

August 4, 2022

The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali
Faculty of Arts & Science,
Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto
4 Bancroft Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1C1

Dear Selection Committee,

I am applying to the University of Toronto for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies for 2022-2023. This is to assist me in pursuing the revision and publishing of my dissertation as a book, at an academic institution which specializes in contemporary Iranian history and related fields as well as to gain access to the university library collection, which will provide solid ground for my research in the field of Iranian studies.

My dissertation research project contributes to the urban and social histories of Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The investigation touched upon major themes that have been responsible for the processes and trajectory of modernization and democratization in Iranian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To achieve this, the study has explored various aspects of religion, economy, society, women's rights, labor, and minorities. These were the contents of the city that were used to analyze the urban collective violence and social and political struggles and transformations that have been the main topic of the dissertation.

My next research project reveals new, unique perspectives on German economic expansionism in the first decade of twentieth century by examining the struggles of labourers in the factories of Persische Teppich Gesellschaft (PETAG) established across Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This German initiative, starting in Berlin in 1910, which began as a regional one but progressed to become global, was responsible for building factories in the Persian cities of Tabriz, Sultanabad, Kashan, Mashhad, and Kirman. The company thus intervened in Persia's longstanding tradition of carpet making, exploiting cheap human resources (including the labour of women and children); extracting natural resources; building local and global networks; and expanding the local and global markets. The project takes a close look, in particular, at the establishment of the company's first foreign factory in Tabriz—a city of political, geographical and historical significance, situated in the north-west of Iran.

The project will address the important factor of artificial colors or dyes, which mark a key intervention PETAG made in the carpet-weaving business. I look at how this intervention affected the lives of the labourers, as well as how the technology altered the traditional production process, as well as the appearance and quality, of Persian carpets. The German company, in competition with Russian, British and Italian carpet manufacturers, sought to reduce manufacturing costs by importing synthetic colours, such as Indigo dye, to Persia from 1906 onwards. Formerly, the natural and organic dyes used had been produced locally. The new, imported synthetic Aniline colour was much cheaper and faster to use than the natural colours. However, the low-quality synthetic colours damaged the natural, traditional colour format of the carpet. Foreign merchants benefited from using these German synthetic colours which led to higher production rates and greater profits for the European manufacturing companies.

During my junior research fellowship, I will turn my completed dissertation into a book. In addition, I would like to publish an article on this project in a peer-reviewed journal. My long-term career aim is to remain in the academic world as well as contributing to ongoing women movement in Iran and be active in teaching and research.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of this application and I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Fatemeh Masjedi
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