

# HASSAN ASIF

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Scholar of digital religion and media who traces how AI assisted devotional edits, captions, and audio travel across platforms and remake doctrine and authority, using close reading, ethnography, and media genealogy.

## EDUCATION

- **PhD, Information**, University of Toronto, Canada, 2019 – present (expected Winter 2026).  
*Parental leave: September–December 2025.*  
Dissertation “Remixing Devotion: Digital Media Practices in Pakistan.”  
Collaborative Specialization in South-Asian Studies.  
Supervisor: Prof. Seamus Ross; Committee: Prof. Mark V. Campbell,  
Prof. Farzaneh Hemmasi
- **MA, Museums & Gallery Practice**, University College London, UK, 2015. (Grade: Distinction).  
Dissertation: "The Muslim Buddha: Sculpture and Heritage Values in Taxila, Pakistan"  
Supervisor: Prof. Trinidad Rico
- **BS, Communication Studies**, Northwestern University, USA, 2014. GPA 3.75 (cum laude).  
Minor: Cultural Anthropology.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

- **Asif, H. (2025).** Discostan and Hamnawa: Between erasure and preservation in South Asian digital diasporic archives. *Media, Culture & Society*, 47(8), 1599-1618.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437251353093>
- **Asif, H. (2024).** “Blur the preacher”: Media remix and digital technocultural practice in Pakistan. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, 13(3), 363–386. <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10110>
- **Asif, H. (in press).** Obfuscation as revelation: Knowledge sharing, piracy, and Islamic devotional remixing in Pakistan. *Digital Humanities Quarterly* (Special Issue “Digitization and Machine Learning in the Global South: Building Computational Futures and Addressing Challenges,” guest editors S. T. Shanmugapriya & P. Murrieta-Flores).
- **Asif, H. (forthcoming 2026).** Moral traffic: How WhatsApp moves media, rules, and resources in Pakistan’s devotional media ecologies. *Mobile Media & Communication*, Special Issue “Messaging Applications and Global Cultures of Mobility”. (Abstract accepted after peer review; full manuscript invited for submission March 2026; expected publication December 2026).
- **Asif, H. (under review).** IslaMixing: Hauntology as an experimental framework for exploring online #Islamogram memes. *Journal of Media and Religion*.

### Peer-Reviewed Book Chapters

- **Asif, H. (in press).** Translating truth: AI in digital Islamic sermons and the case of Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza. In D. Sundaram & C. Tekobbe (Eds.), *Social Media, Religion, and Culture*. Routledge.
- **Asif, H. (in press).** Technical imagination against deepfakes: Reading, bending, and exposing the image game. In J. Tulasiewicz, S. Jovicic, & X. Zhan (Eds.), *Ethnographies of Digital Addiction, Harm, and Repair*. Bloomsbury Academic.

- **Asif, H., & Rico, T. (2017).** The Buddha Remains: Heritage transactions in Taxila, Pakistan. In T. Rico (Ed.), *The Making of Islamic Heritage*. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4071-9\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4071-9_7)

#### Non-Peer-Reviewed Contributions

- **Asif, H. (2025).** Hall Road, Lahore: Devotion's signal chain. *HELIOTROPE*. <https://www.heliotropejournal.net/helio/hall-road>
- **Asif, H. (2019).** Really risky “interpretation”. *Association for Heritage Interpretation*, 24(1), 36–37.
- **Rico, T., & Asif, H. (2015).** Reports. *Anthropology of the Middle East*, 10(1), 61–88.
- **Asif, H. (2013).** Rolling out a new broadband era in Qatar. *The Edge*, 43, 40.

#### Works in Progress

- **Asif, H., & Bashir, H. (Eds.). (in preparation).** *Digital Religion* [edited-volume proposal; submission planned for Winter 2026].

### SELECTED GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2025 Margaret Higgins Memorial Fellowship (university-wide) – CA \$2000
- 2025 Professor Amilcare Iannucci Graduate Fellowship in the Humanities (university-wide) – CA \$5000
- 2024–25 Chancellor Jackman Graduate Fellowship (university-wide) – CA \$38,000
- 2023–24 SSHRC Doctoral Scholarship (national competition) – CA \$20,000
- 2021–23 Ontario Graduate Scholarship (provincial competition) – CA \$30,000
- 2021–22 iSchools Inc. Research Award (international competition) – CA \$5000
- 2022 School of Graduate Studies Research Travel Grant (university-wide) – CA \$3000
- 2022 Ethel W. Auster Scholarship for Doctoral Research (university-wide) – CA \$2000

