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IRANIAN INTELLECTUALS

LINEAGES & LEGACIES CONFERENCE

کنفرانس نگاه به تاریخ
و میراث روشنفکری در ایران

July 27

THE MICHENER
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WELCOME MESSAGE

BY THE TIRGAN 2019 CEO



ESTEEMED SCHOLARS, FELLOW FRIENDS OF TIRGAN.

I am delighted to welcome you to this special conference that Tirgan is hosting on “Iranian Intellectuals: Lineages and Legacies.” We are thankful to Professor Ramin Jahanbegloo, the conference chair, for reaching out to leading scholars of Iranian history and society based in Canada, the U.S. and Europe who have kindly accepted the invitation to join us today. We are eager to learn from them about the predicament of intellectualism in light of their own areas of specialization.

It was two decades ago, in the late 1990s, when Professor Jahanbegloo launched a philosophy and history discussion group at the University of Toronto, which he called the “Agora”. It would meet on a weekly basis in a participatory seminar format to discuss popular topics, making the field accessible to a non-specialist audience. Some of Tirgan’s own roots are also at the University of Toronto when, in the early 2000s, we collaborated with the Iranian Association at the University of

Toronto to host events that were rich in content and scholarship but also accessible to a broad public audience with an interest in ideas and their impact on our collective situation.

Today, as we host our sixth biannual festival in Toronto, which is expected to attract over one hundred thousand people, Tirgan is in many ways going back to its roots and hosting our first full-day academic conference on a topic that has social and public significance.

The role of intellectuals is of key importance in all societies, but especially so in a country such as Iran where defining national identity and institution building are an imperative due to the scale of the economic and political challenges the country is facing, and the need for promoting an accurate understanding of the country’s predicament at this sensitive historical juncture.

Thus, the role of Iranian intellectuals is crucially important and Tirgan, as a Canadian public charity committed

to a free and open (and always respectful) discussion of ideas, looks forward to more collaboration on this and related topics with leading academic institutions in Canada, the U.S., Europe and beyond so we combine our strengths to generate and communicate new thinking.

I am often awed by the depth of knowledge that so many professors and scholars at leading universities possess, and I have often wondered about how this knowledge can be brought to public forums where it can arouse debate and educate a broader group of people. This has been a key motivation in Tirgan undertaking this effort and an indication of our bridge building role. We see Tirgan’s role as one of “place making” or “Mahfel Sazi” so that intellectual and creative expressions can find the right audience and thus create a positive feedback system where the originators of ideas and their audience mutually support and reinforce each other.

As a social and volunteer-driven organization, we aim serve as an

umbrella that brings the Iranian diaspora together to explore and celebrate the rich cultural heritage that we share and chart new paths.

Given the values we share and our common commitment to promoting the arts and humanities, we welcome further opportunities to organize more events on Iran, including academic conferences, historical photography displays, and artistic displays and performances which bring people together.

With my best wishes to all of you for a successful event.

Warmest Regards,

Mehrdad Ariannejad
CEO, Tirgan Festival 2019

MISSION STATEMENT

BY THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

Ever since the appearance of the notion of the “intellectual” in France in late 19th century, theorists and political activists in the West and the “Third World” countries have been preoccupied with attempting to define just what an intellectual is, or ought to be. Is an intellectual a detached observer, one who is free from the immediate concerns of life, and interested primarily in the pursuit of perennial truths, or is an intellectual one who very much engages with politics and society and necessarily challenges power – one who, in Edward Said’s words, “is a spirit in opposition” and according to Jean-Paul Sartre “does not mind its own business”? At the crossroads between tradition and modernity in the modern history of Iran stand generations of intellectuals, diverse in their backgrounds and views, who struggled to mediate the transition from traditionalism to a modern mode of thinking. Yet for many decades the development of democratic ideas was held back by intellectual elites who surrendered their critical independence to the dogmas of ideologies such as Stalinism and Islamism.

