



September 4, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

I write to recommend Mr. Gunha Kim for an Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowship in support of his PhD studies at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto.

I have known Mr. Kim since January 2022, when he enrolled in my graduate seminar on feminist approaches to science and technology studies. Since then, he has worked with me as a teaching assistant for one of my undergraduate courses. I was one of the examiners for his qualifying exams passed in June 2024, and now I am a member of his advisory committee. Throughout these different experiences of working with Mr. Kim, I have been impressed with his strong work ethic. His performance in the seminar and exam preparation confirmed that he is a diligent and thoughtful scholar. As a teaching assistant who helped me prepare and mark an unconventional “escape room” assignment for undergraduates, he demonstrated his ability to work efficiently and adapt creatively to emerging challenges. Given these experiences, I consider the dissertation completion timeline that he has outlined in his proposal to be feasible. I am confident that Mr. Kim’s strong Persian language skills and his graduate training in interdisciplinary science and technology studies will yield an outstanding dissertation.

Mr. Kim’s dissertation proposal shows a high degree of originality and promises to make important contributions not only to Iranian history, but also the global history of science and medicine. Through his thematic approach of studying death in twentieth-century Iran, he links together issues in Iranian history that have previously been studied in isolation, namely the histories of psychology, environmentalism, and martyrdom. Furthermore, his research creatively draws on materials from Iranian cultural history, including newspapers, films, and novels, and places them in dialogue with scientific journals and government periodicals. Many of these sources have not been analyzed before. Finally, by contextualizing historical developments in Iranian psychiatry, sociology, and environmental conservation within international trends in these areas, Mr. Kim’s research offers important insights on the distinct position of Iran’s scientific actors as global agents.

As a specialist in the history of science in the modern Middle East, I find Mr. Kim’s work very novel and exciting, and have encouraged him to consider his work within the history of science field. I was delighted to learn that he submitted an abstract based on his dissertation research to the 2024 annual meeting of the History of Science Society (HSS) in Mérida, Mexico, which has been accepted. HSS abstract selection is highly competitive; even established scholars routinely receive rejections. The fact that Mr. Kim has been selected to present on his first attempt testifies to the interesting new perspectives that his work can bring to the history of science. With the

support of the EOM Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Mr. Kim will be able to attend this conference in person and benefit not only from the experience of presenting his ongoing research, but also from networking opportunities and professionalization supports provided by the HSS graduate and early career caucus. I look forward to mentoring him and further encouraging his efforts to highlight the role of Iran in the history of modern science, and likewise to strengthen historical research on science and technology within Iranian studies.

Overall, Gunha Kim is an excellent scholar with great promise for a future academic career that enriches and expands the scope of Iranian studies at the University of Toronto and beyond. I enthusiastically recommend him for this fellowship.

Please contact me at e.burton@utoronto.ca if I can provide any further information to support his application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elise Burton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elise" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Burton".

Elise K. Burton
Assistant Professor
Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology
University of Toronto