*Full list of grants and awards available on request.*

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- #Blacktronica Electronic Music in Detroit and Berlin, Research Assistant, Prof. Beth Coleman, University of Toronto Mississauga, Sep '21 – Jan '22
- DigiLabs Workshops, Participant and Research Assistant, University of Toronto and University of Manchester, Feb '20 – Jan '21
- Richard Charles Lee Insights Through Asia Challenge, Student Research Trainee, Asian Institute, University of Toronto, Apr '21 – Sep '21
- McLuhan Centre for Culture and Technology, Member Reading Group, “Sub-Alternative Media Technologies,” University of Toronto, Sep '20 – May '21
- Toronto Data Workshop, Member, University of Toronto, Sep '20 – Sep '21
- Centre for South Asian Civilizations, Member Reading Group, “Pakistan Reading Group,” University of Toronto, Jan '20 – Sep '21
- Lahore College of Arts and Sciences, Social Studies Curriculum Developer, May '18 – Aug '19
- Barker Langham, Research Consultant, Aug '17 – Mar '18
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Research Associate, Nov '15 – Mar '16
- TBWA\Worldwide, Account Manager & Concept Researcher, Jun '15 – Nov '15
- Media Gallery for Journalism and Communication, Research Assistant, Northwestern University, Jan '15 – Jun '15
- Northwestern University, Research Assistant, Sociology, Jan '13 – May '13

## FIELD RESEARCH

- Devotional Media and Remix Culture, Karachi, Lahore and adjacent cities, Pakistan, Jul '22 – Dec '22
- Buddhist Sculpture and Heritage Values, Taxila & Islamabad, Pakistan, Apr '15 – Jul '15
- Cityscapes on Experimental Film, Paris, France, Dec '13 – Jan '14
- Understanding Female Sports Participation, Doha, Qatar, Sep '13 – Dec '13
- Media Entrepreneurship in East Asia, Seoul, South Korea, Jun '13 – Aug '13
- Future of Broadband in MENA, Broadband MEA Conference, Dubai, UAE, Jan '13 – May '13
- Heavy Metal Music and Subculture, Lahore & Islamabad, Pakistan, May '12 – Jul '14

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### **University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM)**

Chief Presiding Officer | May – June 2025

- Oversaw daily operations of UTM's spring examination period, coordinating multiple on-campus venues, exam materials, and invigilation teams to ensure smooth delivery and academic-integrity compliance.
- Briefed and supervised presiding officers and front-line invigilators, troubleshooting logistical issues in real time and maintaining clear lines of communication with Registrar staff and faculty.
- Enforced exam protocols - ID verification, timing, and accommodations - while liaising with Accessibility Services to support registered students.
- Logged incident reports and post-session summaries, contributing to UTM's continuous-improvement review for future exam cycles.

### **Muslims in Canada Archive (MiCA), Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Toronto**

Senior Digital Fellow | Sep 2021 – Jun 2023

- Helped initiate a nationwide collection and digitization program; prototyped archival workflows and system architecture with U of T Libraries and partner institutions.
- Led RFP processes and evaluated proposals for Access to Memory (AtoM) hosting and the MiCA public site deployment.
- Drafted archival workflows and data-sharing agreements between community partners, the University, and MiCA governing ingest, description, access, and preservation of born-digital and legacy materials.

### **Muslims in Canada Data Initiative (MiCDI), Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Toronto**

Senior Digital Fellow | Dec 2021 – Jun 2023

- Prototyped a Dataverse repository on University of Toronto servers; set up dataset templates, metadata schemas, and access controls.
- Tested search, browse, and API query functions; documented ingestion workflows.

### **Amal Academy (supported by Stanford University & Acumen)**

Program Manager | Sep 2017 – Feb 2018

- Managed Career Prep Fellowships across Punjab University, UET Lahore, and GCU Lahore.
- Trained 500+ low-income students; 70 % secured employment within three months of graduation.
- Raised local sponsorships and expanded alumni engagement by 60 %.
- Rebuilt milestone tracking in Looker Studio, boosting student-engagement metrics by 25 %.

### **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Pakistan**

Project Assistant, Culture | Jan 2017 – Jul 2017

- Built a network of 40 museums, universities, and NGOs for joint heritage projects.
- Ran digitization workshops at Taxila, Lahore, and Peshawar Museums, preserving 2 000+ artefacts.
- Procured and installed IT and lab equipment, establishing Taxila Museum's first digital archive lab.

