

Synopsis of My Monograph and Research Interests of Dr Behrouz Soheili Esfahani

My academic journey and research are centered on the critical examination of Iranian handicrafts, exploring their role in articulating and shaping socio-political, artistic, and religious discourses from the Qajar era through the Pahlavi dynasty and into the contemporary Islamic Republic. My monograph, titled **"Discourse Analysis of Iranian Handicrafts from the Constitutional Era to the Twelfth Government of the Islamic Republic,"** serves as a cornerstone of this exploration, delving into the complex ways in which these cultural objects have been both products and symbols of broader societal changes.

The primary focus of my research is on the dualities inherent in the discourse surrounding handicrafts—specifically the contrasts between "Form/Content" and "Application/Function." These dualities have played a crucial role in defining the cultural and artistic value of handicrafts within Iranian society across different historical periods. By analyzing these contrasts, I aim to reveal how handicrafts have been employed to negotiate and express competing narratives of identity, modernity, and tradition, especially in the face of significant political and cultural shifts.

A central theme in my work is the application of **Foucauldian discourse analysis**. This methodological approach has enabled me to critically assess the ways in which Iranian handicrafts have been positioned within the frameworks of Westernization and Orientalism during the Qajar period, and how these perceptions were transformed under the Pahlavi regime and later in the Islamic Republic. My research reveals the complexities of these transformations, demonstrating how handicrafts have been both marginalized and celebrated within various political and cultural contexts.

Beyond my monograph, my research interests extend into several interconnected fields, including **material culture, cultural heritage, visual studies, and museum studies**. I am deeply interested in how material objects—particularly those classified as crafts—serve as vehicles for cultural memory and identity. My work explores the ways in which these objects mediate between the past and the present, acting as tangible links to historical narratives while also being adapted and reinterpreted in contemporary contexts.

One of the key areas I explore is the role of **cultural institutions, such as museums**, in shaping the narratives around handicrafts. Museums and cultural heritage organizations play a significant role in determining which aspects of cultural history are preserved and how they are presented to the public. My research critically examines the processes through which these institutions curate and display handicrafts, often highlighting the tensions between preserving tradition and embracing modernity. I am particularly interested in how these institutions navigate the complex interplay between local and global influences, especially in the context of a rapidly globalizing world.

In addition to my focus on material culture and heritage, I am engaged with the broader implications of **globalization on local crafts**. My research investigates how global discourses on art, heritage, and cultural identity intersect with local practices in Iran. This includes examining how international recognition of Iranian handicrafts impacts their production and reception both within Iran and abroad. I explore the ways in which globalization

has facilitated the dissemination of Iranian crafts while also posing challenges to their authenticity and traditional modes of production.

Another significant aspect of my research is the interdisciplinary approach I bring to the study of Iranian handicrafts. By integrating perspectives from **anthropology, sociology, history, and art history**, I aim to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural and social dynamics that shape these objects. This interdisciplinary approach allows me to address the multifaceted nature of handicrafts, considering them not only as artistic creations but also as social and political symbols.

Through my publications and presentations, I have contributed to the ongoing academic discourse on the **politics of heritage** and the role of art in society. My work challenges conventional narratives about Iranian handicrafts, proposing new ways of understanding their significance within both local and global contexts. I am committed to advancing scholarly conversations about how material culture can articulate complex socio-political realities, while also serving as a medium for cultural continuity and transformation.

Overall, my research aims to shed light on the enduring relevance of handicrafts in Iranian society, demonstrating how these objects continue to play a vital role in negotiating the tensions between tradition and modernity, local identity, and global influences. By examining the historical and contemporary significance of these crafts, I seek to contribute to a broader understanding of the cultural and political dynamics that shape art and heritage in Iran and beyond.

Warm Regards,

Behrouz Soheili Esfahani