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CURRENT POSITION

University of Calgary (2020-)

Associate Professor of Arabic and Muslim Cultures, School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures
Adjunct Professor, Department of Religion and Classics
Division Chair, German, Russian, Arabic Language and Muslim Cultures

Past positions

University of Calgary: Assistant Professor (2015-2020)

Yale University: Visiting Lecturer in Classical Arabic and Classical Persian (spring, 2015)

The Institute of Ismaili Studies (London): Research Associate (2012-2013)

Trinity College: Visiting Lecturer in Language and Culture Studies (2011)

Fairfield University, Religious Studies Department: Visiting Instructor (2008-2009); Adjunct Professor (2007)

EDUCATION

PhD Religious Studies (Islamic Studies), **Yale University** 2012

MPhil Religious Studies (Islamic Studies), **Yale University** 2008

MA Medieval Studies, **Central European University** 2002

MA Arabic Studies, **Yerevan State University** 2003

BA Arabic Studies, **Yerevan State University** 2001

Non-degree programs

2001-02 The University of Isfahan, Department of Theology, courses in Qur'an, Exegesis, Shi'i texts, and Hadith

1999-2000 The University of Cairo, Department of Arabic Literature, courses in Arabic language and literature

2000 Tarbiat Modares University (Tehran), courses in Persian Language and Literature

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Controversies in Formative Shi‘i Islam: The Ghulat Muslims and their Beliefs, London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.

- Reviewed by Sajjad Rizvi in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 34 (2017), 83-85
- Reviewed by Mehmet Toprak in *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 22.42 (2017), 166-169
- Reviewed by Leonardo Capezzone in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81.2 (2018), 335-337
- Reviewed by Edmund Hayes in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138.4 (2019)
- Reviewed by James Weaver in *Shii Studies Review* 3 (2019), 319-328

Peer-reviewed articles

- 2021 “How to Read Muslim Heresiology? An Ismaili man-of-letters and his Classifications of Muslim Sects,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (forthcoming).
- 2021 “Secret Writing in Early Muslim Polemics: Feigning Orthodoxy in Saffar al-Qummi’s *Basa’ir al-Darajat*,” *History of Religions* (forthcoming)
- 2021 “Of Wine, Sex, and other Abominations: The Meanings of Libertinism in Early Islamic Iraq,” *Global Intellectual History* (forthcoming)
- 2019 “Early Ismailis and Other Muslims: Polemics and Borrowing in *Kitab al-Kashf*,” in *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019)
- 2016 “Shiite Underground Literature Between Iraq and Syria: The Book of Shadows and the History of Early Ghulat,” in *Texts in Transit in the Medieval Mediterranean*, eds. Tzvi Langermann and Robert Morrison (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), pp. 128-161.
- 2015 “An Early Shi‘i Cosmology: *Kitab al-asbab wa l-aʿilla* and its Milieu,” *Studia Islamica* 110 (2015), pp. 1-80.
- 2014 “Bankers and Politics: The Network of Shi‘i Moneychangers in Eighth-Ninth Century Kufa and their Role in the Shi‘i Community,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 7 (2014), pp. 1-21. (an earlier version of this paper won the 2011 Middle East Medievalists Graduate Student Paper Prize)

Book chapters and other articles

- 2020 “The Good, the Bad, and the Heretic in Early Islamic History,” in *Deconstructing Islamic Studies*, eds. Majid Daneshgar and Aaron Hughes (Cambridge, MA)
- 2019 “Shi’i Literature in the Late 9th Century Ishāq al-Ahmar al-Nakha’ī (d. 286/899) and His Writings,” in *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, eds. Jamal Elias and Bilal Orfali. (Leiden: Brill, 2019)
- 2018 “An Agenda for the Study of Early Shi’a Cosmologies,” *The Gnostic World*, ed. Garry Trompf (Routledge, 2018), 321-327.
- 2016 [with Dylan Burns] “Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism? Religious Transmissions in Late Antiquity,” in *L’ésotérisme shi’ite, ses racines et ses prolongements*, eds. M. A. Amir-Moezzi et al., (Brepols, 2016 [Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes and The Institute of Ismaili Studies]), 55-86
- 2011 [with Hatim Mahamid, in Arabic] “Wathīqat ‘ahd min al-rasūl ilā l-nasārā kāffatan: dirāsa wa tahqīq,” in *Maqālāt tārikhiyya takrīman li l-ustādh al-dukūr Butrus Abū Manna*. Eds. ‘Atā’ Allāh Qutbī, Jūnī Mansūr, and Mustafā l-‘Abbāsī: 3-28
- 2006 “Iranian Elements in Arabic: the State of Research,” *Iran and the Caucasus* 10.1: 87-106.

