

ASSEF ASHRAF

Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies
 Sidgwick Avenue
 Cambridge
 CB3 9DA

Pembroke College
 Trumpington Street
 Cambridge
 CB2 1RF

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

University of Cambridge

2024–	University Associate Professor (Grade 10) in the Eastern Islamic Lands and Persian-Speaking World [with tenure]
2023–2024	University Associate Professor (Grade 9) in the Eastern Islamic Lands and Persian-Speaking World [with tenure]
2018–2023	University Assistant Professor in the Eastern Islamic Lands and Persian-Speaking World

Pembroke College, Cambridge

2018–	Fellow
-------	--------

Bryn Mawr College

2016–2018	Consortium for Faculty Diversity Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of History
-----------	--

Central Connecticut State University

2015–2016	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History
-----------	---

EDUCATION

2016	PhD, History, Yale University <i>From Khan to Shah: State, Society, and Forming the Ties that Made Qajar Iran</i> Honorable Mention, 2018 Mehrdad Mashayekhi Dissertation Award, Association for Iranian Studies
2011	MPhil, History, Yale University
2010	MA, History, Yale University
2005	BA, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University

PUBLICATIONS

Books (single authored)

Making and Remaking Empire in Early Qajar Iran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

Shortlisted: 2025 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize in Middle Eastern Studies

Edited Volumes

ed., with Abbas Amanat, *The Cambridge Companion to Qajar Iran* (under contract with Cambridge University Press).

ed., with Abbas Amanat, *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

Peer-reviewed Journal Articles and Book Chapters

“Safavid Nostalgia in Early Qajar Chronicles,” in *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran*, Idea of Iran, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022), 81–102.

“Copied and Collected: Firmans, Petitions, and the Political History of Qajar Iran,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, no. 5–6 (November 2019): 963–97.

“Pathways to the Persianate,” in *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1–15.

Persian Translation: “Qalamrū-yi Zabān va Farhang-i Fārsī: Bāzandīshī-yi Sipihrī-yi Mushtarik” (available online at: <https://www.aasoo.org/fa/books/2155>).

“A Familial State: Elite Families, Ministerial Offices, and the Formation of Qajar Iran,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51, no. 01 (February 2019): 43–64.

“The Politics of Gift Exchange in Early Qajar Iran, 1785–1834,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58, no. 2 (April 2016): 550–76.

Book Reviews

Rudi Matthee, *Angels Tapping at the Wine-Shop’s Door: A History of Alcohol in the Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023). *American Historical Review* 129: 4 (2024).

Blain Auer, *In the Mirror of Persian Kings: The Origins of Perso-Islamic Courts and Empires in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). *Global Intellectual History* 8: 5 (2023).

Michael Axworthy, ed., *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). *Iranian Studies* 52: 3–4 (2019).

Hooshang Amirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran under the Qajars: Society, Politics, Economics and Foreign Relations, 1796–1926* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012). *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47: 4 (November 2015).

Other Writing

“Bahā’iyān va Siyāsāt dar Dawrān-yi Qājār” [Baha’is and Politics during the Qajar Era], in Erfan Sabeti, ed. *Ā’in-i Bahā’ī: Jām’ih va Siyāsāt* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Bunyād-i Taslīmī, 2020), 21–28 (available online at:

<https://www.aasoo.org/fa/books/2891?fbclid=IwAR3yiQKBBuaFCeqPSf8oFgAS44rkIYNKPsExr2FslgEfWorYbYlqg1zXxs>).

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2018	Mehrdad Mashayekhi Dissertation Award (Honorable Mention)
2014–2015	Roshan Institute Fellowship for Excellence in Persian Studies
2012–2013	Samuel K. Bushnell Fellowship
2013	John F. Enders Fellowship
2011–2012	MacMillan Center Dissertation Research Grant
2011–2012	International Security Studies, Smith Richardson Foundation Grant
2010	Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (Russian)
2008–2009	Yale University Chase Fellowship
2005	Rumi-Biruni Prize for Excellence in Persian Studies, New York University

PRESENTATIONS

Invited Lectures

“Finding Empire in Early Qajar Iran.” Séminaire Autorité et culture politique en Iran qajar et dans l’Empire ottoman (ca. 1780-1920). L’école des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris. June 2025.

