

Piero Donnini

Via Pietro Traversari 15, 48121, Ravenna (RA), Italy

Telephone: +39 348 174 4323 (mobile)

Email: donninipiero@gmail.com

24 June 2025

To the kind attention of the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto,

Candidacy for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies 2025-2026.

I recently graduated *cum laude* with a PhD in Asian and African Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where I wrote a dissertation on the reception of the *sāqināme* in Persian literature. My research highlighted the pivotal role that Turcographic literary circles played in the emergence of the *sāqināme* as a distinct genre.

By applying for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies, I seek to further develop and substantiate the hypotheses advanced in my doctoral work, broaden the scope of my research, and consolidate it into a monograph that I hope will make a lasting contribution to the field of Persographic literature. The fellowship offered by your esteemed institute would provide an ideal intellectual environment for the advancement of this scholarly endeavor.

My academic trajectory has been consistently centered on Persian literary traditions. My undergraduate thesis focused on Moḥsen Nāmju, a contemporary musician and lyricist who draws upon the canonical works of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Persian poets while engaging with Reżā Barāheni's seminal work, *Xeṭāb be parvānehā*. Later, I chose to specialize in Indo-Persian studies. My master's thesis involved a comparative study of the *robā'iyāt* section of Ṣohuri Toršizi's *kolliyāt* (MS 14041, Library of the Iranian Parliament) and Behdārvand's printed edition, leading me to a broader engagement with the Persographic manuscript tradition. This work laid the foundation for my doctoral research on Ṣohuri's *maṭnavi* poem *Sāqināme* and, more broadly, on the *sāqināme* as a literary form.

Although the Persographic literary tradition transcends geographical and political boundaries, it remains crucial to engage with Iran as a living, dynamic, and pluralistic reality. As a scholar of Persian literature, I consider collaboration with the academic community in Iran a fundamental priority. In this regard, I deeply admire forward-looking initiatives such as *Iran Namag* and the *Iran Namag Books* series, which foster intellectual exchange and scholarly dialogue. I would be honored to contribute to and learn from this vibrant community of researchers.

Best regards,

Piero Donnini



Enc.: CV; Synopsis and Research Interests; Two Letters of Recommendation.



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Venice, 24 June 2025

To the selection board of the
Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies

**Dipartimento
di Studi sull'Asia
e sull'Africa
Mediterranea**

**Department
of Asian and North
African Studies**

—
Palazzo Vendramin
dei Carmini
Dorsoduro, 3462
30123 Venezia - Italy

T+39 0412349511
F+39 0412349589

Ca' Cappello
San Polo, 2035
30125 Venezia - Italy

T+39 0412348811
F+39 0415241847

www.unive.it/dsaam

C.F. 80007720271
P. IVA 00816350276

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing this letter in the strongest support of Dr. Piero Donnini's application for the prestigious fellowship offered by your distinguished institution.

I have known Dr. Donnini for many years, closely following his career as a student, especially in the last four years, as the supervisor of his PhD thesis. Over time, I have come to deeply appreciate his seriousness, consistent dedication, research independence, and remarkable critical maturity.

Dr. Donnini has written a brilliant and, in many respects, groundbreaking doctoral dissertation on the *saqiname* (book of the cupbearer) genre and on 'Abd on-Nabi Faxr oz-Zamāni Qazvini's *Mayxāne*, in which he shed light on the compositional strategies of that treatise, proposed innovative hypotheses regarding the historical development of *saqiname* as a genre, and produced the first unabridged translation, in a European language, of Zohuri Toršizi's *Sāqināme*, one of the most outstanding and complex compositions of the kind.

Dr. Donnini enthusiastically wishes to continue his research in this field, and I am confident that the publication he is preparing will put forward original hypotheses and offer fresh perspectives that will enrich future scholarship.

I have no doubt whatsoever about Dr. Donnini's commitment to this work, since I am well acquainted with his absolute academic rigor and rare reliability as a human being. I believe that your fellowship would not only recognize the dedication he has already shown in the field of Persian studies, but more importantly, it would provide the conditions necessary for him to pursue his work at a stage of full maturity in terms of critical and argumentative approach.

Therefore, I do hope that Dr. Donnini's application will receive favourable consideration from your institution.

With my warmest regards,

Stefano Pellò
Professor of Persian Literature and Indo-Persian Studies



Università
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Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia
e sull'Africa Mediterranea

Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Campo San Sebastiano, Dorsoduro 1686, 30123 Venezia
P.IVA 00816350276 - CF 80007720271
www.unive.it/dsaam

Venice, 26 June 2025

To the Selection Committee of the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies.

Dear Committee Members.

It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend PhD Piero Donnini for the fellowship offered by your prestigious institution. I am Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and I had the privilege of mentoring Piero Donnini since the early stages of his academic journey.

Over the years, I have come to appreciate not only his intellectual discipline and steadfast commitment to scholarship but also his independent thinking and his ability to engage critically with complex textual traditions. His academic career has been marked by both in-depth research and originality.

Donnini's doctoral research exemplifies these qualities. His dissertation focuses on the *sāqināme* [book of the cupbearer] genre and on the early-seventeenth century *tadkere Maykhāne*, offering an in-depth analysis of its compositional strategies and shedding light on narrative inconsistencies within the text. His groundbreaking line of research, which traces the appearance of the *sāqināme* composition within the Turcographic literary circles of the late Timurid era, the subsequent literary categorization of the composition by Ottoman literary circles, and the genre's reintegration into the Persographic sphere through the multilingual educated circles of late fifteenth-century Shiraz, brings into focus an issue to which no scholar had hitherto succeeded in providing due recognition. A further major contribution of his work is the first complete Italian translation of the *Sāqināme* by Zohuri Toršizi, a court poet active in the kingdoms of Deccan during the second half sixteenth century.

Donnini is currently preparing a scholarly publication based on his research, and I am convinced that it will introduce innovative perspectives and provide fertile ground for further academic discussion in the field of Persian studies. I firmly believe that by virtue of his methodological rigor and interpretive ability, his book will make a significant and lasting contribution to the discipline.

I am confident not only in his intellectual capabilities but also in his human qualities, his capacity for dialogue and his professionalism. A fellowship from your institution would not only acknowledge the impressive work he has already undertaken but would also offer him the ideal context to pursue his research further, at a time when his critical approach is seriously developed and mature from a scientific point of view.

I wholeheartedly support Dr. Donnini's candidacy and hope that you will give his application your most favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Daniela Meneghini



Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature

Department of Asian and North African Studies

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

San Polo 2035

30125 Venezia - Italy

Tel. +39 0412348819

neghin@unive.it