

To the Selection Committee, Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowships

I am applying for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowships. I am currently a fifth-year doctoral student at the University of Calgary and intend to complete my PhD program in the next academic year. Being one of the only students in the Department of Classics and Religion who originally comes from the Middle East, I am enormously motivated to study the history and archaeology of my homeland by utilizing the significant research opportunities provided at the University of Calgary. For my doctoral thesis, I am examining Sassanian architecture with a concentration on Shapur II's reign. The outcome of my research will elucidate the hidden facts behind this era (309-379 AD). It has been an honor for me to have been admitted to one of the most prestigious universities in Canada in the field of Classics and I am under the supervision of Prof. Marica Cassis. The fact that she is a well-known scholar in the field of Medieval Byzantium and Christianity, has always been an inspiration for me as a woman and as a researcher. As I enter the fifth year of my doctoral studies, I am looking for opportunities to expand my academic networks. The pandemic had significant negative influence on my research over the past two years, as it hindered my access to numerous valuable resources that would have been more easily accessible under normal circumstances, like the attendance at different conferences. Nonetheless, I managed to successfully complete my candidacy exams, and I also collaborated with my supervisor to write an article. (Marica Cassis, Sydney Burton, and Sanaz Safari, "Sharing Animals: Animal Imagery as Late Antique Intercultural Dialogue," *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Material Religion in the Ancient Near East and Egypt* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023)).

I am looking forward to completing my thesis in the next year. However, the completion of my degree requires significant resources in terms of secondary sources as well as, access to archival resources in museums and libraries. While there are numerous libraries offering abundant

resources, not all of them are accessible online, and acquiring some of this work for research purposes can be exceedingly expensive. Furthermore, a considerable number of the written books used for my research are original books in Farsi or Turkey, which are not available in my home university.

To successfully complete my Ph.D., I am eager to maximize the remaining years of my research by joining one of Canada's top universities, one with outstanding research resources through Robarts library, including the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library (among others). This will grant me access to valuable resources and the opportunity to connect with leading scholars in Iranian Studies. The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies will help me to have the honor of engaging with the foremost scholars in the field of Iranian studies and collaborating with them. Time at the University of Toronto would also allow me to network with the members of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, which is significant as some of the sources I am considering are in languages such as Syriac. Receiving this fellowship would greatly facilitate the progress of my research. Completing my dissertation is a hard endeavor that heavily relies on the invaluable resources provided by the University of Toronto (U of T). Securing this fellowship will not only facilitate the process through funding, but more importantly will provide me with unique access to crucial study materials such as Persian rare books and scholars in my field.

Sincerely

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