In preparation

Making Heretics, Making Muslims: The Politics and Poetics of Muslim Heresiology

Kitab al-Intisar by Mu‘tazili theologian al-Khayyat, translation and study (under contract with Gorgias Press)

Encyclopedia Entries

Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE

“Mukhammisa” (forthcoming)

“Bayaniyya” (forthcoming)

“al-Nahiki” (forthcoming)

“Janahiyya (forthcoming)

“al-Kulayni” (in progress)

Encyclopedia Iranica, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York, 1983-)

2013 “Mokhammesa” (2013; 1600 words)

2012 “Eshaq Ahmar Nakha‘i” (2012; 750 words)

2011 “Mofazzal al-Jo‘fi” (2011; 1800 words)

“Tanasokh” (Reincarnation) (3000 words, submitted for publication)

The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought, ed. Gerhard Böwering (Princeton, 2012)

“Alawis” (650 words)

Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage, ed. Larissa J. Taylor (Leiden, 2010)

“Hajj” (2000 words)

“Ziyara” (1300 words)

Book Reviews

2019 Hussein Abdulsater, *Shi‘i Doctrine, Mu‘tazili Theology: al-Sharif al-Murtada and Mu‘tazili Discourse* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), *al-Abhath* 67 (2019)

2016 *The Politics and Culture of an Umayyad Tribe: Conflict and Functionalism in the Early Islamic Period* by Mohammad Rihan, *Ilahiyat Studies* 7.2 (2016)

2015 Sālih Ahmad al-‘Ali, *Al-Kūfa wa ablubā fi sadr al-islām: dirāsa fi abwālibā l-‘umrāniyya wa sukkānibā wa tanzīmātibim*, in *Muslim Civilisations Abstracts* (Edinburgh), ed. Aptin Khanbaghi

2014 Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam: Beliefs and Practices* (London, 2011) in *Studia Islamica* 109.2 (2014): 329-347

2014 Isra Yazicioglu, *Understanding the Qur’anic Miracle Stories in the Modern Age* (University Park, 2013), in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*: 214-15

2009 Gautier Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadith* (Leiden, 2007), in *Muslim Civilisations Abstracts: Encyclopedias about Muslim Civilisations*, ed. Aptin Khanbaghi (Edinburgh): 75, 255

2007 Ethel Sara Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park, 2003), in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 7.1: 203-207

2005 Nicola Laure al-Samarai, *Die Macht der Darstellung* (Wiesbaden, 2001), in *Iran and the Caucasus* 9.2: 406-407.

INVITED TALKS

- 2020 “The Politics of Devotion to the Imams in Early Shi’i Circles” (featured speaker) – University of Chicago, Annual Shi’i Studies Symposium [event canceled because of COVID 19]
- 2018 “Language, Heresy, and Power in an Early Islamic Text: Or how to Smuggle in your argument through the backdoor, unnoticed” – University of Calgary, Cercle Bénédictin Conferences
- 2018 “Of Wine, Sex, and Other Abominations: Accusations of Libertinism in and their Cultural Meaning in 8th-9th-century Iraq” – University of Calgary, Medieval and Renaissance Cultural Studies Research Group
- 2014 “Medieval Heresy between Armenia and Khurasan: Writing a Connected History of the Tondrakians” – UCLA
- 2011 “Divine Man or Man of God? The Early Islamic Sources on the Idea of the Divinity of the Imams” – Trinity College, Hartford, CT

