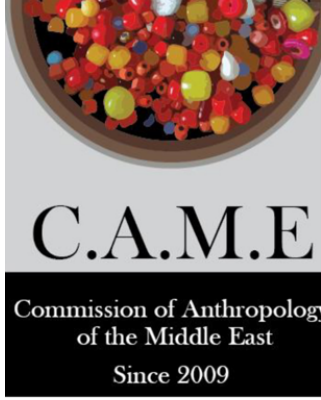




IUAES
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ANTHROPOLOGICAL and
ETHNOLOGICAL sciences



Conference of the Commission on the Anthropology of the Middle East, IUAES

Nostalgia and Future

Galatasaray University in Istanbul, Türkiye
September 9–11, 2026.

Galatasaray University, Center for Social Research (TAM)

Commission on Anthropology of the Middle East, IUAES

Chair: Soheila Shahshahani

Co-Chair: Paulo Pinto

Executive Secretary: Magdalena Rodziewicz

Regional Representatives:

Soraya Tremayne & Christian Bromberger: Europe

Mary E. Hegland: United States and Canada

Paulo Pinto: South America

Tomoko Yamagishi: East Asia

Venue:

Munevver Soylu Hall (C316)

(Second floor in the historical building)

Galatasaray Üniversitesi

Çırağan Caddesi No:36 34349

Ortaköy/İstanbul

Day 1
September 9, 2026, 9:00 (Istanbul Time)

09:00-09:30	Registration
09:30-09:45	Welcome Note to Participants: Prof. Didem Daniş – Galatasaray University Dr. Soheila Shahshahani – Chair of the Commission

Panel 1: Reflections on Today

Convenor: Didem Daniş

10:00-10:15	Paulo G. Pinto: Ritual and Politics, or Politicization of Rituals
10:15-10:30	Seyed Abdolreza Hosseini: Hearing Missiles: War, Technology, and the Reimagining of National Industry in Iran
10:30-10:45	Christian Bromberger: The Iranian Football Team at the 2026 World Cup
10:45-11:00	Soheila Shahshahani: Obituary, Late Dr. Shahnaz Nadjmabadi, and Her Work on the Persian Gulf
11:00-11:15	Ali Akherati: Temporary Shelter, Enduring Loss: War, Displacement, and Everyday Life in Tehran's Wartime Hotels
11:15-11:45	Discussion
11:45-13:00	Lunch break

Panel 2: Humour in Times of Crisis

Convenor: Soraya Tremayne

13:00-13.20	Julie Alev Dilmaç: Humour in Times of Mourning: Cartoons and the Representation of Catastrophe in Turkey
13:20-13:40	Nafe Babasafari: Laughter at Hour 1248: Satirical Resistance and the Reclamation of the “Confiscated” Voice Following the World’s Longest Digital Blackout
13:40-14:00	Magdalena Rodziewicz: Laughing with the Clergy: Humour as a Communication Strategy of the Iranian Religious Establishment
14:00-14:20	Iraj Esmaeilpour Ghoochani: Humor, Dreams, and Diaspora: Ethnopschoanalytic Observations from Participatory Video Work with Iranians in Stuttgart
14:20-14:40	Özlem Atik: Humour as a Way of Transforming Traumatic Narratives
14:40-15:20	Discussion & Coffee

Panel 3: Food, Studied Anthropologically – Food in Anthropological Perspective

Convenor: Su Hyeon Cho

- 15:20-15:40 Minoo Salimi: Food and Female Identity: Women's Mutual Aid in Preparing Tarkhineh in Western Iran
- 15:40-16:00 Soyoka Namie and Alia Shaddad: How to Eat Japan: On Authenticity and the Ethics of Eating the Other
- 16:00-16:20 Discussion

Day 2

September 10, 2026, 9:00 (Istanbul Time)

Panel 4: Rituals, Boundaries and Crossings: Migration, Pilgrimages and Conversion in Muslim Contexts

Convenors: Paulo Pinto and Gisele Fonseca Chagas

- 9:00-9:20 Shahnoza Madaeva: Anthropology of Religious Identity in Contemporary Uzbek Traditional Society
- 9:20-9:40 Gisele Fonseca Chagas: Local Rituals, Transnational Crossings: Shi'a Religious Landscape in São Paulo, Brazil
- 9:40-10:00 Zuzanna Błajet: Living Between Worlds: Intangible Cultural Heritage of Pamiri-Isma'ili Migrant Populations in Poland
- 10:00-10:20 Paulo G. Pinto: The Mahdi Among Us: Doctrinal and Ritual Dynamics of the Ahmadiyya in Brazil and Suriname
- 10:20-11:00 Discussion & Coffee

Panel 5: Performance of *Shir Zan* and of Masculinity in Iran

Convenors: Mary E. Hegland and Janet Afary

- 11:00-11:20 Fahimeh Musavi, Jón Ingvar Kjarran, and Mohammad Naeimi: Religious Masculinity and Homoerotic Desire in Iranian Hajj Travelogues of the Qajar Period
- 11:20-11:40 Nafiseh Sharifi: Ethical Negotiations: Masculinity, Sexual Experience, and Moral Responsibility among Young Men in Tehran

11:40-12:00 Mary Elaine Hegland and Maryam Karimi: Living History: A Rural Iranian Woman Facing Widowhood, Economic Challenges, and Social/Cultural Transformations

12:00-12:20 Khatereh Sheibani: Masculinity in Abbas Kiarostami's Romance Sequel Films

12:20-12:40 Babak Rezvani: From Pahlavan to Abzar: Conscription, Masculinity, and the Question of Male Bodily Autonomy

12:40-13:00 Discussion

13:00-14:00 Lunch break

14:00-15:30 **Business meeting** – All are invited
Soheila Shahshahani & Danila Mayer

15:30-18:00 **Panel 6: Visual Anthropology: Film Screening**
Convenor: Shilan Saadi

Film screenings:

Letters from Baghdad, dir. Sabine Krayenbühl and Zeva Oelbaum, 2017

Wild Grapes of Halile-Rud (Angur-e Deim dar Bushehr), dir. Farhad Varahram, 1977

17:30-18:00 Discussion

Day 3

September 11, 2026, 9:00 (Istanbul Time)

Panel 7: Human–Animal Relations: Transformations and Meanings
Convenor: Ali Akherati

9:00-9:20 Maxime Henninger: What the Hive Does to the Honeybees: Sword-bees, Shield-bees and the Transformation of Beekeeping Techniques in Southwestern Turkey

9:20-9:40 Marzieh Khodabandehshahraki: Microbial Archives at the Edge of Extinction: Tracing Entangled Temporalities of Antimicrobial Resistance in Iranian Conservation Practices

9:40-10:00 Su Hyeon Cho: Our Kids: Mothering Through Animal Sacrifice in the Turkish Borderlands

10:00-10:40 Discussion and Coffee

Panel 8: Reimagining Gender and Identity: The Role of Beauty Influencers Across the Middle East

Convenor: Ziba Jalali Naini

- 10:40-11:00 Foojan Zeine: Beauty as a Psychological Borderland: Influencers of Culture, Gendered Identity, and Belonging in Iran and the Diaspora
- 11:00-11:20 Yasaman Karimpour: Personal Branding and the Reimagining of Femininity: Beauty Influencers in Contemporary Iran
- 11:20-11:40 Ziba Jalali Naini: Influencers as Civic Amplifiers: How Beauty Influencers Become Public Tribunes in Times of Crisis
- 11:40-12:00 Discussion
- 12:00-13:00 Lunch

Panel 9: Research in Progress

Convenor: Soheila Shahshahani

- 13:00-13:20 Danila Mayer: World Tour Road Cycling and its Organisation in the Middle East: a Developing Sports Ethnography
- 13:20-13:40 Toyoko Morita: How Did Non-Iranian Women Married to Iranian Men Adapt to Their Lives in Iranian Culture and Today to the Current Circumstances?
- 13:40-14:00 Discussion
- 14:00-14:30 Closing Remarks and Farewell
- 18:00 Commission Dinner, Location will be announced later.

