**Monica M. Ringer**

Professor of Middle Eastern History, Amherst College

CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

1998 Ph.D., Middle Eastern History, UCLA. Advisor: Nikki Keddie.

1992 M.A., Islamic Studies, UCLA. Advisor: Hossein Ziai.

1988 B.A., European History, Oberlin College. Advisor: Robert Neil.

ACADEMIC and VISITING POSITIONS

Fall semester, 2018: Academic Visitor, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University.

Winter term 2014: Visiting professor of Islamic Studies, Divinity School, University of Chicago; Taught a graduate seminar entitled “Secularism and the Citizen in the Middle East and South Asia” and organized an international conference by the same name.

2014- present: Professor of Middle Eastern History in the Department of History and the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations, Amherst College.

2009-2014: Associate Professor of Middle Eastern History in the Department of History and the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations, Amherst College.

2003-2009: Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern History in the Department of History and the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations, Amherst College.

2001-2003: Mellon Visiting Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern History, Williams College.

2001-2003 Executive Director, Society for Iranian Studies.

2000-2001: Visiting Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern History, UMASS, Amherst.

1999-2000: Visiting Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, Religion Department, Oberlin College.

PUBLICATIONS – books

*God’s Intent: Islamic Modernism and the Re-enchantment of the Sacred*. (Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming, 2020).

This book is principally a study of the complex relationship of religion to modernity. The adoption of historicism in the 19th century led to the disenchantment of religion, even as it enabled its re-enchantment. I argue that modernity, however variously defined and imagined, should be understood as the consequence, not the cause, of this new intellectual landscape. This enables us to abandon the futile project of searching for a definition of modernity that is empirically sustainable. Moreover, it resolves the problem of viewing non-Western modernities as imperfect imitations of European modernity, or as independently generated nativist processes. Modernities, as a set of possible moderns, are thus products of similar contexts (the historicist intellectual landscape) as well as different contexts (religious traditions and intellectuals location to their traditions). Through the lens of one particular subset of religious modernisms – Islamic modernism – I uncover the underlying epistemology and methodology of historicism that penetrated the Middle East and South Asia in the 19th century and both forced and enabled a recalibration of the definition, nature, function, and place of religion. Muslim Modernists, like their counterparts in other religious traditions, engaged in a sophisticated project of theological reform designed to marry their twin commitments to religion and to modernity. They were in conversation not only with European scholarship and Catholic modernism, but more importantly, with their own complex Islamic traditions.

*Ottoman Culture and the Project of Modernity: Reform and Translation in the Tanzimat Novel*. Co-edited with Etienne Charrière. (I.B. Tauris, 2020).

Central to the nineteenth-century Ottoman Tanzimat reform project, the novel originally developed outside of Ottoman space, yet was adopted as a didactic tool to model and generate new forms of Ottoman citizenship. Essays in this book explore the appropriation of the novel as a literary genre and its deployment in the late Ottoman cultural project of constructing an Ottoman modernity. Analyzing key texts and authors, from the works of Ahmet Midhat Efendi to Mizanci Murad and Vartan Pasha, among others, the book's chapters explore the novel genre as far more than a case of importation of Western and non-Ottoman cultural productions, but rather as a vehicle for the cultivation of indigenous modern subjectivities.

*Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi*.Translated with Melih Levi. (Syracuse University Press, 2016.)

Ahmet Midhat’s famous novel written in 1875, *Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi,* exemplifies the struggle of Ottoman Tanzimat reformers (1839-1876) to affect the transition from subject to citizen and from empire to nation. Ahmet Midhat’s didactic novel presents two dichotomous characters, Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi, as models of emulation. Through the exploits and relationships of

these two individuals, the author explores the costs and benefits of translating European political and social structures into the Ottoman context. At the same time, it is equally an exploration of what elements of Ottoman culture he believed needed to be modified or replaced. The two principle characters represent a synthesis of the best and the worst elements of European and Ottoman civilization, respectively. The novel provides the reader with a sophisticated blueprint of Tanzimat ideas of modernity and reform, specifically related to ideas of family structure, women’s rights, freedom, choice and individual responsibility that lay at the center of the project of forming new subjects and subjectivities, in short, modern citizens capable of supporting modern, secular and constitutional states. Ahmet Midhat is often heralded as the father of the modern Turkish novel for his experimentation with new colloquial forms, deeply influenced by Victorian literature. *Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi* has remained an enduring part of the canon of Turkish literature, and one of the most cited and discussed of Tanzimat novels in histories of the Ottoman Empire. Ahmet Midhat is the subject of recent renewed scholarly interest on the part of intellectual, cultural, gender and intellectual historians of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey.