As a result, many among Iranian intellectuals became handmaidens of power rather than agents of the

Iranian Enlightenment. That is the reason why the Iranian Revolution was not accompanied with an intrinsically critical nature among the Iranian intellectuals which would impel them to speak the truth to power. Actually, in 1978-79, when calls were made by revolutionaries for people to remove what they called “the representatives of the Pahlavi regime and Western imperialism”, and to return to their roots and their authentic culture, the so-called “progressive” intellectuals did not question the meaning of this political attitude. Instead, they joined forces with the clergy, since they themselves had perhaps inadvertently contributed to the rise of the revolution in Iran. The shock of the Revolution and the re-evaluation of political ideals have been part of a learning process that has generated a collective sense of responsibility among post-Revolutionary intellectuals in Iran and led them to opt for cultural dissent rather than ideological politics. Forty years after the Revolution, how can we evaluate the role of Iranian intellectuals in the history of Iranian modernity and in the process of the Iranian democratic debate? This question and many others are some of the key points which will be discussed in the one-day conference organized by Tirgan Festival on July 27, 2019.



DR. RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

CONFERENCE CHAIR

BIOGRAPHY

Ramin Jahanbegloo is a political philosopher. He is presently the Executive Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Nonviolence and Peace Studies and the Vice-Dean of the School of Law at Jindal Global University- Delhi, India. He received his B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy, History and Political Science and later his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Sorbonne University. In 1993 he taught at the Academy of Philosophy in Tehran. He has been a researcher at the French Institute for Iranian Studies and a fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. Ramin Jahanbegloo taught in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto from 1997-2001. He was an Associated Professor of Political Science and a Research Fellow in the Centre for Ethics at University of Toronto from 2008-2012 and an Associate Professor of Political Science at York University in Toronto from 2012 – 2015. He is also a member of the advisory board of PEN Canada. He is the winner of the Peace Prize from the United Nations Association in Spain (2009) for his extensive academic works in promoting dialogue between cultures and his advocacy for non-violence and more recently the winner of the Josep Palau i Fabre International Essay Prize.

Among his twenty-seven books in English, French, Spanish, Italian and Persian are *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*; *Gandhi: Aux Sources de la Nonviolence*; *Penser la Nonviolence*; *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity*; *India Revisited: Conversations on Contemporary India*; *The Clash of Intolerances*; *The Spirit of India*; *Beyond Violence*; *Leggere Gandhi a Teheran*; *India Analysed*; *Talking Politics*; *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran*; *Democracy in Iran*; *Introduction to Nonviolence*; *Time Will Say Nothing*; *Talking Philosophy*; and very recently *The Decline of Civilization*.



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SCHEDULE

IRANIAN INTELLECTUALS LINEAGES & LEGACIES

8:30 am

Registration

9:00 am

Opening Remarks

9:20 am

PANEL I - From Qajar to the Early Pahlavi

10:40 AM

Break

10:55 am

PANEL II - The Second Pahlavi Era

12:15 AM

Lunch

1:00 PM

PANEL III - Women Intellectuals in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran

2:20 PM

Break

2:35 PM

PANEL IV - Mapping Iranian Intellectuals after the Revolution of 1979

3:55 PM

Closing Remarks



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PANEL I

FROM QAJAR TO THE EARLY PAHLAVI

Tradition and Modernity in the Mirror of Iranian Intellectuals

From Qajar to the Early Pahlavi Period

Professor Ali Mirsepassi (New York University-USA)

“Crafting Iranian Social Imaginary: Intellectuals during the Two World Wars”

Professor Saeed Paivandi (University of Lorraine- France)

“Amir Kabir: A Reformist and Pioneer of Modernization in the Traditional State”

Professor Ali Ansari (St. Andrews University- Scotland)

“Iranian Intellectuals and the Narratives of the Enlightenment”

Moderator

Mr. Saeed Hariri



ALI MIRSEPASSI

BIOGRAPHY

Ali Mirsepassi is Albert Gallatin Research Excellence Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University. He is also director of Iranian Studies Initiative at NYU. He was a 2007-2009 Carnegie Scholar and is the co-editor, with Arshin Adib-Moghadam, of *The Global Middle East*, a book series published by the Cambridge University Press. He is the author of *Iran's Troubled Modernity: Debating Ahmad Fardid's Legacy*, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Thought of Ahmad Fardid* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), among many other books. His new book, *Iran's Quiet Revolution: The Downfall of the Pahlavi State*, will be published in November 2019.

