



Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University

Afghanistan Inside Out: History, Culture, and Politics in Afghanistan Studies

Agenda

Date: August 11 - 12, 2018

Venue: Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University

Program Abstract:

In addition to studies carried out by orientalists in the nineteenth century, scholars have studied Afghanistan from different disciplinary perspectives in the twentieth century. As a matter of fact, it was during this later century when certain local and global institutions, individuals, and social and scholarly processes, such as Anjuman-e Adabi Kabul, Pashto Tolana, Anjuman-e Tarikh, DAFA, and others inside and outside Afghanistan, built the foundations of studies of Afghanistan. They have studied the country in relation to development of social structures and processes, such as historical evolution of state, society and culture. Their general subjects of analyses have been rise and fall of the state in the country, movements and makeup of nomadic as well as tribal populations, cultural tribal organization, ethnic dynamics, and most recently development and conflicts. Cultural historians as well as anthropologists have also studied different systems of power, cultures, and even learned communities like Sufis and individual polymaths, and cosmopolitan groups like mercantile communities and caravans, movements of peoples like refugees, and emergence of cultural identities and ideologies, such as political Islam. They have studied these aspects of Afghanistan's history, culture, and society in the contexts of socio-cultural epistemologies developed in the 19th and 20th centuries pertaining to consideration of organized civilizational developments, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Indo-Persian spheres of culture, society, and politics. Expanding this body of scholarship, art historians and archaeologists have further studied Afghanistan's built urban environments of empires and emperors, such as monuments, like Minerat-e Jam in Ghur, Bagh-e Babur in Kabul, and other architectural and archaeological remains.

Beside these disciplinary studies of Afghanistan, today the country is understood in the development and political science studies as one of the most impoverished countries in the world in general, and in Asia in particular. Indeed, there is no doubt that Afghanistan is linked to these global trends. As a matter of fact, the country has been subject to several of these global and local events in its recent histories including the American-Soviet fight over the country during the Cold War, subsequent Soviet invasion in the 1980s, and the rise of political Islam afterwards. Although Afghan people might be the primary victim of these global and local rivalries and ideologies, our knowledge remains poor about the country's deep pre-Islamic and Islamic histories, culture, and politics. Existing scholarship, dominated by foreign specialists of the country, represent the country as a monolithic and chaotic country fragmented into factional tribes and ethnicities who believe deeply in conservative forms of Islam and traditions, thus detesting the world outside theirs. As a result, the country's historical and political experiences are particularized to a banal cycle of conquests and local resistances. The latest example is the argument that 'Afghanistan is America's longest war,' and Afghans are resisting it.

In light of these previous and on-going trends in studies of Afghanistan, this symposium bringing together a younger generation of Afghan scholars will ask several conceptual as well as methodological questions: What is Afghanistan Studies? Should one think even of a 'field' of Afghanistan Studies? What are its pros and cons? How indeed do disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields, both in humanities and social science, converge and diverge in studies of Afghanistan? Are there unique human or institutional limitations in studying Afghanistan? If so, why and if not, why not? What are the benefits or limitations of an 'Afghanistan Studies' approach? What about Afghanistan's cultural, social, economic, political, historical, geographical and epistemic linkages to other studies, such as Iranian Studies, South Asian Studies, Central Asian Studies? Are these linkages methodological? Theoretical? What are the most recent changes in the field of Afghanistan Studies? Which scholars and institutions have shaped Afghanistan Studies? What has been the contribution of Afghans, both at home and in diaspora, to Afghanistan Studies?

To address these and other questions a new generation of Afghanistan scholars will come together from their respected field of studies to Kabul. During a two-day symposium, organized by the Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University, the premier centre of academic research in the country, the scholars will present their scholarly works in several disciplinary panels. In addition to their disciplinary works, there will be several disciplinary roundtables, in which the presenters will have a collective dialogue discussing the various methodological and theoretical limitations and opportunities available in their respected field in general, and concerning studying of Afghanistan in particular.

