

About the Authors

Estelle Amy de la Bretèque

Estelle Amy de la Bretèque holds a doctorate in anthropology and is an ethnomusicologist and a musician. She conducted research on “melodized speech and narratives of sorrow” amongst the Yezidis of Armenia. Before this she studied women’s mourning ceremonies on the Absheron Peninsula (Azerbaijan), in a Russian Christian sectarian community exiled to the Caucasus (the Molokans), and the laments of displaced Kurdish women in the suburbs (*gecekondu*) of Istanbul and Diyarbakir. As a CNRS-affiliated researcher since 2020, she is currently conducting research on the Yezidi community in the diaspora (mainly in France). Her main publication is *Paroles mélodisées: Récits épiques et lamentations chez les Yézidis d’Arménie* (Classiques Garnier, 2013). She has also published several articles on vocal repertoires in the Caucasus and Anatolia.

Françoise Arnaud-Demir

During a lifelong career as a translator, Françoise Arnaud-Demir has chosen traditional songs and dances from Turkey and Alevi culture as her main subject of research. She gave concerts on numerous stages across Turkey and Europe and published three music albums. From 2001 to 2010, she taught Turkish lexicology and ethnomusicology at the Paris INALCO Institute. She devoted two postgraduate theses (INALCO, 1999; Paris 10 University, 2012) to the symbolism of the crane (bird) and to ritual dances amongst the Alevis of Turkey. Her publications have a transdisciplinary approach, linking music, dance, verse, ritual, and the natural world: “Quand passent les grues cendrées . . . : Sur une composante chamanique du cérémonial des Alévis-Bektachis” (*Turcica*, 2002); “Entre chamanisme et soufisme: Le *semâ*’ des Alévis-Bektachis” (*Journal of the History of Sufism*, 2004); “Le syncrétisme alévi-bektachi dans les chants accompagnant la danse rituelle *semah*” (International Symposium, Paris, 2005); “*Semah* bir ‘oyun’ mudur? Şamanizim, Tasavvuf ve Canlandırma ışığında Alevi-Bektaşî’lerde dinsel dansın adı” [“Is *Semah* a ‘Dance’? The Name of the Alevi-Bektachi Sacred Dance in the Light of Shamanism, Sufism, and Cultural Revival”] (*Folklor/Edebiyat*, Ankara, 2006); and “Garder le rythme: Danse et écoute rituelle dans le *semah* des Alévis de Divriği” (*Cahiers de littérature orale*, 2014).

Alberto Cantera

Alberto Cantera is Professor of Iranian Studies and Director of the Institute of Iranian Studies in the Free University of Berlin. The focus of his work is on Zoroastrian texts from antiquity until the modern age, especially the Avestan texts, their reception in Late Antiquity, and their use in the Zoroastrian ritual until today. His work aims to transform our understanding of the Avestan texts, emphasizing their ritual character. He has undertaken a new edition of the Avestan texts which represents them as ritual texts. He is the founder of the *Corpus Avesticum Berolinense*. Since 2007 he has also been collecting the extant Avestan manuscripts and publishing them online in the Avestan Digital Archive. He has authored and edited a number of books, among them, for example: *The Liturgical Widēwdād Manuscript 4010 (Ave 977/978)* (Girona, 2019);

with Céline Redard, *Introduction à l'avestique récent* (Girona, 2019); *The Transmission of the Avesta* (Wiesbaden, 2012); *Studien zur Pahlavi-Übersetzung des Avesta* (Wiesbaden, 2004).

Gulsuma Demir

Gulsuma Demir studied linguistics in Istanbul and graduated in 2017. During that time, she also joined the classes at the Kurdish Institute in Istanbul and received a teaching certificate. From 2017 to 2020 she continued her education in Moscow and took part in activities conducted by the Moscow Research Group on Aramaic languages, including weekly seminars and fieldwork on the Neo-Aramaic language Turoyo in Tur Abdin.

Yulia Furman

Yulia Furman is an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the Department of Semitic Languages, Free University of Berlin. Her research interests focus on Syriac literature and language, Neo-Aramaic languages, and the oral literature of Eastern Anatolia: Syriac historiography, East Syrian literature and the theology of the Church of the East, the history of the Classical Syriac language, and the documentation and description of the Neo-Aramaic language Turoyo and its oral traditions. She studied Semitic Languages at the Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, and received her PhD there in 2017 with a thesis on the seventh-century Syriac universal history by John bar Penkaye. Since 2018 she has been conducting fieldwork on Turoyo in Turkey as a member of the Moscow research group. Her current project deals with lexical and grammatical aspects of the Turoyo verb.