Abstracts

Day 1

9th of September 2026

Pale 2: Humour in Times of Crisis

Convenor: Soraya Tremayne

Panel description: Humour as a universal human trait is defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* as “that quality of action, speech, or writing which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun.” However, humour serves multiple critical functions beyond mere entertainment, acting as both a psychological mechanism and as a tool for social critique. It can act as strategic and often a defiant force that shapes public perceptions, influences political discourses, and help societies navigate uncertainty. In addition to amusing people, humour provides a different lens through which to look at the society and events, and helps individuals reframe difficult situations, reduce emotional intensity, and regain a sense of control. Humour can appear in a variety of forms ranging from: self-deprecating, to sarcasm, to observational humour, and to political humour as a form of resistance and critique, particularly when used to challenge authority. Humour also provides valuable archival records for the study and better understanding of historical events.

Julie Alev Dilmaç

Humour in Times of Mourning: Cartoons and the Representation of Catastrophe in Turkey

Abstract: The major earthquake that struck Turkey in February 2023, causing a very high number of casualties, is part of a long history of seismic disasters that have deeply shaped the country. Far from being an isolated event, it reactivates collective memories—particularly those of the 1999 earthquake—while simultaneously reconfiguring everyday experiences in the present and projecting an anxious anticipation of the future, especially in relation to the expected major earthquake in Istanbul. In this sense, the catastrophe can be understood as a moment of reconfiguration of the social imaginary, where memory, lived experience, and projection intersect. In this context of shock and mourning, the production of cartoons addressing the earthquake may appear paradoxical. Yet it constitutes a heuristic phenomenon. Far from being merely anecdotal, these images are embedded in a moral and political economy of disaster, where humour operates both as a means of distancing from trauma and as a critical resource. This paper proposes to approach these cartoons as visual enunciative devices, at the intersection of scholarship on emotions, media, and political critique. It examines what these representations bring into view: which iconographic registers are mobilized, which actors are depicted, and how the catastrophe is framed. Do these cartoons represent death and destruction directly, or do they shift attention toward political responsibility, particularly through the denunciation of structural and institutional failures? In this sense, they may be understood as forms of framing that reconfigure the intelligibility of disaster and shape its public interpretation. Beyond their expressive dimension, these productions participate in forms of symbolic resistance, contributing to the politicization of catastrophe and the contestation of dominant narratives. They open a space in which tensions between mourning, critique, and meaning-making are negotiated through humour in the face of traumatic experience.

Nafe Babasafari

Laughter at Hour 1248: Satirical Resistance and the Reclamation of the “Confiscated” Voice Following the World’s Longest Digital Blackout

Abstract: Following forty days of intense military conflict and the resulting physical destruction in early 2026, Iran experienced a near-total international internet blackout lasting 1,248 hours (53 days)—the longest documented digital shutdown in contemporary history. This disruption occurred against a backdrop of severe economic exhaustion following the nationwide protests of January 2026 (Dey 1404). While officially justified as a public security necessity, this systemic exclusion engineered a profound state of “double marginalization.” In the ensuing silence, the everyday lives of citizens—navigating physical ruins and a decimated digital economy—were rendered into a political void, allowing their experiences to be “confiscated” and spoken for by various domestic and external actors who claimed these narratives while the subjects themselves remained structurally silenced. This research explores the digital restoration period, examining how ordinary people, deprived of institutional channels for expression, utilized dark humor as the primary medium to articulate their reality. Guided by a pragmatic paradigm, this study employs a purely qualitative online ethnography (netnography). The digital field site comprises the comment sections of prominent Instagram influencers and high-traffic pages, selected based on their mean engagement rate during the connectivity restoration phase. The findings reveal that the reclaimed public voice is deeply fragmented and saturated with satirical resistance. The qualitative analysis identifies an “arithmetic of absurdity” where citizens mock survival costs and the collapse of the digital economy, while simultaneously critiquing digital stratification and “Pro-Internet” models as forms of structural constraint. Furthermore, the data exhibits a “chronic intermission” logic, where geopolitical ceasefires are skeptically dismissed as mere half-time breaks in a cycle of damage. This is complemented by symbolic subversion and a vernacular resilience that utilizes laughter to bridge the “hope gap” in a post-conflict environment. Drawing on James Scott’s concept of infrapolitics (weapons of the weak) and Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, this paper argues that dark humor serves as a vital linguistic tool. It enables the “spoken-for” subjects to turn the world upside down, reclaiming their narrative agency from those who sought to capitalize on their 1,248 hours of forced silence.

Magdalena Rodziewicz

Laughing with the Clergy: Humour as a Communication Strategy of the Iranian Religious Establishment

Abstract: In the realm of state-society relations, humour is commonly viewed as a tool of resistance for those contesting authority – serving to counteract either the foolishness or the oppression of those in power. Jokes, caricatures, and satirical works frequently function as survival strategies in the face of a harsh reality. Consequently, it is this dimension of humour that usually captures the most attention. Relatively less scholarly attention, however, has been dedicated to how those in power deploy humour for ideological purposes, political legitimation, or even cultural diplomacy. This paper addresses this gap through the case of the Iranian religious establishment, examining the activities of Shi‘i clerics, particularly those of the younger generation and lower-to-mid-ranking. Amidst various initiatives aimed at promoting religious knowledge and softening the public image of turban-wearers, humour, jokes, and comedy have emerged as strategic communication tool designed to counter societal resentment and anticlerical sentiments. The analysis focuses on the television, cinematic, and online appearances of Shi‘i clerics, as well as

their activity on social media platforms, which, despite official restrictions, are widely utilised by state-sponsored actors, including the clerics themselves.

Iraj Esmaeilpour Ghoochani

Humor, Dreams, and Diaspora: Ethnopschoanalytic Observations from Participatory Video Work with Iranians in Stuttgart

Abstract: This presentation emerges from an ongoing participatory video project with members of the Iranian diaspora in Stuttgart, developed within the framework of visual anthropology and ethnopschoanalysis (<https://ov-os.de>). While the project initially focused on migration, memory, and self-representation, one of its central findings became the structural role of humor in situations of crisis, displacement, and symbolic rupture. In interviews and collaborative film exercises, humor repeatedly appeared where direct narration became difficult. Jokes, absurd associations, irony, mimicry, sudden tonal shifts, and playful linguistic distortions often emerged precisely at the points where political language reached its limits. Similar mechanisms can also be observed in Iranian social media culture, where jokes, memes, and short viral videos circulate virally during moments of political tension and social uncertainty. Humor therefore appears not merely as a reaction or coping mechanism, but as a specific form of symbolic work. The presentation draws partly on Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*) and its structural parallels between jokes and dreams, a relation explored extensively in the dissertation *Bābā Āb Dād: The Phenomenology of Sainthood in the Culture of Dreams in Kurdistan with an Emphasis on Sufis of Qāderie Brotherhood*. The dissertation examines dreams as archaic spaces in which Word and Flesh become inseparable and where visual and phonic associations operate simultaneously. In this framework, dream work (*Traumarbeit*) and joke work (*Witzarbeit*) appear as structurally related operations based on condensation, displacement, ambiguity, and rebus-like transformations between image and language. The contribution proposes that many forms of diasporic humor function similarly. Humor opens narrative spaces that direct ideological or political discourse tends to close. Laughter appears at the threshold between trauma and narration, almost as a topological fold between what can and cannot be directly articulated. Methodologically, the presentation combines participatory video practices, documentary interviewing, social media observation, and ethnopschoanalytic inquiry. It also introduces *mardomkāvi* (مردم‌کاوی), a neologism combining *mardomshenāsi* (anthropology/ethnography) and *ravānkāvi* (psychoanalysis), proposed here as a framework for studying symbolic life, humor, dreams, and unconscious processes within cultural formations.