ABSTRACT

The interwar years were the period when the critical elements of Iranian nationalism were crafted, or more precisely it began but remained unfinished. Important ideas on the nature of the modern Iranian State received articulation, while its self-image was established against “cultural others,” principally the threats of pan-Turkish (Ottoman) ideology. [One can argue that] the Iranian self-imaginary was partially formed in reaction to the racialized discourse of new Ottoman national identity. I argue that an intellectual and political struggle occurred to write *The Discovery of Iran*, starting in the early 1900s and extending to the 1930s. Important Iranian intellectuals who contributed to this struggle for national articulation were many. In this talk I will focus on Taghi Arani's writings on Iranian social imaginary. I will argue that Arani's thought was part of a far larger intellectual and political wave which also figures in the story of thinking about the modern Iran. Each of these individuals contributed significantly in shaping the debates which generated the beginnings of *The Discovery of Iran* which was never completed and it is still an unfinished project.



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SAEED PAIVANDI

BIOGRAPHY

Saeed Paivandi is currently working as a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lorraine, Nancy, France since 2011. Prior to this, he was Associate professor at the University of Paris 8 (1996-2011). Paivandi holds Habilitation (HDR), Ph.D. in Sociology of Education from University of Paris 8 and a Master's degree in Sociology from University of Tehran. His areas of research and specialization are Sociology of Education and Sociology of intellectuals. Part of his research work is focused on Iran (the experience of the Islamization of education in Iran) and has published several articles on the Iranian curriculum, a book on Islamization of education in Iran (2005) in French and a book on critical analysis of Iranian textbooks in English (2008).

ABSTRACT

The process of modernization of Iran in 19th century was marked by the co-existence of two elite movements. The first movement represented reformist statesmen within the state apparatus of the Qajar dynasty who attempted to modernize Iranian society. These State-led reforms targeted the economy, State administration, Army, Education, Judicial system. The second movement includes intellectuals who largely contributed to spread the ideas of modernity. If Abass Mirza was the first eminent figure of state-led reforms, Amir Kabir has become the most important reformist personality of this period. With over 20 years of political practice within the State apparatus including 3 years as prime minister, Amir Kabir founded a conception and a model of modernization. Seeing in him a unique embodiment of honesty, patriotism, and efficiency, Amir Kabir represents an exceptional figure in the Iranian collective memory. He was also perceived as the founding father of emerging Iranian nationalism and modern education in Iran. Despite this very positive image, some critical questions are also raised about his conception of power and the modern State.



ALI ANSARI

BIOGRAPHY

Ali Ansari is a professor of Iranian History and Founding Director of the Institute for Iranian Studies at the University of St Andrews; and a Senior Associate Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute. In 2016, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He is the author of *Modern Iran since 1797; Iran, Islam & Democracy - The Politics of Managing Change*, and *Iran: A Very Short Introduction*, among many others. He is also Editor of the *Cambridge History of Iran Vol 8 (The Islamic Republic)*.

ABSTRACT

This paper will look at the interaction between Iranian intellectuals and thinkers and the ideas of the Enlightenment with a particular focus on the influence of British - whig - ideas, as they related to progress and good governance. The paper will look at the initial contacts in the early nineteenth century and the adaption and absorption of these ideas through the later part of the century and towards the Constitutional Revolution. The paper will argue that British political ideas and ideals played a far more influential role in shaping modernity than previously appreciated and that while Iranian intellectuals found much that was attractive in them, they were regularly disappointed by British policy and its failure to live up to those ideals. The paper will conclude by noting that Iranian thinkers remained wedded to the whig narrative long after it fell out of favour with British intellectuals.

