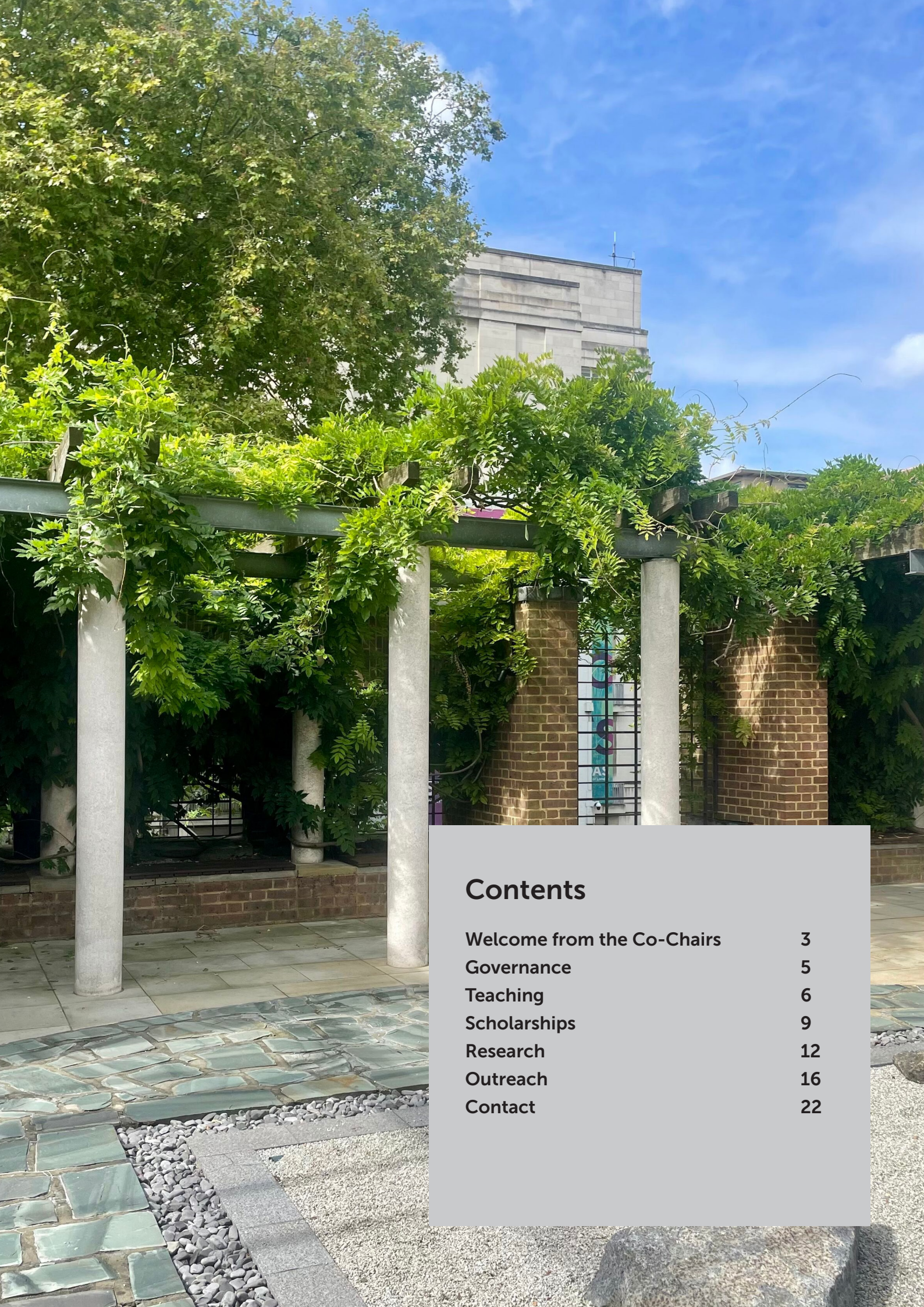


THE SHAPOORJI PALLONJI INSTITUTE OF ZOROASTRIAN STUDIES

SOAS University of London

Report prepared October 2025





Contents

Welcome from the Co-Chairs	3
Governance	5
Teaching	6
Scholarships	9
Research	12
Outreach	16
Contact	22

Welcome from the Co-Chairs

As Co-Chairs of the Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies, we are delighted to present the Annual Report for the academic year 2024–2025. Over this period, the Institute has continued to thrive as a leading centre for Zoroastrian scholarship and education.