While the scholars of this symposium have studied abroad at several important global research universities, they are all Afghans with deep cultural and familial links to Afghanistan. One of the main purposes of this symposium is to bring these scholars together in front of a local audience inside Afghanistan to share their knowledge and experience.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Day 1, August 11, 2018

Registration, Welcome Reception and Opening Remarks (8:00 am –9:00 am)

- 1) Recitation from the Quran (Qari Omar), 8:30-8:40 am
- 2) Welcoming Remarks (Abdul Wahid Wafa, Director of ACKU), 8:40-8:50 am
- 3) Opening Remarks (Hamidullah Farooqi, Chancellor of Kabul University), 8:50-9:00 am

Panel 1 (9:00-10:45 am), Political Science: People & State

Chair: Shahrzad Akbar

- 1) Omar Sadr, “Debating Individual Rights and Diversity in a Multicultural Society.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Nasir Ahmad Andisha
- 2) Weeda Mehran, “Jihadi Propaganda Strategies and Inter-Group Competition.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Timor Sharan
- 3) Yaqub Ibrahim, “State-Building and State-Society Relationships in Afghanistan.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Arian Sharifi

Tea Break (10:45 am - 11:00 am)

Roundtable 1 (11:00 am - 12:30 pm), Political Science View: People & State in Afghanistan Studies

Participants: Arian Sharifi, Weeda Mehran, Omar Sadr, Nasir Andisha

Moderator: Hamid Saboory

Lunch (12:30 pm - 1:30 pm)

Panel 2 (1:30 pm -3:15 pm), Anthropology: Culture & Communities

Chair: Sami Mehdi

- 1) Bibi-Zuhra Faizi, “Community-based schools and the promise of quality education.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Orzala Nemat
- 2) Solaiman Fazel, “Ethnohistory: Why it matters in Afghanistan Studies?”
Disciplinary Discussant: Sayyid Askar Musavi
- 3) Omar Sharifi, “Nauroz Festival, Living in an Afghan Atmosphere.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Nazif Shahrani

Tea Break (3:15 pm – 3:30 pm)

Roundtable 2 (3:00 pm - 4:30 pm), Anthropological View: Afghan Cultures and Communities in Anthropological Studies

Participants: Ghafor Lewal, Zuhra Faizi, Nazif Shahrani, Askar Mosavi, Omar Sharifi

Moderator: Rohullah Amin

ACKU Official Dinner (6:00 pm - 10 pm)

Day 2, August 12, 2018

Registration & Coffee (8:30 am – 9:00 am)

Panel 3 (9:00 am – 10:45 am), History: Themes in Afghanistan Historiography

Chair: Kambaiz Rafi

- 1) Jawan Shir Rasikh, “The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan: Muslim Conquests of Ghur, 9-11 Centuries, CE.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Mohammad Moheq
- 2) Hakeem Naim, “Modernity and Dependency: The Paradoxes of Eurocentric Thinking and its Reproduction in the Ottoman Empire and Afghanistan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth Century.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Mujib Rahman Rahimi
- 3) Mejgan Massoumi, “Kabul Cosmopolitan? Radio Broadcasting and Afghan Connectivity to the World, 1960-1979.”
Disciplinary Discussant: Belgheis Alavi

Tea Break (10:45 am - 11:00 am)

Roundtable 3 (11:00 am - 12:30 pm) Historical View: Trends in Afghanistan Historiography

Participants: Mohyadin Mehdi, Hakeem Naim, Mejgan Massoumi, Ali Amiri, Mujib Rahman Rahimi

Moderator: Jawan Shir Rasikh

Lunch Break (12:30 pm - 1:30 pm)

Roundtable 4 (1:30 pm - 03:00 pm), ACKU Afghanistan Studies Annual Conference

Participants: Abdul Waheed Wafa (Director of ACKU), Global Presenters, and other ACKU-invited individuals, launching Afghanistan Studies Annual Conference.

Afghanistan Research Evaluation Unit (AREU) Dinner, (6:30 pm - 9:00 pm)

BIOGRAPHIES & PAPER ABSTRACTS

Omar Sadr, Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), University of Afghanistan

Omar Sadr is Senior Research Associate at Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), and assistant professor at University of Afghanistan, Kabul, Afghanistan. His primary research interests are laid in the intersection of culture and politics. He earned a doctorate degree from South Asian University (SAU), New Delhi, India (2013-2018). His doctoral thesis was on 'Negotiating Cultural Diversity in Afghanistan'.

