

To the Selection Committee, Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Graduate Scholarships

I am applying for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Graduate Scholarship. 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 studying 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 now looking forward to doing field work for my dissertation. Many of the factors involved in my research are closely dependent on visiting the historical places where the extant evidence of the Parthian/Sassanian architecture can be observed. This scholarship will not only be

a great asset for me to be able to visit several historical sites, such as Taq- I Kisra in Ctesiphon and other excavated sites, but also to access primary sources related to Shapur's rule, such as coin, in Iran will enrich my research significantly through traveling to Iran. The impact of such field visits will be vital to my research.

Furthermore, exploring the excavation records in the archives at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, and at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures in Chicago will be essential to uncovering some of the Sasanian material excavated by early archaeologists. Further, I have submitted an abstract to the AIA Annual Meeting in Chicago, which will provide valuable opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange. Your support would be instrumental in advancing my research and academic contributions. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely

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