center will begin a search for another postdoctoral research associate in the fall (details below).



Our second researcher is **Dr. Rose Wellman**. Rose was appointed from September 2014 to conduct her research in the field of sociocultural anthropology, more particularly in the study of the social dynamics, politics and structure of the family. Her current project, entitled *The Family, Shi'ism, and the Making of Post-Revolutionary Iran*, draws from more than a year and a half of ethnographic research between 2007-2010 in the Islamic Republic. She explores how conservative Basiji Muslims endeavor to create what they refer to as virtuous social relations, both within their households and within the wider context of the nation-state. In this she is examining how Basijis strive to constitute this inner purity by strategically channeling and containing two vital aspects of Iranian social life and being: food and bodily substances such as the blood (e.g., the blood of martyrs). The project builds on her doctoral dissertation, *Feeding Moral Relations: The Making of Kinship and Nation in Iran*, to be published in the near future. In addition, Rose has two articles accepted for publication this fall: "Regenerating the Islamic Republic: Commemorating Martyrs in Provincial Iran," in the *Muslim World Journal*, and "Substance, Spirit, and Sociality among Shi'i Basijis in Iran" in a volume she co-edited titled *The Sacred Social: Reconceptualizing Spiritual Kinship across the Abrahamic Religions*. Rose has been instrumental in developing our seminar program and series of public lectures and a key member of the team in developing our range of social activities – from Persian food-tasting to Nowruz festivities!

During the spring semester we were also fortunate enough to have as a Visiting Fellow **Professor David Menashri** from the University of Tel Aviv (emeritus), and an internationally respected scholar of Iran. Currently the President of the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan Israel, David's main field of study is the history and politics of modern Iran. He has written on Shi'a Islam, Islamic radicalism, Central Asia, and the history of education in the Muslim world. In the late 1970s he spent two years conducting research and field work in Iranian universities on the eve of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. He was also the Founding Director of the Alliance Center for Iranian Studies (2005-2010) at Tel Aviv University, and the incumbent of the



Parviz and Pouran Nazarian Chair for Modern Iranian Studies (1997-2010). He has held a number of visiting positions in the US, including as a visiting Fulbright scholar at Princeton University and Cornell University (1984-86), and is involved in numerous NGOs, in Israel and abroad. David has written and edited ten books and monographs on Iran and the Middle East, including: *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power*; *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*; and *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*. He is the editor of several other works on Iran and Iranian politics. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to support the work of such a distinguished international scholar, and he has undoubtedly made a substantial contribution to the work of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center during his stay.

Other Research and teaching

In addition to our postdoctoral research faculty, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center also supported financially and logistically other faculty, postdoctoral researchers, graduate and undergraduate students in various departments at Princeton whose research required support for visits to Iranian libraries or other research contexts, for language training, or to attend meetings and conferences in the USA and abroad, to a total of some \$30k in 2014-2015. Among those who received support were postdoctoral researchers Dr. Navid Hassanpour, Dr. Stefan Kamola, and Dr. Dan Sheffield; language lecturer Amineh Mahallati; graduate students Amna Qayyum, Simon Fuchs, Andrew Ledford, Lindsey Stephenson, Brian Gung-Nien Ho, Xiyue Wang, Mazdak Ttamjidi, Thomas Benfey; and undergraduate student Mohamed Moussavian.

As last year, so in this academic year the Mossavar-Rahmani Center cross-promoted a number of Iran-related graduate and undergraduate classes, chiefly in the Department of Near Eastern Studies but in other departments too. This is an important aspect of our activity that we hope to expand on in coming years. The list of classes associated with the Center can be found on our webpage.

Projects

As announced in last year's report, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center is directly supporting a number of research or research development projects.

a. **The Mossavar-Rahmani Center Translation Series**, intended to support the priorities and needs of scholars, students, and the general public in Iran for well-translated works, and in collaboration with Iranian publishing concerns. We have now completed our first call for proposals, for which we received over 110 applications. The translation series has met with enthusiasm far beyond expectations. After a rigorous screening process the editorial board selected Dr. Meisam Nikzad from Tarbiat Modarres University as our first award winner for the series. He will be translating Allan Johnson and Timothy Earle's *The Evolution of Human*