Prior to that he had worked as Academic Assistant at the National Centre for Policy Research (NCP), Kabul University. He has written about politics, history and culture in a number of local and international publications. His recent writings are 'Political Culture and Attitudes of People of Afghanistan toward Peace Process and Taliban,' Kabul: Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS), forthcoming; 'Mahmud Tarzi: Intellectual and Reformist', in Dev N Pathak and Sanjeev Kumar H.M. (eds.), *Modern South Asian Thinkers*, Delhi: Sage, 2018; 'Afghanistan: the Vulnerabilities of Minorities', in Sajjad Hassan (ed.) *South Asia State of Minorities Report- 2016: Mapping the Terrain*, Delhi: Books for Change, 2016; 'Rethinking Stability for Afghanistan: Socializing Great Powers in a Multilateral Order', in Rajen Harshe and Dhananjay Tripathi (eds.), *Afghanistan Post-2014: Power Configurations and Evaluating Trajectories*, London and New Delhi: Routledge, 2015.

Paper Title: *Debating Individual Rights and Diversity in a Multicultural Society*

Abstract

There are two scenarios that lead to controversy in the multicultural society. The first one is the balance between individual rights and group rights. The primary concern is whether recognition of group rights undermines the right to dissent within a community. What if the community's cultural practices are in contradiction with the fundamental human rights, particularly, women rights? The second controversy is the moral contradiction between cultural values and practices of different groups within a multicultural society. For instance, the cultural practices of one community can possibly offend the values of the other fellow community and hence may lead to limitation of individual rights of people from other community. Or in the same context, a cultural practice may not be considered a violation of individual rights and liberties by the follower of the same culture, but it might be perceived by the followers of other culture. This issue is directly related to tolerance within a multicultural society. The question is to what extent the opposing cultural practices of another community shall be tolerated. The proposed paper explores the ways to understand the internal diversity of groups vis-à-vis counter-homogenisation policies. It will seek to suggest means through which group rights can be reconciled with the individual rights and choice in Afghanistan. The paper first discusses the challenges of multiculturalism and its limits to acknowledge the diversity as well as inequality within the communities. It will discuss what if recognition of one culture imposes limitations on the individuals of another community. Subsequently, it picks three different cases from Afghanistan to show how community cultures and recognition of group rights led to the curtailing of individual rights and freedom. The first case examines the lack of religious tolerance and the lack of right to dissent within the Muslim practices of Afghanistan. The second case argues how recognition of Shia Hazara Personal Law curtailed rights and freedoms of the community's women. And finally, the last case presents the Pashtun's culture and possible challenges to human rights.

Weeda Mehran, Political Science Department, Georgia State University

Weeda Mehran is a post-doctorate fellow at Global Studies Institute, Georgia State University. Her research takes a multidisciplinary approach to studying propaganda campaign across a number of militant groups such as the Islamic State, Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Tahrir-e Taliban of Pakistan. She is particularly interested in investigating dynamics of online communities and the relationship between online and offline structures, social and political relations and logics that produce and reinforce extremist ideologies among youth. Before joining the Global Studies Institute, Dr. Mehran worked at Hamburg University and McGill University. In 2015, she completed her PhD dissertation entitled “The Political Economy of Warlord Democracy in Afghanistan” at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge. In 2007, she obtained a Masters degree in Sociology from the University of Oxford as the first Afghan woman who graduated from Oxford University. She also has an MA degree in International Conflict Analysis from Kent University where she focused on studying mediation and negotiations. Dr. Mehran is actively involved in national and global policy processes. She has worked with a number of organizations such as Afghanistan Human Rights Commission, Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan, Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Afghanistan Research, Evaluation Unit, and a number of UN organizations. She has written numerous policy reports on various issues in Afghanistan.

