

## MUSHEGH ASATRYAN, PhD

University of Calgary  
School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures  
Craigie Hall, D 511  
2500 University Drive NW  
Calgary, AB T2N 1N4 Canada  
403 220-3291  
[Mushegh.asatryan@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Mushegh.asatryan@ucalgary.ca)

## CURRENT POSITIONS

### University of Calgary

**Director**, Language Research Centre (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2025)

**Associate Professor** of Arabic and Muslim Cultures, School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures

**Adjunct Professor**, Department of Religion and Classics

### *Past positions*

#### University of Calgary:

Chair, Division of German, Russian and Arabic (2020-21)

Assistant Professor (2015-2020)

**Yale University**: Visiting Lecturer in Classical Arabic and Classical Persian (spring, 2015)

**The Institute of Ismaili Studies** (London): Research Associate (2012-2013)

## EDUCATION

PhD Religious Studies (Islamic Studies), **Yale University** 2012

MPhil Religious Studies (Islamic Studies), **Yale University** 2008

MA Medieval Studies, **Central European University** 2002

MA Arabic Studies, **Yerevan State University** 2003

BA Arabic Studies, **Yerevan State University** 2001

### Non-degree programs

2001-02 The University of Isfahan, Department of Theology, courses in Qur'an, Exegesis, Shi'i texts, and Hadith

1999-2000 The University of Cairo, Department of Arabic Literature, courses in Arabic language and literature

2000 Tarbiat Modares University (Tehran), courses in Persian Language and Literature

## PUBLICATIONS

### Book

*Controversies in Formative Shi‘i Islam: The Ghulat Muslims and their Beliefs*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2017.

- Reviewed by Sajjad Rizvi in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 34 (2017), 83-85
- Reviewed by Mehmet Toprak in *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 22.42 (2017), 166-169
- Reviewed by Leonardo Capezzone in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 81.2 (2018), 335-337
- Reviewed by Edmund Hayes in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138.4 (2019)
- Reviewed by James Weaver in *Shii Studies Review* 3 (2019), 319-328
- 

*Kitab al-Intisar* by Mu‘tazili theologian al-Khayyat, study and translation (manuscript submitted to Gorgias Press)

### Peer-reviewed articles

- 2022 “The Heretic Writes Back: Feigning Orthodoxy in Saffar al-Qummi’s *Basa’ir al-Darajat*,” *History of Religions* 61.4: 1-27.
- 2022 “How to Read Muslim Heresiology? An Ismaili man-of-letters and his Classifications of Muslim Sects,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 51: 293-336.
- 2022 “Of Wine, Sex, and other Abominations: The Meanings of Libertinism in Early Islamic Iraq,” *Global Intellectual History* (forthcoming)
- 2019 “Early Ismailis and Other Muslims: Polemics and Borrowing in *Kitab al-Kashf*,” in *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019)
- 2016 “Shiite Underground Literature Between Iraq and Syria: The Book of Shadows and the History of Early Ghulat,” in *Texts in Transit in the Medieval Mediterranean*, eds. Tzvi Langermann and Robert Morrison (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), pp. 128-161.
- 2015 “An Early Shi‘i Cosmology: *Kitab al-asbbah wa La‘zilla* and its Milieu,” *Studia Islamica* 110

(2015), pp. 1-80.

- 2014 “Bankers and Politics: The Network of Shi‘i Moneychangers in Eighth-Ninth Century Kufa and their Role in the Shi‘i Community,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 7 (2014), pp. 1-21. (an earlier version of this paper won the 2011 Middle East Medievalists Graduate Student Paper Prize)

### **Book chapters and other articles**

- 2023 “Prophecy After Muhammad: The View from Late Antiquity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Shii Islam*, eds. Ahab Bdaiwi and Sajjad Rizvi (under review).
- 2020 “The Good, the Bad, and the Heretic in Early Islamic History,” in *Deconstructing Islamic Studies*, eds. Majid Daneshgar and Aaron Hughes (Cambridge, MA)
- 2019 “Shi‘i Literature in the Late 9<sup>th</sup> Century Ishāq al-Ahmar al-Nakha‘ī (d. 286/899) and His Writings,” in *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, eds. Jamal Elias and Bilal Orfali. (Leiden: Brill, 2019)
- 2018 “An Agenda for the Study of Early Shi‘a Cosmologies,” *The Gnostic World*, ed. Garry Trompf (Routledge, 2018), 321-327.
- 2016 [with Dylan Burns] “Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism? Religious Transmissions in Late Antiquity,” in *L'ésotérisme shi'ite, ses racines et ses prolongements*, eds. M. A. Amir-Moezzi et al., (Brepols, 2016 [Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes and The Institute of Ismaili Studies]), 55-86.
- 2011 [with Hatim Mahamid, in Arabic] “Wathīqat ‘ahd min al-rasūl ilā l-nasārā kāffatan: dirāsa wa tahqīq,” in *Maqālāt tārikhīyya takrīman li l-ustādh al-duktūr Butrus Abū Manna*. Eds. ‘Atā’ Allāh Qutbī, Jūnī Mansūr, and Mustafā l-‘Abbāsī: 3-28.
- 2006 “Iranian Elements in Arabic: the State of Research,” *Iran and the Caucasus* 10.1: 87-106.

