



CANADA I. IRANIAN STUDIES IN

i) The Development of Iranian Studies in Canada

Several factors in the last half-century have led to a rapid expansion of Iranian studies in Canada. Part of this development has its roots in the post World War II expansion in Canada's economic and political influence on the international scene, and the concomitant migration of European, and specifically British, scholars to a number of expanding Canadian universities. Iranian Studies grew as a sub-discipline of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies with the establishment of the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in 1951, and the Department of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto in 1961. In the 1960s and 1970s, under the strong leadership of Professor George Michael Wickens, the University of Toronto emerged as an important center for Iranian studies and Persian literature. Supported by various federal government initiatives to strengthen Middle Eastern studies, Wickens was able to carry out an ambitious acquisitions program for the University of Toronto library, creating as a result one of the finest libraries on Middle East and Persian studies in North America. Toronto was further bolstered as a center of Iranian studies with the creation of the West Asian Studies section (now known as the Near Eastern and Asian Civilizations Department) at the Royal Ontario Museum, which houses a rich collection of miniatures, manuscripts, ceramics, textiles, and other cultural artifacts from Persia and Central Asia. In 1969, the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University set up an official



branch at the University of Tehran, and created facilities for students and research scholars; it was because of this that one of the more prominent publishing series on Islamic philosophy and mysticism came into existence: the Wisdom of Persia Series. It should also be noted that pre-Islamic studies of Iran have been a focus of research in a number of Classics and History departments at various Canadian universities.

Recent decades, however, have witnessed a radical transformation in Iranian studies in Canada. The 1979 Revolution in Persia and the ensuing arrival of Iranian academics, journalists, novelists, poets, and other intellectuals into Canadian academic and artistic society has generated a greater interest in Iran and the Persian-speaking world among Canadians. This, combined with a growing number of second-generation Irano-Canadians interested in studying aspects of Iranian civilization at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, has contributed significantly to the growth of different aspects of Iranian studies across Canada from Victoria to Halifax. This expansion has been further enriched by the participation of a number of talented Iranian literati, artists, and musicians in contemporary Canadian society. The following subentries survey different Canadian contributions to the successive periods of Iranian history, literature, language, philosophy, religion, art history, and archaeology.

ii) *History*

The study of Iranian history from prehistoric to modern times is arguably one of the most productive fields in Canadian scholarship, encompassing both the translation and scholarly annotation of important texts as well as pioneering monographs on different historical periods.

The Achaemenid period, and specifically the study of acculturation in the ancient Irano-Mediterranean world, has been the focus of Margaret C. Miller's research at the University of Toronto. Her book, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century B.C.: A Study in Cultural Receptivity* (Cambridge, 1997), was awarded the Ghirshman prize by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 2001. Her authoritative contribution to the *Encyclopædia Iranica* on "Greco-Persian Cultural Relations" (*EIr.* XI, fasc. 3, pp. 301-19) provides a succinct overview of the current state of research and contains references to several of her significant articles in this field. Janick Auberger, a Classicist at the History Department of the Université de Québec à Montréal, has done extensive research on the 5th century Greek historian, [Ctesias](#) of Cnidus and has



gathered together the surviving extracts of his work in her authoritatively comprehensive edition, *Histoires de l'Orient*, (Paris, 1991). Waldemar Heckel of the Classics Department at the University of Calgary has been a prolific contributor to the study of the Alexandrian and Hellenic periods. His publications include *The Marshals of Alexander's Empire* (London, 1992), and *The Wars of Alexander the Great: 336-323 B.C.* (Oxford, 2002).

The study of Iranian history in the Timurid and Safavid periods has been particularly prominent in the Canadian academic tradition. Roger Savory, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto, has had a profound influence on the study of the Safavid period (1501-1722). His numerous books and articles on Safavid political and military history, administration, bureaucracy, and diplomacy—translated into several languages—have done much to deepen our understanding of the period, particularly in the field of political and administrative history. Following in the footsteps of his eminent teacher Vladimir Minorsky at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Savory has worked meticulously on the complex structures of officialdom and bureaucracy in the 16th century (See “The Principal Offices of the Safavid State During the Reign of Isma‘il I (907-30/1501-24),” *BSOAS* 23, 1960, pp. 91-105, and “The Principal Offices of the Safavid State During the Reign of Tahmasp (930-84/1524-76),” *BSOAS* 24, 1961, pp. 65-85). He was the principal organizer of the first academic conference in Canada on Iran (“Iranian Civilization and Culture,” Dec. 10-11, 1971); and the ensuing publication of the proceedings (*Iranian Civilization and Culture*, Montreal, 1972) heralded Canada’s formal entry into the Iranian academic world. His *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980), a survey of the rise of and fall of the Safavid dynasty, continues to undergraduate and graduate students with a succinct introduction to this important dynasty. This was supplemented by Savory’s *magnum opus*, his translation of the monumental Safavid court chronicle, Eskandar Beg Monšī’s *Tārīḫ-e ‘ālam ārā-ye ‘abbāsi* as *History of Shah ‘Abbās the Great* (I-II, PHS, Boulder, Colorado, 1979; III (index), Bib.Pers., New York, 1986).

