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The cover photo, “Citadel” was taken in Cairo, Egypt, by Halima Ibrahim, ’24, art history major and Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies affiliate.

Dear Friends,

The world is undergoing fast changes and Muslim-majority societies are among the most vulnerable in our new and uncertain post-pandemic reality. To honor the fortitude of Muslim communities worldwide, this year, we chose to focus on the themes that bind and unite, and renew our hope for connection, collective memory, and heritage preservation. Our ‘21-‘22 academic theme of “Memory, Heritage and Cultural Production” inspired our brilliant Abbasi faculty affiliates to organize colloquia and seminars along the same theme. Professor Samer Al-Saber taught a new course entitled “Introduction to Arab Studies” with a focus on memory and cultural production.

Professor Nora Barakat of the History Department, along with Professor Trinidad Ricco (Abbasi Affiliate Visiting Scholar, Director of Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies, Rutgers University) brought together three stellar events and successfully launched The Forum for Interdisciplinary Gulf Heritage Studies at Stanford (FIGHS). Bringing Gulf heritage experts to Stanford such as Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi, FIGHS critically engages the politics of making and mobilizing heritage in the Gulf in the context that confront the legacies of colonialism characteristic of heritage preservation traditions.

At the Abbasi Program, we are always looking for ways to increase our student engagement and inspire a different and unique perspective on Islam and Muslim intellectual production on the Stanford campus. Our stellar inaugural Abbasi-Markaz fellow (who also happens to be a minors student in Islamic Studies) Yusuf Zahurullah organized three successful events, ranging from “the Islamic Golden Age and Silicon Valley” with Professor Asad Ahmed (UC Berkeley) to the breadth of Black Muslim art with Professor Su’ad Abdul Khabeer (University of Michigan).

Continuing the theme of connectivity, we have already begun working with the new AY ‘22-‘23 theme of “Oceanic Imaginaries”, as oceans are timeless representations of expanse, exchange, ecology and connectivity. We are pleased to partner with our umbrella division, Stanford Global Studies, to feature courses, exhibits, and performances that engage with the cultures, geographies, and histories of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean world.

We hope you will continue to support the Abbasi Program and stay connected, this year and beyond. Thank you for your partnership. Here is to a more prosperous future for all.

Sincerely,

Lisa Blaydes
Tell us about your current research/what excites you in Islamic Studies right now.

Hello! I think of myself as a philologist: someone who studies (and cares about!) words and what they mean, whether these are words in poems or words that make up theories about how the world is and should be. Islamic Studies is in an interesting place at the moment: on the one hand scholars are now finally producing overlapping research on the vast diversity that was always present in the Islamic archive – recent work on Africa (including that of my interviewer Farah El-Sharif) is a good example. On the other hand, we still have not made even the most basic sources readily available to people who do not read the languages in which they were written (the “Classical” Arabic works that “postclassical” African scholars read and engaged with remain untranslated, for example). But this work is slowly getting done, and I think we will see the benefits across academia in a decade or so. I think particularly of the Library of Arabic Literature series from NYU Abu Dhabi, and projects like Alan Williams’s translation of the Masnavi into blank verse.

How did your interest in Islamic Studies begin and how would you define your approach to it?

It’s funny, I never thought of myself as an Islamic Studies specialist during undergraduate or after graduation, even though the Arabic part of my Arabic and International Relations degree included Quranic studies and Classical Arabic literature, and even though I then ended up working in human rights and writing on questions of Muslim access to political and civic rights in Palestine and Israel. It was only when my Ph.D. at Harvard taught “Arabic and Islamic Studies” as a pairing that I started to think of myself as taking part in a field with that label. Now I work in Comparative Literature, which is a discipline both radically open to all forms of human literary and cultural endeavor, and at the same time somewhat behind the curve when it comes to taking advantage of the conceptual resources available in Islamic literature, history, and culture. As a philologist – someone who works closely with words – I find myself in the position of trying to advertise the advantages of Islamic Studies to my colleagues in Comparative Literature.

What are some of the aspects you wish more people knew about your work?

I just published an article on Neoplatonic poetics that deals with al-Hallaj and the Bay Area poet Robert Duncan, among others.

What is your favorite course to teach at Stanford?

