Fitting Tributes and Fine Brocades: The Politics of Gift Giving in Early Qajar Iran

This talk uses gift-giving practices in early nineteenth-century Iran as a window onto statecraft, governance, and center-periphery relations in the early Qajar state (1785 – 1925). Gifts have a long history in the administrative and political history of Iran, the Persianate world, and broader Eurasia, but the pishkish, a tributary gift-giving ceremony, held a central role in the politics and economy of Qajar Iran. It was part of the process of presenting Qajar rule as a continuation of previous Iranian royal dynasties. Nevertheless, pishkish ceremonies also illustrated the challenges Qajar rulers faced in exerting power and control in the provinces. Gifts and honors to the Shi’i religious establishment, to broader society, and to foreign envoys were part of Qajar rulers’ strategy of presenting themselves as just and legitimate.

Tuesday, December 8, 2015
2-S-14 Green Hall
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.
Open to the Public
Light Lunch Served
RSVP to iran@princeton.edu