PANEL II

THE SECOND PAHLAVI ERA

Iranian Intellectuals between Statesmanship and Dissent
The Second Pahlavi Era

Professor Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Syracuse University)
“Endangered Species: Intellectual-Statesmen in Iran”

Professor Farzin Vahdat (Vassar College)
“Al-e Ahmad and the discourse of modernity in Iran”

Professor Afshin-Matin Asgari (California State University-USA)
“In Search of Liberal-Democratic Thought: From Foroughi to Mosaddeq”

Moderator
Professor Arsalan Kahnemuyipour (University of Toronto-Canada)



MEHRZAD BOROUJERDI

BIOGRAPHY

Mehrzad Boroujerdi received his Ph.D. in International Relations from The American University in 1990 and was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University and a Rockefeller Foundation fellow at the University of Texas at Austin. He has been a professor of political science at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs since 1992. Boroujerdi received the Maxwell School's Daniel Patrick Moynihan Award for best teaching, research, and service by a junior faculty (1998), was named the school's inaugural O'Hanley Faculty Scholar, and was recently awarded the Astrid Merget Fellowship for graduate teaching in the area of foreign policy. He is a founding editor of the Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East book series published by Syracuse University Press (1996-2014). He has been a visiting scholar at UCLA's Center for Near Eastern Studies (2017-18) and the President of the Association for Iranian Studies (2012-14). Among many other books, Dr. Boroujerdi is the author of *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*.

ABSTRACT

The aim of my presentation is to problematize the issue of intellectual-statements in Iran by answering the following set of questions: Should intellectuals play any official role in the political machinery of the state in a developing society like Iran? Or should they always remain as dissidents and perennial strangers from power? How should we assess the contributions of those intellectuals who regard themselves as “intellectual-statesmen” (dowltmard-e Rowshanfekr) and take an interest in joining the machinery of the state? It will be argued that within Iran's intellectual milieu both before and after the revolution, we have generally frowned upon the notion of “dowltmard-e Rowshanfekr” and instead have embraced a heroic view of “public intellectuals” as those speaking truth to power. This narrow definition has done enormous disservice to those individuals who rightfully decided to join the machinery of the state for the betterment of their society.





FARZIN VAHDAT

BIOGRAPHY

Farzin Vahdat is a sociologist working on conditions and notions of modernity and their applications to Iran, Islam and the Muslim world. He is the author of *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity and Islamic Ethos and the Specter of Modernity*. Vahdat has just completed a book manuscript entitled *Cinema and Social Change in Iran*. He has taught at Tufts, Harvard, and Yale Universities, as well as Vassar College. He currently teaches sociology at Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities, an online university, for Persian speaking students.

ABSTRACT

Al-e Ahmad and the Discourse of Modernity in Iran: Jalal Al-e Ahmad is a controversial figure in contemporary Iranian intellectual history. Seen by some as one of the intellectual architects of the 1979 revolution, Al-e Ahmad's writings very much influenced Iranians state of mind in the second part of the 20th century. In his presentation, Farzin Vahdat will discuss Al-e Ahmad's ideas on modernity in relation to Iran.



AFSHIN MATIN-ASGARI

BIOGRAPHY

Distinguished historian Afshin Matin-Asgari specializes in 20th-century Middle East, modern Iran, and modern Islamic political and intellectual movements. Dr. Matin-Asgari was born in Tehran, Iran, and moved to the U.S. after high school. In 1993, Matin-Asgari received a doctoral degree in Middle East history from UCLA. His dissertation was published in 2001 as the book, *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah*. At Cal State LA, he teaches courses in Middle East history, world history, Islam, and comparative religion. Matin-Asgari has published 20 articles and book chapters.

ABSTRACT

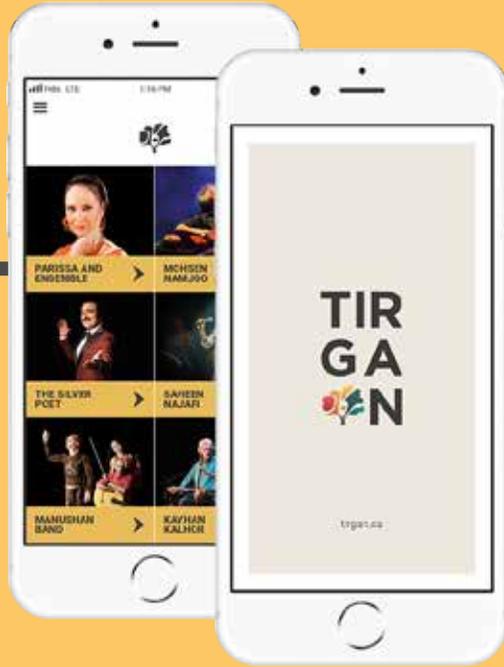
Within our broad conference topic of "Iranian Intellectuals between Statesmanship and Dissent," I propose to probe the question of why modern Iran's liberal tradition has been so weak that practically, in terms of significant presence in the political arena, it is almost non-existent. More specifically, I develop my argument in response to a recent scholarly trend that finds real or closet liberals in high-ranking Pahlavi era statesmen, going back to Taqizadeh and Foroughi and continuing with Shadman and Hoveyda. My argument is twofold: First, I suggest that this revisionist trend erroneously conflates liberal ideals with liberal political practice. Second, I try to show that even in terms of their intellectual makeup, men like Taqizadeh, Foroughi, Shadman and Hoveyda hardly fit the liberal mold. I would also note that, with serious qualifications, Mosaddeq's political career makes him the closest thing to Iran's archetypical liberal statesman. Ironically, recent revisionist interest in Iranian liberalism tends to bypass Mosaddeq, finding instead its liberal icons in men like Foroughi, Taqizadeh and Shadman...