Maria E. Subtelny of the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto has produced a number of seminal works on various aspects of Timurid civilization in eastern Iran and Central Asia. Of particular note is her historiographical emphasis on agronomy, cultivation, landscaping, and general agricultural sciences in Iran and Central Asia. Besides focusing on pious endowments (*waqf*), and agronomical manuals for their social and economic information, and her research on the history of



learning and education in the Timurid period, Subtelny has also taken a longer and wider view of Persian history and has delineated the role of agriculture and garden landscaping as one of the principle motifs in Iranian political, social, religious, and cultural expression. This research has been most recently elucidated in her book, *Le monde est un jardin: aspects de l'histoire culturelle de l'Iran médiéval*, Leuven, 2002. Aspects of 16th and 17th century Safavid diplomatic history have also been examined by Colin P. Mitchell at Dalhousie University in several articles, including "Safavid Imperial *Tarassul* and the Persian *Insha* Tradition," *Studia Iranica* 26, 1997, pp. 173-209. Edward Ingram, retired Professor of History at Simon Fraser University, produced a number of historical studies of Britain and its 19th-century relationship with Persia and the 'Great Game,' including *Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828-1834*, Oxford, 1979, and *Britain's Persian Connection, 1798-1828: Prelude to the Great Game in Asia*, Oxford, 1992.

Persian culture in the Indo-Islamic context has also been much studied in Canada. Derryl MacLean of Simon Fraser University has written on religious and cultural syncretism between medieval Persia and India, and Sajida Alvi (Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University) has contributed to the study of the Perso-Islamic political ethics genre with her edited translation and commentary in *Advice on the Art of Governance: An Indo-Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Albany, 1989).

iii) *Literature and Language*

The study of classical Persian prose and poetry in Canada owes much to the pioneering work of G. M. Wickens, Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto. As well as publishing numerous articles and books on various aspects of Islamic history, religion, and philosophy, Wickens was first and foremost committed to Arabic and Persian literature, and his work in translating and editing a number of medieval Perso-Islamic texts is acknowledged and appreciated worldwide. Besides his monumental translation of Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi's *fürstenspiegel*, the *Aḳlāq-e Nāṣeri* (see below), he provided the first modern translation of Sa'di's *Bustān* (*Morals Pointed and Tales Adorned: The Bustan of Sa'di*, Toronto, 1974), as well as Ṣādeq Hedāyat's *Haji Agha: Portrait of an Iranian Confidence Man* (Austin, 1979). Well-known works of literary analysis include: "The Persian Concept of Artistic Unity in Poetry and Its Implications in Other Fields," *BSOAS* 14, 1952, pp. 239-43, and "The Imperial Epic in Iran: A Literary Approach," *Iranian Civilization and Culture*, ed. Charles Adams, Montreal, 1972, pp. 133-44. After Wickens' retirement in the early



1980s, his friends and colleagues compiled a *festschrift* in his honor: *Logos Islamikos: studia Islamica in honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, eds. R. Savory and D. Agius (Toronto, 1984), in which a biography and bibliography of this scholar appears. Another recently retired contributor to the study of classical Persian literature in Canada is McGill University's Moḥammad Este'lāmi, noted for his comprehensive edition of Jalāl-al-Din Rumi's *Maṭnawī* (Tehran, 1990-95).

Professor G. M. Meredith-Owens, a Turkologist and Persianist and bibliographer at the British Museum, joined the Department of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto in the later years of his career. Meredith-Owens brought with him an intimate knowledge of Oriental, specifically Persian, manuscripts, and much of his time in Toronto was dedicated to enriching the existing corpus of bibliographic studies.