*Pious Citizens: Reforming Zoroastrianism in India and Iran*, (Syracuse University Press, 2011).

*Pious Citizens* tells the story of a major intellectual revolution in nineteenth- and early twentieth–century India and Iran, one that radically transformed the role of religion in society. At this time, key theological debates revolved around Zoroastrianism’s capacity to generate "progress" and "civilization." Armed with both the destructive and creative capacities of historicism, reformers reevaluated their own religious tradition, molding Zoroastrian belief and practice according to contemporary ideas of rational religion and its potential to create pious citizens. Rational and enlightened religion, characterized by social responsibility and the interiorization of piety, was understood by reformers as essential for the development of modern individuals, citizens, new public space, national identity, and secularism. Reformers believed not only that social reform must be accompanied by religious reform but that it was in fact a product of religious reform. *Pious Citizens* offers new insights into the theological premises behind the promotion of secularism, the privatization of religion, and new national identities. The book also explores growing connections between the Iranian and Indian Zoroastrian communities and the revival of the ancient Persian past.

*Amuzesh va goftoman-e eslah-e farhangi dar dowran-e Qajar*, (Tehran: Qoqnus Publishers, 2002).

This is the Persian translation of *Education, Religion and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran*.

*Education, Religion and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran,* (Mazda, 2001).

This book explores the educational reforms and the debates surrounding them in nineteenth-century Iran as a window onto the goals and obstacles of reformers in this period. Missionary schools, student travel to Europe, and the establishment of ‘new’ European-inspired schools are all discussed in the context of the political, social, cultural and intellectual threat, as well as possibilities, that educational reforms posed to the religious establishment in Iran.

PUBLICATIONS – articles

“Beyond Binaries: Ahmet Midhat’s Prescriptive Modern,” in (eds.) Monica M. Ringer and Etienne Charièrre, *Modernity in Ottoman Literature: Reform and the Tanzimat Novel* (I.B. Tauris, 2020).

“Gataullah Baiazitov: An Islamic Modernist in Russia,” in James Quill, *A Tatar Imam’s Refutation of Ernest Renan’s Lecture on “Islam and Science,”* (Indiana University Press, 2017).

“The Al-Afghani-Renan Debate, Reconsidered,” (co-authored with A. Holly Shissler), *Iran Nameh*, 30:3 (Fall, 2015).

“Iranian Nationalism and Zoroastrian Identity: Between Cyrus and Zoroaster” (eds.) Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani, *Iran Facing Others: Iranian Identity Boundaries and Modern Political Culture*, (Palgrave, 2012).

“Kay Khosrow Shahrokh: Rational Religion and Citizenship in Iran,” *Iran Nameh* (Spring 2011).

“Reform Transplanted: Parsi Agents of Change amongst Zoroastrians in Nineteenth- Century Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 42 (September, 2009).

“Rethinking Religion: Progress and Morality in the Early 20th century Women’s Press,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. 24 (1 Spring 2004).

“Negotiating Modernity: Ulama and the Discourse of Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Iran,” in (ed.) Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Iran Between Tradition, Modernity and Postmodernity*, (Lexington Books, 2004).

“The Quest for the Secret of Strength in Iranian Nineteenth-Century Travel Literature: Rethinking Tradition in the *Safarnameh*,” in *Iran and the Surrounding World 1501-2001: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, (eds.) Nikki Keddie and Rudi Matthee, (University of Washington Press, 2002).

“*Madares-e Novvin dar Iran-e Qarn-e Nuzdahom (New Schools in 19th-Century Iran: The Indigenous Approach)*,” in *Iran Nameh* vol. XVIII, (2 Spring 2000).

“The Discourse on Modernization and the Problem of Cultural Integrity in Nineteenth- Century Iran,” in *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (eds). Rudi Matthee and Beth Baron (Mazda, 2000).

PUBLICATIONS – edited books and journals

“Secular Muslims and Conservative Secularists in Turkey: Breaking State-Society Dichotomies,” (eds.) Berna Turam and Monica M. Ringer, special issue of *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 29 (3 2009).

“Education and Reform in the Middle East,” (ed.) Monica M. Ringer, special issue of *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 21 (nos. 1 & 2, 2001).

WORKS IN PROGRESS

*Ruins: The Conquest of the Past*

As a metaphor for this project, imagine two visual bookends. The first, Pollaiuolo’s “Martyrdom of St. Sebastian” completed in c. 1475. In this painting, Christ appears on the cross, surrounded by six archers shooting arrows into him. In the background there are some Roman ruins. In this painting Pollaiuolo employed a standard visual idiom for Christian triumphalism – of the truth of Christianity opposed to the falsity of paganism. For the second visual bookend, imagine the ubiquitous use of ruins in eighteenth-century paintings and lithographs, like those of Panini (1691-1765), or Piranesi (1720-1778). For eighteenth-century artists, ruins were symbols of the loss of antiquity, of the ‘decline and fall of the Roman Empire’ and equally, of the claim that modernity rested on these ancient foundations. These two different visions of ruins illustrate a major reconceptualization of the meaning of antiquity, and of history.