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PANEL III

WOMEN INTELLECTUALS IN PRE AND POST REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

Articulating Gender

Women Intellectuals in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran

Professor Khaterreh Sheibani (York University-Canada)

“Crafting Iranian Social Imaginary: Intellectuals during the Two World Wars”

Professor Farzaneh Milani (University of Virginia- USA)

“And here I am’: Forough Farrokhzad and Modernity”

Professor Nasrin Rahimieh (University of California-Irvine-USA)

“Simin Daneshvar and the Forging of an Intellectual”

Moderator

Professor Haideh Moghissi (York University- Canada)



KHATEREH SHEIBANI

BIOGRAPHY

Khaterreh Sheibani is a lecturer and researcher of Persian Studies at York University, Canada. Khaterreh completed her doctorate degree in comparative literature and film studies at the University of Alberta, Canada in 2007. She has written articles on modern Persian literature, Iranian cinema and Middle Eastern cinemas in literary and film anthologies and journals such as Iranian Studies and Canadian Journal of Film Studies. Her book entitled The Poetics of Iranian Cinema: Aesthetics, Modernity, and Film after the Revolution was published in November 2011. Her most recent work as an editor is Iran Namag: A Special Issue on Abbas Kiarostami. She has taught courses on Persian literature and cinema, Middle Eastern cinemas, postcolonial literatures, and documentary film and television.

ABSTRACT

The extensive and controversial history of Iranian cinema is intertwined with the politics of sexuality and gender relations in the 20th century. Early Iranian cinema was a vehicle for social change and modernity. Women, ethnic minorities, and various religious groups contributed to the progress of filmmaking. The thriving of Iranian film industry was a product of transnational and cross-cultural efforts of both men and women. In the formative years of Iranian cinema, women had a seminal role in front of camera. The last twenty-five years of the Pahlavi era were the most prolific years of pre-revolutionary Iranian cinema, which coincided with the emergence of women as filmmakers. This lecture will focus on the work of five notable women behind the camera who made a significant role in film stylistics in the Pahlavi era. My argument concentrates on female directorial and production contributions to draw on feminine writing/ecriture feminine in Iranian cinema.



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FARZENEH MILANI

BIOGRAPHY

Farzaneh Milani completed her graduate studies in Comparative Literature in 1979 at the University of California in Los Angeles. Her dissertation, “Forugh Farrokhzad: A Feminist Perspective” was a critical study of the poetry of a pioneering Iranian poet. A past president of the Association of Middle Eastern Women Studies in America, Milani was the recipient of All University Teaching Award in 1998 and nominated for Virginia Faculty of the Year in 1999. A former director of Studies in Women and Gender, Milani is Professor of Persian Literature and Women Studies at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She was a Carnegie Fellow (2006-2007), and has published over 100 articles, epilogues, forewords, and afterwords in Persian and in English.

ABSTRACT

Does modernity have a gender? What about theoretical discourses on Iranian modernity? Would our definition of modernity, our identification of its markers, makers, and shapers differ if we were to include in our analysis women’s experiences and the literary texts produced by women? Focusing on the life and work of Forough Farrokhzad—a self-consciously modern poet—avoiding gender reversals and binary oppositions, this presentation examines Farrokhzad’s significant contribution to Iranian modernity—her refusal to respect ancestral silences, her recasting of the private story of a female individual as public history, claiming ownership of her body and responsibility for her liberated sexuality, and a relentless search for truth, voice, visibility, and mobility.