“Finding Empire in Qajar Iran.” *The Royal Domain: Empire in Qajar Iran and the Nineteenth-Century Persianate World*, a conference in celebration of Abbas Amanat. Yale University. May 2025.

“The Making of Qajar Iran: Imperial Formation in a Transitional Period.” Middle East History Seminar, Faculty of History. University of St Andrews, March 2025.

“Making and Remaking Empire in Early Qajar Iran.” British Institute of Persian Studies. September 2024.

“Remaking Empire in Early Qajar Iran.” Department of Middle Eastern Studies Research Seminar. University of Cambridge, October 2023.

“Loyalty, Leadership, and the Formation of Qajar Iran.” Middle East History Seminar, Faculty of History. University of Cambridge, February 2019.

“Fitting Tributes and Fine Brocades: Gift Giving in Early Qajar Iran.”

1. Department of History. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 2016.
2. Department of History and Program in Middle Eastern Studies. Bryn Mawr College, February 2016.

3. Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies. Princeton University, December 2015.

"From Khan to Shah: The Formation of Qajar Iran, 1750-1834." Department of Near Eastern Studies. Princeton University, January 2016.

"Frontier Politics in the Caucasus." Department of History Faculty Research Seminar. Central Connecticut State University, October 2015.

"Fitting Tributes and Fine Brocades: The Politics of Gift Giving in Qajar Iran." Iran Colloquium. Yale University, December 2014.

"Provincial Players in the Great Game: The Qajars and the British in Bushehr, 1827." The International Security Studies Colloquium. Yale University, September 2014.

Presentations at Professional Conferences

"Safavid Nostalgia in Early Qajar Historiography." *The Idea of Iran: Iran in transition to a new world order*. Symposium held at SOAS. London, November 2020.

"Loyalty, Leadership, and the Formation of Qajar Iran." Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting. New Orleans, November 2019.

"The Qajars: Kingship, Turco-Mongol Power, and the Ends of the Persianate World." European Conference of Iranian Studies (ECIS). Berlin, September 2019.

"City, State, Empire: Governing Early-Qajar Bushehr." Association for Iranian Studies Biennial Conference. Irvine, CA, August 2018.

"A Familial State: Ministers, Historians, and the Formation of Qajar Iran." The Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting. Washington, DC, November 2017.

"Governing the Guarded Domains: Farmans, Petitions, and Documentation in Early Qajar Iran." Islamic Cultures of Documentation Conference (by invitation). University of Pittsburgh, May 2017.

"Portrait of a Young Scholar: The Diaries of E.G. Browne." The Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting. Boston, MA, November 2016.

"On the Edge of Empire: Governing the Caucasus in Early Qajar Iran." Association for Iranian Studies (formerly International Society of Iranian Studies) Biennial Conference. Vienna, August 2016.

"At the Edge of Empire: Frontier Administration and the Formation of Qajar Iran." The Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting. Denver, CO, November 2015.

"Loyalty, Largesse, and Lucre: Gift-exchange in Early Qajar Iran." International Society of Iranian Studies Biennial Conference. Montreal, August 2014.

"'Quenching the Fire of Ferment': Political Authority and Urban Upheaval in Early Nineteenth Century Bushire." The Association for the Study of Persianate Studies Biennial Conference. Sarajevo, September 2013.

Conference Panel Organizing, Chairing, and Discussing

Chair, “Foreign and Persian perceptions of Iran”. The Idea of Iran: Qajar Iran on the cusp of modernity. London, May 2024.

Discussant, Graduate Workshop: State of Scholarship. Part of the 2017 Ehsan Yarshater Lecture Series. Yale University, April 2017.

Organizer, “E. G. Browne and his Iranian Interlocutors: Knowledge Production beyond Orientalism.” The Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting. Boston, MA, November 2016.

Chair, “Personnel and Patronage: Getting Ahead in the Ottoman System.” The Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting. Washington, DC, November 2014.