At the moment, I am having a lot of fun co-teaching a course on Islamic science with my colleague in Classics Reviel Netz – we are tackling the way astronomy, mathematics, and linguistics developed in Islamic societies from the eighth century onwards. It is also always a privilege to teach the Comparative Literature Capstone Seminar; the department has a great group of majors in senior year who are working on all kinds of different topics. This quarter, I have been introducing them to Classical Arabic poetics and the way scholars like ‘Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani can help us read poems in English today.

What advice would you offer to students wanting to pursue Arabic and the study of Arabic texts?

Early and often! Arabic is a massively rewarding language that offers access to vast untapped resources for contemporary thought, politics, history, and much more. Arabic does take several years to learn, but college is the best time to do that, and the Abbasi Program offers summer funding that can enable students to get a head start on their Stanford Language Center courses for the next year.
Tell us about your current research trajectory and what questions excite you the most.

Over the past couple of years I have been drawn more and more to questions of poetic performance and the interconnections of poetry and song. In some ways, one could say that I am returning to my professional roots as a musician. I’ll be on Junior Leave in 2022-23 and hope to spend the year working on a monograph with the provisional title Infinite Events: Poetry, Music, and Spiritual Practice in the Shadow of Sheykh Ahmad-e Jam. My project sets out to trace how poems are performed to music and understood as part of the spiritual practice of the Mojaddedi Naqshbandi Sufi order centred around the shrine of Sheykh Aḥmad-e Jām (1048-1141) in Torbat-e Jām, Khorāsān, Iran. The practice of the Sufi bards defies the modern notion that poetic texts can be separated from the matrix uniting poet, singer, and audience in a ritual of performance where poem, music, and ethics become an indivisible whole. Music here is an essential and formative element of a performance that is at once poetic and spiritual; it also creates an event on which the temporal relation of disciple and guide can be founded.

In what ways does your work on Persian poetics intersect with the field of Islamic Studies?

This is one of the questions that I will be addressing in my new book. The literary – to use a modern concept – aspects of the poems sung by the dotāri bards cannot be divorced from the Islamic ethics on which their performative practice is founded. Your 2016 book, In Memories of an Impossible Future: Mehdi Akhavān Sāles and the Poetics of Time you trace the quest for a modern language of poetry through different figurations of temporality. What was your favorite aspect while working on this book?

The luxury of spending two years reading and thinking about a poet whose work I believe to be outstanding. It takes patience and the ability to sit in silence before a poem begins to open up, so time is the most precious resource for a scholar working on poetry. I am infinitely grateful for those silent spaces of suspended time from which my book could emerge.

What courses are you teaching in Spring ’22?

I am teaching two courses that I feel quite passionate about. One is “Songs of Love and Longing,” which will take students on a musical and poetic journey from the Balkans to South Asia. The other course is “Persian Poetry: Text, Space and Image;” I am co-teaching with Ala Ebtekar, which for me is a dream come true. I admire Ala’s work and am excited to see how we can talk about poems from a millennial tradition in ways that combine the lived approach of art with the analytical retrospection of scholarly research.

What do you wish more people knew about your work?

I hope that my work can lead people to the poems – and singers – I write about.
Toby Matthiesen

Toby Matthiesen is a Visiting Fellow at the Abbasi Program for the Spring of 2022. While at Stanford, Dr. Matthiesen will primarily be working with the Baath Party of Iraq archives at the Hoover Institution for a project on Sunni-Shi‘i Relations in the Middle East. This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 888063.

Dr. Matthiesen is a Marie Curie Global Fellow at Ca’ Foscari University and Stanford University and is the author of Sectarian Gulf: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Spring That Wasn’t (Stanford University Press, 2013), and The Other Saudis: Shiism, Dissent and Sectarianism (Cambridge University Press, 2015). He is also a frequent commentator in the media and has held fellowships at Oxford, Cambridge, and the LSE.

Dr. Tomoyo Chisaka

Dr. Tomoyo is Tomoy a Visiting Scholar to the Abbasi Program from Japan this academic year. She is currently affiliated with the University of Tokyo as a JSPS postdoctoral fellow. Her research examines elections under authoritarian regimes, particularly Iran. She received degrees from Osaka University (B.A. in Persian, M.A. and Ph.D. in International Public Policy). She has done a one-year fieldwork in Iran as a visiting student at the University of Tehran to complete her Ph.D. research on Iran’s election management body. While at Stanford, her faculty sponsor will be Professor Blaydes and she will be a part of the communities of the Abbasi Program and the Hamid and Christina Moghadam Program in Iranian Studies. She plans to develop her paper on managing post-election protests in authoritarian regimes and will consult the archives at Hoover institute and Stanford libraries.

