Director’s Letter

Our Program has experienced much growth and change in the course of the last year. We have moved to our newly renovated and expanded office space, in the new Stanford Global Studies wing of a building aptly called the Hamid and Christina Moghadam Conference Center.

Two years ago, we succeeded in bringing to Stanford—and more specifically to the Hoover Library and Archives—the remarkable Ardeshir Zahedi Papers. They consist of more than three hundred manuscript boxes of material, and several gigabytes of data. They cover not only Ardeshir Zahedi’s diplomatic career, but also include what remains of his father, General Fazlollah Zahedi’s papers. The arrival of this singular collection makes Stanford an indispensable center for research on modern Iranian politics and diplomacy. The Zahedi Family Endowment allows us to henceforth each year select a scholar to visit the archive and write about modern Iranian politics and culture. Hoover Press has published a commemorative volume that includes a selection of these documents. (*A Window into Modern Iran: The Ardeshir Zahedi Papers at the Hoover Institutions Library and Archive*, edited by Abbas Milani, Hoover Press, 2019).

In the same period, we were also fortunate to receive Homa Sarshar’s archive: recordings of her 40-year radio program, as well as those of the Iranian Jewish Oral History. This year, we also facilitated the donation to the Green Library of the papers of Shahrokh Meskoob, one of modern Iran’s most respected and acclaimed public intellectuals, literary critics, memoirists, and *Shahnameh* scholar and commentator.

Major archival contributions to our program in reality began before the official launch of the program. Professor Amin Banani, the first Iranian to receive a Ph.D. in history from Stanford, and an eminent scholar of modern Iran, donated his library to Stanford as soon he heard that the university was considering the launch of an Iranian Studies program.

As a part of our Stanford Festival of Iranian Arts, we are proud to announce that in the spring of 2020 we will be staging a new play by Professor Bahram Beyzaie, our Daryabari Visiting Lecturer. Last year we staged his newest play, “Crossroads.” This will be the seventh of his plays we have staged. So singular have been these productions to the history of modern Iranian theater that the most important journal of theater criticism inside Iran—*Daftarhaye Theatre*—devoted an entire volume (vol. 15) to a discussion of these productions. Another project of the Festival last year was our role in helping the Kronos Quartet launch its remarkable tour of music from the countries banned from traveling to the U.S. The Festival has continued its work because of the generous support of Bita Daryabari, Shidan and Mehran Taslimi, and Hamid and Christina Moghadam.

Another part of our program—the Stanford Iran 2040 project, made possible by the generous support of Hamid and Christina Moghadam—succeeded in publishing two new reports, one on Iran’s scientific output, and the other on problems of governance. While all their past reports on subjects like water, food supply, energy and population have found a large audience inside and outside Iran, the paper underscoring the realities of Iran’s scientific production hit a raw nerve inside the regime.

We have a new Associate Director. To most of you, she is a familiar face. Ms. Roma Parhad, who for four
years has been gracefully and efficiently managing our program, is now our Associate Director. Our program coordinator, Franco Errico, was most deservedly awarded the 2019 Dean’s Award of Merit in the Spirit Category.

Encouraging as these developments have been, we recognize that our most important mandate is to help the Stanford community learn about the nuanced complexities of Iranian society, culture, and history. We organized 30 events, well attended by members of our community, on such topics as Iranian classical music, sites and spaces of cultural dissent in Iran, cholera’s impact on Iranian history, electoral politics in modern Iran, Persian art, and water scarcity. As a part of the SGS Summer Festival, we sponsored the screening of “The White Meadows,” Mr. Mohammad Rasoulof’s haunting film about contemporary Iran. Along with the Telluride Festival, we had hosted him two years ago, when his latest film, “A Man of Integrity,” was screened at the Festival and at Stanford. After his return to Iran, he was banned from travel. In July 2019, he was ordered to serve a year in prison. As he awaited his appeal, he agreed to appear through Skype in our event and engaged in a substantive and long discussion with the audience.

Needless to say, educating students is the most important part of our mandate. Over the last year, we offered courses on topics including U.S.-Iran relations, politics in modern Iran, Iranian cinema and theater, and Persian language and poetry, with more than 230 students enrolled.

We are proud of our success; humbled and heartened by your continued interest and support, and fully cognizant that without that support, and without Stanford University’s enlightened commitment to a multi-disciplinary approach to the complex problems of our time, none of this would have been possible.