The study of modern Iranian literature has flourished under the rubric of Comparative Literature at a number of Canadian universities in recent decades. Rivanne Sandler of the University of Toronto has examined a wide array of modern Persian prose and poetry. Noteworthy studies include: "Imagination Set Free? The Poetry of Suhrab Sipiḥri," *Edebiyat* 8, 1998, pp. 107-24, and "Literary Developments in Iran in the 1960s and the 1970s Prior to the 1978 Revolution," *World Literature Today* 60, 1986, pp. 246-51. Nasrin Rahimieh of the Department of Comparative Literature, Religion, Film/Media Studies at the University of Alberta has focused particularly on contemporary writing by Iranian women, literature of exile and displacement, post-revolutionary Iranian cinema, postcolonial literature, as well as Iranian feminism and contemporary women's movements. This interdisciplinary approach to the study of contemporary Iranian society is best seen in her *Missing Persians: Discovering Voices in Iranian Cultural History*, Syracuse, 2001. Rahimieh has also contributed to comparative perspectives between German and Persian literature, particularly on the works of Franz Kafka and Ṣādeq Hedāyat (see "Die Verwandlung Deterritorialized: Hedayat's Appropriation of Kafka," *Comparative Literature Studies* 31, 1994, pp. 251-69).

The field of Persian linguistics is represented by Jila Ghomeshi at the University of Manitoba. Besides recently editing a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* (46, 2001) on the syntax of Iranian languages, she has contributed articles on various aspects of Persian linguistics including "Plural Marking, Indefiniteness, and the Noun Phrase," *Studia Linguistica* 57, 2003, pp. 47-74, and "Non-projecting Nouns and the Ezafe Construction in Persian,"



Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 15, 1997, pp. 729-88.

iv) *Philosophy and Religion*

One of the earliest and most valuable Canadian contributions to the field of Persian philosophy came from G. M. Wickens in 1965 when he published the first English annotated translation of the celebrated political ethics manual, the *Aḳlāq-e Nāṣeri* by Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi.

The interplay between philosophy and theosophy has been the domain of Hermann Landolt, most recently retired from the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. Landolt has been a leading researcher and scholar of philosophy and mysticism, providing a focus on the Illuminationists of the post-Avicennan Perso-Islamic world (particularly Sohrawardi and Mollā Ṣadrā) and the extent to which Shi'ism and mysticism in Iran were and are shaped by *eṣrāqi* perceptions as described by the French philosopher and Iranologist, Henry Corbin. Notable publications by Landolt include a transcription and editing of Nur al-Din Esfarāyeni's *Kāṣef al-asrār*, Tehran, 1980 (revised and published with a French tr. as *Le révélateur des mystères*, Lagrasse, 1986). Moreover, he has been an important contributor to major encyclopedias, including *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, and *The Encyclopedia of Islam*. Another luminary of Islamic philosophy and mysticism affiliated with McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies was Toshihiko Izutsu. Izutsu, author of the celebrated *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal, 1966), worked closely while at McGill University with the Tehran branch of the Institute and its publishing series *Wisdom of Persia* to produce a number of seminal studies on Perso-Islamic theology and theosophy, including *The Fundamental Structure of Sabzawāri's Metaphysics* (Tehran, 1968). In this context, one must also mention the other major series which ran parallel to the *Wisdom of Persia* series from the mid 1980s onwards under the general editorship of Professor Mehdi Mohaghegh (Mehdi Moḥaqeq) who also contributed many valuable editions to both series and was a major figure in fostering deep cultural contacts between Canada and Persia over many years.

Twelver Shi'ism has been a field of scholarly research at a number of Canadian universities in recent years. A student of Hermann Landolt, Todd Lawson of the University of Toronto has focused on Qur'anic exegesis in the Twelver Shi'ite traditions, including "Akhbari Shi'i Approaches to *Tafsir*," *Approaches to the Qur'an*, eds. G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, London, 1993, pp. 173-210, and "Note for the Study of a 'Shi'i Qur'an'," *Journal*