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2020-22 **National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)**, USD 132,266
Project co-director: Mushegh Asatryan; project director: David Hollenberg
A Critical Edition and Translation of the *Manhaj al-’Ilm* (The Method of Knowledge)”
- 2020 **Zahid Ali Fellowship (The Institute of Ismaili Studies)**, GBP 5000
Granted for the research project on medieval Muslim heresiographies, to result in the publication of a monograph, entitled *Making Heretics, Making Muslims: The Politics and Poetics of Muslim Heresiology*
- 2018 **Institute for Advanced Study**, Princeton: three-week visiting fellowship at the Shii Studies Research Program
- 2011 **Middle East Medievalists**: Graduate Student Paper Prize for “Bankers and Politics: 8th c. Kufan Moneychangers and their role in the Shi’a Community,” presented at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, DC (published in the *Journal of Persianate Studies*)
- 2010 **Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library**, Yale University: Research Fellowship

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Panels Organized

- 2014 “Texts and Contexts in Pre-Modern Shi‘ism,” - *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2013 “Shi‘ism in Historical Perspective,” - *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (New Orleans)
- 2009 “Armenians and Islam”, Organizer and Chair - *Central Eurasian Studies Society*, Annual Meeting (Toronto)

Conference papers

- 2019 “How to Read Muslim Heresiology? Abu Hatim al-Razi’s Classification of Muslim Sects,” *14th Colloquium “From Jabiliyya to Islam,”* Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Jerusalem)
- 2018 “Of Wine, Sex, and Other Abominations: Accusations of Libertinism in and their Cultural Meaning in 8th-9th-century Iraq,” *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (San Antonio)
- 2018 “The Nusayris in Medieval Syria: What can a 13th-century Theological Debate Tell us about them,” *World Congress for Middle East Studies* (Seville, Spain)
- 2017 “The Discourse on Magic and Miracles in 11th-century Baghdad: a Broader Context,” *American Academy of Religion, Northwest-Pacific Regional Meeting* (St. Mary’s University, Calgary)
- 2017 “A Medieval Nusayri Shaykh’s Disputations and the Study of the Nusayris in Western Academia,” *Shi‘i Studies: The State of the Art*, Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton)
- 2016 “Conflict or Symbiosis? The Nusayris and the Ismailis in Medieval Syria,” *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread* – The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London
- 2015 “Iranian Loanwords in Classical Arabic Language Contact and Sound Change,” *Digital Arabic and Digital Persian Research Workshop*, The University of Leipzig
- 2015 [co-presented with Dylan Burns] “Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism,” *American Academy of Religion-International Qur’anic Studies Association* joint panel (Atlanta)
- 2014 “The Ghulat Corpus and its Authors,” *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2014 “The World and Worldview of Early Shi‘i Ghulat” – *Reason and Esotericism in Shi‘i Islam* (The University of Chicago)
- 2013 “*Kitāb al-aẓilla*, Nusayri Literature, and the Transmission of Texts from Iraq to Syria in the Tenth Century” – *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (New Orleans)

- 2012 “A New Source for the Study of Early Shi‘a *ghulāt*” – *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Denver)
- 2012 “How Shi‘īs Adopted Mu‘tazilī Rationalism: Two Early Texts on the Proof of God’s Existence” – *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting (Boston)
- 2011 “Bankers and Politics: 8th c. Kufan Moneychangers and their role in the Shi‘a Community” – *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2010 “Mystical Shiism between the Two Occultations: *Kitāb al-sirāt* and its milieu” – *American Academy of Religion*, Annual Meeting (Atlanta)
- 2010 “Who were the Mufaddaliyya? A Study of an “extreme” Shiite Sect” - *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting (St. Louis)
- 2008 “Mufaddal al-Ju‘fī and the Kufan ‘extremists’ in the eighth century” - *Central Eurasian Studies Society*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2005 “Ibn Khaldūn’s Refutation of the Occult Sciences” - *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting (Philadelphia)

LANGUAGES

Arabic – reading fluency in Classical and Modern Standard; speaking fluency in Modern Standard

Persian – reading fluency in Classical and Modern, speaking fluency in Modern Farsi

Armenian – native in Modern Armenian; reading fluency in Classical Armenian

Russian – near native fluency in speaking, reading, and writing

German, French, Syriac, Turkish, Latin, Middle Persian, Old Persian – reading competence

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Middle East Studies Association

American Academy of Religion

Middle East Medievalists