Typically, the appropriation of antiquity is treated as a European story – of the post-Renaissance ‘rediscovery’ and ‘reclamation’ of a natural birthright. The association with antiquity was connected to new, civilizational explanations of difference and assertions of European cultural superiority. Claiming to be the sole heirs of antiquity served to explain ‘modernity’ as inherently European, and by extension, to insist that to modernize was to Europeanize. Antiquity was central to European conceptions of self, and more particularly, to the European *modern* self. As articulated clearly by nineteenth-century Hebraicist Ernest Renan, European exceptionalism was the product of a particular parentage: the heritage of antiquity on the one hand, and Christianity on the other.

This picture needs to be complicated in two ways. First, the competition over antiquity needs to be extended outside of the narrow borders of French and English scholarship. French and English scholars, though arguably the most successful, were not the only claimants to antiquity. Although the physical heirs to ancient Rome, Italian historians are typically absent from accounts of the reclamation of antiquity. How did they perceive the ancient past? How did they negotiate antiquity’s reclamation by French and English scholars, and what does this suggest about their positionality within ‘modern’ Europe?

Moreover, Ottoman and other Muslim scholars were also interested in asserting their own connection to antiquity – one that they believed offered an alternative genealogy of modernity – one not dependent on transmission via Europe. The Ottoman Empire occupied Byzantium, and many of the key Greek cities are located in Anatolia (Troy, Pergamon, Ephesus, Priene). Moreover, the Ottoman empire retained the Byzantine capital, even transforming the emperor’s church of Saint Sophia into the Sultan’s mosque. The Ottomans thus also had a claim to being the direct heirs of both Hellenic and Eastern Roman antiquity and scrambled to establish museums and fund archaeological digs to pursue these claims.

This project seeks to lay bare the full extent of the competition over antiquity as it was claimed by French, English, Ottoman and Italian scholars. Widening the scope of the project beyond well-trodden paths and opening it up to greater comparison – both within and beyond Europe – will illuminate the extent of shared/different constructions of antiquity as the foundation of modernity, as well as the ways in which these relationships to antiquity also shaped positionality within the modern. What did antiquity meant to various scholars in different traditions? Where was antiquity located, both temporally and physically? What do different articulations – as ‘narratives of meaning’ – reveal about definitions of ‘modern’? How do these contested claims suggest the variety of possible moderns, their relationship with each other, and their location in the context of nineteenth-century European imperialism and colonialism?

Secondly, this project focusses on an additional set of questions that aims to tease out the ways in which claims that antiquity served as a bridge to modernity were also implicated in the construction of individual ‘modern’ subjectivities. Italy was the physical *space* of Roman antiquity, yet this did not entail a closer lineage in the eyes of French and British historians, who often saw antiquity, like modernity, as civilizations that needed to be embodied in order to be claimed. To be modern, thus, was to adopt ‘modern’ ways of thinking, modern ideals, modern scientific (historical) method, and modern sensibilities and dispositions. To be modern was to embodying modernity’s ideals and aesthetics. Antiquity was dislocated from space, and universalized – only becoming accessible to those that embodied and consumed it. What were the ‘modern’ sociopolitical values that were anachronistically written back into the past? How did specific sensibilities and dispositions of the modern individual manifest themselves as the embodiment and consumption of antiquity?

CONFERENCE PAPERS

“Islamic Modernism: Disenchantment and Re-Enchantment in the Modern Age” – Uppsala University, December 2018.

“Using Translation as a Heuristic device in Conceptualizing non-European Modernities,” Uppsala University, December 2018.

“The Abbasid Golden Age in Nineteenth-Century Islamic Modernism,” Boston University, April 2018.

“Historicism and the Recovery of Islamic Essence in Nineteenth-Century Prophetic Histories,” Five College South Asian Studies Forum, Amherst College, March 2018.

“The Tanzimat as an Era of Translation: Ahmet Midhat’s ’Creative Innovation’, Middle East Studies Association, 2017.

“Abbasid history as the Future Modern: Periodization and Historicism in Nineteenth- Century Islamic Modernist Thought,” Indiana University, Bloomington, October 2017.

“Defining Religion and Civilization in Imam Bayezidof’s Refutation of Renan,” University of Chicago Divinity School, 2014.

“Hijacking Islam: The Green Movement and the Deployment of Shiite Symbolism against the Islamic Republic.” *Gender of the State and Politics in the Middle East* conference, Northeastern University, 2013.