of *Semitic Studies* 36, 1991, 279-95. He has also written several articles on Babism and the Baha'i faith including "The Structure of Existence in the Bab's *Tafsir* and the Perfect Man Motif," *Studia Iranica: Cahiers 11: Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religions from Mazdaism to Sufism. Proceedings of the Round Table held in Bamberg, Paris, 1992*, pp. 81-99. Another student of Landolt, Lynda Clarke at the department of religion at Concordia University, has contributed significantly to the historical study of Twelver Shi'ism. 'Abdulaziz Sachedina, a specialist on shi'ite Islam (*Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism*, Albany, 1980, and *The Just Ruler in Twelver Shi'ism: The Comprehensive Authority of the Jurist in Imamite Jurisprudence*, New York, 1988) was educated at the University of Toronto, and taught at a number of Canadian universities before receiving an appointment at the University of Virginia. *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran* (Leiden, 1977) by the late 'Abdul-Hadi Hairi (Ḥā'eri) was a revised expansion of his doctoral dissertation at McGill's Institute of Islamic Studies which was later translated into Persian and became a seminal text in contemporary Iranian political studies. Also at McGill University's Institute of Islamic Studies is Eric Ormsby, who has contributed to contemporary understanding of the great Persian theologian and scholar, Ḡazāli, with *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: the Dispute Over al-Ghazali's "Best of all Possible Worlds,"* Princeton, 1984. Pre-Islamic Iranian religions, most notably eastern and western manifestations of Mithraism, have been examined by Roger Beck, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto, in *Planetary Gods and Planetary Orders in the Mysteries of Mithras*, Leiden, 1988, as well as in other articles.

v) *Art History and Archaeology*

Thanks to institutional affiliations between one of Canada's leading archaeological institutes, the Royal Ontario Museum (R.O.M.), and a number of departments at the University of Toronto, Iranian archaeology and art history have emerged as formidable fields of research in the last thirty years. Of particular note are a number of collaborative projects amongst R.O.M. members (Professors Keall, Mason, Golombek) that employ innovative techniques in ceramic petrography, whereby ceramic material (pottery, mosaic tiles) can be treated to scientifically determine the age and origin of the different constitutive mineralogical elements. In this regard, petrographic analysis can provide critical information on how ceramics were manufactured in a particular period, as well as shed light on the trade and traffic of raw minerals across the Oikoumene. A recent R.O.M. project on Timurid ceramics



resulted in the publication of *Tamerlane's Tableware: A New Approach to the Chinoiserie Ceramics of Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Iran*, by Lisa Golombek et al, Costa Mesa, 1996, while there are ongoing research projects dealing with the manufacture of ceramics in the Safavid period, particularly in the city of Kerman.

Individually, Canadian archaeologists and art historians have made significant contributions to their own particular fields. Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto and Curator Emeritus at the Royal Ontario Museum, T. Cuyler Young, Jr. applied his research to re-define the theory and methodology underpinning ancient pre-Median archaeology and history. After joining the R.O.M. in 1963, he was the director of numerous archaeological excavations in Iran and Iraq, most notably the central western Iranian site of [Godin Tepe](#) between 1965 and 1977, and contributed to the introduction of new models of interpretations in order to understand the complex relationships characterizing western Iran and surrounding regions like Mesopotamia and Khuzistan in terms of agrarian technology, settlement patterns, cultural expression, and population movements. These conceptual frameworks and models of interpretation have been offered, in varying forms, in several publications by Cuyler Young cited in his entry on Godin Tepe in *EIr.*(XI/1, pp. 39-40). His contributions to the ongoing debate about Aryan emigration into Western Iran are also available in "The Iranian Migration into the Zagros," *Iran* 5, 1967, pp. 11-34, as well as (co-written with P. Smith) "The Force of Numbers: Population Pressure in the Central Western Zagros 12,000-4,500 B.C.," *The Hilly Flanks and Beyond: Essays on the Prehistory of Southwestern Asia Presented to Robert J. Braidwood* (co-edited with P. Smith and P. Mortensen), Chicago, 1983, pp. 141-61. Professor Young's most recent contribution is an essay, co-written with E. Keall, on the ancient Persian empires appearing in *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Classical Civilization*, ed. A. Cotterell, London, 1995, pp. 147-92.