Aya Hilal

Aya is the undergraduate Abbasi-Markaz fellow and Moroccan-American Stanford student from Tinley Park, Illinois. Her major is currently undeclared, but she’s “passionate about social justice, anti-imperialism in the Islamic world, biology, writing, and healthcare in marginalized communities, especially the Muslim American community.” Aya will organize three events this year, so stay tuned for Abbasi-Markaz Fellowship announcements.
The Abbasi Program Supported 7 students pursuing their summer research, fieldwork, language study, or internship placements over the summer of 2022.

- **Internships**
  - **Nina Silvia Iskandarsjach**
    - Undergraduate International Relations
    - Arabic Study at Sijal Institute, Amman, Jordan
  - **Emre Can Daglioglu**
    - Graduate History
    - Ph.D. Research, Istanbul, Turkey
  - **Feyaad Allie**
    - Ph.D. Political Science
    - Ph.D Research, India

- **Language Study**
  - **Callum Alexander**
    - Undergraduate Comparative Literature
    - Arabic Study at Sijal Institute, Amman, Jordan
  - **Dwight Miners Knighty**
    - Master of Art Student in International Policy
    - Arabic Study at Qasid Institute, Amman, Jordan

- **Research or Fieldwork**
  - **Mahmoud Hamdi**
    - UNHCR Internship, Amman, Jordan
  - **Hannah Yuh Watkins**
    - Undergraduate Engineering
    - Mawa Modular Internship, Amman, Jordan
  - **James Tresman**
    - Undergraduate Comparative Literature
    - Arabic Study at Sijal Institute, Amman, Jordan
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Contextualizing the Current Crisis in Afghanistan
September 2, 2021
Zohra Saed, Halima Kazem-Stojanovic, Ahmad Rashid Salim
Moderated by Mejgan Massoumi

Religion as the Site of Non-State Politics: Islam, Caste, and the Limits of Secularism in India
January 11, 2022
Shaunna Rodrigues, Shantanu Nevrekar, Shubhangni Gupta

In Conversation: Artist Ambreen Butt and Curator Elizabeth Mitchell
January 12, 2022

The Case Against White Feminism
January 25, 2022
Rafia Zakaria, Usha Iyer

Love in the Islamic Tradition from Islam in Africa
February 14, 2022
Bilal “Butch” Ware

Black Ink: Exploring the Breadth of Black Muslim Art
February 24,
Su’ad Abdul Khabeer

The Social Fingerprint: Personal Identification, Social Relationality and Anxieties of Co-existence at the Kurdish-Iraqi Borderlands
March 4, 2022
Kerem Ussakli

Support Incarcerated Muslims
Workshop on Imam Jamal al-Amin. Imam Jamil al-Amin (aka H. Rap Brown) is a Muslim elder and former Civil Rights Leader.
March 5, 2022

What is the value of the Persianate to Afghanistan Studies
March 11, 2022

Rethinking Modern Sunni-Shii Relations: The State, Revolution, and Foreign Intervention
March 15, 2022
Toby Matthiesen

Towards a People-Centered Recovery of Post-blast Beirut, Lebanon
March 31st 2022
Howayda Al-Harithy

“What’s Secular About Religious Law? Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Perspectives.”
March 31st 2022

Marketing Democracy: The Political Economy of Democracy Aid in the Middle East
April 19th 2022
Erin A. Snider

REFRAMING ENSLAVED PASTS SERIES (part of Stanford Global Studies Research Workshops Program)
April 28, 2022

Ensuring a Trauma-Informed Approach to Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL in Iraq
April 28, 2022
Daryn Reicherter, Nenna Ndukwe

You Have Not Yet Been Defeated: A Conversation with Sanaa Seif and Sharif Abdel Kouddous about Human Rights in Egypt
May 11, 2022
Sanaa Seif
Salim Tamari was a Visiting Fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center this Spring Quarter. He is an Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) senior fellow and the former director of the IPS-affiliated Institute of Jerusalem Studies. He is the editor of Jerusalem Quarterly and Hawliyyat al Quds. He is professor of sociology at Birzeit University and an adjunct professor at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University. He has authored several works on urban culture, political sociology, biography and social history, and the social history of the Eastern Mediterranean. Tamari was nominated by the Department of Theater and Performance Studies.