Sincerely,

Abbas Milani
Hamid & Christina Moghadam
Director of Iranian Studies

Table of Contents

2 Director’s Letter
4 Event Highlights
5 Bita Prize for Persian Arts
6 Stanford Festival of Iranian Arts
7 Stanford Iran 2040 Project
8 Student Highlights
10 News & Publications

Administration

Abbas Milani, Director
Roma Parhad, Associate Director
Pooya Azadi, Project Manager
Franco Errico, Program Coordinator

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Collaborations this year included programming with several groups on and off campus, including the Freeman Spogli Institute; Stanford Global Studies; the Persian Student Association; the American Middle Eastern Network for Dialogue at Stanford; the Iranian Stanford Alumni Association; the United Nations Association Film Festival; the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies; the Creative Writing Program; Stanford Live; and the Kronos Quartet. The Iranian Studies Program hosted 30 events with a total audience of more than 3,500.

**Music for Change: The Banned Countries**

In critical response to the 2017 Executive Orders limiting travel to the United States by people from largely Muslim-majority countries, San Francisco’s Grammy Award–winning Kronos Quartet created a new program featuring music from the original seven “banned” countries—Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Presented by Stanford Live, Kronos’ “Music for Change: The Banned Countries” premiered at Stanford’s Bing Concert Hall on October 20, 2018 and highlighted a rich diversity of artistic voices, including works composed specifically for the performance, new collaborations, and signature works from Kronos’ extensive repertoire.

The Iranian Studies Program was involved in the early conceptualization of this project and helped commission works in the performance. Stanford Live convened a panel discussion on the effects of the travel ban which was held a few days before the concert, featuring Professor Abbas Milani, Ambassador Michael McFaul, Professor Martha Crenshaw, and David Harrington, Kronos’ artistic director.

**Event Highlights**

- **“Electoral Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran”**
  with Mehrzad Boroujerdi
- **“Hadi and His Alam”** with Hadi Khorsandi
- **“A Modern Contagion: Cholera’s Impact on Iranian History”** with Amir Afkhami
- **“Russia and Iran in the Qajar Period: Uneasy Neighbors”** with Rudi Matthee
- **“My Life in Food”** with Narsai David

**Jason Rezaian in Conversation with Brett McGurk**

On March 13, 2019, Jason Rezaian discussed his new book *Prisoner: My 544 Days in an Iranian Prison*. He was joined in conversation by Brett McGurk, the former special presidential envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, who led the secret negotiations with Iran to free prisoners, including Rezaian. As the Washington Post’s Tehran bureau chief at the time, Jason and his wife were arrested in June 2014, and Jason was held in Iran’s notorious Evin Prison for 544 days.

The evening discussion, co-sponsored by the Freeman Spogli Institute (where McGurk is now a lecturer), highlighted the special relationship that developed between McGurk, Rezaian, and their wives as they went through the negotiations.

“As a diplomat working on these very difficult missions in the world, they’re rarely as personal as this,” McGurk said.
The acclaimed classical Iranian singer, Parissa, received the 11th Bita Prize for Persian Arts on November 9, 2018 at Stanford University. More than 450 people attended the ceremony to celebrate Parissa’s accomplishments. The evening included remarks by Iranian Studies Director Abbas Milani and Ms. Bita Daryabari, as well as a special live performance by Parissa, accompanied by her son, Dara Afraz, and musician Emile Richard.

Parissa has worked tirelessly to preserve the best of Iranian classical music and elevate the role of women in that tradition. She is a master vocalist of classical Persian music (radif) who continues to play a singular role in promoting, preserving, and elevating the best in classical Persian music. She has dedicated her support—by example and action—to the rights of female musicians to create, train, perform, and contribute to a rich legacy of music. Her exemplary role as the embodiment of the dignity of an artist, undaunted by the commercial market or power, makes her yet another impressive and indispensable addition to the list of Bita Prize recipients.

In accepting the award, Parissa closed by saying (translated from Persian), “I again offer my gratitude and dedicate this trophy to all Iranian women artists who, in spite of many obstacles and pressures, have kept their eagerness and, with earnest and hardworking dedication, continue to march on this path.”

“The fact that she has created this rich and varied body of work in spite of many obstacles on women vocalists in Iran, and the fact that, through it, she has never been tempted to either quit or change her singular style...is a testimony to her truly unshakeable dedication to mastering, teaching, performing, [and] researching the best of Iran's rich musical tradition.”