*Consultant, Culture | Mar 2016 – Jan 2017*

- Managed three preservation projects (World Bank, Swiss Embassy, UNESCO) with a combined budget over US\$150 000.
- Led policy dialogue that supported Pakistan's ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity.
- Wrote successful grant proposals for site restoration and intangible-heritage programmes.
- Conducted needs assessments in Taxila to guide long-term conservation and community outreach plans.

*Additional curatorial projects available on request.*

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### Courses taught

- Reimagining Global Copyright (graduate, U of T, 2024 & 2025, 25 students, offered four times)
- Religion, Media & Popular Culture (undergraduate, UTM, 2023, 40 students, offered twice)
- Engaging with Texts (Lahore University of Management Sciences, 2019, 45 students, offered once)
- History & Sociology (Lahore College of Arts and Sciences A-level, 2018-19, 25 students each)
- Human-Machine Communication (undergraduate, University of Toronto Mississauga, Fall 2025; enrollment cap 40). *Appointed instructor of record; deferred during parental leave.*
- Digital Platforms: A Global Perspective (undergraduate, University of Toronto Mississauga, Fall 2025; enrollment cap 40). *Appointed instructor of record; deferred during parental leave.*

### Teaching Assistant

*Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology (ICCIT), University of Toronto Mississauga*

- Contemporary Communication Technologies (7 sections: 2020 Fall – 2024 Summer)
- Rhetoric and Media (8 sections: 2020 Winter – Present)
- Popular Culture and Society (2026 Winter)
- Interpersonal Communication (2025 Winter, 2025 Summer)
- Communication, Technology, and Social Change (2024 Fall)
- Media Audiences (2021 Winter, 2023 Fall, 2026 Winter)
- Mind, Media and Representation (2022 Fall)
- Signs, Referents, and Meaning (2023 Summer)
- Visual Rhetoric and Digital Environments (2020 Fall)
- Communicating In and Between Organizations (2020 Fall)
- Communication and Advertising (2023 Winter, 2024 Winter)
- Introduction to Visual Culture (2023 Winter)

*Faculty of Information, University of Toronto*

- INF2320H Remix Culture (2021 Winter)
- INF2040H Project Management (2020 Winter)
- MSL2360H Museums and Indigenous Communities (2020 Winter)

*Asian Institute, University of Toronto*

- CAS350H1 Asian Youth Cultures (2021 Fall)

## CONFERENCES (SELECTED)

- **Asif, H. (2025, November).** *Remixing Devotion: The Digital Audio Workstation as Sacred Space* [Conference presentation]. Sacred Space: Conflicts and Convergences, Trinity College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

- **Asif, H. (2025, November).** *From Breath to Waveform: HCI Lessons from Editing Na’at in Cubase* [Conference presentation]. First Annual Conference on Spirituality, Religion, and Interactive Technology Design (SPIRITED ’25), Online (virtual).
- **Asif, H. (2025, June).** *Obfuscation as revelation: Knowledge sharing, piracy, and Islamic devotional remixing in Pakistan* [Conference presentation]. International Communication Association 2025 Pre-Conference “Debating Creator Culture,” Boulder, Colorado, United States.
- **Asif, H. (2025, June).** *Between confusion and deception: Ethical dilemmas in AI-enabled audiovisual remixing of Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza’s sermons* [Conference presentation]. Canadian Communication Association Annual Conference, George Brown College, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2025, April).** *Cracked devotion: Piracy, pedagogy, and Islamic media remixing in Pakistan* [Conference presentation]. South Asia Graduate Student Workshop, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2025, February).** *Mediating truth: Tensions in AI-driven remixing of Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza’s sermons* [Conference presentation]. 20th Annual Communication Graduate Caucus Conference, “(In)Tensions—Navigating the In-Between,” Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2024, June).** *Digital desires and distortions: The impact of deepfake pornography in Pakistani cyberspace* [Conference presentation]. Global Digital Intimacies Conference, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- **Asif, H. (2024, May).** *Technological transcendence: The transformation of Na’at in Pakistan’s digital Islamic landscape* [Conference presentation]. Canadian Association for the Study of Islam and Muslims Second Biennial Conference, Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (Chair). (2024, April 27).** *Performance, sound, music, media, and materiality* [Conference panel]. Arts of the Indian Ocean Conference, University of Toronto Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2023, October).** *Bytes of blessings: Examining digital technology’s influence on Pakistan’s Na’at culture* [Conference presentation]. 51st Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, Wisconsin, United States.
- **Asif, H. (2023, May).** *Prayers, pixels, and piracy: Online presentation of religious self in Pakistan’s Na’at community* [Conference presentation]. Graduate Student Conference, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2021, September).** *Rogue representations: Diasporic digital archives of South Asian musical media.* Paper presented at the Richard Charles Lee Insights Through Asia Challenge, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2021, April).** *Discursive identities: Media remix in Pakistan.* Paper presented at the South Asian Studies Graduate Symposium, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2021, April).** *Critical technocultural discourse analysis of sampling in Pakistani media remixes.* Paper presented at iSchool PhD Research Days, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2016, February).** *Stillborn Siddhārthas: Reassessing Gandharan art in Pakistan.* Paper presented at the Liberal Arts International Conference, Texas A&M University, Doha, Qatar.
- **Asif, H. (2013, September).** *Broadband development in MENA: Current trends and future directions.* Paper presented at the 6th Annual Meeting of ASMEA, Washington, DC, USA.
- **Asif, H. (2013, March).** *Wherever I may roam: Heavy metal in Pakistan.* Paper presented at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Austin, TX, USA.