Paper Title: *Jihadi Propaganda Strategies and Inter-Group Competition*

Abstract:

The Internet has changed the image, means and reach of jihad. Jihad is no longer confined to radio and newspaper calls. Al-Qaeda used to openly make announcements to attract Muslims from Arab countries to the training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight the Soviet army in the 1980s and early 90s (Kjuka, 2013). As Umar Patek—who masterminded the October 2002 bombings in Bali—said during his trial: “For those who do not know how to commit jihad, they should understand that there are several ways of committing jihad...This is not the Stone Age...This is the Internet era, there is Facebook, Twitter and others” (MEMRI 2012 Cited in Weimann, 2016, p. 47). This research conducts a temporal and cross-modal comparative analysis of media strategies employed by the Taliban and other groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Tahrir-e Taliban of Pakistan. The paper intends to highlight the differences in propaganda strategies of the Taliban and compare it with other groups and discusses any inter-group differences in terms of the medium used (i.e. magazines versus videos and audios), their outreach methods and intended audience. The paper will also analyse inter-group competition and how and if competition has any bearing on the group’s propaganda campaign. Taliban’s projection of image, power and messages will also be discussed and compared with other groups. The analysis is based on the type and production volume of various media, e.g. videos, audios, and magazines of each group and whether it has changed since 2015; and an extensive review of the relevant literature.

يعقوب ابراهيمي (دبيارتمنت علوم سياسي- دانشگاه کارلتون)

يعقوب ابراهيمي استاد علوم سياسي در دانشگاه کارلتون در اتاوا است. ابراهيمي دکترای خویش را در رشته علوم سياسي از همین دانشگاه به دست آورده و در حال حاضر در حوزه نظریه‌های روابط بین‌الملل، امنیت بین‌المللی و دولت‌های شکننده مصروف پژوهش است. بررسی توسعه سياسي افغانستان از عرصه‌های اصلی کار اوست. مقالات علمی ابراهيمي در ژورنال‌های مختلف از جمله *شورشگری و جنگ‌های کوچک*، *خشونت سياسي و تروریسم*، و *سروی آسیای میانه* نشر شده‌اند.

چکیده:

افغانستان معاصر بر روی یک دولت مرکزگرا و یک جامعه مرکزگریز بنا شده است. از بدو تاسیس افغانستان در نیمه دوم قرن نوزدهم، دولت‌ها کوشیده اند با طرح سیاست‌های مرکزگرا به نهادهای اجتماعی و سنتی رسوخ کرده و آنها را در خود ادغام کنند. اما نهادهای جامعه مرکزگریز رویاروی این سیاست‌ها ایستاده و با بازتولید نیروی سیاسی حکومت‌ها را به چالش کشیده اند. سیاست در افغانستان پیرامون این دو اردوگاه شکل گرفته و نیروهای سیاسی تا جاییکه منافع شان ایجاب کرده در یکی از این دو اردوگاه سنگر گرفته اند. مقاله حاضر، با بررسی تاریخ این تقابل، تاثیر آن را در شکل‌گیری سیاست و دولت‌سازی در افغانستان معاصر و درچارچوب نظریه "مناسبات دولت و جامعه" بررسی میکند. برخلاف دیدگاه‌های سنتی که دولت‌سازی را بطور محض برنامه‌های توسعه‌ی حکومت‌ها می‌انگارند، این مقاله با برجسته ساختن رویارویی جامعه با دولت در فرایند توسعه سیاسی، نقش نیروهای اجتماعی در این فرایند را برجسته می‌سازد. در این مقاله، جامعه به عنوان ملغمه‌ای از نهادها و ساختارهای پویایی که بطور مداوم با دولت در داد و ستد اند بررسی شده است. مقاله با برجسته ساختن ویژگی سیال و درحال‌تغییر نهادها و نیروهای اجتماعی و رابطه متحول آنها با دولت، خصوصیت نهادهای اجتماعی، چگونگی مناسبات آن با دولت و تاثیر آن بر فرایند دولت‌سازی را بررسی میکند. بطور مشخص، ابتدا دو روش دولت‌سازی در افغانستان، یعنی شیوه محافظه‌کارانه سلطنت مصاحبان و دولت‌سازی مداخله‌گرانه حزب دموکراتیک خلق افغانستان، توضیح و سپس چگونگی تقابل نهادهای اجتماعی با این سیاست‌ها و تاثیر آن بر فرایند دولت‌سازی در افغانستان بحث میشود. به دنبال آن و با توجه بر تغییر اقتصاد سیاسی و کارکرد نهادهای اجتماعی در اثر جنگ داخلی، کوشیده شده تا رابطه این نهادها با دولت و تاثیر آن بر دولت‌سازی در افغانستان معاصر بررسی شود. هدف نهایی این مقاله ارایه چشم انداز تازه ایست که از منظر آن به دولت‌سازی به مثابه روند نهادمندسازی رابطه دولت و جامعه نگاه میشود. طی این روند، دولت با ریشه دواندن در متن جامعه نهادهایش را استحکام میبخشد. در مقابل، جامعه نیز با بهره‌گیری از سیاست‌های دولتی نهادهایش را پویا می‌سازد. آیا طی صد سال دولت‌سازی در افغانستان گامی در این راستا گذاشته شده است؟ پاسخ این پرسش را میتوان در لابلای این نوشتار جست.