~Bita Daryabari
The Stanford Festival of Iranian Arts hosted two concerts, a performance, a workshop, and several lectures with more than 1,100 attendees.

**Recitals of the Nightingale**

The grand dame of Persian classical music, Parissa, performed with Amir Hossein Pourjavardy, Pejman Hadadi, Saeed Kamjoo, and Ali Pajooheshgar on April 26, 2019.

**RAAM**

Artist and musician, King Raam, gave an intimate spoken-word performance about his life on March 6, 2019.

**Voices of Spring**

The acclaimed musician and music scholar, Hossein Omoumi, performed with Amir Koushkani, Jessika Kenney, Eyvind Kang, Hamin Honari, and Hesam Abedini on May 19, 2019.

**Canticle of the Birds, Parts I & II**

Dr. Michael Barry, February 5 & 7, 2019.

**The Next Revolution Will be Led by Women**

Masih Alinejad, November 29, 2018.

**The Art of Iranian Classical Music: History, Context, and Purpose**

Parissa, April 25, 2019.
The Stanford Iran 2040 Project launched in 2016 to conduct in-depth and interdisciplinary research on Iran’s long-term economic outlook. As political, military, and economic tensions between the U.S. and Iran escalate, the research team, led by Dr. Pooya Azadi, continues to publish analytical reports on the increasingly troublesome state of Iran’s economy and infrastructure.

Co-sponsored by the Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute, the Stanford Iran 2040 Project published three papers this year:

Congratulations to the newest graduates of the Iranian Studies minor program! We wish them the very best in their next endeavors.

**Student Highlights**

Congratulations to anthropology Ph.D. student Alexandria Brown-Hejazi, who is also working towards a certificate in Iranian Studies, for being awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study artistic and cultural exchanges between Safavid Iran and Italy in Rome in March of 2020. She conducted archival research in Venice during the summer. Here, she stands next to a 1603 Safavid silk and velvet textile that Shah Abbas commissioned especially for Doge Marino Grimani in Venice. It features a Madonna and Child, represented according to Quranic rather than Biblical descriptions, and is currently housed in the treasury of St. Mark’s in Venice. The silk was originally used to display the treasures of the Basilica of St. Mark, and is now part of the Palazzo Mocenigo textile collection.

**Student Research**

During the summer of 2019, undergraduate and graduate students affiliated with Iranian Studies furthered their studies through advanced language study and fieldwork, including a trip to India to conduct research on how and why Saudi Arabia and Iran project their brand of Islam into India.

**Student Internships**

This summer, the first Iranian Studies/Global Studies internship was offered at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Iranian Studies minor student Pierce Reza Lowary, spent the summer assisting senior scholar Karim Sadjadpour on research related to U.S.-Iran relations.

Congratulations to anthropology Ph.D. student Alexandria Brown-Hejazi, who is also working towards a certificate in Iranian Studies, for being awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study artistic and cultural exchanges between Safavid Iran and Italy in Rome in March of 2020. She conducted archival research in Venice during the summer. Here, she stands next to a 1603 Safavid silk and velvet textile that Shah Abbas commissioned especially for Doge Marino Grimani in Venice. It features a Madonna and Child, represented according to Quranic rather than Biblical descriptions, and is currently housed in the treasury of St. Mark’s in Venice. The silk was originally used to display the treasures of the Basilica of St. Mark, and is now part of the Palazzo Mocenigo textile collection.
**Iranian Studies Minor**

Lara Prior-Palmer graduated with a minor in Iranian Studies in the winter of 2019. She returned to campus to give a talk on her new book, *Rough Magic*, about her experience as the first woman to win (and youngest rider to finish) the Mongol Derby—known as the world’s longest and toughest horse race.

**Alumni Spotlight**

After graduating from Stanford, Daniel Khalessi (class of 2013) completed an M.A. in Global Affairs from Yale University and an M.A. in Economics from Peking University. He worked as a Research Associate at the Harvard Kennedy School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. This autumn, he begins the J.D. program at Stanford Law School. Daniel was the first student to complete a certificate in Iranian Studies. Daniel reflects on his time as an undergraduate at Stanford and his work with the Iranian Studies Program:

“The courses, professors, and experiences I was fortunate to have at Stanford challenged me to consider how global tectonics have been changing and to think creatively, critically, and practically about how to tackle complex problems emerging from these changes. The Stanford Iranian Studies Program was a major centerpiece of my undergraduate career and opened doors that I had not even considered. I am grateful to the program for providing me with an opportunity for deep introspection into my goals, aspirations, and the meaning of being an American of Iranian descent. The program expanded my curiosity about the world.”