Discussant, “Persianate Communities Abroad.” The Persianate World: A Conceptual Inquiry. Yale University, May 2014.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Cambridge, 2018–present

Undergraduate

Empires of the Eastern Islamic World: Timurids to the Qajars

Formation of the Modern Middle East (co-taught)

Introduction to the Contemporary Middle East (co-taught)

Introduction to the History and Culture of the Middle East (co-taught)

The Global Eighteenth Century (co-taught)

Postgraduate

Theory and Method in Middle Eastern Studies (co-taught)

Directed Readings in the History of Iran and the Persianate world

PhD Supervision (primary or co-supervisor)

Yinghui Huang (History, co-supervisor with Dr Dror Weil, 2024–present)

Saleh AlKhulaifi (2021–2025)

Yusuf Chaudhury (co-supervisor with Prof. Andrew Marsham, 2020–2025)

Iqan Shahidi (2020–present)

MPhil Supervision

Leo Alaghband (2024–2025)

Hannah Hassani (2023–2024)

Elizabeth Linsdell (2023–2024)

Maya Taha (2023–2024)

Casper Sanderson (2020–21)

Mohammad Z. Adnan (2020–21)

Merjen Atayeva (2019–20)

Yusuf Chaudhary (co-supervisor with Prof. Andrew Marsham, 2019–20)

Manuel Giardino (2019–20)

Iqan Shahidi (2019-20)
Thomas Whitworth (2019–20)

Pembroke Cambridge Summer Programme (for International Students)
History of the Modern Middle East

Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education, 2020 and 2023

Methods in Historical and Social Science Research (Master's Level)

Bryn Mawr College, 2016–2018

Histories of Gender and Sexuality in the Middle East
Three Empires of Islam
Introduction to Middle East History

Central Connecticut State University, 2015–2016

Early Modern Muslim Empires and their Legacies
Modern Iran: Great Game to Great Satan
The Modern Middle East
Europe: Renaissance to Enlightenment

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Service to the Field

2021–22; 2023–	External Examiner for Persian Studies, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford
2022–2024	Council Member, Association for Iranian Studies
2018–	Blind peer reviewer for Brill, I.B. Tauris, <i>Modern Asian Studies</i> , <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History (CSSH)</i> , <i>Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient (JESHO)</i> , <i>Journal of Social History, Iran, Middle Eastern Literatures</i> , as well as Symposia Iranica and the Biennial Iranian Studies Conference.

Editorial

2021–2023	Book Review Editor (History), <i>Iranian Studies</i>
2016–2017	Senior Managing Editor, <i>Curator Reviews</i> (http://curator.reviews)
2014–2016	Assistant Managing Editor, <i>Dissertation Reviews</i>
2012–2016	Field Editor, <i>Iran and Persian Studies Dissertation Reviews</i>

Service to the University of Cambridge

2024–	Postgraduate Coordinator, DMES
2023–	Co-convenor of the DMES Research Seminar, FAMES
2023–	Faculty Board, FAMES
2023–	Degree Committee, FAMES

2023–	Research Committee, FAMES
2023–2024	Undergraduate Dissertation Coordinator, FAMES
2020–2022	Faculty Board, FAMES
2020–2022	Arabic and Persian Exams Coordinator, FAMES
2019–2022	Research Committee, FAMES
2018–2022	Convenor of the DMES Seminar Series, FAMES
2019–2021	Degree Committee, FAMES
2019–2021	Teaching and Learning Committee, FAMES
2019–2021	Outreach Coordinator, FAMES

Service to Pembroke College, Cambridge

2018–	Director of Studies, AMES
2021–	Undergraduate Tutor
2020–2022, 2025–	Education Committee
2023–	Infrastructure and Services Committee
2018–	Admissions Interviewer for Undergraduate Applicants to AMES

Conference Organizing

2014	“Persianate Studies: A Conceptual Inquiry” at Yale (with Abbas Amanat)
------	--

ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS

Middle East Studies Association

Association for Iranian Studies

British Institute of Persian Studies

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Human Rights Watch, New York, NY

2007–2008	Senior Associate, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Division
2005–2007	Associate, MENA Division