### **In preparation**

- [with David Hollenberg], *Manhaj al-‘ilm*, critical edition and study (under contract with Brill, the “Shii Islam: Texts and Studies” series, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities)

## Encyclopedia Entries

### *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*

- “Mukhammisa” (forthcoming)
- “Bayaniyya” (forthcoming)
- “al-Nahiki” (forthcoming)
- “Janahiyya (forthcoming)
- “al-Kulayni” (in progress)

### *Encyclopedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York, 1983-)

- 2013 “Mokhammesa” (2013; 1600 words)
- 2012 “Eshaq Ahmar Nakha‘i” (2012; 750 words)
- 2011 “Mofazzal al-Jo‘fi” (2011; 1800 words)
- “Tanasokh” (Reincarnation) (3000 words, submitted for publication)

### *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Gerhard Böwering (Princeton, 2012)

- “Alawis” (650 words)

### *Encyclopedia of Medieval Pilgrimage*, ed. Larissa J. Taylor (Leiden, 2010)

- “Hajj” (2000 words)
- “Ziyara” (1300 words)

## Book Reviews

- 2019 Hussein Abdulsater, *Shi‘i Doctrine, Mu‘tazili Theology: al-Sharif al-Murtada and Mu‘tazili Discourse* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), *al-Abhath* 67 (2019)
- 2016 *The Politics and Culture of an Umayyad Tribe: Conflict and Functionalism in the Early Islamic Period* by Mohammad Rihan, *Ilabiyat Studies* 7.2 (2016)
- 2015 Sālih Ahmad al-‘Ali, *Al-Kūfa wa ahlubā fi sadr al-islām: dirāsa fi ahwālībā l-‘umrāniyya wa sukkānībā wa tanzīmātībim*, in *Muslim Civilisations Abstracts* (Edinburgh), ed. Aptin Khanbaghi
- 2014 Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam: Beliefs and Practices* (London, 2011) in *Studia Islamica* 109.2 (2014): 329-347
- 2014 Isra Yazicioglu, *Understanding the Qur’anic Miracle Stories in the Modern Age* (University Park, 2013), in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*: 214-15
- 2009 Gautier Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Hadīth* (Leiden, 2007), in *Muslim Civilisations Abstracts: Encyclopedias about Muslim Civilisations*, ed. Aptin Khanbaghi (Edinburgh): 75, 255
- 2007 Ethel Sara Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park, 2003), in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 7.1: 203-207
- 2005 Nicola Laure al-Samarai, *Die Macht der Darstellung* (Wiesbaden, 2001), in *Iran and the Caucasus* 9.2: 406-407.

## INVITED TALKS

- 2021 “Prophecy After Muhammad: The Early Alid Rebellions in a Late Antique Context” – Leiden University
- 2021 “Theology in Society: Reading Medieval Muslim Constructions of Heresy and Orthodoxy” – University of Notre Dame
- 2020 “The Politics of Devotion to the Imams in Early Shi’i Circles” (featured speaker) – University of Chicago, Annual Shi’i Studies Symposium [event canceled because of COVID 19]
- 2018 “Language, Heresy, and Power in an Early Islamic Text: Or how to Smuggle in your argument through the backdoor, unnoticed” – University of Calgary, Cercle Bénédictin Conferences
- 2018 “Of Wine, Sex, and Other Abominations: Accusations of Libertinism in and their Cultural Meaning in 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>-century Iraq” – University of Calgary, Medieval and Renaissance Cultural Studies Research Group
- 2014 “Medieval Heresy between Armenia and Khurasan: Writing a Connected History of the Tondrakians” – UCLA
- 2011 “Divine Man or Man of God? The Early Islamic Sources on the Idea of the Divinity of the Imams” – Trinity College, Hartford, CT

## AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2020-22 **National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)**, USD 132,266  
Project co-director: Mushegh Asatryan; project director: David Hollenberg  
A Critical Edition and Translation of the *Manhaj al-’Ilm* (The Method of Knowledge)”
- 2020 **Zahid Ali Fellowship (The Institute of Ismaili Studies)**, GBP 5000  
Granted for the research project on medieval Muslim heresiographies, to result in the publication of a monograph, entitled *Making Heretics, Making Muslims: The Politics and Poetics of Muslim Heresiology*
- 2018 **Institute for Advanced Study**, Princeton: three-week visiting fellowship at the Shi’i Studies Research Program
- 2011 **Middle East Medievalists**: Graduate Student Paper Prize for “Bankers and Politics: 8th c. Kufan Moneychangers and their role in the Shi’a Community,” presented at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in Washington, DC (published in the *Journal of Persianate Studies*)

2010 **Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library**, Yale University: Research Fellowship

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

### Panels Organized

- 2014 “Texts and Contexts in Pre-Modern Shi‘ism,” - *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2013 “Shi‘ism in Historical Perspective,” - *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (New Orleans)
- 2009 “Armenians and Islam”, Organizer and Chair - *Central Eurasian Studies Society*, Annual Meeting (Toronto)

### Conference papers

- 2022 “Who Gets to be Sunni? The Making of a Heresiological Category” – Heresy and Infidelity: Islamic Politico-Religious and Legal Discourses (10th-11th century) International Conference, University of Lausanne
- 2021 “Feigning Orthodoxy in an Early Islamic Polemic” – Schools, Networks and Communities in the Study of Early Shi‘i Hadith workshop
- 2019 “How to Read Muslim Heresiology? Abu Hatim al-Razi’s Classification of Muslim Sects,” *14<sup>th</sup> Colloquium “From Jahiliyya to Islam,”* Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities (Jerusalem)
- 2018 “Of Wine, Sex, and Other Abominations: Accusations of Libertinism in and their Cultural Meaning in 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>-century Iraq,” *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (San Antonio)
- 2018 “The Nusayris in Medieval Syria: What can a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Theological Debate Tell us about them,” *World Congress for Middle East Studies* (Seville, Spain)
- 2017 “The Discourse on Magic and Miracles in 11<sup>th</sup>-century Baghdad: a Broader Context,” *American Academy of Religion, Northwest-Pacific Regional Meeting* (St. Mary’s University, Calgary)
- 2017 “A Medieval Nusayri Shaykh’s Disputations and the Study of the Nusayris in Western Academia,” *Shi‘i Studies: The State of the Art*, Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton)
- 2016 “Conflict or Symbiosis? The Nusayris and the Ismailis in Medieval Syria,” *Intellectual Interactions in the Islamic World: The Ismaili Thread* – The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

- 2015 “Iranian Loanwords in Classical Arabic Language Contact and Sound Change,” *Digital Arabic and Digital Persian Research Workshop*, The University of Leipzig
- 2015 [co-presented with Dylan Burns] “Is Ghulat Religion Islamic Gnosticism,” *American Academy of Religion-International Qur’anic Studies Association* joint panel (Atlanta)
- 2014 “The Ghulat Corpus and its Authors,” *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2014 “The World and Worldview of Early Shi’i Ghulat” – *Reason and Esotericism in Shi’i Islam* (The University of Chicago)
- 2013 “*Kitāb al-aẓilla*, Nusayrī Literature, and the Transmission of Texts from Iraq to Syria in the Tenth Century” – *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (New Orleans)
- 2012 “A New Source for the Study of Early Shi’a *ghulāt*” – *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Denver)
- 2012 “How Shi’is Adopted Mu‘tazilī Rationalism: Two Early Texts on the Proof of God’s Existence” – *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting (Boston)
- 2011 “Bankers and Politics: 8th c. Kufan Moneychangers and their role in the Shi’a Community” – *Middle East Studies Association*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2010 “Mystical Shiism between the Two Occultations: *Kitāb al-sirāt* and its milieu” – *American Academy of Religion*, Annual Meeting (Atlanta)
- 2010 “Who were the Mufaddaliyya? A Study of an “extreme” Shiite Sect” - *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting (St. Louis)
- 2008 “Mufaddal al-Ju‘fī and the Kufan ‘extremists’ in the eighth century” - *Central Eurasian Studies Society*, Annual Meeting (Washington, DC)
- 2005 “Ibn Khaldūn’s Refutation of the Occult Sciences” - *American Oriental Society*, Annual Meeting (Philadelphia)

## LANGUAGES

**Arabic** – reading fluency in Classical and Modern Standard; speaking fluency in Modern Standard

**Persian** – reading fluency in Classical and Modern, speaking fluency in Modern Farsi

**Armenian** – native in Modern Armenian; reading fluency in Classical Armenian

**Russian** – near native fluency in speaking, reading, and writing

**German, French, Syriac, Turkish, Latin, Middle Persian, Old Persian** – reading competence

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Middle East Studies Association

American Academy of Religion

Middle East Medievalists