Erdal Gezik

Erdal Gezik is an independent researcher on Alevism in Turkey. He studied Economic and Social History at the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Making use of oral history, he has published widely on Alevi theology, traditional religious organization, and history. Recently he coedited *Kurdish Alevi and the Case of Dersim: Historical and Contemporary Insights* (London and New York, 2019).

Partow Hooshmandrad

Partow Hooshmandrad is Professor of Ethnomusicology at California State University, Fresno. She received her PhD in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2004. She has done extensive research on the cultural heritage of the Kurdish Ahl-e Ḥaqq (Yāresān) of Guran since 2000. As a scholar and a musician, she specializes in Kurdish Ahl-e Ḥaqq musical culture. She has won several awards for her research endeavors, including a grant from the National Geographic Conservation Trust Fund in 2005. Her publications include the USB video album *Nazms of Guran: A Pedagogical Presentation* (Tehran, 2019); the CD album *Selections from Tanbur Nazms of Guran* (Tehran, 2017); the documentary film *Music of Yarsan: A Living Tradition* (Tehran 2015); “Life as Ritual: Devotional Practices of the Kurdish Ahl-i Ḥaqq of Gurān,” in *Religious Minorities in Kurdistan: Beyond the Mainstream*, ed. by Khanna Omarkhali (Wiesbaden, 2014); and a two-CD album of her field recordings titled *Ritual Music of Guran* (Tehran, 2013).

Philip Kreyenbroek

Philip G. Kreyenbroek is Professor emeritus of Iranian Studies, Georg-August University Göttingen. His main research interests are “minority” religions in Iranian cultures, especially Zoroastrianism, Yezidism, and Ahl-e Ḥaqq, oral culture, and mysticism. He is the general editor of the series Göttinger Orientforschungen III. Reihe: Iranica (Harrassowitz). He has authored and edited a number of books, among them: *Sraoša in the Zoroastrian Tradition* (Leiden, 1985); *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*, with S. Sperl (eds.) (London, 1992); *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston, NY, 1995); *Kurdish Culture and Identity*, with C. Allison (eds.) (London and New Jersey, 1996); *God and Sheikh Adi Are Perfect*, with Kh. J. Rashow (Wiesbaden, 2005); *Yezidism in Europe: Different Generations Speak of Their Religion*, in collaboration with Z. Kartal, Kh. Omarkhali, and Kh. J. Rashow (Wiesbaden, 2009); *Oral Literature of Iranian Languages*, with U. Marzolph (eds.) (London and New York, 2010); *Yezidism and Yezidi Studies in the Early 21st Century*, special issue of *Kurdish Studies* guest edited with Kh. Omarkhali (London, 2016); “*God First and Last*”: *Religious Traditions and Music of the Yaresan of Guran* (with Y. Kanakis), vol. 1, Religious Traditions (Wiesbaden, 2020).

Nikita Kuzin

Nikita Kuzin is a PhD candidate at the Department of Semitic Languages, Free University of Berlin. He studied Semitic languages and literatures at Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow and graduated in 2017. He is a member of a Russian research group conducting fieldwork on Ṭuroyo in Turkey. His research interests are Neo-Aramaic languages, Kurmanji, Semitic morphology, and language contact. His PhD thesis investigates the grammatical voice and valency change in the Neo-Aramaic language Ṭuroyo.

Alexey Lyavdansky

Alexey Lyavdansky is Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies, National Research University of Economics, Moscow. His primary research area is Aramaic Language and Literature, including classical texts (Babylonian Aramaic) and modern spoken dialects (North-Eastern branch of Neo-Aramaic). He has published extensively on Aramaic and other Semitic languages and literatures. His main publications include: “Neo-Aramaic Languages” (in Russian), “Temporal Deictic Adverbs as Discourse Markers in Hebrew, Aramaic and Akkadian,” “Aramaic Incantation Bowls at the State Hermitage Museum” (with T. Fain and J. N. Ford), “An Aramaic Version of St. Sisinnius Legend” (in Russian), “Mandaeans” (in Russian), “A Neo-Aramaic Version of a Kurdish Folktale” (with Ch. Häberl, N. Kuzin, and S. Loesov, forthcoming). He currently directs a field research program on North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects and a project aimed at creating an anthology of Syriac charms.