Master-musician Necati Çelik (ne-JAH-tee CHEY-lik) was the Roberta Bowman Denning visiting artist in residency at the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies at Stanford University and Spring 2022 lecturer in the Department of Music. Çelik is one of the most important representatives of Ottoman musical traditions and an undisputed master of the ud, or fretless lute. Regarded unanimously as a virtuoso of this era, he is an unparalleled improviser and interpreter of Turkish classical music.
Feyaad Allie traveled to India in the summer ’22 on Abbasi Program Grant to research Muslim marginalization in India. Allie’s dissertation, titled “Power, Exclusion, and Identity: The Politics of Muslim Marginalization in India,” is broken into several chapters. One of his findings is that when Indian Muslims do secure seats in government, they are actually less likely to win reelection. Allie theorizes that Muslims in India experience a “representation trap” in which the dominant group works to consolidate its power and the marginalized group splits into factions. In the case of Indian Muslims, Allie’s research suggests the Muslim community splits along caste lines when there are multiple Muslim candidates, reducing their power as a political bloc.

Hannah Yuh Watkins is an undergraduate Stanford student majoring in Mechanical Engineering. She spent two weeks in Jordan this past summer to continue working with Mawa Modular, a company that builds modular, sustainable housing for refugees in Jordan. This trip allowed Hannah to assist in the project. Hannah also participated in efforts to make significant modifications to the design of the housing structures. After her successful internship at Mawa Modular, Hannah was able to bring back samples of the wall and roof to support a Stanford mechanical engineering capstone project that will be going to Jordan in the winter. Despite growing up in Abu Dhabi, Hannah never got a chance to immerse herself in Arabic. While the goal of the trip was not for language immersion, Hannah said that “this trip was a way of weaving personality and culture into the words I spoke. When I went back to Abu Dhabi, I found expressions coming out instinctively. This comfort with the language is something I would not have achieved without this trip.”

Hannah reflects fondly on the trip’s highlights: how she was able to spend time with her family, coordinate visits with them to Petra and Wadi Rum, enjoy the delicious food, and develop a project to provide dignified housing to refugees in Jordan. Hannah expressed her gratitude to the Abbasi Program “for unlocking such an enriching experience.”

Emre Can Daglioglu: The Archival Research Report in Istanbul

The Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies supported Ph.D. Candidate Emre Can Daglioglu’s visit to the Ottoman Archives and the SALT Archives in Istanbul. Three bodies of collections housed in the archives—the Commerce, Public Works, Forestry, Mining (CPWFMM) Ministry collections, the Agriculture Ministry collections, and the Arzuhal, Bab-i Ali Evrak Odasi and Dahiliye İdare collections—were of particular importance for his research on how imperial experts and technocrats of the PDA contested to play a role in scientific decision-making regarding silk production. In his own words, upon his return back to Stanford, Emre said that: “I am very grateful to the Abbasi Program for helping to finance this research. I believe that this sponsorship added to the outreach of Abbasi as a platform addressing the importance of thinking about a global history that bridges various human and non-human actors. This project also paved new ways of collaboration with a new institutional partner to advance research in a not-often visited repository of under examined collections.”
GIFTS & SUPPORT

We at the Abbasi Program express our gratitude to our alumni, parents, students, and friends for their support of our activities at Stanford.

Your gift enhances genuine understanding of the histories, cultures, and languages of Islam and Muslims societies by:

- Equipping the next generation of leaders with rigorous knowledge through courses, seminars, and research or internship opportunities.
- Supporting innovative faculty research and scholarship.
- Deepening our public and K-12 outreach efforts.

Your generosity ensures that knowledge of Islam and Muslim societies is an integral part of the future of America and the globe.

For more information, please review islamicstudies.stanford.edu/about/make-gift or contact Scott Sugiura, Senior Associate Director of Development, at ssugiara@stanford.edu or (650) 723-1208.