**Norooz Celebration**

Iranian Studies students, faculty, and staff celebrate Norooz (Persian new year) with a traditional Persian dinner and *haftseen* display.
News & Publications

New Archives: Stanford’s modern Iran archives rapidly increasing

With new archive acquisitions, and with the documents and posters already housed at the Hoover Archives and the Green Library, Stanford is now a preeminent center for archival research on modern Iran’s culture and politics.

The papers of Shahrokh Meskoob, one of modern Iran’s most respected and acclaimed public intellectuals, literary critics, memoirists, and Shahnameh scholar and commentator, were donated to Stanford University. The collection includes hundreds of letters from some of Iran’s most prominent intellectuals, thousands of pages of notes, and first drafts of many of his manuscripts. In April of 2020, the launch of this collection will be celebrated with a scholarly conference organized in collaboration with the Green Library at Stanford.

The private papers of Seyed Jalal Tehrani—an astronomer, political figure, and a head of the regency council in the last days of the Shah’s rule—were donated to Iranian Studies and the Hoover Library & Archives.

Homa Sarshar, one of the Iranian diaspora’s most esteemed journalists, generously donated the entire collection of recordings of 40 years of her radio programs to Stanford. The donation includes copies of the invaluable Iranian Jewish Oral History Project she and her family helped create. The collection is now housed at the Green Library at Stanford.

Selection of Recent Publications

Sa’di & Humanism, Abbas Milani with Maryam Mirzadeh (Zemestan, Tehran 1398/2019).

Bahram Beyzaie and “When We Are All Asleep” (Nila Press, October 2019).


“As tensions mount, we must not forget about the Iranian people,” Abbas Milani, The Hill, May 16, 2019

“Islamic Republic of Iran in an Age of Global Transitions: Challenges for a Theocratic Iran”, Abbas Milani with Roya Pakzad, Governance in an Emerging New World, Spring Series, Issue 519, April 22, 2019


“Iran must free Farhad Meysami, a nonviolent fighter for human rights,” Washington Post, Abbas Milani with Larry Diamond, Francis Fukuyama, and Mike McFaul, December 5, 2018

“A Deal Worse,” Abbas Milani, Hoover Digest, October 29, 2018


“The Iranian paradox made more complex by erratic U.S. behavior,” Abbas Milani, The Hill, August 18, 2018

Journal on Beyzaie plays published

Daftarhaye Theatre (Journal of Theater), No. 15, Nila Press.

Nila Press is a prominent publishing house in Iran, with particular emphasis on works in theater.
Thank you for your continued support of the Hamid and Christina Moghadam Program in Iranian Studies at Stanford University. In the 2019-2020 academic year, plans are under way for the 12th Bita Prize for Persian Arts; the Meskoob archive launch conference; and the continuation of the lecture series. Professor Bahram Beyzaie is hard at work on a new play, and we are pleased to be collaborating with Stanford Live on events related to their theme of “politics and music.”

Stay Tuned!

If you missed any lectures or events, join our email list; follow us on Facebook; subscribe to our YouTube channel; keep in touch with us on Instagram, Telegram, or Twitter; download audio recordings from our SoundCloud account; or explore our website.

We have moved! Visit us in our new location in Encina Commons, 615 Crothers Way, suite 128.

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Book on Zahedi Archive published

In October of 2019, Hoover Press published a volume, titled *A Window Into Modern Iran*, commemorating the arrival of the Ardeshir Zahedi archive at the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, and edited by Abbas Milani.

The *Ardeshir Zahedi Archive*, donated to the Hoover Library & Archives in 2017, is easily the most important collection, outside of Iran, on the history of Iran’s modern diplomacy. The collection includes important documents, hundreds of historic photos, and some of General Fazlollah Zahedi’s private papers. Additionally, Ambassador Zahedi created an endowment that will allow the Iranian Studies Program to host a fellow for one quarter each academic year to undertake research on the archives.

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New Course on French-Persian Cooking

An exciting new course is being offered for the first time in the fall of 2019: FRENLANG 60E: Persian-French Cooking, which will take place on Friday afternoons. Students will learn about French and Persian cuisine from experts in their fields, including the Iranian chefs Najmieh Batmanglij, Faz Poursohi, Hanif Sadr and author Naz Deravian, while enjoying some excellent meals.