The Parthian period of Iranian history had been the focus of Prof. Ed Keall, currently senior curator at the R.O.M.'s Near Eastern and Asian Civilizations Department. From 1971 to 1979, Keall had directed a major excavation at Qel'a-ye Yazdegerd, and it was on account of his archaeological findings that this citadel, traditionally dated to the late Sasanian period (6th-7th centuries), is now believed to be a Parthian construction of the 2nd century C.E. A good overview of Parthian material culture is available in Keall's "Islam's Debt to Parthian Art," *Archaeological Iranica et Orientalis: Miscellanea in Honorem*



Louis Vanden Berghe, ed. L. de Meyer and E. Haerinck, Vol. 2, Ghent, 1989, pp. 977-99. Although now focusing on the medieval Yemeni city of Zabid, Professor Keall nonetheless continues to work on various aspects of Iranian ceramic typology and analysis (see “One Man’s Mede is Another Man’s Persian; One Man’s Coconut is Another Man’s Grenade,” *Muqarnas* 10, 1993, pp. 275-85, “The ‘Abbasid Glazed Wares of Siraf and the Basra Connection: Petrographic Analysis,” *Iran* 29, 1991, pp. 51-66). Keall’s colleague and a noted specialist of petrographic analysis, Professor Robert Mason, has introduced the theoretical implications of this petrographic approach to Persian ceramics with “Medieval Iranian Lustre-painted and Associated Wares: Typology in a Multidisciplinary Study,” *Iran* 35, 1997, pp. 103-35.

The final pillar to the Iranian studies component at the R.O.M. is Professor Lisa Golombek, a specialist of 15th and 16th-century material culture and architecture and an important contributor to the aforementioned rehabilitation of the Timurid era in recent scholarship. After publishing the first systematic study of the shrine of ‘Abd-Allāh Anṣārī at Herat, *The Timurid Shrine at Gazur Gah*, Toronto, 1969, Professor Golombek has produced a number of studies on 15th century architecture in Persia and Central Asia (“Abbasid Mosque at Balkh,” *Oriental Art (New Series)* 15, 1969, pp. 173-89, “The Chronology of Turbat-i Shaikh Jam,” *Iran* 9, 1971, pp. 27-44, “The Resilience of the Friday Mosque: the case of Herat,” *Muqarnas* 1, 1983, pp. 95-102, and *Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*, co-edited with D. Wilber, Princeton, 1988). She has also researched different aspects of Isfahan’s medieval urban morphology in “Anatomy of a Mosque – the Masjid-i Shah of Isfahan,” *Iranian Civilization and Culture*, ed. C. Adams, Montreal, 1972, pp. 5-14, and “Urban Patterns in Pre-Safavid Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 7, 1974, pp. 18-44. In recent years, she has re-oriented her focus to Timurid and Safavid-era ceramics, and has presented her findings in a number of articles, including (co-authored with Robert Mason) “New Evidence for Safavid Ceramic Production at Nishapur,” *Apollo* 142, 1995, pp. 33-36, and “Timurid Potters Abroad,” *Oriente Moderno* 15, 1996, pp. 577-86.

In addition to Lisa Golombek, Canada’s other leading contributor to the field of Safavid artistic representation in painting, calligraphy, and architecture is Professor Anthony Welch of the University of Victoria. Welch was a principal organizer of a number of prominent exhibitions in the 1970s and 1980s related to medieval Perso-Islamic art; in turn, Welch wrote and published a number of catalogues to commemorate these respective exhibitions. Of these, *Shah ‘Abbas*



and the Arts of Isfahan, New York, 1973, continues to be used by all students interested in Isfahan's renovation and revival in the early 17th century. Likewise, his work with the private collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan has resulted in a number of exhibitions and publications, namely *Arts of the Islamic Book: The Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan*, Ithaca, 1982, and the four-volume catalogue of *The Collection of Islamic Art, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Geneva, 1972 and 1978). Welch has also been one of the first art historians to offer a prosopographic study of artists working in the Safavid court of Ismā'il II and Moḥammad Ḳodābanda in *Artists for the Shah: Late Sixteenth Century Painting at the Imperial Court of Iran*, New Haven, 1976. Specific article publications reflect a wide range of interest, addressing Safavid painting ("Worldly and Otherworldly Love in Safavid Painting," in *Persian Painting: From the Mongols to the Qajars: Studies in Honour of Basil W. Robinson*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand, London, 2000, pp. 301-317) European and Iranian contacts ("Safavi Iran as Seen Through Venetian Eyes," *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. A. Newman, Leiden, 2003, pp. 97-124), and the art of the book ("Arts of the Book: The Arab Lands, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, and India," *Treasures of Islam*, ed. S. Falk, London, 1985, pp. 32-175). Anthony Welch also researched and script wrote the 1975 production of *The Isfahan of Shah 'Abbas* by the National Endowment for the Humanities.