

Cover Letter

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I write to apply for the postdoctoral fellowship announced by the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto, and express my interest in this opportunity, as it corresponds closely to my research interests and career plans. I successfully completed my PhD degree in Islamic Studies with the GPA of 4/4 at McGill's Institute of Islamic Studies just recently, and am highly motivated to continue and expand my research in a new academic environment.

Since the beginning of my master's studies at the University of Tehran until now, my intellectual journey has largely been focused on medieval and premodern Persian Sufism with a particular focus on Persian Sufi orders. It was my extensive studies in the area of Sufism, as well as the solid knowledge I managed to acquire by meticulous study of a plethora of published and unpublished primary sources, which convinced my supervisor and myself that I could undertake a thorough analysis of the confessional evolution of Persian Sufism from the Mongol through the Safavid period. This challenging yet essential project, which was long overdue in the field, took nearly three years of my PhD, and only a part of it constituted my doctoral dissertation (I have discussed the themes of my thesis in the "Monograph Synopsis" document). In this endeavor, apart from the matchless mentorship of my supervisor Prof. Rula Jurdi Abisaab, I had the privilege of benefitting from the guidance of Glasgow University's Prof. Lloyd Ridgeon among others, as well as the intensive codicological training of Prof. François Déroche, Prof. Nuria de Castilla, and Prof. Jamil Ragep.

Even though I always saw it a beneficial idea to engage in postdoctoral research after my PhD, my determination and motivation for doing so has multiplied since my oral defense in July. The very positive reports of both my thesis examiners (Prof. Cyrus Zargar and Prof. Prashant Keshavmurthy) as well as the heartwarming feedback I received from my defense committee members such as Prof. Robert Wisnovsky, have all persuaded me to prioritize publishing my thesis over any other task. That is why I believe a postdoctoral fellowship like the one announced by the EOM Institute is a wonderful opportunity for such a project. The Institute's brilliant scholarly affiliates, along with its excellent research resources for Iranian studies, have made it the ideal institution for a researcher like me who seeks to develop his dissertation into a monograph, while getting scholarly advice from some of the best experts of the field at the University of Toronto.

I have included my teaching and research experiences, language skills, and academic publications in my CV. I will be glad to provide further details and information regarding any aspect of my academic background if necessary. Thank you very much for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,
Seyed Saleh Pezhman