Mohammad Omar Sharifi, Anthropology Department, Boston University

Omar Sharifi is the former Senior Research Fellow and Kabul Director of the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies. He is also a member of the advisory board of the Civil Society Development Center (CSDC) and member of the Board of Directors of the Afghan Alumni Association and Afghanistan 1400. In addition, he worked as National Consultant for UNICEF Afghanistan. He is Asia Society Fellow and member of Afghan 21 Young Leaders Forum. He graduated from Kabul Medical Institute in 2003. Following his medical studies, he worked as Head of research and publications for the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society in Kabul, and as Director of the Open Media Fund for Afghanistan. From 2006 to 2008, he studied Cultural Anthropology at Columbia University in New York under a Fulbright Fellowship. He also received a fellowship at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. Currently he is a PhD Candidate at Boston University in the department of Anthropology. Omar Sharifi has written several essays on social and political issues in Afghanistan, and his articles are published in national and international journals.

Paper Title: *Nauroz Festival, Living in an Afghan Atmosphere*

Abstract:

Every year on March 20/21, hundreds of thousands of people from all corners of Afghanistan gather in the city of Mazar e Sharif (ancient Bactria-Balkh) to celebrate the Afghan/Persian New Year, Nauroz. The Nauroz festival is held in the Shrine of Ali bin Abu Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad, the fourth Caliph of Sunni Islam and the first Imam in Shia tradition. The Nauroz festival is not a religious pilgrimage or part of Islamic calendar, but a syncretic event that happens every year in self-organized way. Despite its association with the Islamic shrine, the festival and its associated ceremonies such as Janda bala (raising the flag), public performances of music and theatrical shows, poetry contests, storytelling and Sufi Zikr sessions, are all perceived as secular (not entirely) event. Both

Sunni and Shia Afghans from all walks of life, including the high-ranking government officials gather in the Shrine of Ali to attend the official Nauroz ceremony and other associated festivities. This important designation of is considered a space for “ethnic and religious harmony”, manifestation of collective identity and symbolic reaffirmation of the political legitimacy of the central government. My presentation examines the processes of the juxtapositions that give rise to Nauroz festival and its associated festivities, and how it came about to be celebrated in an Islamic shrine, viewing the festival as an arena for reproduction and possible negotiation about the term of the nation, governance, ethnic identity and frameworks for plural coexistence.

Solaiman Fazel, Anthropology Department, Indiana University

Dr. Solaiman Fazel was born in Sarai-Ghazni district of Kabul, Afghanistan. He completed the first four years of his primary education at Sayid Jamaluddin Afghan Elementary School. During school holidays, the young Solaiman spent countless hours helping his father operate their family business, *Ketab Feroshi Fazel*. In mid-1980s, Dr. Fazel’s parents decided to leave Kabul because of the intensified Afghan-Russian War. After a year of stay in Peshawar, Pakistan, Solaiman, his parents, and two brothers emigrated to Los Angeles, California - where completed his middle and high school. After high school, Solaiman Fazel continued his education at University of California, Santa Barbara, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Middle Eastern Studies. His interest in Economics, Globalization, and the Technological Divide between advanced and modernizing societies lead him to earn his Master’s Degree in the field of History. Solaiman Fazel resumed his Ph.D. studies in the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University. In 2016-17, he served as a Future Faculty Fellow. He has taught courses on the Modern History of the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iran, Globalization, and Introduction to Anthropology. Apart from teaching, Dr. Fazel, has presented research papers in conferences and symposiums. He has also published books reviews and articles in prestigious journals. Dr. Fazel is currently trying to turn his dissertation, “Qizilbash Ethnohistory: Migration, State, and a Shi’a Minority in Kabul” into an academic book. Dr. Fazel is married to Engineer Mojgan Sarwary. They have two lovely kids: Tamanah and Sohrab, who are passionate readers and enjoy playing sports. Apart from research, Dr. Fazel enjoys nature, music, and camping.