Societies (2000, Stanford). This is a landmark text for historical anthropology, and is used widely in US classrooms and graduate programs in anthropology, archaeology, global studies, and history. Publication is expected in 2016-17. We are looking to expand this fund through external donations, possibly a named gift, so that we can handle more than one book a year.

b. To build bridges across Persian and Iranian Studies programs, scholars from New York University's Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department and the Gallatin School (ISI-NYU), Princeton University's Mossavar-Rahmani Center, and the University of Pennsylvania's Middle East Center, have established the **Iran Graduate Student Workshop**. In the spring of 2016 (April 29-30), Princeton University will host the first meeting of this joint workshop, to be followed by similar gatherings at the other campuses every two years. The workshop will provide a valuable venue for academic exchange and production, giving distinguished young scholars of the field an unrivalled opportunity to present and promote their research. At Princeton the project is managed by Professor Cyrus Schayegh, an associate of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center and a member of its executive committee.

c. **The Iran Social Survey**. Since Princeton has a well-established expertise in sophisticated and rigorous survey polling, and the university's Survey Research Center provides cutting-edge guidance, the aim of this project is for the Mossavar-Rahmani Center to design and implement a longitudinal polling project for Iran. The aim is to generate rigorous survey results on pertinent social science questions related to contemporary social life, tracked consistently every 3-5 years, primarily relating to areas of Iranian society which today are mostly known anecdotally (generational patterns of migration, urban and rural life, voting and civic participation, cultural interests, economic activity at work and home, attitudes towards foreign and domestic affairs). Questions from social scientists inside Iran are also being solicited to add to our survey, which will then be packaged and made accessible for public use. The project has now established a working association with appropriately-vetted consultants and planning is at an advanced stage. The Social Survey is currently raising funds and plans to launch the first wave in spring 2016. Among other firsts, it will be the first survey to independently verify Iranian voter turnout in the post-revolutionary era.

d. **Princeton University Iranian Periodicals Digitization Project**. A major desideratum for Iranian Studies at Princeton is the proper cataloging and digitizing of our very extensive collection of **Iranian journals and newspapers**, and in collaboration with Firestone Library this process has now begun and is making rapid progress. An application for substantial external funding in conjunction with Firestone Library has now been submitted. Newspapers from the late 19th century up until 1978 will be included, curated, and made available on the Firestone website. We estimate that over 95% of this material has never been digitized anywhere.

Finally, I should mention an important project that forms a key element in Kevan Harris's current research, a project to map out **Iran's current economic structure** using a different method from that usually applied to the subject. This entails examining recently available data from the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) without pre-existing assumptions of ownership and economic control by any single political entity. As this raw data is clustered into linkages between different state, quasi-public and private organizations, the project team will be better able to determine what corporate governance looks like among Iran's top 500 companies. Since the data on institutional shareholders comes from 2013 and 2014, and foreign capital has barely penetrated this large tier of the economy, it may provide a more systematic assessment of key economic sectors before sanctions are lifted and foreign direct investment arrives in force.

For a comment from Kevan on this, go to: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/04/23/irans-political-economy-under-and-after-the-sanctions/>

Other research

As well as our own projects, we are also supporting, together with Firestone Library, the initial start-up costs of the **Badakhshan Digital Library Project**, directed by Professor Jo-Ann Gross of the College of New Jersey. The objective is to preserve and make available the largest single collection of historical sources on the history and culture of the Isma'ilis of Badakhshan in Tajikistan, which is contained in the private manuscript library of Umed Mamadsherozodshoev in Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan. The collection consists of 10,000 manuscripts and 3,000 documents in Persian and includes rare Isma'ili theological and legal materials, genealogical histories, correspondence, local histories, recorded oral traditions, literary texts, tax records, land deeds, biographies, photographs and other materials. Due to the current storage conditions of the collection, and the remoteness and political instability of the region, which is located close to the Afghan border and has suffered several outbreaks of violence in the past few years, it is urgent that these irreplaceable sources be preserved and made available to scholars around the world.

Resources

In addition, we need to maintain and expand our Iran-related publications more generally, both in respect of books, journals and other published materials from Iran as well as Iranian-Studies related publications from countries other than Iran. To support this, and following upon a review conducted by our **Library resources working group**, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center is investing substantially with Firestone Library in purchasing materials, with the aim of making our collection second to none in the USA in as many Iran-related fields as our mission requires.