Özlem Atik

Humour as a Way of Transforming Traumatic Narratives

Abstract: Traumatic events are often narrated through repetitive and seemingly fixed forms of storytelling that shape how communities remember the past across generations. Drawing on ethnographic research in Dersim, this paper argues that humour offers an alternative mode of narration, transforming not the traumatic past itself but the ways in which it is publicly remembered, retold, and negotiated. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2021 and 2022, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with multiple generations of Dersim residents, the paper examines humorous narratives emerging from the long aftermath of the 1937–38 Dersim Massacre. Rather than approaching humour merely as a coping mechanism

or a form of resistance, I examine it as a narrative practice through which painful histories are continuously reworked in everyday life. Particular attention is paid to intergenerational storytelling, vernacular expressions, and the role of humour in negotiating memories of violence, displacement, and state repression following the 1937–38 Dersim Massacre. I argue that humour does not diminish the significance of traumatic experience nor resolve historical injustice. Instead, it creates alternative narrative possibilities through which difficult pasts become speakable in new ways. Humour interrupts repetitive forms of traumatic narration, introducing shifts in perspective, language, and social interaction without erasing the enduring weight of memory. By focusing on humour as a mode of transforming traumatic narratives, this paper contributes to anthropological discussions on memory, narrative, and everyday life, while offering an ethnographic perspective on how communities continue to live with unresolved histories.

Panel 3: Food, Studied Anthropologically – Food in Anthropological Perspective

Convenor: Su Hyeon Cho

Panel description: Food is never simply sustenance. Our engagement with food allows us to remember and immortalise memory while continuing heritage. Through everyday practices of cooking, sharing, and eating, we make kin, politics, identities, and borders. Food is thus a powerful anthropological lens for examining how nostalgia and futurity are lived and negotiated. This panel invites contributions that examine food through anthropological perspectives in relation to the conference themes of Nostalgia and Future. Anthropology has long treated food as a privileged site for examining kinship, ritual, economy, power, colonial histories, migration, identity, and sensory experience. In moments of rapid social change, food frequently becomes a terrain where nostalgic imaginaries of authenticity, tradition, and heritage are mobilised—sometimes strategically, sometimes affectively. At the same time, food is central to speculative futures: alternative food systems, sustainability projects, technological innovation, food justice movements, and shifting moral economies of consumption. We welcome papers that explore (but are not limited to) the following questions:

- How is nostalgia articulated, embodied, or contested through food practices?
- In what ways do culinary traditions function as archives of memory?
- How do diasporic and migrant communities negotiate belonging through food?
- What futures are imagined through alternative food movements, biotechnology, lab-grown food, or climate-adaptive agriculture?
- How do heritage discourses transform food into patrimony?
- What role does food play in projects of decolonisation, revival, or reinvention?
- How are sensory experiences of taste and smell implicated in temporal imaginaries?
- How do media, markets, and tourism produce nostalgic foodscapes?
- What tensions arise between “authentic” pasts and sustainable or technological futures?

We encourage ethnographically grounded research as well as theoretically driven contributions. Comparative, historical, multispecies, material, political-economic, and sensory approaches are particularly welcome. By placing food at the center of anthropological inquiry, this panel seeks to explore how temporalities—remembered pasts and imagined futures—are lived, contested, and materialised in everyday acts of production, preparation, sharing, and consumption.

Minoo Salimi

Food and Female Identity: Women's Mutual Aid in Preparing Tarkhineh in Western Iran

Abstract: Food is not merely something that humans use to sustain life; rather, among members of various societies and cultures, food is considered a cultural phenomenon. Food has the ability to express and display different social and cultural identities. The food of any region is a clear indicator of the dietary habits, biological makeup, and cultural reflections of its people. Food has the ability to express and display various social and cultural identities. The fundamental role that food plays over a long-term, cyclical process in creating organization and facilitating socialization in human societies has led anthropology, more than anything else, to emphasize this continuous process and to dissect and analyze its components. In this article, the preparation and consumption of Tarkhineh are examined using ethnographic methods among the Kurds of western Iran. This food is produced and prepared by Kurdish women over a period from the 1st to the end of September (1-21) after the completion of agricultural work. Since the production of this food is an identity-forming activity, its study and understanding are important. The production of Tarkhineh is an entirely feminine activity, and mutual aid (cooperation) is employed in its Production. The research findings indicate that the production of Tarkhineh can be considered a form of women's mutual aid and a manifestation and reinforcement of social identity for women in this region. The production of Tarkhineh represents a distinct and unique form of social, female, and structured identity in response to a biological necessity. This form of food preparation is, on the one hand, an economic organization rooted in ancient historical conditions and sustained by economic needs; on the other hand, like many economic organizations of traditional society, it is holistically intertwined with non-economic and cultural factors. In particular, due to its nature as a traditional cooperative organization, this form of food preparation also possesses strong social dimensions.

Soyoka Namie and Alia Shaddad

How to Eat Japan: On Authenticity and the Ethics of Eating the Other

Abstract: This paired ethnography explores how Japanese cuisine becomes a 'consumed belonging' through which questions of morality, class, and global power relations are contested across classed postcolonial contexts. Drawing on comparative ethnographic fieldwork conducted in London and Cairo, alongside analyses of menus, restaurant design, table interactions, and online reviews, we trace how authenticity, purity, and cultural authority are produced before, during, and after the meal. In London, diners frequently ask staff, "Is this real Japanese food?" signalling their pursuit of an "authentic" experience of Japan. The fact that the restaurant is vegan also means that this pursuit is entangled with other forms of ethical consumption. We examine how Japan becomes staged as a heritage object that must be authenticated, with staff serving as gatekeepers of this imagined essence. Drawing on Said's Orientalism, we explore how this desire for a pure Japan reflects a classed form of cultural authority, through which the Global North produces Japan as a coherent and morally legible object of consumption. In an upscale Japanese restaurant in Cairo, Japanese cuisine becomes a marker of elite distinction and cosmopolitan aspiration, where authenticity is defined by curated ingredients, refined service, and high prices. Ethical claims are less explicitly articulated, and access to "real" Japanese food serves as a status symbol. Across both sites, purity and authenticity are not inherent but performed, classed practices embedded in the afterlives of colonial domination. Food becomes a contested heritage

object through which consumers ingest and reproduce global inequalities, even under ethical and cosmopolitan frameworks.

Panel 4: Rituals, Boundaries and Crossings: Migration, Pilgrimages and Conversion in Muslim Contexts

Convenors: Paulo Pinto and Gisele Fonseca Chagas

Panel description: Rituals are often associated with the creation or reinforcement of boundaries in Muslim contexts in the Middle East and its diasporas, as they produce collective cohesion and solidarity as well as demarcate and define sacred territories. Conversely, movement, such as pilgrimage, displacement, such as immigration and diasporas, and crossings, such as conversion, are also central features of the religious life of Muslim communities which are expressed and done through rituals. The meanings and social processes that spring from these processes are shaped and defined by each cultural context in which they unfold. Therefore, we invite to our panel papers that explore these religious processes through ethnographic research in Muslim contexts in the Middle East and/or its diasporic and immigrant communities established in other geographic areas.