Paper Title: *Ethnohistory: Why it matters in Afghanistan Studies*

Abstract:

What is ethnohistory? How can it be applied to research related to peoples, spaces, and cultures of Afghanistan? How do you connect the local microhistory to the global transformations? To answer the aforementioned questions, this paper focuses on the following three points: 1) Approaching history and culture from bottom is a new direction in the ethnographic study of Islamic majority societies. 2) Using the ethnohistorical method of the Americanist Sociocultural Paradigm allows the researcher to incorporate data from a variety of eclectic sources that includes primary materials, newspapers, hagiographies, images, participant observation, and in-person interviews. And 3) To weave together the local to meta-history, I will discuss the “zoom-in” and “zoom-out” technique known as the scalar framework.

Bibi-Zuhra Faizi, Education Department, Harvard University

Bibi-Zuhra Faizi is a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her research examines the role of local and international actors in providing quality education for marginalized children in conflict-affected countries with a particular focus on educational relevancy. She is currently conducting her dissertation fieldwork on community-based

schools supported by foreign NGOs in Afghanistan. Ms. Faizi serves on the Board of the Harvard Educational Review and has a Bachelors in Linguistics and Masters in International Political Economy.

Paper Title: *Communities-based schools and the promise of quality education*

Abstract:

Globally, 58 million children of primary school age are out of school, with half live in conflict-affected contexts (UNESCO, 2015a). In Afghanistan, approximately 4.2 million children remain out-of-school (UNICEF, 2011). While scholars have examined common barriers to access, such as physical distance and poverty, an emerging body of work raises the issue of cultural distance. Cultural distance in education refers to “assumptions, expectations, ideas, and values” that students must navigate as they enter a school outside of their community (Sperling & Winthrop, 2016, p. 40). In Afghanistan, community-based schools (CBSs)—schools situated within community spaces—are positioned to mitigate cultural distance between school and home, primarily through community-selected local teachers. Teachers act as a possible bridge between school and community ambitions and expectations, having to balance national education requirements with the identities and aspirations of community members. During this conference, the researcher will share her research methodology and preliminary findings from an ethnographic study of community-based schools in one district of Kabul that serves marginalized communities displaced by conflict and instability.

Jawan Shir Rasikh, South Asia Studies Department, University of Pennsylvania

Jawan Shir Rasikh is a PhD Candidate in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is writing a dissertation on history of arrival of Islam in medieval Afghanistan. He has a BA (2010) in International Politics with a minor in the Middle Eastern Communities and Migrations from James Madison University. He also earned a MA (2012) in World History from James Madison University for which he wrote a thesis titled *Nationalism in Afghanistan: Colonial Knowledge, Educational Symbols, and the Junket Tour of Amanullah Khan, 1901-1929*.

Paper Title: *The Coming of Islam to Afghanistan: Muslim Conquests of Ghur, 9-11 Centuries, CE*

Abstract:

This paper examines how early Islamic textual and cartographic sources in Arabic and Persian imagine the medieval hinterland of Balād-e Ghūr in northwest-central Afghanistan during the ninth and eleventh centuries, CE. The extant early Islamic sources, such as the universal histories and geographical manuals, have produced a variety of political and spatial pictures of the region of Ghur, including its representation as the ‘only kafir/pagan land’ surrounded by Muslims in the eastern Islamic empire. However, the same sources have enthusiastically also discussed Ghur, mapped it, and linked it politically and geographically to its various Muslim neighboring regions, such as Herat and Sistan, which were some of the major urban centers of the medieval Islamic worlds. Moreover, the paper’s cross-examination of the early Islamic sources regarding Ghur shows more epistemological ambiguities about how to consider Islamic authority in rural areas, such as Ghur, in the absence of local sources, and the complex ways that early Islamic historians and geographers had deployed in mapping them within or beyond the new Islamic empire than about the region of Ghur per se. Finally, the preliminary findings of the paper challenge the prevailing historiographical arguments

that portray Ghur and Ghuris as an ‘obscure’ place and people within the eastern Islamic empire.