In this connection, I am delighted to report that, as a result of the gift from **Dr. Anahita Naficy Lovelace '75**, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center and the University have been successful in purchasing the **Schaaf Collection** of some 800 Sasanian coins ranging in date from the third to seventh century CE. The acquisition for Princeton of the Schaaf Collection brings to the university what was probably the best collection of Sasanian coins in private hands. Princeton possesses outstanding holdings in many areas of pre-modern numismatics, and our holdings of Sasanian coins (many on loan from the Department of Near Eastern Studies) are good. Until now, however, this material has not been adequate to support world class research. This collection now makes Princeton a key center for the study and teaching of late ancient and early medieval Iranian coinage, economy and cultural history. The Sasanian period of Iranian history is one in which Princeton already commands respect in terms of faculty and research interests, and the acquisition of this collection undoubtedly makes a significant contribution towards the achievement of the aims of our mission, both by attracting international scholars and researchers as well as through being a major stimulus to inter-disciplinary and inter-departmental cooperation on campus. It puts Princeton ahead of the game in several respects and will help to make us one of the leading centers for research on pre-modern Iran. As a direct consequence of this acquisition and in the course of the academic year 2015-2016 we will also be conducting a search for a **postdoctoral research associate in an aspect of Sasanian history**.

Links and associations

The Mossavar-Rahmani Center's *mailing/publicity list* continues to expand in line with the aim of keeping us in touch with three main target groups: (a) Iranian/Persian Studies organizations; (b) individual scholars/interested non-academics who may be able to contribute in some way; (c) regional universities and Centers (e.g. Rutgers, Columbia, UPenn, NYU, CUNY etc.). The Center has also become an institutional member of the **Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (ASPS)** and the **International Society for Iranian Studies (ISIS)**.

Postdoctoral research positions

In the fall of 2015 the Mossavar-Rahmani Center will initiate two searches for postdoctoral research associates. The first will be in the field of **contemporary politics, economics or diplomacy of natural resource extraction in Iran and the Gulf region**. Given the importance of natural resources and the world energy market, the intention is to attract a first-rate scholar in this field, broadly described, who will be able to make full use of Princeton's resources and collaborate with faculty in departments such as the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS), the Woodrow Wilson School, and possibly some of our natural science departments, including the world-ranking Princeton Environmental Institute (PEI).

A second position has already been mentioned, namely a postdoctoral researcher in an aspect of Sasanian history, with a special focus on economic and cultural history. The acquisition of the Schaaf Collection now offers a unique opportunity to a junior scholar in this field, and once again we will be looking for a first-class candidate with an exciting and important project that can take advantage of this resource.

In collaboration with the Department of Near Eastern Studies, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center hopes also to host at least one other researcher in an Iranian Studies-related field in the coming year.

Support

We are grateful to those who have generously offered their support to the Mossavar-Rahmani Center this year. In addition to Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani, we would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to **Dr. Anahita Naficy Lovelace '75** along with **Mr. Alexander M. Farman-Farmaian '87** and his wife, Patricia, for their enthusiastic support of our activities and mission.

Events and activities

The academic year was an extremely busy one. We are certainly off to a flying start, with an already strong campus presence. Here is a somewhat compressed list of the events we supported, alone or in collaboration with other campus entities, from September 2014 to early June 2015:

September 23, 2014

Rose Wellman - Regenerating the Islamic Republic: The Magic of Martyr's Blood

October 14, 2014

The **formal inauguration of the Center**, attended by our benefactors Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani, with introductory remarks from the President of the University, Christopher Eisgruber '83, and the Center Director, John Haldon. The reception and presentation to the benefactors followed an opening lecture by **former Secretary of State James A. Baker III '52, entitled Iran: 35 Years after the Revolution**, and preceded a dinner in honor of the Mossavar-Rahmanis.

