

How to Read a Genealogical Text:

The Persianate *Nasab* Tradition as Cultural Archive and Social Practice

Abstract

While genealogical texts were a common form of documentation throughout the pre-modern Persianate world, these texts to date have received relatively little attention within scholarship, save for a few narrow avenues of research into areas such as dynastic legitimacy. Anthropological studies in the fields of genealogy and kinship have suggested a number of promising approaches for historical research that advance beyond strictly empiricist methods. In this presentation we will examine several case studies of recent research involving genealogical texts from the Persianate tradition that illustrate the wide range of research queries that can be addressed using such sources.

Bio

Daniel Beben is Associate Professor of History and Religious Studies at Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan. He completed his PhD in History and Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University in 2015. His research focuses on the themes of genealogical practices, religious conversion and community formation in the Persianate world in the post-Mongol era. He is the co-author (with Daryoush Mohammad Poor) of *The First Aga Khan: Memoirs of the 46th Ismaili Imam: A Persian edition and English translation of the 'Ibrat-afzā of Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī, also known as Ḥasan 'Alī Shāh* (I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018); the co-editor (with Jo-Ann Gross) of *Genealogical History in the Persianate World* (Bloomsbury, 2025); and the co-author (with Jo-Ann Gross and Umed Mamadsherzodshoev) of *Ismailism in Badakhshan: A Genealogical History* (Brill, forthcoming).