Shahnoza Madaeva

Anthropology of Religious Identity in Contemporary Uzbek Traditional Society

Abstract: In Uzbekistan, religion and culture are understood within a social framework in which religious traditions associated with the Hanafi school are deeply rooted, reflecting the Oriental and Islamic elements of traditional society. Historically, religious identity in Uzbekistan—from the period of the *Avesta* to the advent of Islam—has functioned as a system of mental, domestic, cultural, economic, and political norms and imperatives. These elements have syncretically combined pre-Islamic and Islamic values. Religious identity has also served as a strong spiritual and social foundation in the formation of statehood, ethnicity, nationhood, family structures, and individual upbringing. However, these concepts and their underlying principles have undergone significant transformations in the present day. In contemporary Uzbekistan, new aspects of religious identity are emerging, some of which negatively affect the balanced development of key social institutions such as the state, the nation, and the family. Throughout Uzbekistan's history, religious phenomena have largely developed in close interaction with national identity. While religion itself remains relatively constant in its core doctrines, the cultural expressions shaped by it continue to evolve. In modern Uzbekistan, Islam influences various aspects of life, including lifestyle, dress, cultural and religious practices, mechanisms of governance, and even patterns of thought among the population. Modern religious identity in Uzbekistan is generally associated with the period following independence. Earlier forms of identity were shaped by Soviet-era communist ideology, which promoted atheism through deliberate policy in the early 20th century. Since the 1990s, however, there has been a revival of religious identity alongside the restoration of national and religious values. In the 21st century, this process has been further influenced by globalization, including the spread of diverse Islamic interpretations—some of them radical or fundamentalist—through cyberspace. Overall, Uzbek society is currently experiencing a complex process that can be described as an identity crisis, particularly in relation to maintaining and managing statehood amid rapid social change. This issue has become increasingly recognized during the years of independence and is now the subject of serious consideration within public and academic discourse.

Gisele Fonseca Chagas

Local Rituals, Transnational Crossings: Shi'a Religious Landscape in São Paulo, Brazil

Abstract: Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Shi'a communities in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, this paper presents an overview of the local Shi'a religious landscape, examining the configuration of its communities, institutions, and ritual practices. Particular ethnographic attention is given to the rituals of 'Ashura, exploring how Shi'a collective identity is mobilized through local engagements and transnational crossings.

Zuzanna Błajet

Living Between Worlds: Intangible Cultural Heritage of Pamiri-Isma'ili Migrant Populations in Poland

Abstract: This paper explores how Pamiri-Isma'ili migrants in Poland use intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to maintain community, negotiate belonging, and cope with displacement. Originating from the Tajik Badakhshan, Pamiris are a marginalised ethno-linguistic and religious minority whose identities are shaped by minority language use, regional belonging, and adherence to Nizari Isma'ilism. Although migration from Central Asia to Poland has increased in recent years, Pamiris remain largely invisible in Polish public discourse and academic research. Drawing on preliminary ethnographic research conducted since 2025, this paper examines how a small community of approximately 500 Pamiris mobilises ICH to sustain continuity while adapting to a new social and institutional environment. Grounded in anthropological and critical heritage scholarship, the study understands ICH as a dynamic and continually negotiated set of practices. Following the UNESCO framework, the analysis focuses on religious rituals, festive celebrations, language, oral traditions, foodways, music, and community knowledge. It asks: (1) Which forms of ICH are maintained, adapted, or silenced, and in which contexts (family, community) are they performed? (2) How is ICH renegotiated within the Polish social, political, and institutional environment? The analysis is based on in-depth interviews and participant observation. Preliminary findings indicate that ICH functions both as a source of continuity and as a strategy for navigating displacement. Heritage practices—particularly religious and family celebrations—remain central but are reshaped by Polish legal frameworks, limited community infrastructure, and the absence of elder relatives. At the same time, Pamiri heritage remains largely invisible within Polish institutions. The paper contributes to emerging scholarship on intangible cultural heritage in migration by highlighting the experiences of a largely overlooked Central Asian migrant community in Poland.

Paulo G. Pinto

The Mahdi Among Us: Doctrinal and Ritual Dynamics of the Ahmadiyya in Brazil and Suriname

Abstract: This paper presents a comparative analysis of the presence of the Ahmadiyya movement in Brazil and Suriname. The Ahmadiyya presence in Suriname dates back to 1929, having established a large community with an extensive network of mosques and institutions, whereas in Brazil, it began in the 1990s and remains limited to a single mosque in Petrópolis, serving a small community. In Suriname, the Ahmadiyya split into two rival communities: one that rejects the founder's prophetic status—aligning itself more closely with the country's Sunni majority—and another that regards him as a prophet. In Brazil, the only existing community is affiliated with the latter branch. This comparison of the communities will explore how differences in ritual practices

and doctrinal cosmologies led to distinct processes of the Ahmadiyya's localization within the local religious landscape in each country.

Panel 5: Performance of *Shir Zan* and of Masculinity in Iran

Convenors: Mary E. Hegland and Janet Afary

Panel description: This panel offers a deep historical perspective on the evolution of Iranian masculinities across time. A close investigation of the political economy of Iranian films depicts that the production, distribution, and consumption of films in Iran are deeply affected by gender relations and sociocultural trends of gender norms. One paper examines how Iranian mainstream festival films construct and circulate images of masculinity, transforming male subjects into governable figures whose power aligns with state authority. For a paper on lioness women of Iran, insight is offered about the life story of one *shir zan* (lioness woman) of an early widow who adjusted to her difficulties and to cultural, religious, political and economic changes.

Fahimeh Musavi, Jón Ingvar Kjaran, and Mohammad Naeimi

Religious Masculinity and Homoerotic Desire in Iranian Hajj Travelogues of the Qajar Period

Abstract: This paper develops the notion that masculinity, sexuality, and religiosity are historically constructed and shaped by power relations in every society. In nineteenth-century Iran, one of the characteristics of religious masculinity, as defined by the dominant discourse, was its complex stance toward same-sex relations; while same-sex desire was tolerated, actual homosexual intercourse was religiously forbidden according to the Quran. This chapter examines the intersection of religiosity and sexuality in Qajar-era Hajj travelogues, focusing on when and how such relations could be expressed within a religious framework. Eighty Hajj travelogues, written between 958 AH (1551 CE) and 1348 AH (1929 CE), were examined. Among these, only eight travelogues—all composed between 1260 AH (1844 CE) and 1319 AH (1901 CE), a span of fifty-nine years—explicitly refer to the presence of homosexual desire and relations. The temporal concentration of these accounts suggests that a convergence of factors in this short period fostered a discursive space where desires deviating from religious norms could be articulated, even within the sacred context of the Hajj. Drawing on queer theory and masculinity studies, this research analyzes how religious masculinity and same-sex desire were articulated, negotiated, and constrained by the interplay of social norms, religious authority, and power dynamics.

Nafiseh Sharifi

Ethical Negotiations: Masculinity, Sexual Experience, and Moral Responsibility among Young Men in Tehran

Abstract: This paper examines how young Iranian men born in the 1990s negotiate contemporary masculinity through their intimate lives and sexual ethics. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Tehran between 2019 and 2021, I explore how fifteen university-educated men articulate their masculine identities whilst navigating between inherited cultural expectations, emergent egalitarian ideals, and anxieties about sexual competence and moral responsibility. Rather than upholding or rejecting traditional gender norms in straightforward ways, my informants expressed deeply contradictory attitudes. They performed care and emotional attentiveness whilst maintaining evaluative authority over women's bodies and intimate decisions. They claimed that women's sexual pasts "don't matter" whilst revealing persistent anxieties. They

articulated principles of respect and choice whilst continuing to evaluate and regulate women's sexuality. Drawing on Inhorn's (2012) attention to embodied masculinities and Bridges and Pascoe's (2014) theorization of hybrid masculinities, I approach masculinity not as a fixed category but as an ongoing ethical negotiation, a process through which men construct moral selfhood whilst navigating competing gender expectations. Their narratives reveal masculinity as relational, contextual, and full of unresolved tensions. The paper also reflects on the methodological dimensions of this research. As a female researcher interviewing men about intimate experiences, the gendered dynamics of our encounters became ethnographic data themselves. Men performed respectability, managed their language carefully, and negotiated vulnerability in ways that reveal how masculinity is performed across gender lines. This research contributes both empirically, offering insights into changing masculinities in contemporary Iran, and methodologically, demonstrating the productive tensions that emerge when women study men's intimate lives in the Middle East.