The Institute owes its existence to the extraordinary generosity of Mr Shapoor Mistry. SOAS is very grateful indeed for his generous gift. Students of Zoroastrianism at SOAS have access to scholarships provided by the Shapoorji Pallonji endowment, the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (for Zoroastrians only) and the Kamran Djam endowment. These funding opportunities have been instrumental in enabling the best students to study Zoroastrianism at SOAS's world-class academic environment.

Supported by substantial and prestigious grants from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council and the European Research Council, the Institute has attracted doctoral and post-doctoral scholars, further consolidating its position as the foremost centre for Zoroastrian studies globally. In addition to a cohort of ca. ten doctoral students, Dr Yousef Moradi researches Sasanian seals as Co-Investigator of a five-year AHRC grant, Dr Chiara Grassi and Dr Mehrbod Khanizadeh are now working at the Institute as postdoctoral researchers of the ERC project Avestan Ritual in India, and Dr Anna Kuritsnya, an expert in Central Asian languages, has taken up her position as an AHRC-funded Daphne Jackson scholar. The Institute also hosted PhD candidate Ms Ayşe Büşra Togay from the University of Ankara, whose research was funded by a grant of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey.

In 2024–25, the Institute successfully delivered a programme of outreach activities including the third Pallonji Shapoorji Mistry Memorial Lecture and the Kutar Memorial Lecture. The Institute's summer school, organised in collaboration with the University of California Irvine, attracted a diverse cohort of students from around the world, fostering community-engaged learning. The Artist-in-Residence Fellowship was successfully launched this year with the Zoroastrian architect and artist Karl Singaporewala as the inaugural fellow. The research-led work he produced to explore the intersection of materiality and identity formation culminated in the exhibition *Cosmos, Memory, Scale* at SOAS Gallery in the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year.



Dr Mariano Errichiello



Professor Almut Hintze

During the meeting of the Senior Advisory Panel in June 2025, the Co-Chairs presented the annual plan outlining activities to ensure the sustainable growth of the Institute in 2025–2026.

We are deeply grateful for the continued support of our benefactors, partners, students and the wider SOAS community. Together we remain committed to advancing the study of Zoroastrianism and fostering a vibrant intellectual community.

Mariano Errichiello *Almut Hintze*



Governance of the SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies

The Senior Advisory Panel comprises nine members, including the donor, who nominates up to four of its representatives. SOAS also nominates up to four members. The SOAS Panel members include the Vice-Chancellor of SOAS, who acts as Panel Chair. The Co-Chairs of the Institute are in attendance of the meetings. The Senior Advisory Panel's remit is purely advisory. It is intended to offer guidance and support to the work and development of the Institute, to collaborate to maximise opportunities, to consider the Institute's continued evolution and impact, and to support and advise the Co-Chairs in their work for the Institute, in particular on the management of any risks associated with the activities of the Institute.

The Senior Advisory Panel meets twice a year, and the Co-Chairs attend the meetings. The membership for the 2024-25 academic year was as follows:

- **Professor Adam Habib** (Chair), Vice-Chancellor of SOAS.
- **Mr Shapoor Mistry**, Chairman and Managing Director of Shapoorji And Co Pvt Ltd.
- **Mr Kekoo Colah**, Executive Director of Shapoorji Pallonji And Co Pvt Ltd.
- **Dr Zar Amrolia**, Chair XTX Markets.
- **Dr Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis**, Curator of Middle Eastern Coins at the British Museum, London.
- **Mr Malcolm Deboo**, President of Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE).
- **Ms Bapsy Dastur**, General Counsel at VFS Global.
- **Justice Rohinton Nariman**, retired Supreme Court of India Judge.
- **Professor Graeme Earl**, Dean of College of Humanities and Professor of Archaeology at SOAS.

Honorary appointments

On 13 November 2024, Prof. Laura Hammond, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of SOAS, appointed Dr Leilah Vevaina as Professorial Research Associate of the Institute for a period of one year, for the project "Funerals, Faith, and Finance in the Parsi Zoroastrian Diaspora."

On 8 May 2025, Prof. Hammond appointed Karl Singaporewala, inaugural recipient of the Shapoorji Pallonji Artist Residency Fellowship, as SOAS Community Fellow for a period of three years, to help shape the development of the Fellowship in the years ahead.

Teaching Zoroastrianism at SOAS

Zoroastrianism in the Ancient and Modern Worlds (UG)

This course is offered in the undergraduate degree programme entitled 'World Philosophies'.