Hakim Naim, History Department, University of California, Davis

Hakeem Naim is a lecturer at the University of California, Davis and California State University, Sacramento. He received his M.A. from the University of California, Davis in Modern Middle East History (West Asian History) and his B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in Middle Eastern Studies, where he was a Robert & Colleen Haas scholar. He was subsequently admitted to the University of California, Davis, where he is currently a doctoral candidate in modern Middle East and South Asian history. In his research, Naim focuses on the nineteenth century Islamic nationalism, modernity, colonial and post-colonial theories, and intellectual history of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. He attended national and international conferences and presented his work at Cambridge University, University of Toronto, Stanford University, and University of California. He has a command of various languages, including Persian (Dari), Turkish (Modern and Ottoman Turkish), Arabic, Pashto, Uzbek, German, and English.

Paper Title: *Modernity and Dependency: The Paradoxes of Eurocentric Thinking and its Reproduction in the Ottoman Empire and Afghanistan during the Late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries*

Abstract:

Through a comparative study of Afghanistan and the late Ottoman Empire, I argue that the adoption and reproduction of modernity, which was simultaneously a progressive structure of power and a destructive threat, irrevocably changed the conditions for state formation in the abovementioned places. It also reconceptualised Islam, as a political ideology, which had no precedent in Islamic history. Modernity was not a choice the Ottoman and Afghan elites could exercise. But it was a colonial condition that compelled the Afghans and the Ottomans to render themselves, their objects and their agencies. Thus, chaotic “nation-building”, religious nationalism, and dependency are products of paradoxes of modernity in non-European spaces.

Mejgan Massoumi, History Department, Stanford University

Mejgan Massoumi is a doctoral student in the department of history at Stanford University. Her research investigates the impact of sound and radio technology in Afghanistan during the twentieth century (1960-79). She received both a B.A. in Architecture (2003) and a Masters in City and Regional Planning (2005) from UC Berkeley. Prior to joining graduate school, Mejgan served as the Manager of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley. She is a co-editor of *The Fundamentalist City? Religiosity and the Remaking of Urban Space* (Routledge, 2010) and *Urban Diversity: Space, Culture, and Inclusive Pluralism in Cities Worldwide* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). She has also contributed articles to the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* and the *Journal of International Affairs* at Columbia University. Mejgan's current research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the Stanford Global Studies Division, the Graduate Research Opportunities Fund, the Diversity Dissertation Research Opportunity Grant, the Abbasi Program for the Study of Islam in Muslim Societies, the Europe Center, the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies and the Stanford Department of History Graduate Student Fellowship.

Paper Title: *Kabul Cosmopolitan? Radio Afghanistan and the Politics of Popular Culture, 1960-79*

Abstract:

Inspired by dynamic flows of people and ideas through Afghanistan and the rich history of Kabul, the capital city as an important site of cultural production and intercultural exchange, my research brings attention to the history of the radio as a medium that connected Afghans to a wider transnational network in the 20th century. In so doing, it highlights this form of popular culture as the site in which significant patterns of contemporary movement, regional exchange and connectivity are visible. Although radio broadcasting in Afghanistan began in the early 1920's with the purchase of two broadcasting systems that functioned out of Kabul and Kandahar, it wasn't until the acquisition of German transmitters in the early 1960's that a national radio station was established. For the first time, local broadcasters could offer their listeners programming on politics, daily news including world events, society, arts & culture, and music featuring artists in and beyond Afghanistan. The study of the radio allows insight into diverse content as well as broad range of participants that transcended gender, ethnic and age divisions. I argue that the radio provided a space in which Afghans showcased their cosmopolitan sensibilities and actively engaged in global currents as well as the changing social and political dynamics within the country throughout the 1960's and 1970's. In addition to investigating the transnational flow of cultural ideas through the radio, this paper also deliberates on how this technology allowed for expressions of social and cultural resistance and encouraged processes of radical deliberation. Music played a significant role in allowing for these acts of implicit defiance to be projected to the wider Afghan public. As the shifting landscapes of revolution and counterrevolution continued to impact the country throughout the 1960s and 1970s, these expressions serve as important frameworks for understanding how Afghans both experienced and understood themselves as well as others.