Mary Elaine Hegland and Maryam Karimi

Living History: A Rural Iranian Woman Facing Widowhood, Economic Challenges, and Social/Cultural Transformations

Abstract: Coming from behind a political, religious, cultural, and economic curtain, narratives of an Aliabad woman from a village settlement in Fars province about the lives of herself, mother, and grandmother show how transformations have affected them and how their decisions and actions have helped bring about changes. Based on anthropological fieldwork covering fifty years and extensive interviewing, "Maryam Karimi's" narrations about the lives of herself, her mother and grandmother reveal how they managed through the personal and historical conditions and changes of early marriage, early widowhood, supporting self and children on their own, rural to urban migration, changing cultural practices concerning care for elderly mothers, and rampant inflation and economic disasters. Maryam's decisions to avoid remarriage, leave her in-laws' home, open the first clothing shop in Aliabad, and live alone after raising her sons and her mother's death opened pathways for other Aliabad women. As a young bride, Maryam worked hard under the control of her mother-in-law, but later brides gained more power. Maryam stated, "When I was a bride, it was the rule of the mother-in-law. When I became a mother-in-law, it was the rule of the brides." Maryam's life and that of her age mates were affected by modernization and globalization. With daughters-in-law gaining power and individuation, the cultural decline of elderly mothers living with sons while daughters-in-law tended to their needs affected aging widows. Many live alone although unprepared for such a life. As Maryam says, "Now, I live my life for myself." Disconnected from her sons, Maryam prays, sees friends, watches TV, and goes to women's religious rituals. This paper about village widows' lives during historical transformations is based on 18 months of fieldwork 1978-1979 with additional 8 more much shorter visits to the same research site, visits with Maryam and other people from Aliabad in Turkey lasting from a month to 10 days, and close internet contact, interviewing, and clarifications from January 2022 and on. Long-term contact, many conversations, and close friendships enabled documentation on how an uneducated, early-married, early-widowed village woman was able to endure her losses and make her way through difficult times as best as possible.

Khatereh Sheibani

Masculinity in Abbas Kiarostami's Romance Sequel Films

Abstract: This paper explores the notion of masculinity in Kiarostami's romance sequel, *Gozareh* (Report, 1977) and *Certified Copy* (2010). The two films explored in this chapter examine the masculine world and the male protagonists' uncertainties and challenges in comprehending women, romantic relations, and life in general. In both films men are featured as lead figures. The cinematic point of view (POV) in both films is reserved for the male protagonist, and female characters are barely given a subjective POV. *Report* shows a troubled man, Mamad, in a flustered wintery Tehran. He tries to exert his agency in the familial and professional domains to no avail. His uncompromising attitude and his physical violence at home ends his marriage, while his stubbornness at work ends his job. Mamad mirrors the sociopolitical failure and shortcomings of Iranians in the late 1970s. *Certified Copy*, on the other hand, has various elements of a romantic comedy. The lead male figure, James Miller, is a scholar of art exploring the significance of the certified copies of great works of art. His elusive and everchanging relationship with a woman, suggest that the character is quite at ease with embracing the fleeting moments of happiness. He has accepted that no romantic relationship is original or authentic, that any relationship is a copy of previous experiences. Kiarostami was criticized for his limited portrayal of women in his films. But what has often gone unnoticed is that he was aware of his own shortcomings and self reflexively explored his complicated views about women and romantic relationships. Kiarostami repeatedly criticizes his alter ego in many of his films including the two films under study here. This article sheds light on how Kiarostami's portrayal of male desire and anxiety, as represented in the narrative, performance, and cinematography, stand in jarring contrast to popular models of masculinity in most Iranian films.

Babak Rezvani

From Pahlavan to Abzar: Conscription, Masculinity, and the Question of Male Bodily Autonomy

Abstract: This contribution examines the transformation of masculinity from the cultural ideal of the pahlavan (heroic protector) to the instrumentalized abzar (tool/ instrument) of the state. It explores how military conscription and militarized nationalism have positioned male bodies as resources for collective defense, often subordinating individual bodily autonomy to the perceived needs of the nation. While men have been granted symbolic social value within patriarchal systems, they have simultaneously been exposed to disproportionate risks through expectations of military service and sacrifice—among many other systemic burdens that prioritize their utility over their well-being. The presentation analyzes how this paradox operates within contemporary political discourse, particularly in contexts of renewed militarization where silencing and shaming are used to enforce compliance. In the current world, security is often framed as a necessity that requires human contribution and activism; this necessity frequently manifests through gendered shaming. For instance, in Iranian media, young women have been prompted to state that men who do not “dare” to go behind missile launchers are “cancelled,” implying they do not deserve affection, love, or marriage. While there are arguments that territoriality is a biological instinct found throughout the animal kingdom, this contribution argues that nationalism, the concept of the nation-state, and conscription service are social constructs designed to facilitate state utility. The general lack of attention toward these issues in mainstream human rights and feminist discourse reinforces the social mechanisms of silencing dissent and shaming young men who refuse to be used as disposable instruments of war. Drawing on scholarship—including the work

of Cynthia Enloe, Carol Cohn, Catherine Lutz, and Cynthia Cockburn—this contribution situates male conscription within broader gendered systems of power. While these scholars have highlighted how militaries rely on gendered expectations, the specific question of male bodily autonomy and the fundamental right to life under compulsory service was not their primary focus. Furthermore, while earlier activism from figures such as Eva Gore-Booth, Alice Paul and Karen DeCrow who discussed also the male-only military service and challenged the gendered nature of citizenship, they often left the core issue of male corporal integrity unaddressed. All in all, looking at this issue through bodily autonomy and right- to-life perspectives remain largely overlooked in modern debates. By revisiting the slogan “my body, my choice” in the context of conscription, the presentation asks whether modern societies maintain an unresolved contradiction: the defense of bodily autonomy as a universal principle while preserving institutions that treat young men as expendable for national survival. The contribution ultimately invites a reconsideration of militarization, citizenship, and gender equality through the lens of autonomy, the “disposability” framework, and the ethical limits of state authority over the human body,

Panel 7: Human–Animal Relations: Transformations and Meanings

Convenor: Ali Akherati

Panel description: Across human history, animals have held deep material, moral, and symbolic roles in shaping socio-cultural life — as companions, laborers, mediators, mirrors of human values, or pets. This panel invites ethnographic and historical reflections on how these relations are lived, imagined, and transformed across the Middle East. Moving beyond familiar frameworks of pet keeping or Western notions of companionship, it explores how animals are integrated into social institutions, rituals, and systems of belief, and how these meanings shift through urbanization and changing moral and affective sensibilities — from pastoral and rural settings to contemporary cities. By tracing such transformations, the discussion hopes to reveal how animals continue to shape, and be shaped by, the cultural and symbolic worlds of human communities.

Maxime Henninger

What the Hive Does to the Honeybees: Sword-bees, Shield-bees and the Transformation of Beekeeping Techniques in Southwestern Turkey.