The course introduces students to Zoroastrianism - its doctrines, rituals and observances within a historical framework. The teachings of the religion are discussed on the basis of the Zoroastrian sacred text, the Avesta, in the context of the Indo-Iranian religious system to which it belonged. The history of Zoroastrianism is traced from its prehistoric roots in Indo-Iranian times through its development under the rule of three great Iranian empires, Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian, its gradual development into a minority religion after the Muslim conquest of Iran, the subsequent migration and re-settlement of a diaspora community in India, and from there to the present day. Theological developments and issues of the contemporary communities are treated within this historical context with particular reference to Zoroastrian literature. The modern history and adaptation of the religion in different cultural environments are looked at mainly with reference to the Parsis in India, and the global Diaspora in such places as Britain, Canada and the USA.

Zoroastrianism: Ancient Faith, Living Philosophy (UG)

This course is offered to third year undergraduate students of the 'World Philosophies' programme. It introduces students to the major aspects of the Zoroastrian philosophy through an overview of its religious features, the engagement with relevant texts and the study of its development from ancient to modern

times. It engages with key questions, debates and challenges that the field of Zoroastrian studies offers to the discipline of Philosophy by looking at critical aspects of epistemology, ethics, metaphysics and ontology emerging from the Zoroastrian esotericism, philanthropy, ritual performance and scholarship. This course proposes a community-engaged learning that entails the involvement of members of the Zoroastrians community in our seminars, allowing students for lively debates and interactions with individuals who, today, embody the Zoroastrian philosophy.



Zoroastrianism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (PG)

This course is offered to postgraduate students in the degree programmes 'Religion in Global Politics', 'Iranian Studies', 'Near and Middle Eastern Studies', and 'South Asia Area Studies'. The course provides a survey of Zoroastrian teachings, observances, rituals and contemporary issues with reference to Zoroastrian primary sources, including Avestan and Pahlavi texts in translation, and religious practices. It is taught within a historical framework beginning with the Indo-Iranian religious system and going on to trace the development of the religion in the Iranian empires and

Teaching Zoroastrianism at SOAS

after the Islamisation of Iran, and its revival on the Indian subcontinent and the contemporary global diaspora. The course also covers modern Zoroastrian thought and the ritual and devotional practices of Zoroastrians today.

It is the counterpart to the undergraduate course 'Zoroastrianism in the Ancient and Modern Worlds', and lectures are shared. Postgraduate seminars are separate and students spend more time studying Zoroastrian religious texts.

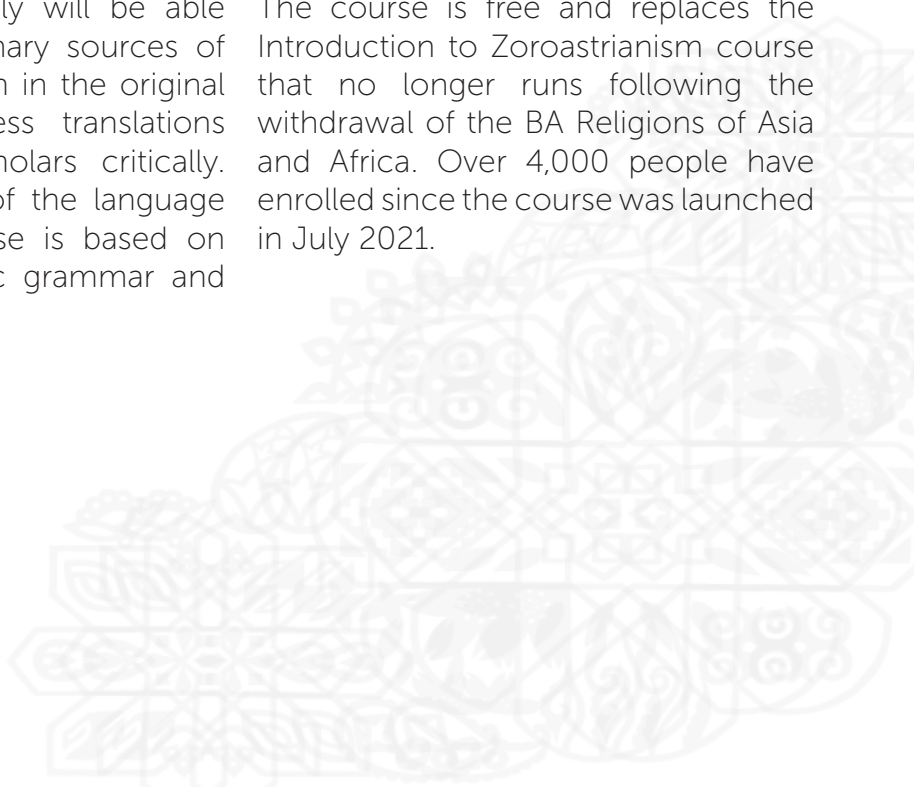
Avestan (UG/PG)

This course is an introduction to the language of the Avesta, the earliest and sacred texts of the Zoroastrians. To the present-day Zoroastrians pray in the Avestan language. The course is designed to provide students with a clear understanding of the basic principles of the Avestan language in a way that enables them to translate simple Avestan texts and to analyse their grammar. Students who complete the course successfully will be able to handle simple primary sources of the Zoroastrian religion in the original Avestan and to assess translations made by various scholars critically. No prior knowledge of the language is required. The course is based on lessons covering basic grammar and

on the reading of texts (the selection of which may vary according to the particular interests of the students). Some memorisation of grammar and vocabulary will be required, but the emphasis will be on learning how to approach the philological and the linguistic problems of the texts in a critical fashion.

MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) – Zoroastrianism: History, Religion and Belief

Created by Sarah Stewart and Céline Redard, Zoroastrianism: History, Religion and Belief is an online short course for the FutureLearn platform. Its purpose is to introduce the subject of Zoroastrianism to an international audience and provide a 'taster' for the courses offered at SOAS. The course draws upon the rich repository of artefacts, paintings and texts displayed in the Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination exhibition held in the Brunei Gallery (2013) and the National Museum, Delhi (2016). The course is free and replaces the Introduction to Zoroastrianism course that no longer runs following the withdrawal of the BA Religions of Asia and Africa. Over 4,000 people have enrolled since the course was launched in July 2021.



Teaching Zoroastrianism at SOAS

Zoroastrianism Summer School (UG/PG)

The fifth Zoroastrianism Summer School took place this year from the 30th June to 4th July 2025 in London. A collaboration between SOAS and the University of Irvine, California, we welcomed 16 students to the SOAS campus for a week of lectures, seminars and workshops. The course was convened by Dr Mariano Errichiello (SOAS) and Prof Carlo Cereti (UCI) who, alongside Dr Sarah Stewart (SOAS) and Dr Jenny Rose (Claremont), led a dynamic series of lectures, seminars and interactive workshops. The topics covered by the lectures included Zoroastrianism in the modern times, migrations, the global diaspora and ritual performance. Highlights of the Summer School included a guided visit to the British Museum, led by Dr Yousef Moradi, and a day at the Zoroastrian Centre.

This visit was generously sponsored by Yazad Dalal, a member of the Management Committee of the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe, which warmly hosted the students as they conducted interviews with members of the Zoroastrian community in London, in the spirit of community-engaged learning. The students included undergraduates, postgraduates and graduates from around the world.



Scholarships

Thanks to the generosity of the Shapoorji Pallonji endowment for scholarships in Zoroastrian studies at SOAS, there are a number of awards available for Domestic and Overseas fee-paying students. These will normally provide a contribution to fees for the duration of the award. In addition, a stipend may also be awarded. The awards are calibrated according to merit and availability of funds.

The SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies spreads the net widely and invites application from students who approach Zoroastrianism from different disciplinary backgrounds, including history, linguistics, anthropology and study of religions.

Eligible programmes and modules for 2025/26:

- 1-year full-time or 2-years part-time MA Iranian Studies.
- 1-year full-time or 2-years part-time MA Religion, Politics and Society.
- 1-year full-time or 2-years part-time MA South Asian Area Studies.
- 1-year full-time or 2-years part-time MA Middle Eastern Studies.
- Full-time MPhil/PhD (new admissions only, starting in September 2024) in the following subject areas: i) Zoroastrianism, both ancient and modern ii) Zoroastrianism with Avestan, Pahlavi, Persian or Gujarati languages.

Candidate Criteria

Applicants for the MA scholarships must

possess or expect to be awarded a First Class Honours Degree or equivalent. Applicants with a non-UK MA degree must be in the top rank as evidenced by references and transcripts. Applicants with a 2:1 are also considered.

Applicants for the MPhil/PhD scholarships must possess or expect to be awarded an MA degree with a mark of Distinction from a UK university. Applicants with a non-UK MA degree must be in the top rank as evidenced by references and transcripts. Applicants with a mark of merit may also be considered.

Applicants for the MPhil/PhD scholarships must demonstrate in the research proposal of their application for admission that their research is in one of the following subject areas: Zoroastrianism, Avestan and/or Pahlavi languages, Persian language, Parsi Sanskrit and Parsi Gujarati languages.

Applicants for the MA scholarships must complete the compulsory 60-credit dissertation on a topic relating to Zoroastrianism and the 30-credit module: Zoroastrianism, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. In addition, applicants are encouraged to develop their linguistic skills by taking a 30-credit language module on one of the Zoroastrian languages, in particular Avestan, Pahlavi, New Persian or Sanskrit, all of which are offered at SOAS. We feel strongly that language competence enables students to engage with primary sources first-hand in their research.

Scholarships

In 2024–25 we were able to offer two MA part-time scholarships to Ms Elmas Buyukmumcu and Mr Meysam Saebi and one MPhil/PhD scholarship to Ms Nafiseh Ansari to partly contribute to their fees. Support towards living costs was also provided to Mr Shiruy Billimoria. While MA scholarships are awarded for one year only, MPhil/PhD scholarships entail a considerable funding commitment as they are granted for three years.



Nafiseh Ansari's PhD is concerned with a Pahlavi text entitled 'The Assyrian Tree' (Draxt ī Asūrīg). Relating the debate between a goat and a palm tree on who of the two is of greater use to human beings, the text is a unique specimen of Zoroastrian agonistic literature. It is thus a precious part of Zoroastrian literature, although no critical edition with a translation currently exists. Nafiseh is preparing an edition of this text based on the manuscripts and a translation. Moreover, she interprets and analyses it in the context of Mesopotamian and Iranian material cultural traditions.

Shiruy Billimoria's PhD is on the business ethics of Parsi entrepreneurs

and businessmen and -women. In particular, he is hoping to throw light on the question whether religion plays any role in the way they approach their business practices and how they use funds they have generated through their business activities.

Zoroastrianism Summer School Scholarship

The SSPIZ scholarships fund also provided five scholarships to students at the Zoroastrian Summer School to help towards the costs of travel and accommodation. Students can apply for the scholarship when filling in their application for the summer school.



I would like to thank the donors of the Shapoorji Pallonji Scholarship. I am most grateful to their magnanimity and generosity. I am indebted to their munificence and thank them for making it possible for me to do my PhD research field work. It was due to the Scholarships stipend that I could focus and dedicate my efforts towards doing my field work this year and gathering data. Were it not for the scholarship, I could not have concentrated on conducting my field work the way I did.

Before applying for my MPhil/PhD I had done my MA Religion in Global Politics at SOAS. Prior to that I did my BA in History from the University of Mumbai. While in my second year of BA I started interning at the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai. I worked at the museum for six years and was promoted to Curatorial asst.

The MA enabled me to receive an in depth understanding of the Zoroastrian religion. My dissertation was titled "Zoroastrian business ethos and their roots in theology". In my dissertation I argued the scope and extent of influence of Zoroastrianism on the evolution of the business practices of Zoroastrian entrepreneurs. An extension of this understanding is my PhD research "Studies in Zoroastrian Business Ethics". My thesis is about studying the business practices of prominent Parsi business families historically and juxtaposing this historical study alongside the business practices of contemporary Parsi

entrepreneurs in India and in the diaspora. The purpose of the thesis is to determine if the identifiable aggregate of business ethics and practices of Parsi business houses continues to be adhered to by contemporary Parsi entrepreneurs.

This year I had to do my fieldwork. I intended to gather data by interviewing Zoroastrian entrepreneurs in India and the diaspora. I travelled to India soon after the academic year began. There I interviewed various Zoroastrian entrepreneurs from different industries. I interviewed several Zoroastrian entrepreneurs in the UK and the diaspora as well. The exercise of gathering data and interviewing all the different research participants was a great learning opportunity. It does little justice to say that the Shapoorji Pallonji scholarship had a profound impact on my fieldwork and research.

I urge the scholarship to continue doing the great work so that more people can benefit from it. I appreciate it. I shall ever remain grateful.

Research

Zoroastrianism, Esotericism and Race

This research project, funded by the British Institute of Persian Studies, examined how concepts of race and esotericism shaped modern Zoroastrian subjectivities in India and beyond. It brought together leading scholars of religion, history and Zoroastrianism for a workshop held at SOAS on 31 May 2025.

Focusing on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the project explored the impact of racial discourse and the activities of organisations and individuals promoting esoteric ideas among Zoroastrians across the Persianate and Western worlds. By situating Zoroastrianism within global intellectual and colonial history, it highlighted the entanglement of esoteric and racial discourses in the formation of modern religious identities.

Research papers traced the intellectual and religious networks linking Zoroastrians with global race discourse and esoteric thought in India, Iran, North America and Europe, demonstrating how intellectuals and practitioners were active interlocutors in the construction of religious modernity. Key findings include the strategic mobilisation of race concepts by Zoroastrians to construct genealogies of religious purity and civilisational authority; the use of esotericism as a hermeneutical tool for articulating religious authenticity; and the persistence of ethnocentric stances in contemporary Parsi discourse rooted in these historical entanglements.

The project emphasised the agency of South Asian actors in shaping global religious categories, challenging Eurocentric narratives. One of its key outcomes is a proposal for an edited volume currently under review by Cambridge University Press.



Research

Avestan Ritual in India (AVINDIA), Jan 2024 -Dec 2028)

The team of this five-year project, funded by an Advanced Investigator Grant of the European Research Council (€2,499,999) filmed the performance of a Visperad ceremony at the Cama Athornan Institute in Andheri, Mumbai, in November 2024. Using film and computational technologies, the project team, led by Almut Hintze, seeks to detect, describe, visualise and analyse how the ritual is structured as systematically organised activity, and to reconstruct its genesis and historical trajectory. By analysing the ritual structure of the Visperad in the Indo-Iranian diachronic perspective, we are hoping to reveal change over long periods of time and across the boundaries of religious cultures.

In addition, the team examines how the ritual is practised and understood in India. Building on editing tools and work already undertaken in Professor Hintze's Multimedia Yasna (MUYA) ERC project, we edit, translate, and analyse the Sanskrit version of the Avestan recitation text, the Gujarati preparatory ceremony (Paragna) and ritual directions, and Gujarati language treatises. This will create new insights into the historical trajectory of ritual change, as well as local variation of the performances in India.

The project will generate a large volume of research data in audio and visual digital formats, bringing with it responsibility for effective management

both of data captured in field research and of subsequent processing. Technical infrastructure will be created to ensure that the data complies with recognised standards and can be made preservable in the long term. Early establishment of such infrastructure will significantly strengthen long-term preservation of raw data as well as discovery and accessibility of outcomes of AVINDIA, resulting in standards-based and sustainable research and public data resources. Deliverables of AVINDIA, including movies, annotated collections and publications including books will be formed into corpus repositories designed for sustained use and further enrichment by the team and by the wider research community, and to also deliver publicly-accessible presentations of key outputs.

Data management will be undertaken by AVINDIA team member Data Futures GmbH, a non-profit company and member of the international InvenioRDM consortium, which is led by CERN and the European Commission's OpenAIRE programme. While the infrastructure of the InvenioRDM platform is well established in the Sciences, AVINDIA pioneers its use in the Humanities and Social Sciences, being the first large-scale Humanities project to adopt it from the outset.

Research

Beyond Discovery: Religion, economics and administration in Sasanian Iran through new clay bullae from Taxt-e Solayman, June 2023 - May 2028.
Co-Investigator: Dr Yousef Moradi.

This five-year project is funded by a Standard Grant of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council with £999,998. The team analyses and publishes newly discovered bullae and the seal impression they bear from one of the most important fire temples of Sasanian Iran. The World Heritage Site of Taxt-e Solayman, or 'Throne of Solomon', is located in the province of Western Azerbaijan in Iran. It was home of the 'fire of the warriors and military chieftain', in Middle Persian: Adur Gushnasp, one of the three most sacred Zoroastrian fires of the Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE). There, between 2002 and 2008, during archaeological excavations under the auspices of the then Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization, Yousef Moradi excavated 824 Sasanian clay bullae, bearing almost 2,000 seal impressions. He thus recovered a new Iranian primary source for Sasanian history, which to date largely relies on non-Iranian accounts. The outstanding feature of this find is not only that it comes from one of the most important religious centres of Zoroastrian Iran, but also that it has a secure provenance. For, in contrast to most other collections of Sasanian seals, this one comes from a controlled and fully documented excavation. Now housed in the Museum of Urmia in Azerbaijan, it is unpublished and inaccessible to the public. The purpose of our project is to analyse and publish it in a methodologically innovative

way both in print and online, and to enhance its public visibility through film, exhibitions, 3-D models and replicas.

The project provides new insights into the reading of inscriptions and the imagery, the production process of bullae, sealing practices, the role of seals in Sasanian society, the economic activities of the Zoroastrian fire temple, and its interaction with different social and religious groups, including Jews and Christians. Results will be disseminated in print as articles and as a two-volume book to be published in the series *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*, covering sealing practices, inscriptions, iconography, and providing a full descriptive catalogue with plates. An electronic dataset, published online with metadata, will provide photographs and line drawings of all 824 bullae, and 3D models. Replicas of selected bullae will be made available at a workshop, and at exhibitions in the UK and at the Urmia Museum, Iran, where the bullae are stored.



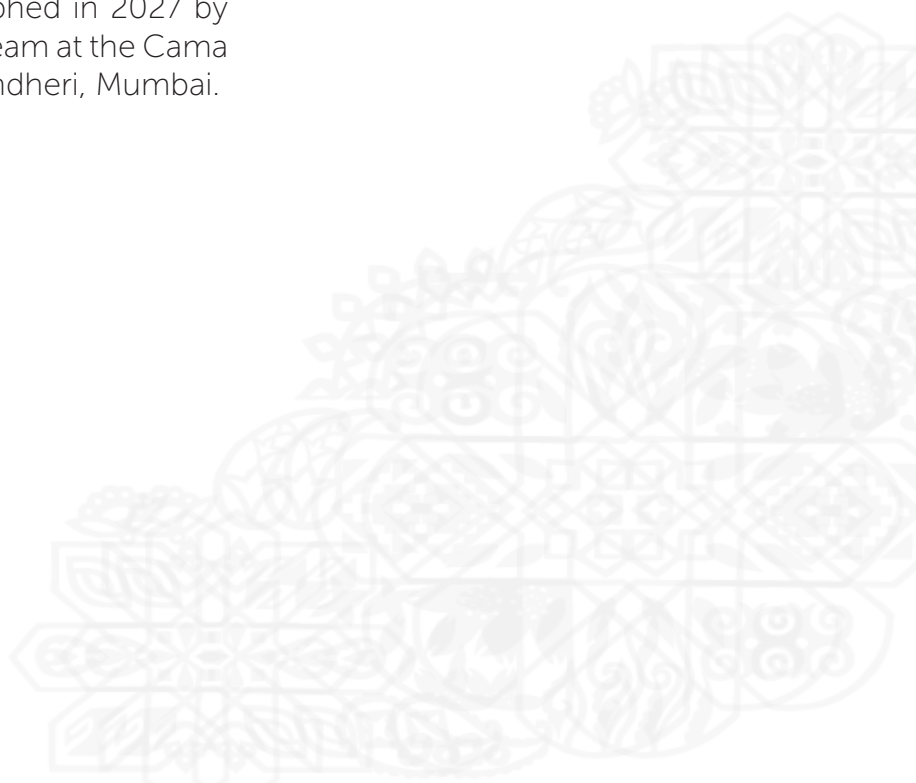
Research

The Repository of Edward William West's Notebooks at the Royal Asiatic Society, London

With funding of an Impact and Knowledge Exchange grant (£20,000, February to June 2024) by Research England the SSPIZ partnered with the German non-profit company Data Futures GmbH (DF) and the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) in London to create a new digital repository for the unpublished notebooks of Edward William West held at the RAS, previously digitised via Hintze's ERC Advanced Grant MUYA (2016–2023).

The Cama Athornan Institute Repository

Funded by Research England through a Research Culture Grant (£5,000, February to June 2024), this project trained three of the SSPIZ's PhD students to create and manage digital data in agreement with the FAIR principle (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). The students created metadata to the images of 42 manuscripts photographed in 2027 by the Multimedia Yasna team at the Cama Athornan Institute in Andheri, Mumbai.



Outreach



The third Pallonji Shapoorji Mistry Memorial Lecture, entitled "Picturing Paradise: An Introduction to the Art of the Zoroastrian Book" was delivered by Prof Daniel J. Sheffield (Princeton University) on 28th October 2024. Prof. Sheffield explored how, for nearly 250 years, Zoroastrians in Iran and India produced richly illustrated manuscripts of well-known stories. More than a dozen of these survive today, offering rare insights into how early modern Zoroastrian communities imagined their history and place in the cosmos.

He presented a new stylistic typology of Zoroastrian miniature painting, examined the relationships between patrons, scribes and artists through manuscript colophons, and showed how these traditions shaped nineteenth-century Parsi lithographic print culture in Bombay.

On 21 November, the Institute hosted the launch of "Zoroastrianism in India and Iran: Persians, Parsis and the Flowering of Political Identity" with author Alexandra Buhler. The book examines the cultural, religious and political ties between the Zoroastrian communities of Iran and the Zoroastrian communities of India during the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods. A major theme is the increase in philanthropy directed to the Zoroastrians of Iran by the Parsis and the involvement of the British in encouraging Parsi feelings of patriotism towards Iran. Using a variety of original sources from Britain, India and Iran, this book examines the political, legal and social position of Zoroastrians in Iran and how different events impacted their attitudes as well as the attitudes of Parsis towards their ancestral homeland.



Outreach



On 26 November, the Institute hosted the UK premier screening of the documentary “Derbent, What Persia Left Behind,” directed by Pejman Akbarzadeh. This comprehensive documentary explored the unique history and archaeology of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. After the Russian-Persian Wars, Derbent became part of Russia in 1813. Today, it lies within the Republic of Dagestan, where Western visitors are advised against travelling

due to ongoing conflicts between Islamic extremist groups and the Russian central government. Once a hub for promoting Zoroastrianism during the Sasanian period, the area is now predominantly Muslim. The documentary features exclusive footage shot in Derbent just before the Russo-Ukrainian war, along with interviews with renowned scholars who illuminate the rich yet often overlooked history of the fortifications.

The 2025 Kutar Memorial Lecture, entitled “Sogdian fire-worship: between Zoroastrianism and Buddhism”, was given on 1st May 2025 by Professor Pavel Lurje of the Hermitage at St Petersburg. Drawing on his recent research and excavations in Central Asia, Professor Lurje discussed what we know of fire rituals in Sogdiana (the land in present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). He developed the compelling argument that wall paintings, archaeological discoveries and references in the written texts show that worship in front of a fire was a significant part of Sogdian ritual practices during the first millennium CE. While some fire rituals depicted or described have a direct link to Zoroastrian practices spanning from Sasanian Iran to the present day, there are other, later, instances which point to incense burning known from Buddhist contexts in Central Asia and China.



Outreach

On 10–11 June 2025, the Institute ran a workshop entitled “Creating sustainable data resources: escaping the technology obsolescence vortex” at SOAS’s Khalili Lecture Theatre. The workshop was taught by Professor Peter Cornwell (Data Futures GmbH) and SOAS’s Almut Hintze and Myriadne Wang. Taught in person and online, the workshop introduced researchers and wider audiences to the creation of a research data repository and to technologies for subsequently annotating imagery and geo-locations. Participants also learned how to preserve both images and annotations effectively for the long-term. Moreover, students had the opportunity to get hands-on experience in creating repository accounts of their own. Using the collection of Zoroastrian manuscripts at the M.F. Cama Athornan Institute in Mumbai as a case study, the workshop sets out policies for creating digital heritage imagery for long-term preservation.

The Institute announced the launch of its Artist-in-Residence Fellowship, a space where artists, researchers, students and communities can explore how art communicates questions of religion, identity and memory. Our inaugural fellow, Karl Singporewala RWA RIBA, responded to the theme *How do religion, aesthetics and materiality shape identity?* Through new large-scale commissions and earlier works, he reimagined Zoroastrian ritual objects as sculptural vessels of belonging, diaspora and memory in *Cosmos, Memory, Scale*, in exhibition at SOAS Gallery from 9 October to 13 December 2025. Shaped by his Zoroastrian Parsi heritage, Karl’s works often explore themes of identity, materiality and enduring tensions between tradition and modernity. His art has been exhibited internationally, including at the Saatchi Gallery, Royal Academy of Arts, New York Institute of Technology and the Onassis Cultural Centre Athens. The Fellowship is designed as an ongoing platform for practice-led research and public engagement, a dialogue between artistic expression and academic inquiry.





Thank You
Your support is transforming
students' lives





If you would like to receive updates on the work taking place at the Institute and information about upcoming events, please sign up to the SSPIZS mailing list. This can be found through our website or directly at eepurl.com/gen7f5.

SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Institute of Zoroastrian Studies

SOAS University of London
10 Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG

+44 (0)20 7074 5146
sspizs@soas.ac.uk

www.soas.ac.uk/institute-of-zoroastrian-studies