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The Ehsan Yarshater Lecture Series are delivered by an outstanding scholar whose work has distinctively impacted the study of the Iranian Civilization. Each biennial lecture series consists of four to five lectures on a single theme that is subsequently elaborated and amplified into a monograph. The lectures represent original research and synthesis in all aspects of Iranian Studies, including archaeology and art history, as well as history, literature, the study of religions, and philosophy.

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*Sasanian Law in its Social Context – A series of five lectures, November 9-18, 2015*

**UCLA** Iranian Studies

The Biennial Ehsan Yarshater  
Lecture Series

Presents

# *Sasanian Law in its Social Context*

*November 9-18, 2015*

11360 Charles E. Young Research Library

**A series of five lectures**

By

**Maria Macuch**  
Professor of Iranian Studies  
Freie Universität Berlin

# Sasanian Law in its Social Context

11360 Charles E. Young Research Library • November 9, 12, 13, 16, 2015  
306 Royce Hall • November 18, 2015

## Maria Macuch

Maria Macuch is Professor of Iranian Studies, and has been head of the Institute of Iranian Studies (*Institut für Iranistik*) at the *Freie Universität Berlin* (Germany), prior to her retirement in April 2015. She was a former member of the Board of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* (SIE) from 1999 to 2003, and President of the SIE from 1999 to 2007. She is editor of the series *Iranica* (1993–); member of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* (2007–); and Honorary Fellow of the *Ancient India and Iran Trust*, Cambridge (UK), since 2013. Her scholarly research focuses mainly on pre-Islamic (Zoroastrian/Sasanian) Iranian law and its impact on other ancient legal systems of the Near East in late antiquity.

## Areas of Research:

(1) Pre-Islamic Iran; languages; religious, social, legal history; (2) Pahlavi literature and legal sources; (3) Middle Persian legal terminology; (4) Reconstruction of Sasanian law and its relation to Zoroastrian theology and jurisprudence; (5) Impact of Zoroastrian/Sasanian law on other legal systems of the late antique Near East (Christian, Rabbinic, Islamic, Byzantine law); (6) Pre-Islamic Iranian literary traditions; (7) Classical Persian literature.

## Recent Publications (2014–2015):

- “Ardashir’s Genealogy Revisited.” In: *Iran Nameh: A Special Issue Honoring Jaleh Amouzgar*, eds., Parvaneh Pourshariati and Mohamad Tavakoli, vol. 29, 2014, 80–94.
- “Jewish Jurisdiction within the Framework of the Sasanian Legal System.” In: *Encounters by the Rivers of Babylon: Scholarly Conversations between Jews, Iranians and Babylonians in Antiquity*. Edited by Uri Gabbay and Shai Secunda. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014, 147–160.
- “Law in Pre-modern Zoroastrianism.” In: *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*. Edited by Michael Stausberg and Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2015, 289–298.
- “Legal Implications of Mazdakite Teaching According to the Dēnkard.” In: *Husraw I<sup>er</sup> Reconstructions d’un Règne: Sources et Documents*. Edited by Christelle Jullien. *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 53. Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2015, 155–174.
- “Precision Orientated Legal Terminology in the Sasanian Law of Inheritance.” In: *From Aa’l to Zā’id: Essays in Honour of Éva M. Jeremiás*. Edited by Iv’an Szántó. Piliscsaba: The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies 2015, 129–146.

## Synopsis

Legal texts are among the more important sources for the reconstruction of the political and economic institutions, and cultural practices, of late antique Iran, as they considerably further our understanding of past social complexities that are decisively different than our own. This year’s *Ehsan Yarshater Biennial Lectures* shall provide a sweeping overview and detailed analysis of the principal fields of jurisprudence in Sasanian Iran (third to seventh centuries CE). The five lectures will be investigating the genesis of legal institutions that were instrumental in consolidating the social status of Sasanian élites, notably, the Zoroastrian clergy and the Iranian aristocracy.

## Legal Sources and Instruments of Law

The opening lecture will provide an overview of the available legal material, dispersed in a great variety of sources, and discuss the many pitfalls Iranists encounter in reconstructing the Sasanian legal system.

## Kinship Ties and Fictive Alliances

The second lecture examines questions pertaining to Family Law, in particular, the role of kinship ties that are of paramount importance in Sasanian jurisprudence. The lecture also elaborates on the significance of legal institutions within the context of marriage and succession.

## Property and Inheritance

The third lecture explores the general concept of property, in particular, how it gave rise to complex categories crucial to preserving the possessions of affluent élites, while ensuring that proprietary rights were preserved from one generation to the next.

## Civil and Criminal Proceedings

The fourth lecture reviews the judicial system, the foundation upon which the privileges of the élites were built, and the position of religious minorities, the Jews and Christians, within the framework of the judiciary.

## Sasanian Law and other Legal Systems

The final lecture discusses the impact of Iranian law on other important legal systems of the Near East, be it Rabbinic and Nestorian-Christian, or be it Islamic and especially Shi’ite, law.

## “Legal Sources and Instruments of Law”

### Introductory Remarks

M. Rahim Shayegan, Director, Iranian Studies, UCLA

Monday, November 9, 2015 | 4:00pm  
11360 Charles E. Young Research Library

## “Kinship Ties and Fictive Alliances”

Thursday, November 12, 2015 | 4:00pm  
11360 Charles E. Young Research Library

## “Property and Inheritance”

Friday, November 13, 2015 | 4:00pm  
11360 Charles E. Young Research Library

## “Civil and Criminal Proceedings”

Monday, November 16, 2015 | 4:00pm  
11360 Charles E. Young Research Library

## “Sasanian Law and Other Legal Systems”

Wednesday, November 18, 2015 | 4:00pm  
306 Royce Hall

### Closing Remarks

Reception to follow at the  
Royce Hall Terrace at 5:30pm