Abstract: Turkey is one of the world's largest producers of honeybee products, and beekeeping is a widespread practice in rural areas. Like other Turkish agricultural practices, beekeeping has undergone profound changes over the past century as part of a drive toward modernization. Drawing on ongoing fieldwork conducted in the province of Muğla, I will present how a specific change in the beekeeping system, namely the introduction and subsequent dominance of hives equipped with removable frames, has led to a profound shift in the local taxonomy regarding bees. The distinction between “sword bees” (*kılıç arı*) and “shield bees,” (*kalkan arı*), each possessing unique qualities, stemming from the observation of the orientation of honeybee combs as seen by the beekeeper in traditional hives, is obscured by the movable-frame hive, which dictates the orientation of combs to the bees. While the sword-shield taxonomy is vanishing, the recognition and preservation of a local bee subspecies, the Muğla bee, has become a topic of interest in a context of long-distance migratory beekeeping that brings in contact multiple honeybee subspecies. This example sheds light on the interactions between imaginaries, technical systems, and practices within the context of honeybee domestication and specifically the recent transformations of beekeeping in Turkey. It underlines how specific technical systems open or in

this case close the possibilities of interpretation of animal behavior by restricting them and rendering them illegible.

Marzieh Khodabandehshahraki

Microbial Archives at the Edge of Extinction: Tracing Entangled Temporalities of Antimicrobial Resistance in Iranian Conservation Practices

Abstract: This research investigates the convergence of two existential crises—biodiversity loss and antimicrobial resistance (AMR)—within Iran’s protected areas, where the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah persists at the precipice of extinction. As global attention fixates on visible species decline, an invisible ecological transformation unfolds: antibiotics and resistant microbes are quietly infiltrating the bodies, soils, and waters of conservation landscapes, creating what I term “microbial archives” that document our pharmaceutical past within endangered species themselves. This project employs multispecies ethnographic methods to trace how the global circulation of antibiotics, microbial evolutionary dynamics, and conservation interventions co-produce new threats to species survival. Iran constitutes a critical frontier for this inquiry, ranking among nations with the highest per capita antibiotic consumption—approximately 68 Defined Daily Doses per 1000 inhabitants daily, substantially exceeding global averages. This intense pharmaceutical flow intersects with conservation sites, creating unprecedented exposure pathways for already vulnerable populations. The Asiatic cheetah’s survival is compromised not merely by habitat fragmentation and poaching but by a microbial legacy it cannot perceive, a threat particularly acute for captive breeding programs where close proximity and intensive veterinary care facilitate elevated AMR exchange. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s conceptual framework from *Staying with the Trouble*, I analyze AMR through the lens of entangled temporalities—what I call “AMR time.” This concept captures the non-linear sedimentation of past antibiotic use within environments and organisms, constraining present conservation actions while foreclosing future viability. AMR manifests as ecological heritage that shapes the “thick present” of conservation, where the urgency of preventing immediate extinction coexists with the creeping threat of resistant infections. By moving beyond linear narratives of drug development and resistance emergence, I argue that conservation must now contend with bacterial genomes as key actors in species survival. Methodologically, I propose tracing antibiotic itineraries and resistance genes across species and institutional boundaries—from farms and pharmacies into protected soils, water systems, and ultimately into cheetah bodies. This approach treats soil samples, water sources, scat collections, and veterinary records not merely as data points but as archives of multispecies relations where past pharmaceutical practices, present exposures, and future viability are knotted together. My analysis critically engages with emerging conservation interventions such as probiotic and prebiotic supplementation in captive diets, which seek to engineer “healthy” microbiomes while raising profound ethical questions about reshaping the intimate ecologies of species on the brink and creating unforeseen dependencies. A multispecies perspective proves imperative here because the cheetah’s fate is inextricably entangled with the evolutionary futures of its microbial companions. To trace AMR “at the edge of extinction” is to acknowledge that conservation imaginaries must now incorporate bacterial genomes as co-constituents of survival possibilities. This research contributes to broader conversations in environmental anthropology and science and technology studies by demonstrating how the seemingly discrete crises of biodiversity loss and antimicrobial resistance are fundamentally interconnected, demanding analytical frameworks capable of tracking chemical and microbial flows across species, institutions, and temporalities. The Asiatic cheetah emerges not merely as

an endangered individual but as a keystone whose existence signals the health of entangled grasslands, prey populations, and watersheds—and whose microbial companions may ultimately determine whether conservation succeeds or fails in the Anthropocene.

Su Hyeon Cho

Our Kids: Mothering Through Animal Sacrifice in the Turkish Borderlands

Abstract: This paper presents ethnographic findings on women's sacrifice practices (*kurban/adak* in Turkish; *madagh* in Armenian) among Christian communities in post-earthquake Hatay, Turkey. By documenting these practices beyond Muslim communities, it complicates the common association of votive animal sacrifice with Islam. Moving beyond confessional differences, I argue that women's sacrifice articulates a gendered idiom of kinship in which motherhood is enacted through practices of sacrifice, care, and self-sacrifice. Women's vow offerings (*adak*) are directed toward establishing and sustaining family relations, particularly through giving birth to and safeguarding sons. I argue that ideals of female self-sacrifice (*fedakârlık*) constitute an essential dimension of these ritual practices. This contrasts with men's sacrificial practices, which are more often oriented toward individual aspirations, such as success, return from *gurbet*, or recovery from illness. This gendered ritual is further expressed through women's relationships with male sacrificial animals. By raising these animals within the household, women often cultivate intimate, mother-and-son-like bonds with them. These relationships culminate in the animal's sacrifice upon the fulfilment of vows made for their human sons. Through this intimate yet ultimately sacrificial relationship, I explore the symbolic, affective, and embodied dimensions of human-animal relations and argue that sacrificial care constitutes a distinctive mode through which motherhood and family are enacted.

Panel 8: Reimagining Gender and Identity: The Role of Beauty Influencers Across the Middle East

Convenor: Ziba Jalali Naini

Panel description: This panel examines how beauty and lifestyle influencers across the Middle East use digital platforms to renegotiate gender norms, identity, and cultural belonging. In contexts where traditional and state structures enforce rigid binaries and appearance standards, influencers have emerged as cultural actors who subtly or overtly challenge these boundaries. The panel invites interdisciplinary exploration of beauty as a cultural language—one that enables resistance, aspiration, and new forms of identity-making. Key questions address how influencers challenge or reinforce gender norms (especially in Iran), how beauty mediates self-expression and belonging, how men's participation reshapes masculinity, and how global digital trends interact with local cultural frameworks. Suggested themes include new masculinities, subversive aesthetics, digital activism, diasporic identity formation, generational shifts toward gender fluidity, and comparative perspectives across Middle East countries.

Foojan Zeine

Beauty as a Psychological Borderland: Influencers of Culture, Gendered Identity, and Belonging in Iran and the Diaspora

Abstract: This conceptual paper examines beauty and lifestyle influencing as a psychological borderland in which gender, body, identity, and cultural belonging are continuously negotiated.

Centering Iran while extending to Middle Eastern and diasporic contexts, I propose that beauty is not merely an aesthetic practice or commercial product; it is a language through which individuals communicate visibility, resistance, aspiration, safety, and belonging. Recent research links appearance-centered social media to self-objectification, social comparison, body dissatisfaction, and internalized beauty ideals, while emerging studies of Iranian women, micro-celebrities, and digital feminist artists also demonstrate that online self-presentation can reclaim bodily agency and challenge institutionalized gender control. Drawing on objectification theory, social comparison theory, identity-development research, and Awareness Integration Theory (AIT), this paper introduces a whole-person framework for examining influencer culture across awareness, beliefs, emotions, embodied experience, social identity, relationships, and intentional action. The analysis identifies a central psychological double bind: influencers may use beauty practices to author a more expansive self, yet become increasingly governed by audience approval, algorithmic visibility, marketability, and culturally sanctioned appearance norms. The same image can therefore function as liberation, adaptation, self-surveillance, or all three simultaneously. Special attention is given to men's participation in beauty culture and the ways grooming, makeup, fashion, and emotional expressiveness may broaden masculinity while also commercializing gender transgression. For diasporic Iranians, digital beauty practices may support bicultural integration and connection, but can also intensify fragmentation, shame, and competing expectations from homeland and host cultures. The paper concludes with psychological criteria for distinguishing integrated self-expression from externally regulated self-objectification and offers implications for culturally responsive clinicians, educators, and researchers studying digital identity.