NASRIN RAHIMIEH

BIOGRAPHY

Nasrin Rahimieh is Howard Baskerville Professor of Humanities in the Department of Comparative Literature at University of California, Irvine. She is the Director of the School of Humanities signature Humanities Core Course 2019-2022. Between 2016 and 2019 she served as Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature and was Maseeh Chair and Director of the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture and Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine (2008-2014). Prior to her appointment at UC Irvine, she was Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at McMaster University (2003-2006), and she had served as Associate Dean of Humanities at the University of Alberta (1999-2002). Her teaching and research are focused on modern Persian literature, the literature of Iranian exile and diaspora, contemporary Iranian women’s writing, and post-revolutionary cinema.

ABSTRACT

Simin Daneshvar has been celebrated for her contributions to modern Persian prose fiction. What is less recognized is her position as a thinker and intellectual. This might in part be due to her husband Jalal-Al-e Ahmad’s standing as one of the leading intellectuals of his time, renowned for his trenchant critiques of Iran’s economic, social, political, and cultural subservience to the West, specifically to the US. Daneshvar did not wish to be compared to her husband and insisted on her own distinct approach. She was far from sanguine about the problems that beset Iranian society before and after the revolution. And yet, she is not counted among Iranian intellectuals. In this presentation I will explore the terms under which Iranian discourses of intellectualism have sidelined women even as they have taken up the cause of women’s position, education, and rights in Iranian society. Focusing on select examples from Daneshvar’s fiction and correspondence I will demonstrate Daneshvar’s rightful place among Iranian intellectuals of the modern era.

PANEL IV

MAPPING IRANIAN INTELLECTUALS AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF 1979

Professor Mojtaba Mahdavi (University of Alberta-Canada)

“A Critique of three Generations of Muslim Left in Iran: From Nakhshab to Neo-Shariatis”

Professor Mohsen Mottaghi (University of Sorbonne-France)

“Muslim Intellectuals after the Revolution”

Mr. Nasser Rahmaninejad (Stage Director)

“Intellectuals and Creative Art in Post-Revolutionary Iran”

Moderator

Professor Minoo Derayeh (York University)



MOJTABA MAHDAVI

BIOGRAPHY

Mojtaba Mahdavi is the ECMC Chair in Islamic Studies and Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta. He is the author and editor of numerous works on post-Islamism, contemporary social movements and democratization in the Middle East and North Africa, postrevolutionary Iran, and modern Islamic political thought. He is the co-editor of *Towards the Dignity of Difference: Neither ‘End of History’ nor ‘Clash of Civilizations’* (2012) and the guest editor of *Contemporary Social Movements in the Middle East and Beyond – Sociology of Islam* (2014). Dr. Mahdavi’s research lies at the intersection of critical Middle East Studies, Political Economy, Contemporary Islamic Studies and Decolonial/ Postcolonial Studies.

ABSTRACT

This presentation is an attempt to critically examine the rise and legacy of three generations of the “left-leaning Muslim intellectuals/activists” in modern Iran. In the first section, it conceptualizes and problematizes epistemological and Ontological foundations of this intellectual trend. The second section traces the historical origins of the egalitarian Muslims in modern Iran from Mohammad Nakhshab’s Movement of the “Socialist Theists” to Ali Shariati’s trinity theory of “Freedom, Social Justice and Spirituality”, to the postrevolutionary Neo-Shariati’s “post-Islamist” discourse and its critique of religious and market fundamentalism. The third section examines the most recent developments in the emerging discourse of Iran’s Muslim New Left: the neo-Shariati intellectual movement. It shows how post-revolutionary socio-political context has contributed to new thinking about conditions of possibility for the rise of Iran’s social democracy, and a post-Islamist and post-(neo)liberal position among the contemporary Muslim left leaning intellectuals.



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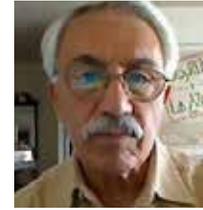
MOHSEN MOTTAGHI

BIOGRAPHY

Mohsen Mottaghi obtained his doctorate in sociology from l'Ecole de Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He was a professor of sociology and social psychology at l'Institut supérieur de l'intervention sociale and currently works in the public sector as an educational instructor in the city of Versailles. He has written several books and articles in both Persian and French, including on the relationship between intellectualism and religion in Iran.

ABSTRACT

In the 1950s, a phenomenon appeared in Iran that later took on the name "religious intellectualism" or "Islamic intellectualism". The introduction of modern education, the presence of young Iranians in universities and the inability of traditional clergy to respond to the modern needs of Iranian youth led to the new generations' efforts to redefine religion outside of established structures, and based on new readings of religion in the new socio-political and intellectual environment in Iran. The topic of my talk will be the evolution of these movements in contemporary Iranian history, and will be divided in three parts: the genesis and formation of this movement throughout the 1950s to the Iranian Revolution of 1979; the years of rethinking and redevelopment following the Revolution; and the patterns and models of religious modernity within which new thinkers are currently working.



NASSER RAHMANINEJAD

BIOGRAPHY

Nasser Rahmaninejad is a director and actor who began working in theatre in 1959. He founded the prestigious and influential Mehr Theatre Company (later renamed to Iran Theatre Association) in 1966, which he led until its government enforced closure in 1974, following which he was imprisoned by the Shah's regime until the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Nevertheless, Mehr was home to many significant theatre artists in Iran, including Behzad Farahani, Mahmoud Dowlatabadi and Saeed Soltanpour. After the revolution, he resumed work at the Iran Theatre Association, and directed works by various playwrights, including Dario Fo and Bertolt Brecht, but was again persecuted and forced into exile. He previously lived and worked in France, and currently resides in California.

ABSTRACT

Following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the dreams and ideal of establishing a modern society that could move along contemporary global lines of progress, and where equality would allow different tier of society to contribute to the country's development in equal measure were diminished. The new authoritarians in power had begun work on eliminating the Iranian intellectual from the social scene before the Islamic Republic was even fully established. The intellectual was viewed as an obstacle to the establishment and the strengthening of a totally Islamic society, and its removal from society had been a goal of the Islamists since the Constitutional Revolution. The aim of this talk is to offer a brief summary of the Islamic Republic's policies against different strata of intellectuals in Iran, and to dissect its totalitarian nature, and to consider the ways in which creation of art and discourse is possible in an environment of religious totalitarianism through formal and informal infrastructures of government.

MODERATORS



SAEED HARIRI

For the past 28 years, he has provided Information Systems consulting to some of the largest Canadian organizations. His passion for history and the literature of contemporary Iran led to the foundation of the Toronto Book Club, which has held 144 monthly sessions to date. In these sessions, researchers and experts discuss various aspects of the contemporary history of Iran, from the constitutional revolution of 1905 to the present. Toronto Book Club sessions are a unique opportunity in which the latest researched books and articles in the areas of Iranian history, culture and literature are presented and discussed in a public forum where the audience directly engages with the foremost researchers in the field.



ARSALAN KAHNEMUYIPOUR

Arsalan Kahnemuyipour is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Department of Language Studies, University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) and at the Department of Linguistics, University of Toronto St. George (UTSG). His areas of expertise are syntax, morphology and the syntax-phonology interface.



HAIDEH MOGHISSI

Haideh Moghissi holds a Ph.D. in Political Studies, Queen's University, M.A. in Political Studies, Queen's University and B.A. (Honours) in Law and Political Science, Tehran University. A retired professor of sociology and women's studies at York University in Toronto, she was one of the founders of the Iranian National Union of Women and a member of its first executive and editorial boards, before leaving Iran in 1984.



MINOO DERAYEH

Dr. Minoo Derayeh, a specialist on Iran, Islam, World Religions and Gender Studies is Associate Professor at York University in Toronto. Her research interests are related to gender, education, and religion, modernity and tradition, and religion and social justice. Dr. Derayeh received her MA in Islamic Studies and her PhD in the Department of Culture and Values, at the Faculty of Education at McGill University.

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