*Pious Citizens* book tour (2012), including lectures at: Columbia University, Pomona College, UCLA, The University of Chicago, Northeastern University.

“Kay Khosrow Shahrokh: Religious Reform as a Path to Secularism and Citizenship,” Middle East Studies Association, 2011.

“Secularism and Nationalism as Products of Religious Reform: Theological Premises of a Reconstructed Past,” in “Rethinking Iranian Nationalism” conference, University of Texas, Austin, 2010.

“Rational Religion, Evolution and the Generation of Secularism and Citizenship in the Middle East and India,” “Darwin and Evolution in the Muslim World Conference,” sponsored by Carnegie Foundation of New York, Hampshire College, 2009.

“Religion and the Citizen: Theorizing Modernity in the Middle East,” Amherst College, 2009.

“Hijacking Islam: The Green Movement and the Deployment of Shiite Symbolism against the Islamic Republic.” Annual Lazarowitz lecture, Amherst College, 2009.

“Iranian Nationalism and the Claiming of the Zoroastrian Past,” Five College History Symposium, 2009.

“Modernizing Religion and the Creation of Citizens: Kay Khosrow Shahrokh’s Religious Reform Program,” Yale University, 2008.

“Creating the Modern Citizen: Zoroastrian Religious Reform and the Secular Project,” Middle East Studies Association, 2008.

“Religion and the Modern Citizen,” Religious Modernity and Secularist Resistance in Turkey, Amherst College Conference, 2008.

“Defining Modernity: Zoroastrian Religious Reform in Nineteenth-Century Iran and India”, University of Chicago, 2008.

“Theoretical Perspectives on Modernizing Religion in 20th Century Iran,” University of Toronto, 2007.

“Between Ethnicity and Religion: The Zoroastrian Dilemma in Modern Iran.” Five-College Middle Eastern Studies Seminar, 2005.

“Zoroastrian Community Organizations: Rethinking Traditions from the Grassroots” Middle East Studies Association, 2005.

“Zoroastrian Women Between Community and State: Negotiating Identity and Activism” University of Chicago, 2005.

“Rethinking Religion: Progress and Morality in the Early 20th century Women’s Press,” American Historical Association, 2003.

“Religion, ‘Civilization’ and the Nation-State in the Early 20th-Century Women’s Press” Middle East Studies Association, 2002.

“Islam and Democracy: Prospects for the Future of the Middle East” St. Mary’s College, MD, 2002.

“The Ulama and the Specter of Reform in 19th-Century Iran” University of Chicago, Center for Near Eastern Studies, 2001.

“Intellectuals and Educational Reform in 19th-Century Iran” Harvard University, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 2000.

“The “New” Schools and the Re-Formation of Identity in Late 19th-Century Iran” Society for Iranian Studies Conference, 2000.

“The Quest for the Secret of Strength in Iranian Nineteenth-Century Travel Literature: Rethinking Tradition in the *Safarnameh*” UCLA International invitational conference, “Iran and the Surrounding World Since 1500: Cultural Influences and Interactions,” 2000.

“Religion, Identity and the Reform Agenda in Persian-language Travel Literature,” The Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 2000.

“The Indigenous Solution to the Modernization Dilemma in 19th-Century Iran: The “New” Schools,” Georgetown University, 1999.

“Educational Reform and Problems of Modernization in Iran” Columbia University, 1999.

“Education and the Battle Over Iran, 1870-1906” Middle East Studies Association, 1997.

BOOK REVIEWS AND ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

*Iran: A Modern History.* ByAbbas Amanat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). 1000 pp. Reviewed for *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*.

*Teaching Islam: Textbooks and Religion in the Middle East*. By (eds.) Eleanor Abdella Doumato and Gregory Starrett (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2007). 265 pp. Reviewed for *Iranian Studies*.

*Réligion et éducation en Iran: l’échec de l’islamisation de l’école*. By Saeed Paivandi (Paris: Harmattan, 2006). 228 pp. Reviewed for *Iranian Studies*.

*Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries 1400-1800*. By Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007) 399 pp. Reviewed for *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*.

*Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran*. By Ali Mirsepassi (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 223 pp. Reviewed for *Iranian Studies.*

*Who Is Knowledgeable is Strong: Science, Class, and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900-1950*. By Cyrus Shayegh (University of California Press, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-520-25447-3, 340 pp. Reviewed for *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*.

*Encyclopedia Iranica* entry*, “*Dar al-Fonun” (The Academy of Applied Sciences).

*Encyclopedia Iranica* entry*,* “Anjuman-I Ma’arif” (The Society for Education).

*The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, various entries on Islam. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).