Yasaman Karimpour

Personal Branding and the Reimagining of Femininity: Beauty Influencers in Contemporary Iran

Abstract: Instagram has become an important cultural space where contemporary ideals of femininity are not only displayed actively shaped and negotiated through everyday digital practices. In Iran, beauty influencers increasingly occupy this space by presenting carefully curated public personas that combine beauty, lifestyle, work, relationships, and self-care into integrated and aspirational narratives of womanhood. While existing scholarship has primarily examined beauty influencers through the lenses of marketing, consumer behavior, and digital communication, comparatively little attention has been paid to personal branding as a cultural practice through which particular representations of femininity are made visible, recognizable, and socially legitimate. This paper approaches personal branding not simply as a strategy for visibility or commercial success, but as a cultural practice embedded in broader negotiations surrounding gender and identity. Rather than asking whether beauty influencers affect their audiences, the study examines how branding practices construct, organize, and circulate recurring models of contemporary femininity within the socio-cultural context of Iran. In doing so, it brings personal branding into dialogue with anthropological perspectives on gender performance, identity formation, and digital cultural expression and digital culture. The study adopts a mixed-method design combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative interpretation. A purposive sample of prominent Iranian beauty influencers will be selected, and approximately 100–150 Instagram posts will be systematically coded using a framework that examines visual self-presentation, authenticity, lifestyle, entrepreneurial identity, body representation, self-care, and references to both traditional and contemporary femininity. Descriptive statistics will be used to identify recurring patterns, which will then be interpreted within their broader cultural context.

By examining beauty influencers through the lens of personal branding, this study seeks to contribute to anthropological discussions of gender and digital culture in the Middle East. Rather than viewing influencers primarily as promoters of products or lifestyles, it considers them cultural actors whose branding practices participate in the public representation and normalization of particular models of femininity in contemporary Iranian society. The paper ultimately argues that personal branding offers a robust analytical lens for understanding how contemporary femininity is publicly performed and culturally negotiated in digital environments.

Ziba Jalali Naini: Influencers as Civic Amplifiers: How Beauty Influencers Become Public Tribunes in Times of Crisis

Abstract: In moments of social upheaval, political repression, or national trauma, a distinct transformation occurs within the digital sphere: individuals who normally operate as lifestyle creators, educators, or small-scale community influencers begin to function as *civic amplifiers*. This paper examines how beauty influencers -creators typically associated with skincare, makeup, and aesthetic content- unexpectedly become civic actors during moments of national crisis. Built on trust, emotional familiarity, and daily presence, their platforms transform into public tribunes where lived realities, testimonies, and verified information circulate. The session explores how aesthetic intimacy becomes civic trust, how beauty spaces evolve into channels of ethical witnessing, and how these overlooked voices shape collective memory when traditional media is censored, constrained, or distrusted. Their interventions are not driven by branding or visibility; instead, they emerge from a sense of responsibility, proximity to lived realities, and a commitment to truthful witnessing. I will examine how these individuals navigate the tension between personal vulnerability and public duty, how their audiences respond to the sudden shift in tone and content, and how their contributions shape collective memory during crises. The discussion highlights the ethical dimensions of their work-accuracy, restraint, and non-exploitative storytelling- and considers how their presence complicates conventional definitions of “influencer,” “activist,” and “citizen journalist.” By focusing on small-scale, less-recognized figures rather than celebrity voices, the panel foregrounds authenticity, moral clarity, and the quiet but powerful labor of digital witnessing. Methodology (Approach to Research): This panel draws on a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative digital ethnography, close reading of social media posts during crisis periods, and semi-structured interviews with small-scale influencers and community-based digital witnesses. The research prioritizes accounts that demonstrate ethical communication practices-verifiable information, non-sensational tone, and avoidance of personal or political gain. Content analysis focuses on patterns of narrative framing, emotional register, and the shift from personal to civic voice. Additionally, the study incorporates comparative analysis across different crisis moments (e.g., protests, humanitarian emergencies, regional conflicts) to identify recurring behaviors and structural pressures. The methodology intentionally excludes high-profile or politicized figures to center the quieter, often overlooked actors whose contributions are more aligned with grassroots truth-telling. This approach allows the panel to map how “ordinary” digital voices become extraordinary civic agents when society enters a state of rupture.

Panel 9: Research in Progress

Convenor: Soheila Shahashahani

Danila Mayer

World Tour Road Cycling and its Organisation in the Middle East: a Developing Sports Ethnography

Abstract: Professional Road Cycling races have a dedicated fan base and take place all around the world. The discipline is part of the Olympics and has national competitions and a World Championship, where the riders compete in national teams. In other main events - the three annual Grand Tours in Italy, France and Spain, and five one-day races called Monuments, among many others - the riders compete in UCI* World Teams: commercial teams, consisting of professionals from a variety of national and ethnic backgrounds. These teams are owned and sponsored by private and public companies; the highest ranking are 18 UCI World road cycling teams at present, with additional 16 UCI Pro Teams. The World teams *XTS Astana*, *UAE Team Emirates* *XRG*, and *Bahrain Victorious* are sponsored by Kazakhstan, the UAE, and Bahrain respectively. UAE has a men's and a women's team; additional teams and 'Academies' in each country prepare younger riders. Academic literature on these Mid-Eastern countries' sponsorship in professional road cycling centers on aspects of nation-building, 'sportswashing', the uses of sports as soft powers, and sports diplomacy. Sports journalism takes up similar approaches in their features on riders and teams. Professional road cycling is an individual sport played as a team, and vice versa. N. Elias and E. Dunning point out the dynamics of small groups and group constellations in sports (in their example, soccer), where relationships are complex and flowing in space, time and awareness. Such multi-dimensional changes of a group's relations while depending on each other is especially virulent in road cycling, where the peloton consists of around 180 riders racing top-speed in ca. 20 teams, with each team member having a different task and also varying levels of endurance and 'legs' for the specific race stage. In my presentation, I will give a short overview of the Mid-Eastern World Pro Cycling Teams in question, and analyse a selection of publications on them. A short account of this year's Grand Tours and the teams' performances in them, with visuals to bring us closer to the riders, will round out this first leg of an emerging research.

*Union Cycliste Internationale, based in Aigle, Switzerland

Toyoko Morita

How Did Non-Iranian Women Married to Iranian Men Adapt to Their Lives in Iranian Culture and Today to the Current Circumstances?

Abstract: The purpose of the paper is to explore the historical background of Japanese women who married Iranian men and came to live in Iran, their current circumstances, and the ways in which they have adapted to Iranian culture while carrying a Japanese cultural background. Most Japanese who have married Iranians are women, and they have formed small communities mainly in Tehran and other major cities. Through their married life and child-rearing in Iran, they have encountered Iranian culture and developed their own ways of adapting to it. In this presentation, I examine the historical trajectories and contemporary conditions of these women—situated at the intersection of Japanese and Iranian cultural spheres—drawing on empirical insights derived from in-depth interviews. The analysis highlights how their lived experiences illuminate broader processes of cultural negotiation, identity formation, and transnational family dynamics.

