

SAFA MAHMOUDIAN

PALACE GARDENS IN LOWER MESOPOTAMIA: 8TH–11TH CENTURIES

Monday Majlis Online on the 24th of November, 17:00-18:30 (UK time)

Centre for the Study of Islam, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter

Register please on this link:

https://Universityofexeter.zoom.us/meeting/register/nvNXpR70Q_i_ZQ1-12kDdw



Bio: Safa Mahmoudian is an art and architectural historian specializing in Western Asia from the early Islamic to early modern periods. She is currently Principal Investigator of the “Travelling Gardens” project, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), at the Department of Near Eastern Studies of the University of Vienna. Her research explores the intersections of architecture, landscape, and socio-cultural dynamics, with a particular focus on water systems, gardens, and palatial spaces in historical contexts. Dr Mahmoudian has previously held academic positions at the University of Oxford, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the University of Vienna. Her work has been supported by several research grants and scholarships and was recognized with the Grete Mostny Prize in 2022.

<https://orientalistik.univie.ac.at/en/about-us/staff/details-staff/user/mahmoudias15/inum/1073/backpid/86555/>



Ernst Herzfeld Papers, FSA.A.06, National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Ernst Herzfeld, 1946.

Abstract: In this talk, Safa Mahmoudian presents her latest book, which investigates palace gardens constructed during the Abbasid period in their Lower Mesopotamian heartland—an area that has received remarkably little scholarly attention. Drawing on a wide range of previously un- or underutilized Arabic and Persian sources alongside material evidence, the book offers the first comprehensive study of these gardens within their broader architectural and socio-geographical contexts. It challenges essentialist notions of an “Islamic garden” typology that presuppose continuity across time and place, and instead develops a more nuanced understanding of their diverse forms and functions. By showing how these gardens served both as settings for and expressions of courtly life, the study positions them as central to understanding the architecture and daily life of the Abbasid court.

In the spirit of the label ‘Majlis’ and also to make the talks even more interesting, our speakers present the topic discussed as embedded in their own journey. You can watch the previous Majlises here https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YRkUahFj_81oJzCSDLTx4kVQQgeHLC-, but we don’t record the Q&A in order to keep the discussion free. Please come and enjoy the talks and the discussions :) If you’d like to be included in the CSI (Centre for the Study of Islam, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter) mailing list, please write to me (I.T.Kristo-Nagy@ex.ac.uk).

We’ll be happy to welcome you!

István T Kristó-Nagy <https://arabislamicstudies.exeter.ac.uk/staff/kristo-nagy/>