Khanna Omarkhali

Khanna Omarkhali is Privatdozentin and Reader in Kurdish Studies at the Institute of Iranian Studies, Free University of Berlin, Germany. She was granted her Doctor of Philosophy of Science (Rus. *kandidat filosofskich nauk*) in 2006 in the Department of Religious Studies, Saint Petersburg State University. From 2006 to 2017 she was a researcher in the Institute of Iranian

Studies in Göttingen and responsible for Kurdish Studies. In July 2017, she “habilitated” at the Georg-August University of Göttingen in Iranian Studies with the Habilitationsschrift “The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written.” She participated in various externally funded projects. Her main research covers Yezidism, religious minorities in Kurdistan, and orality and scripturalization in the Middle East. Her works have been published in several languages and include *Religious Minorities in Kurdistan: Beyond the Mainstream* (Wiesbaden, 2014); *Yezidism and Yezidi Studies in the Early 21st century*, a special issue of *Kurdish Studies* guest edited with Ph. Kreyenbroek (London, 2016); *The Yezidi Religious Textual Tradition: From Oral to Written. Categories, Transmission, Scripturalisation and Canonisation of the Yezidi Oral Religious Texts* (Wiesbaden, 2017).

Shahrokh Raei

Shahrokh Raei is a lecturer and researcher at the department of Oriental and Islamic studies, Ruhr University Bochum. His main research interests in the field of cultural history and anthropology are: mystical brotherhoods and Sufi groups in the Islamic world, Qalandariyya, Khāksāriyya and the related cultural traditions, and also Zoroastrianism. He studied Ancient Iranian Culture and Ancient Languages at the University of Tabriz, Iran, and received his PhD in October, 2007, at the Institute of Iranian Studies, University of Göttingen, with a thesis entitled *Die Endzeitvorstellungen der Zoroastrier in iranischen Quellen* (Wiesbaden, 2010). From 2007 to 2015 he worked as a Lecturer and Research Associate at the Institute of Iranian Studies in Göttingen, and was involved in a research project entitled, “The Khāksār Order between Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Shiite Sufi Order.” In this framework, he organized an international Symposium and published the proceedings in *Islamic Alternatives: Non-Mainstream Religion in Persianate Societies* (Wiesbaden 2017). Since 2016 he has been a Lecturer at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Freiburg. Since January, 2018, he has been Germany’s “Focal Point” at the UNESCO project Silk Roads: Dialog, Diversity & Development.

Eszter Spät

Eszter Spät earned her PhD in Medieval Studies from Central European University (Budapest) in 2009, with a thesis on Late Antique motifs in Yezidi mythology. She has carried out field research among the Yezidis of Northern Iraq since 2002. She held a research grant from the Postdoctoral Research Grant of the Hungarian Scientific and Research Fund (OTKA), and also from the Gerda Henkel Foundation and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. She was also a visiting Research Fellow at Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Bochum, in 2014. Presently she is affiliated with the Cultural Heritage Studies Program at the Central European University (Vienna). Her research focuses on Yezidi religion and its ongoing transformation, the scripturalization of Yezidi religious oral tradition, Yezidi institutions of divination and their relation to the issues of orality and scripturality, and on the construction of modern Yezidi ethnic and national identity. She has published two books, *Late Antique Motifs in Yezidi Oral Tradition* (2010) and *The Yezidis* (2005), as well as numerous peer-reviewed articles, and produced the film *Following the Peacock*.

Sarah Stewart

Sarah Stewart joined the Department of Religions at SOAS in 2012 to teach Zoroastrianism and is the current SOAS Shapoorji Pallonji Senior Lecturer in Zoroastrianism. Her research focuses on the Zoroastrian living tradition in both Iran and India and on aspects of orality and the gathering of qualitative data. A British Academy research award enabled her to spend several years researching the remaining Zoroastrian communities in Iran, a project that resulted in over 300 recorded interviews. In 2013, she curated an exhibition at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, *The Everlasting Flame, Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination*, which was reassembled at the National Museum in Delhi in 2016. Her current project entails conducting an online digital survey of the global Zoroastrian population that will collect and collate demographic, behavioral, and attitudinal data. Her publications include two books, *Voices from Zoroastrian Iran: Oral Texts and Testimony*, volumes 1 (*Urban Centres*, 2018) and 2 (*Urban and Rural Centres: Yazd and Outlying Villages*, 2020).

Allison Taylor Stuewe

Allison Taylor Stuewe is a PhD student in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Arizona where she also completed her M.A. Her research focuses on questions of power, identity, and belonging among Iraqi Yazidi refugees living in Germany. Her M.A. thesis was entitled “‘I Can’t Dance in Two Weddings’: Marriage as an Articulation of Emerging and Transforming Fractures in the Iraqi Ezidi Refugee Community in Germany.”

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