Bios

Afary, Janet is a Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies and History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her most recent project (with John Lee, UCSB) is a broad edited volume on performance of masculinity in Iran from 500 BC to the contemporary period.

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Akherati, Ali is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Tehran, where he also earned his Master's degree in Anthropology. His areas of focus include visual anthropology, urban anthropology, Ludology, and human–animal relations. He has conducted long-term ethnographic research on pigeon racing in Iran. His academic contributions in this field include a peer-reviewed journal article, a book, and an encyclopedia entry in Iranian Folk Culture, published by the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia. He has also directed a documentary film on this topic.

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Atik, Özlem is a sociologist and part-time lecturer at Istanbul Bilgi University. She received her PhD in Sociology from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Her research focuses on humor, memory, trauma, language, and ethnography, particularly in relation to Dersim. She is the author of the article “Laughing Through Silence: Humour, Language, and Memory in Dersim Narratives” and has published on humor, collective memory, and cultural identity.

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Bromberger, Christian is a French professor of anthropology and an expert of Iranian Studies at the University of Provence in France. He is a specialist in studying the culture of Gilan in the Northern side of Iran and also the head of the French Association of Iranian Studies. Bromberger has conducted field research in the foothills of Gilan and has a major role in the establishment of the Guilan Rural Heritage Museum being a member of the museum's Board of Experts.

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Chagas, Gisele Fonseca is a Professor of Anthropology and vice-director of the Centre for Middle East Studies (NEOM) at the Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil. She has published articles and book chapters on Sufi women in Syria and gender and religious authorities in Muslim communities in Brazil. Gisele is currently conducting fieldwork on shi'a rituals in Brazil.

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Cho, Su Hyeon is a DPhil candidate at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, the University of Oxford. Her doctoral project, *Blessing in Return: Votive Fares and Family Affairs in post-earthquake Turkey*, centres on a votive meal called *harīsa* from Samandağ, a coastal border region of Turkey, to explore the meanings of rituals during times of crisis. Her research languages are Turkish and Arabic, with growing proficiency in Armenian. Before returning to academia, she worked in different capacities at research institutions, diplomatic missions, and the United Nations in the Middle East.

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Danış, Didem is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Galatasaray University in Istanbul. She received her BA degree in Political Science and Sociology from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul (1997) and her MA in Sociology from Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara (2001). She stayed at IMER (International Migration and Ethnic Relations Program) in Malmö University, Sweden as a visiting Ph.D. in 2002–2003, and completed her PhD at EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2008) in Paris, with a doctoral thesis analyzing the social networks of Iraqi transit migrants in Istanbul. Her research interests include international migrations (with a special focus on state-migrant relationships, undocumented migrants' social networking and survival mechanisms in Turkey) and urban sociology (particularly socio-spatial fragmentation, gated communities and new middle classes in urban setting). She is also getting more and more involved with demographic change and aging in Turkey from a sociological perspective. She has been teaching sociology at Galatasaray University in Istanbul since 2005.

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Dilmaç, Julie Alev is an Associate Professor of Sociology affiliated with TAM–GSÜ and the French Institute for Anatolian Studies (IFEA). Her research focuses on the sociology of death and memory in Turkey, as well as on the anthropology of the body and its visual representations.

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Esmailpour Ghoochani, Iraj is a visual anthropologist, filmmaker, and ethnopsychanalyst based in Stuttgart. In 2005, he initiated the first university course in visual anthropology at the University of Tehran. His doctoral research at Ludwig Maximilian University Munich explored dreams, symbolism, and cultural imagination through ethnographic and psychoanalytic approaches and incorporated extensive audiovisual material. His current work focuses on participatory video methodologies, migration and collaborative forms of visual storytelling and is currently being developed within the framework of the Shift Scholarship of the City of Stuttgart.

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Hegland, Mary Elaine is a Professor Emerita at Santa Clara University where she taught in the Anthropology Department since 1989. Since 1966 when she was a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching English in the girls' high school in Mahabad, she has been fascinated by Iranian culture, people and society. Mary conducted fieldwork in "Aliabad," Iran in 1978-1979 and since then has been able to return some 7 times to that site to provide publications about revolution, local politics, women and gender, and change.

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Karimi, Maryam is a seventy-six year old woman living on her own in the community of “Aliabad,” Iran where she welcomed Mary Elaine Hegland as a fieldworker conducting research for her Ph.D. dissertation in fall 1978. Maryam, a gifted autodidactic ethnographer, has worked as a research assistant for Mary and joined her in authorship of several papers and a published article. Currently, Maryam and Mary are working on a book-length life story about Maryam’s history from childhood until the present.

Karimpour, Yasaman holds a Ph.D. in Marketing from Allameh Tabataba’i University, Iran. In 2020, she completed a three-month doctoral research fellowship at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Spain. Her doctoral dissertation employed an ethnographic approach to explore audience consumption experiences in theatre, reflecting her broader interest in culture, consumer behavior, and qualitative research. Alongside her academic work, Yasaman has over a decade of professional experience as a brand strategist and marketing consultant. She teaches marketing and branding courses in Iran, bridging academic research with professional practice. Her current research interests focus on branding, identity, digital culture, consumer behavior, and gender representation, particularly within the context of social media and the Middle East.

Henninger, Maxime is a third year Social Anthropology PhD student at the Université d'Aix-Marseille in France. He received a bachelor and master's degrees in Social Anthropology from the Université Jean Jaurès of Toulouse. He is currently conducting ethnographic fieldwork in south-western Turkey, documenting beekeeping activities. His research interests mainly cover documenting technical changes in local beekeepers' practices as well as the impact of climate change on beekeeping.

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Hosseini, Seyed Abdolreza is a PhD graduate of Allameh Tabatabaei University, specializing in sociology. With a keen focus on the sociology of knowledge, the history of artifacts, and the anthropology of technique, He conducts extensive fieldwork that bridges these interconnected disciplines. Seyed Abdolreza Hosseini has published a monograph on the social history of writing in Iran, exploring its role as the nexus of art and knowledge. Additionally, he has authored another monograph centering on the concept of individuality. His academic contributions include various papers that delve into the anthropology of machines, cities, and techniques within the Iranian context, reflecting a profound engagement with the intersections of technology and society.

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Madaeva, Shahnoza is a Head of Department Philosophy and Logic at the National University of Uzbekistan (NUUZ), Professor, Doctor of Philosophical science. She is the author of monographs “National Mentality and Democratic Thought” (2008), “Anthropology of Identity” (2015), “Mahalla and National Mentality” (2018), “Philosophical-Historical Analysis of Religious and National Values of the Uzbek People” (2022) and several scientific articles. Her research was funded by Sweden’s STINT (2010-Stockholm University), Germany’s DAAD (2013-Bonn University), Uzbekistan’s “El-Yurt Umid” Foundation (2023-Spain’s University of San Pablo). With the support of the Erasmus Mundus grant project of the European Foundation, she completed an internship at Konstantin Philosophic University in Nitra, Slovakia during 2011 and 2023. She founded as editor the Journal of JCAR-Journal of Central Asian Renaissance from 2021th. Professor Madaeva is a professional educator who lectures on the history of the Central Asian philosophy, philosophy of religion, and Islamic theology. Her lectures in these areas were based on her many years of research on the

history of philosophy of the East. At the same time, more than ten Ph.D. dissertations in History of Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Social Philosophy were defended under her supervision.
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Musavi, Fahimeh (Raha) holds two Master's degrees, one in Sociology and one in History. Her research areas include gender studies, historical sociology, and contemporary Persian fiction. Her paper at this conference examines the relationship between masculinity and same-sex desire in the historical context of Iran.
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