November 11, 2014

Sara Vakhshouri - Oil and Gas Policy in Iran from 1979-2014: Politics and Prospects

Co-sponsored by the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS)

December 10, 2014

Beeta Baghoolizadeh - Forging and Forgetting: The Erasure of Slavery in Iranian Memory

February 9, 2015

Farzin Vejdani - Writing History in Iran: Education, Nationalism, and Print Culture

February 10, 2015

Hugh Kennedy - Archaeological Evidence and the Study of the Economy of the Early Islamic Middle East

Co-sponsored by the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies and the Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity

March 10, 2015

Shaul Shaked - The Jews of Bamiyan: A Community of Traders and Scholars in 11th Century Khorasan

Co-sponsored by the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies and the Program in Judaic Studies

March 26, 2015

Persian New Year/Nowruz Celebration

March 31, 2015

Roy Mottahedeh - Ghaznavid Panegyrics as a Historical Source

Co-sponsored by the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies

April 2, 2015

Nahid Siamdoust - Soundtrack of the Post-Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran

April 3, 2015

Navid Hassanpour - Workshop on Iranian Politics: 1905-Present, Continuity Despite Revolutions

Co-sponsored by the Niehaus Center for Globalization and Governance and the PIIRS Workshop on Arab Political Development

April 15, 2015

Gary Sick, David Menashri, Dan Kurtzer and Kevan Harris - U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran: Reflections and Outlooks

Co-sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs

April 22, 2015

Nicholas Sims-Williams - The Rediscovery of Sogdian

Co-sponsored by the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies and the Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity

April 30, 2015

Michael Barry - Carver of Light: Matisse and the Art of Persia and Islam

May 7, 2015

Amin Saikal - Iran: A New Direction

Co-sponsored by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination

May 29, 2015

Princeton Reunions Event - A Welcome Gathering, Persian Food Tasting and Talk with Najmieh Batmanglij

Next year

The coming academic year promises to be every bit as exciting as this year has been. Our seminar and lecture program is currently in preparation, with confirmed speakers **Assef Ashraf**, a doctoral candidate at Yale, and **Professor Ali Ansari** of the University of St. Andrews, scheduled for December 8th and 10th respectively. In addition, we have also committed to supporting a visiting scholar, **Professor Shahab Ahmed**, for one semester, in collaboration with the Institute for Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia and the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

We will have the two postdoctoral searches already mentioned, the **Iran Graduate Student Workshop** in April 2016, and an international conference convened by Rose Wellman on the **Ethnography of Iran: Past and Present** on October 2-3, 2015. **Ethnography of Iran** undertakes the challenge of discerning the major theoretical and methodological innovations of the Iranian cultural area, past and present. The first goal of the conference is to take stock of anthropological scholarship on Iran – its various strands, overlaps and disagreements – to kindle further development. The second goal, however, is to take a fresh look at new research and ask: what theoretical ideas are coming out of the Iranian anthropology? Can the anthropology of Iran be reconceived as a unified field of ethnological study? And further, what can this field of research contribute to understandings of Iran, the Middle East, and the discipline itself? Finally, the conference aims to examine the anthropology of Iran against the backdrop of contemporary world politics. Given the tense climate of Iran/U.S. relations, how and to what extent (if at all) should anthropologists engage with policy makers? The conference will bring together internationally-recognized scholars of Iran who conducted research before the 1979 Revolution together with more junior scholars who have conducted fieldwork in the post-revolutionary Islamic Republic.

Finally the Mossavar-Rahmani Center is co-sponsoring and supporting a wonderful exhibit in the University Art Gallery: **Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings: Myth, Legend, and History**,

which will, among other exhibits, introduce Princeton's sumptuously produced Peck Shahnamah, or Book of Kings, for the first time. The exhibit will be on view from October 2015 through January 2016.

Appendix 1

Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies Executive Committee 2015 - 2016

Voting Members

Charles E. Barber, Professor of Art and Archaeology

Mark R. Beissinger, Henry W. Putnam Professor of Politics and Director of the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS)

Michael A. Cook, Class of 1943 University Professor of Near Eastern Studies

Dimitri Gondicas, Stanley J. Seeger Director of the Center for Hellenic Studies, Classics Department

John F. Haldon, Shelby Cullom Davis '30 Professor of European History, Professor of History and Hellenic Studies, and Director of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Cyrus Schayegh, Associate Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Director of the Program in Near Eastern Studies

Brent D. Shaw, Andrew Fleming West Professor in Classics

Sits with Committee (non-voting members)

Stefan Kamola, Link-Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Council of the Humanities and History.

David S. Magier, Associate University Librarian for Collection Development

Rose Wellman, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Muhammad Zaman, Robert H. Niehaus '77 Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Studies

Other

Kevan Harris, External Associate Advisor and Assistant Professor of Sociology, UCLA

Reagan Maraghy, Manager, The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies