Table of Contents

2 Letter from the Director

4 Center Events
   Mossavar-Rahmani Center Lecture Series
   Cultural Events: Film, Literature & the Arts
   Book Launch Series
   Co-sponsored Events

10 Center Initiatives
   Badakhshan Initiative
   Collaboration with Princeton University Library
   Iran Social Survey

12 Center Funding Awards
   Course-Related Support
   Graduate Funding

13 Research Reports
   Postdoctoral Research Associates
   Associate Research Scholars
   Visiting Research Collaborator
   Visiting Fellow

19 Looking Ahead
   Incoming Fellows

20 People
   Administration
   Center Research Associates
   Visiting Scholars
   Executive Committee
   Affiliated Faculty
   Advisory Council Members
I began my tenure as director in July 2019. One of the first, and unexpected, tasks that needed my attention was to hire a replacement for Reagan Maraghy, who served as manager of the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center since its inception in 2014, and who put in place its entire institutional operations. I am certain that without her dedication and organizational skills, the center could not have gained the reputation it enjoys today.

I am happy to report that after a short search, Femke de Ruyter joined us as the new manager. Femke comes to us with more than eight years of experience at Princeton, most recently at the University Center for Human Values. She received her bachelor’s degree in political science from Colgate University and a master’s degree from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism. Femke brings a wealth of experience and insight to the center. We are indeed fortunate to have her on board.

As many of you have already observed, the center’s website has a completely new look. Last summer, we spent a good amount of time and energy—with noteworthy assistance from Becky Parnian, our amazing events coordinator—and formally launched the new site in September. Please let us know what you think of our new look and ways we can continue to improve it.

In addition to continuing our rich programming and research activities, I have two long-term goals for the center. First, we intend to build a scholarly research infrastructure for the study of modern Iran and the Persian Gulf. Princeton’s library holds one of the largest archives in the country of primary material on modern Iran. We are working with the library’s collections and research services to digitize these materials and to create an “Iran Digital Archive,” which will bring together all the library resources for interdisciplinary research on modern Iran. Second, we will expand our research initiatives and collaborative work with other centers and scholars around the world.

Two new fellows joined the center at the start of the 2019-20 academic year. Amy Malek joined us as an associate research scholar, on leave from her position as assistant professor of international studies at the College of Charleston. Peyman Jafari also joined the center as a postdoctoral research associate; he is on leave from his position as lecturer of modern history at the University of Amsterdam. You can read more about their research projects and their work during their residency at Princeton in the following pages.

In the spring, the center hosted Arash Davari as a visiting fellow. Professor Davari teaches at the Department of Politics at Whitman College in Washington. He is a political theorist who studies intellectual articulations of anti-colonial politics and its proponents in Iran. During his residence, he organized a major conference/workshop, “Deprovincializing Iran,” planned for April. Unfortunately, the conference did not materialize due to the cancellation of public events caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to thank all of you who attended our events throughout the year. In addition to our lecture series, which continues to sustain a vibrant intellectual community on campus, we inaugurated our book launch series with great success. We hope that this series will encourage greater community attendance at our events. The center also sponsors cultural and artistic events, including a performance of music by contemporary Iranian composers and French impressionist works by classical pianist Layla Ramezan, and through an invitation initiated by Amy Malek, we sponsored the
premier screening of a successful documentary called “Coup 53” that has gained respectful recognition from several film festivals around the world. More than 200 people gathered at Princeton’s Garden Theatre to watch the film, followed by a Q&A with the film’s director and producer, Taghi Amirani, and one of the most sought-after film editors, Walter Murch.

While we were able to host probing academic and memorable cultural events that highlight the breadth of center offerings, the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center also serves as a place of community support in times of tragedy. This was a particularly challenging year. In February, it hosted a memorial gathering following the downing of Ukrainian Airline Flight 752 to grieve the tragic loss of life.

Moving forward, I would like to draw your attention to two important initiatives sponsored by the center.

In collaboration with Assistant Professor Kevan Harris of UCLA (a former fellow of the center), we continue to support the Iran Social Survey, one of the very few comprehensive survey projects that is conducted inside Iran. Two years ago, the first phase of the survey generated a wealth of information about Iranian social life and culture. A second phase of polling will be carried out later this year and will include questions related to the pandemic. Stay tuned for key findings, ISS data and media mentions on the website.

And second is Professor Jo-Ann Gross’ Badakhshan project, which nears its conclusion. She has been a visiting collaborator for the past three years, working on a project funded by a three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to locate and digitize rare genealogical documents and manuscripts from the Badakhshan region in Central Asia. With collaborators, Gross created a freely accessible digital repository of all the digitized documents dating from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries, called the “Badakhshan Genealogical Document Collection: Transforming Rare Texts into Accessible Digital Resources.”

This year we must also say good-bye to three of the center’s research associates—Khodadad Rezakhani, Amin Moghadam and Daniel Beckman—as they move onto new research positions elsewhere. Nonetheless, we expect our relationship to continue with them as they move forward on their academic journeys.

We look forward to welcoming two new postdoctoral research associates, Maryam Alemzadeh, Ph.D., in sociology from the University of Chicago, and Milad Odabaei, Ph.D., in anthropology from UC Berkeley, who will join us in the forthcoming academic year. You can read about their work in the “Looking Ahead” section of the report.

This has been a difficult year for all of us and we need to persevere to overcome these moments of crisis. Please tune in to our “Virtual Conversations” and more on the center’s website, as we look forward to an exciting year of research activities and events, albeit perhaps virtually.

Yours,

Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi
Director, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies
Professor of Near Eastern Studies
Center Events

Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center Lecture Series

The Mossavar-Rahmani Lecture Series is a robust interdisciplinary seminar series addressing issues related to Iran and the Persian Gulf in the 19th–21st centuries, with a focus on the region’s role and significance in the contemporary world.

September 24
Lior Sternfeld, Assistant Professor of History and Jewish Studies, Penn State University
“Iranian Jews in the Twentieth-Century: Between Iranian Nationalism, Communism and Zionism”

October 9
Golbarg Rekabtalaei, Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern History, Seton Hall University
“Iranian Cosmopolitanism: A Cinematic History of Nationalism in the Early Twentieth Century”

November 6
Alice Wilson, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Sussex
“Defeated Revolutions, Lasting Legacies: The Afterlife of Revolution in Dhufar, Oman”

February 5
Peyman Jafari, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies
“Oil, Labor and the Making of the Iranian Revolution”

February 12
Elaine Sciolino, Writer for The New York Times and former Paris bureau chief; David Burnett, Photojournalist
“Anniversary of Iranian Revolution Event: The Iranian Unfinished Revolution”

February 26
Adam Hanieh, Associate Professor in Development Studies at SOAS, University of London
“Money, Markets and Monarchies: The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Political Economy of the Contemporary Middle East”

March 4
Arash Davari, Visiting Academic Professional at the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies
“Human Rights Guerrillas: Iran in the Long 1970s”

May 4 (virtual)
Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, Professor of Economics, Virginia Tech
“Covid-19 Management and the Economic Crisis in Iran”
May 5 (virtual)
Amy Malek, Associate Research Scholar, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies
“Paradoxes of Dual Nationality: Constraints on Multiple Citizenship in the Iranian Diaspora”

May 7 (virtual)
Seema Golestaneh, Assistant Professor in Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University
“Unknowing & the Everyday: Mystical Thought in Contemporary Iran”

May 8 (virtual)
Luciano Zaccara, Research Assistant Professor in Gulf Politics, Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University
“Covid-19 Public Health & the Economy in the Gulf States”

Cultural Events:
Film, Literature & the Arts

In addition to its primary academic series, the center offers cultural events to help promote understanding of Iranian society and to further engage with the broader Princeton community.

September 12
Student Welcome Luncheon

October 18
Layla Ramezan, Pianist, Ensemble Matka in Geneva
“100 years of Iranian Piano Music”

October 22
Taghi Amirani, Physicist and Documentary Filmmaker; Walter Murch, Film Editor, Director, Writer and Sound Designer
“Coup 53”

100 Years of Iranian Piano Music
Layla Ramezan is an Iranian concert pianist who intertwines her Persian heritage with the contemporary music that comprises parts of her daily life. She performs regularly in France and Switzerland, as well as other well-known venues in Europe and abroad. Ramezan has also worked with prominent musicians and composers and she is the driving force behind several intercultural musical projects that bring together Iranian, French, Swiss and American composers for global conferences, residencies and concerts.

The concert, “100 Years of Iranian Piano Music,” is based on one of Ramezan’s projects, for which she will produce a total of four CDs: the first CD of the quartet, “Iranian Composers from 1950,” was released in January 2017 and the second, “Sheherazade,” was released in May 2019. Approximately 200 guests attended the event held in Princeton University’s Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall. The unique characteristics of Ramezan’s music are influenced by the intersection of her two defining cultures, by allowing the oriental and occidental influences to inspire and complement each other. Sound, phrasing, sensitivity to rhythm and a refined interpretation are feature qualities of her piano playing.

Above
Layla Ramezan
“Coup 53”: Film Screening
With the help of Associate Research Scholar Amy Malek, the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center hosted a film screening of “Coup 53” at the Princeton Garden Theatre in October. “Coup 53” made its debut at film festivals across Europe. The screening in Princeton was one of the early ones for its American debut and features extraordinary, never seen before archival material unavailable for decades. In addition to telling the story of the 1953 CIA coup in Iran, the 16mm footage revealed dark secrets buried for 66 years. What begins as a historical documentary about four days in August 1953 turns into a live investigation, taking the filmmakers into uncharted cinematic waters. The roots of Iran’s volatile relationship with Britain and America have never been so forensically and dramatically exposed. Following the screening, Iranian director Taghi Amirani and film editor Walter Murch joined the audience and participated in a Q&A.

**Book Launch Series**

**October 16**
*Narges Bajoghli*, Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies, Johns Hopkins University
“Iran Reframed: Anxieties of Power in the Islamic Republic”

**November 20**
*Yann Richard*, Professor Emeritus, Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris
“Plots, Secrets, Truths and Lies in Modern Iranian Historiography”

**May 20 (virtual)**
*Farzaneh Hemmasi*, Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology, University of Toronto
“Tehrangeles Dreaming”

**June 5 (virtual)**
*On Barak*, Senior Lecturer in Middle Eastern History, Tel Aviv University
“How Coal Made the Middle East and Spread Global Carbonization”

**Co-sponsored Events**

**September 30**
*Wheeler McIntosh Thackston*, Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
“Translating Persian”

**October 14**
*Ayça Çubukçu*, Associate Professor in Human Rights and co-director of LSE Human Rights, London School of Economics and Political Science
“For the Love of Humanity: The World Tribunal on Iraq”

**November 12**
*Scott McDonough*, Associate Professor of History, William Paterson University of New Jersey
“We Shall Come to You in a Manner More Befitting a King’: The Royal Succession in Sasanian Iran”
December 2
Thomas Benfey, Graduate Student, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University
“How to Say ‘Religion’ in Late Antique Iran”

February 11
Ambassador Ryan Crocker MCF ’85, Diplomat-in-Residence, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs
Trita Parsi, Executive Vice President, Quincy Institute
Barbara Slavin, Director, Future of Iran Initiative, Atlantic Council
Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer, S. Daniel Abraham Professor of Middle East Policy Studies, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs
“Up to the Minute: The Iran-U.S. Crisis”

February 24
Neda Bolourchi, Postdoctoral Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, Rutgers University
“Iranian Minority Communities during the Iran-Iraq War and After”
Anniversary of Iranian Revolution: The Unfinished Iranian Revolution

In February, the Mossavar-Rahmani Center hosted a special event marking the 40th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution: “The Iranian Revolution: The Unfinished Iranian Revolution,” co-sponsored by Princeton’s Program in Journalism. In the packed Friend Center, Director Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi moderated a conversation between contributing writer and former Paris bureau chief for The New York Times, Elaine Sciolino, and renowned photojournalist and co-founder of Contact Press Images, David Burnett.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 remains one of the most important world events of the second half of the twentieth century. There are numerous studies of the causes and consequences of the revolution, but how the revolution was lived and how those who experienced and were transformed by that revolutionary moment continue to raise questions about our understanding of this historic event. Through their words and images, Elaine Sciolino and David Burnett captured the spirit of this revolution as it was unfolding. At the special anniversary event, Sciolino and Burnett shared stories of their arrival in Iran at the onset of the revolution, which were accompanied by a slide show of Mr. Burnett’s remarkable photographs compiled in his book “44 Days: Iran and the Remaking of the World.” In fact, the caption of one of his first photographs in the “44 Days” collection reads: “I arrived in Tehran the day after Christmas, 1978 unaware of the degree of political unrest. I was to figure it out shortly.” Moreover, Sciolino was on the plane from Paris to Iran with Supreme Leader Khomeini, following the overthrow of the Shah. In her book, “Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran,” she writes: “What really mattered is that in the end the Iranian air force did not shoot us down, and we rode the Ayatollah’s plane into history,” speaking about being one of three female journalists aboard the plane among more than 100 reporters, including Peter Jennings.

In addition to receiving many accolades for her work, Sciolino was honored by Columbia University’s Encyclopedia Iranica project in 2001 for “presenting the best of Iran to the world” and elected to the Executive Council of the Society for Iranian Studies that year. David Burnett was named one of the 100 Most Important People in Photography by “American Photo” magazine. Center members were fortunate to continue the conversation with Sciolino and Burnett over dinner following the event.
Center Initiatives

Badakhshan Initiative

The Mossavar-Rahmani Center continues to support the Badakhshan Manuscript Initiative, and this past year marks the third year of a collaboration with Visiting Research Collaborator, Dr. Jo-Ann Gross, principal researcher of the Badakhshan Project, “Ismailism in Badakhshan: A Genealogical and Documentary History,” which will preserve roughly 65 original, privately held genealogical histories (nasab-namahs) from the 16th–20th centuries and is supported by a three-year National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Grant.

Using an archive of digital photographs of genealogies compiled during Dr. Gross’ 2004–2019 field research in the region, it is the first effort to study the history of genealogical documentation in the Ismaili communities of Badakhshan in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. This groundbreaking work highlights a local documentary culture of genealogically based sanctity and sayyid pedigree among familial communities of shahs, pirs and khalifas.

The results of the project will be the creation of an open access digital repository at Firestone Library and the publication of a co-authored book. This initiative further builds upon the center’s ongoing relationship with Princeton University’s Firestone Library and will make this corpus of Persian-language texts legible as historical sources for scholars and students. It will be the first corpus of Ismaili documents from Badakhshan available online.

Collaboration with Princeton University Library

Princeton University is known for its rich Iranian resources among scholarly circles, and is one of the few remaining libraries that continues its serious acquisitions from Iran via two Iranian vendors, one in Tehran and the other in Qom, the religious capital of Iran. The library hosts one of the largest Persian manuscript collections in the United States and the largest collection of Sharia law outside of Iran. Currently, this includes 81,832 titles in Persian, with 1,400 of these fully accessible online, in addition to

Section of calligraphic ceiling from the shrine of 19th-century Ismāʿīlī pīr, Sayyid Farrukhshāh, 1860, Porshnev, Gorno-Badakshan, Tajikistan
several hundred boxes of books from Iran that have yet to be catalogued. It is also home to a half million pages of pre-revolution materials from the late 1800s to 1979, including magazines, political cartoons, periodicals and pamphlets, that have been digitized, but still need a lot of back-end work to have them accessible to patrons.

Historically, the library acquired materials in Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew for its Near Eastern Studies collection. It has been collecting at least since the turn of the century, focusing primarily on classical items, manuscripts and similar materials. With the establishment of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center, the scope of interest has increased to include contemporary Iran. The center has worked with the library to support current projects and envisions a long-term partnership in developing its rich resources for scholars of Iran and the Persian Gulf.

**Iran Social Survey**

The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center continues to support the Iran Social Survey (ISS) project, conceived by former center postdoc Kevan Harris, now Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, UCLA. The ISS measures social and economic indicators across a broad array of topics: class and occupational change, usage of state and public services, political behavior and electoral participation, identity and ethnicity and engagement with civic institutions. The ISS is important because Iran is the 19th most populous country in the world, yet we know remarkably little about contemporary Iranian social relations and public behavior.

Objective, methodologically rigorous assessments of social and political life in Iran are needed to shape government policy, inform the public debate and ensure that domestic voices are heard and understood. The ISS is designed to create an accurate mapping of the country’s complex social life that generates crucial knowledge as well as a dataset comparable with other rapidly changing developing countries. It is the only nationally representative, personal-interview survey conducted inside the Islamic Republic. ISS research is used by policymakers, area experts and scholars to access the core needs and concerns driving the structure and functioning of Iranian society.

In its initial phase, the ISS surveyed a nationally representative sample of 5,000 Iranian residents after the 2016 Majles (parliamentary) and Assembly of Experts elections, and led to the production of a brief—“Voter Behavior and Political Mobilization in Iran: Findings from the Iran Social Survey”—as well as a 2017 workshop hosted by the center.

The second wave will be fielded in December 2020 rather than early summer as initially planned, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, polling will include questions specifically related to experiences of Iranians since the onset of the pandemic.
Center Funding Awards

**Course-Related Support**

*The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies provides support to student- and course-related activities to help spread understanding and appreciation for Iranian language and culture.*

**Trip to the High Line Nine Gallery with Persian Course Students**

A group of ten students led by Persian lecturer Amineh Mahallati and Ph.D. student Henrietta Toivanen traveled to New York City’s High Line Nine Gallery to attend Shirin Neshat’s curated exhibition “A Bridge Between You and Everything: An Exhibition of Iranian Women Artists.” The group received a guided tour in Persian through the exhibition, familiarizing them with the topics and issues addressed by the artists. The trip culminated with discussion of the exhibit over lunch at a nearby café.

**Persian Culture Night**

A night of Persian food and dance instruction organized by Resident Graduate Student (RGS) Henrietta Toivanen at Butler College.

**Graduate Funding**

*The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies provides summer grants to graduate students pursuing research and intensive language training primarily related to the scholarship of Iran and the Persian Gulf. The following students received grants.*

- **Henrietta Toivanen**  
  Princeton School of Public and International Affairs

- **Bilal Khadidm**  
  Near Eastern Studies

- **Xinyi Wei**  
  Near Eastern Studies
Research Reports

Postdoctoral Research Associates

Daniel Beckman
My research focuses on the relations between Classical Greece and Rome and the Iranian world. I am particularly interested in the historiography of pre-Islamic Iran, including administrative texts, sacred texts, imperial propaganda and non-imperial counter-propaganda.

This year, I focused on the notions of law, judicial procedure and punishment in the Achaemenid empire. This topic has interested me for a long time, as the Achaemenids are, somewhat ironically, well-known both for their use of extremely violent punishment, as well as for their tolerance and orderly and peaceful style of rule. My research so far has shown that the nature of a punishment was determined by the status of the criminal and the strength of the king’s political and military position. It was dangerous to execute a powerful rebel, for instance, especially if their network of supporters was still intact. However, a king might decide to make use of a particularly violent and, more importantly, public execution to shore up his status as the sole legitimate ruler. For the Achaemenids, any such decision also had to conform to Zoroastrian notions of justice and kingship.

I prepared a talk on the ideology of reconciliation between the imperial administration and elites for the Association for Iranian Studies conference, which was cancelled due to the coronavirus. An expanded version of my paper on this research is currently under review with the Journal of Ancient History. In February, I presented a talk at UCLA on the use of burning as a punishment for rebels; I am currently preparing a fuller version of this paper for submission.

My second project concerns the borders of ancient Near Eastern states. Over the course of the twentieth century, scholars largely abandoned the image of ancient states as uniform territorial entities, surrounded by fixed borders. Instead, empires are now understood as webs of nodes of power, constantly shifting in response to political, demographic and climatic changes. Even where hard, fixed walls claim to mark the limit of a state, it has become clear that these border regions were fluid zones of interaction and exchange. My research looks at the way that Near Eastern states in the first millennium Before Common Era (BCE) contextualized their borders. Many ruling dynasties made claims to universal rule, but each had to deal with the realities of geography and competitors in unique ways. I will be presenting my research on post-Achaemenid Near Eastern borders at the Association of Ancient Historians conference in April, via video conference. This will also form the basis of my contribution to an edited volume on “War in Ancient Iran,” which I will submit this summer.

Peyman Jafari
I came to Princeton in September as a postdoctoral research associate, eager to participate in and benefit from the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center’s intellectual environment and resources; both have exceeded my expectations. The center’s lecture series has been an excellent opportunity to meet established and emerging scholars and engage with their work. I have also benefited from the stimulating lectures held by the Near Eastern Studies department, with which the center collaborates closely. Above all, the University’s rich collection of books, periodicals and documents on Iran is every researcher’s dream. Thanks to the attentive staff, it has been easy to navigate the administrative aspects of work.

All of this has been extremely helpful in developing my book project on “Oil, Labor and the Making of the Iranian Revolution,” and a
cohesive long-term research agenda on global energy history with a focus on oil in Iran. I have delivered a number of talks on that topic, including one at the center’s lecture series and another at Yale University’s Iran Colloquium, which have inspired ongoing conversations with colleagues.

The Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association held in November in New Orleans was one of the high points of this past year, as I presented my research on the life, labor and activism of oil workers in Iran in the early 1980s and it resulted in an article submitted for review. After the conference, I started research on the social, political and ecological developments in the Iranian oil industry since the 1990s and published an article on the gas and petrochemical complex around the Persian Gulf city Asaluyeh.

In addition to the history of oil, I also focus on labor history and the study of revolutions. I am very excited to have just completed a co-edited volume on the global and comparative history of labor relations during revolutionary upheavals, which also includes a chapter of mine on Iran.

Unfortunately, last year had some low points as well, as Iran was confronted with a number of crises and tragic events. The center played a very positive role in providing support to the community in dealing with the fallout and reflecting on these developments. I contributed through media outreach and contributions to publications, providing commentary on the history, political economy and geopolitics of the turmoil.

One of these events was, of course, the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus that has affected all of us. The University and the center have been very active in providing personal and work-related support. One of the unavoidable consequences was the closure of the University’s libraries, which has meant that I had to pause my archival research. But with some flexibility, it has been possible to continue with other aspects of research and to do so remotely. I am especially glad we have been able to continue our conversations and collaboration at the center online. It has allowed us to develop new initiatives, such as the virtual talks, to which I have contributed by organizing a book launch with former Princeton Fellow On Barak, a lecturer at Tel Aviv University.

**Associate Research Scholars**

**Amy Malek**

This year as an associate research scholar at the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center has been extraordinary. As an anthropologist of the global Iranian diaspora accustomed to serving as the lone Iran scholar on my home campus, I have been nourished by the camaraderie and intellectual atmosphere provided by fellow Iran scholars at the center. Our discussions, lecture series, dinners and chai chats have been an unprecedented joy.

With regard to research, the fellowship has enabled me to dedicate focused attention on my book project: a transnational comparative ethnography of the Iranian diaspora. Based on long-term fieldwork in Sweden, Canada and the United States, the book examines the intersection of cultural policy, citizenship and cultural production among Iranians in diaspora. Alongside this work, in the course of the year, I have also submitted an article and a book chapter on Persian language use that are currently under review, and have published a peer-reviewed article, “Paradoxes of Dual Nationality: Geopolitical Constraints on Multiple Citizenship in the Iranian Diaspora,” in Middle East Journal. I also published an entry in the “Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology” on the groundbreaking 1925 film “Grass,” a silent feature documenting the Bakhtiari migration that is considered one of the first documentary films in history.

While Norooz 1399/2020 was not the holiday any of us expected, it nevertheless marked the publication of “My Shadow Is My Skin: Voices from the Iranian Diaspora,” an anthology of
non-fiction essays from University of Texas Press. My essay in the volume, “Negotiating Memories,” offers a personal reflection on memory, photography and identity in diaspora.

Prior to the stay-at-home order, the center hosted a flurry of events and lectures. Among them, in October, I had the pleasure of inviting director Taghi Amirani and Oscar-winning editor Walter Murch to campus for a screening of their new documentary film, “Coup 53,” followed by a lively Q & A. The Princeton Garden Theatre was a perfect partner and I was honored to introduce this film to the Princeton community, who filled the hall to capacity on a rainy Tuesday afternoon. Beyond campus, I also attended several conferences, offering research presentations at the Middle East Studies Association annual meeting and the Metropolis North American Migration Policy Forum. In February, I also gave two invited lectures on my current book project at University of Nebraska–Lincoln and University of Nebraska–Omaha. While five other conferences and speaking engagements I was slated to attend this spring and summer were postponed due to the global pandemic, including a lecture at the center, I was pleased to be able to give a virtual talk for the center in April on my research on dual citizenship in the Iranian diaspora.

The start to 2020 has been a difficult one in so many ways, but perhaps particularly so for Iranians. In the first week of January, the tragic loss of life on Flight 752 felt like the tipping point for an Iranian diaspora already on edge. (Little did we know what devastation 2020 would bring.) Canadian Iranians, in particular, suffered enormous losses, a grief that we shared across borders. I wrote about this global mourning in an op-ed for the Ottawa Citizen that was reprinted in three large Canadian newspapers. The context of military aggression, economic sanctions and even-greater heightened tensions between the U.S. and Iran also led to a number of media interviews and appearances related to my research.

With the closing of campus for the rest of the spring term, I have moved my writing space to my home, and have teamed up with my fellow postdoctoral scholars to continue what were in-person writing hours, now via Zoom. I am grateful for these meetings that allow us to maintain momentum, collegiality and shared spirit in a trying time.

Amin Moghadam

In the first semester of the academic year, I initiated and finalized the writing of a new major research project, “The Geography of Transnational Connections of Contemporary Iran: When Sanctions Shape New Territories.” This new proposal of 45 pages outlines my research plan for the coming years. I submitted sections of this project in applying to several positions, and have accepted a senior research position at Ryerson University, Toronto, which will begin in October. I also presented this proposal to the Annual National “Concours” of the Center of Research in France (CNRS) in January for a permanent research position. Although I was shortlisted, the entire process has been suspended due to the pandemic.

Together with two French colleagues, I have continued teaching a research seminar—“Frontières et enfermements dans les mondes arabes et musulmans: incorporations, affects et vécus” (Borders and confinements in the Arab and Muslim worlds: incorporations, affects and experiences)—which is open to graduate students and other researchers at École des hautes études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. The seminar took place once a month at EHESS throughout the academic year.

In February, I was invited to the French Senate at the Palais de Luxembourg in Paris to give a presentation entitled “Soft-power and Iranian Economic Networks,” as part of a conference dedicated to Iran and convened by the French senator Philippe Bonnecarrère and the French geographer and Iranian specialist of Iran, Bernard Hourcade. The video is available here:
I published one article and co-edited “Socio-spatial dynamics of contemporary Iran,” for a special issue of the peer-reviewed French journal EchoGeo. I also have four articles accepted for publication in the coming months.

Finally, I pursued the editing and translation of my book project on Iranian migrations to Dubai. The English manuscript is almost completed, but unfortunately my book workshop at Princeton was cancelled due to the pandemic. I now plan to organize a manuscript workshop in the fall at Ryerson before submitting it to the publisher.

Sadly, my time with the center comes to an end with me stranded in Paris, but I'm certain that my collaboration with my colleagues at the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center will last well beyond these pandemic times.

Khodadad Rezakhani
I started my last year as an associate research scholar at the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center with plans to finish the previous phase of my research in the early fall and then embark on a research trip to Armenia and Iran. Although the last part of my plan was interrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, I managed to finish the first part of my research in the fall. My quarantine lockdown time has been used to work on finishing my second book, while at the same time developing a new project that has grown out of my current lockdown situation in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

In the fall, I worked on completing my work on the historical geography of the Pahlavi documents archive. This collection of documents from the late seventh and early eighth centuries Common Era (CE) has been translated and made available to the scholarly community in the past 15 years. However, historical research on them has not yet taken off. In the past two years, I have worked with this archive in order to extract their historical and geographical content. Part of my research involved finding evidence to localize these documents, as the circumstances of their discovery are unknown and they do not benefit from any archaeological provenance. By re-reading some of the place-names and working with various other types of evidence, I have been able to recognize several geographical and historical facts in these documents that show the continued expansion of Sasanian administrative methods in the early Islamic period as well as the shifting tides of political control in this period. This shines a new light onto the early Islamic period and the formation of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. The geographical information complements what we know of the geography of central and northern Iran during this time and the presence of various powers in the area of Qom and Mahllat, as well as in eastern Tabarestan.

The results of this research, prepared for peer reviewed articles, are due to be published in the current year, have already appeared or are due to appear soon. I hope to eventually incorporate all this research into a monograph on the early Islamic period in Iran and Central Asia. Presently, while under lockdown in Dubai, I have developed an interest in the local powers in the Persian Gulf region who controlled the area after the collapse of the Sasanian empire and in the early and medieval Islamic period. Having done some preliminary research on the subject, I am hoping to develop this interest into a proper research project for my future work.

I am most grateful to the center for its continued support of my research. I have enjoyed the security and the resources offered here, as well as the greater Princeton University community. I hope to continue this relationship with the center and the University in the future and cherish the support and promotion of scholarship.
Visiting Research Collaborator

Jo-Ann Gross

My academic year at the Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center was a very stimulating and productive one, although events scheduled for the spring term were unfortunately disrupted due to the coronavirus. This was my final year of a three-year National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Collaborative Research Grant for the project “Ismailism in Badakhshan: Genealogical and Documentary History.” Working with my two collaborators, Daniel Beben (Nazarbaev University in Kazakhstan) and Umed Mamadsherzodshoev (Institute of Humanities, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan), I approached the project in two-stages: First, to survey, catalogue and digitally preserve a rare collection of privately owned genealogical documents (naṣab-nāmahs) from Afghan and Tajik Badakhshan and establish a freely accessible digital repository of them as part of a digital humanities project at Princeton’s library, and second, to present the results of our analysis in a co-authored book aimed at making the materials and their significance accessible to other researchers and students. The first stage of the project is complete and stored in the Princeton Library’s digital repository, and includes six new genealogies as a result of my field research in Badakhshan, Tajikistan, in June-July 2019. The goal is for the Badakhshan Genealogical Document Collection, as part of the Islamic Manuscript Collection at Princeton, to be widely and freely discoverable through many channels. I hope to continue to add documents to the digital collection, but that will depend on my ability to safely travel and conduct research in Tajik and Afghan Badakhshan, and in Gilgit and Hunza in northwestern Pakistan.

This year was primarily spent writing two chapters for our co-authored book; revising and submitting a book chapter to be published in “Saintly Spheres and Islamic Landscapes,” and which I presented as a conference paper for the Ninth European Conference of Iranian Studies, Societas Iranologica Europaea, in Berlin; and finally organizing a two-day international symposium on Genealogical History in the Persianate World. Building on my project, the symposium was to gather 15 scholars from Kazakhstan, Germany, Japan, Tajikistan, Qatar, Austria and the U.S. who work on genealogical materials. Unfortunately, the symposium had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus. As a result of the lockdown, however, I was able to extend my NEH grant, which I hope will allow us to host the symposium in spring 2021 and work to complete the book manuscript. I am currently preparing another book chapter for the “Festschrift in Honor of Devin DeWeese.” I was scheduled to present a paper entitled “The Genealogical Tradition of Sayyid Muhammad Isfahānī (Shāh Kāshān) in Shughnan, Badakhshan” at the Ninth Biennial Conference of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (ASPS) in Delhi, which was also cancelled.

Aside from my research and publications, my professional activities in 2019-2020 included the following: Board of Directors, Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (ASPS); Editorial Board, Journal of Persianate Studies; ASPS Delhi Conference Planning Committee; Scientific Committee of Wikistan; and director and founder of the Central Eurasia Research Fund (CERF).

I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to extend my stay at the center as a visiting research collaborator, to participate in the engaging center talks and workshops and to exchange ideas with colleagues within the center and those in the Department of Near Eastern Studies.
Visiting Fellow

Arash Davari

My time as a visiting scholar in Princeton’s Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies during the spring 2020 semester was divided in two parts: pre- and post-pandemic.

In the first two months, prior to the pandemic, I made detailed preparations for a two-day spring conference “Deprovincializing Iran,” featuring 20 speakers from universities across the world. We asked conference participants to discuss the prospects for writing social and political theory based on archival and ethnographic research in modern Iran. They each submitted abstracts articulating proposed topics of conversation. While the event was cancelled, we hope to build on these submissions and host a virtual conference in the coming academic year. In the meantime, in February, I researched, wrote and submitted an article to Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East titled “On Inexactitude in Decolonization.” The article was invited for a symposium on a book recently published by Princeton University Press: Adom Getachew’s “Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination.” I wrote a diplomatic history of Iran’s participation in the declaration of the New International Economic Order during the 1970s, adding to Getachew’s framework. My contribution was accepted for publication and is slated to appear in the journal’s December 2020 issue. I also completed revisions for a book chapter co-authored with Naghmeh Sohrabi (associate professor of history at Brandeis University) titled “A Sky Drowning in Stars: Global 1968, the Death of Takhti, and the Birth of the Iranian Revolution.” The chapter recounts the street protests that took place in Iran in 1968 in response to the unexpected death of beloved Olympic wrestler Gholamreza Takhti. A first draft was submitted in December 2019 for a volume edited by Arang Keshavarzian and Ali Mirsepassi, provisionally titled “Global ‘79: Itineraries of the Iranian Revolution.” During the spring semester, we substantially revised that draft to respond to comments provided via internal review. Finally, beginning in late April, I started revisions for an article submitted in January 2020 to the journal Political Theory. The article discusses utopianism and the paradox of politics in Ali Shariati’s most controversial lectures, 1969’s “The Ummah and the Imamat.” These revisions were prompted by a positive decision from the journal’s editorial board and external reviewers, which I received in late April.

I also completed invited peer reviews for three academic journals (ARTMargins, Critical Times, Political Theory); developed the framework for my first book manuscript; advanced an ongoing edited collection of translations featuring Shariati’s writings and speeches; and continued my editorship with Jadaliyya’s Iran Page (which included extensive line edits on articles discussing the impact of the coronavirus in Iran).

The pandemic most obviously effected my work with the cancellation of the April workshop, “Deprovincializing Iran.” The temporary closure of the library also delayed access to invaluable research materials needed to complete my book manuscript.
Looking Ahead

The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies promotes interdisciplinary approaches to advancing understanding of Iran and the Persian Gulf, with special attention to the region’s role and significance in the contemporary world. The goal of the program is to support outstanding scholars of Iran and the wider Persianate world at an early stage of their careers and thus to strengthen the field of Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies in the United States and abroad.

Incoming Fellows

Maryam Alemzadeh is currently the Harold Grinspoon Junior Research Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University. She received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago. Alemzadeh’s main research project focuses on the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and post-revolutionary state building in Iran from 1979 to 1982. She will join Princeton as a postdoctoral research associate and work on her book manuscript, which addresses the formation of the IRGC as a state-sponsored, yet independent and spontaneous revolutionary militia. The book is based on firsthand research on the IRGC’s first generation of command- ers, volunteers, supporters and critics, as they struggled daily to find order in chaos. Alemzadeh’s work revisits questions of continuity, change and institution building through the lens of everyday practices. Her research and policy papers have been published in the British Journal of Middle East Studies, Foreign Affairs and the Crown Center’s Middle East Brief series, among other places.

Milad Odabaei is an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at McGill University. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology with a designated emphasis in critical theory from the University of California, Berkeley. He will join Princeton as a postdoctoral research associate in September. Odabaei’s research and teaching is centered around modern Iran and brings together critical and anthropological approaches to the study of history and historiography, religion and politics, violence and subjectivity and translation and migration. His writings have appeared in Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the edited volume “Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906” and “Narratives of the Enlightenment.” Odabaei is the editor of “Iranian Cosmopolitanism,” the 2019 special issue of Comparative Islamic Studies, and a co-editor of “Europe at a Crossroads,” the inaugural issue of Zone Books’ “Near Futures Online.”

The Azadi Tower in Azadi Square, Tehran, Iran
People

Administration

Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi
Director, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies; Professor of Near Eastern Studies

Femke de Ruyter
Center Manager, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Becky Parnian
Events Coordinator, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Center Research Associates

Daniel Beckman
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Peyman Jafari
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Amy Malek
Associate Research Scholar, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Amin Moghadam
Associate Research Scholar, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Khodadad Rezakhani
Associate Research Scholar, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies

Visiting Scholars

Arash Davari
Visiting Academic Professional, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies; Assistant Professor of Politics at Whitman College

Jo-Ann Gross
Visiting Research Collaborator, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies; Professor, Middle Eastern and Central Eurasian History, The College of New Jersey

Executive Committee

Michael Cook
Class of 1943 University Professor of Near Eastern Studies; Director of Graduate Studies; Former Interim Director, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies (2018-19)

Julia Elyachar
Associate Professor of Anthropology and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (On leave 2019-20)

Dimitri H. Gondicas (Sits with Committee)
Senior Professional Specialist, The Council of the Humanities; Stanley J. Seeger Director, Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies

Amaney Jamal
Edwards S. Sanford Professor of Politics; Director, Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice

Beatrice Kitzinger
Assistant Professor of Art and Archaeology; Harold Willis Dodds University Preceptor (On leave 2019-20)

David S. Magier (Sits with Committee)
Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Collections and Research Services

Daniel J. Sheffield
Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Studies; John Witherspoon Bicentennial Preceptor

Max Weiss
Associate Professor of History and Near Eastern Studies

Muhammed Qasim Zaman (Sits with Committee)
Robert H. Niehaus ’77 Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion; Chair, Department of Near Eastern Studies
Affiliated Faculty

**Divya Cherian**
Assistant Professor of History

**Christopher Chyba**
Professor of Astrophysical Sciences and International Affairs, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs

**Michael Cook**
Class of 1943 University Professor of Near Eastern Studies; Director of Graduate Studies; Former Interim Director, Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies (2018-19)

**Julia Elyachar**
Associate Professor of Anthropology and the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (On leave 2019-20)

**Michael Flower**
David Magie ’97 Class of 1897 Professor of Classics; Chair, Department of Classics

**Molly Greene**
Professor of History and Hellenic Studies; Associate Chair, Department of History; Director, Program in Hellenic Studies

**Bernard Haykel**
Professor of Near Eastern Studies; Director, Institute for Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia

**Stephen Kotkin**
John P. Birkeland ’52 Professor in History and International Affairs; Co-Director, Program in History and the Practice of Diplomacy; Director, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies

**Satyel Larson**
Assistant Professor, Near Eastern Studies

**Michael A. Reynolds**
Associate Professor of Near Eastern Studies; Director, Program in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies

**Daniel J. Sheffield**
Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Studies; John Witherspoon Bicentennial Preceptor

**Jack Tannous**
Assistant Professor of History

**Moulie Vidas**
Associate Professor of Religion and the Program in Judaic Studies

**Muhammed Qasim Zaman**
Robert H. Niehaus ’77 Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion; Chair, Department of Near Eastern Studies

Advisory Council Members

**Olga Merck Davidson**
Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations, Boston University

**Alexander Farman-Farmaian**
Partner, Vice Chairman and Portfolio Manager, Edgewood Management LLC

**Daniel Kurtzer**
S. Daniel Abraham Professor of Middle East Policy Studies, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs

**Charles Kurzman**
Professor of Sociology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani**
Executive Chairman, RAK Petroleum plc

**Sharmin Mossavar-Rahmani**
Chief Investment Officer, Wealth Management, Goldman Sachs

**Cecilia Rouse**
Dean, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs; Lawrence and Shirley Katzman and Lewis and Anna Ernst Professor in the Economics of Education; Professor of Economics and Public Affairs