## INVITED TALKS (SELECTED)

- **Asif, H. (2026, January).** *Remix, devotion, and media infrastructures in Pakistan.* [Guest lecture]. Remix Culture course, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2025, March).** *Politics, pop, and the pulpit: Where does the sacred end and the meme begin?* [Guest lecture]. Remix Culture course, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2025, January).** *Remixing devotion: An exploration of digital media practices in Pakistan* [Invited talk]. Jackman Humanities Institute, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

- **Asif, H. (2023, October).** *Islamixing: Digital audio workstations and contemporary devotion* [Guest lecture]. Masters of Information seminar “Remix Culture,” University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2023, May).** *Branding beliefs: Exploring self-presentation in the Pakistani Na‘at community* [Invited talk]. ICCIT seminar, University of Toronto Mississauga, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.
- **Asif, H. (2020, November).** *Remixing resistance through sonic heritage: A Tribe Called Red (ATCR)* [Workshop presentation]. DigiLabs Workshop, University of Toronto and University of Manchester (online).
- **Asif, H. (2020, February).** *Cross-cultural project management* [Invited talk]. Masters of Information seminar, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

## INTRAMURAL AND EXTRAMURAL SERVICE

- Volunteer Mentor, Palestinian Students & Scholars at Risk (PSSAR): Guide prospective and newly admitted Palestinian graduate students on application strategy, supervisor matching, funding searches, and cultural adjustment in North America, July 2025–present
- Graduate Student Mentor: Continuous mentoring of new graduate students, especially from South Asia and the Middle East. Provide guidance on navigating funding opportunities, research grants, academic integration, and actively participate in South Asian and Middle East-focused student groups, Ongoing
- Manuscript Reviewer: *Journal of Religion, Media, and Digital Culture*, Oct–Dec 2022
- Manuscript Reviewer: *Stream: Culture/Politics/Technology*, Simon Fraser University, Sep–Nov 2021
- Mental Health Committee Member, Doctoral Students Association, University of Toronto, Sep 2020–Jan 2021
- Volunteer, *Our Networks* Conference, Sep 2020
- Contributor, Museum Professionals of Color (MPOC), iSchool, University of Toronto, Jul 2020

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

*Participant*, “Computer Class,” Centre for Culture and Technology Summer Institute, University of Toronto, Summer 2024

- Took part in an intensive three-week studio that paired daily code labs with critical seminars.
- Experimented with the Ludus programming language—modifying its turtle-graphics engine to create generative shapes—while studying classic texts by Seymour Papert (*Mindstorms*) and Joseph Weizenbaum (*Computer Power and Human Reason*). The course linked hands-on coding to media-philosophy debates about learning, agency, and the social limits of AI.

*Participant*, “Global Southing: Internet and Data Studies Workshop,” Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford (Online-Hybrid), March 2025.

- Learned about critical approaches to AI governance, digital sovereignty, and platform politics from Global South perspectives.

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Canadian Communication Association (CCA); Canadian Association for the Study of Islam and Muslims (CASIM); Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA); Museums Association of Pakistan (MAP); International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM).

## LANGUAGES

English (Native fluency: reading, writing, speaking); Urdu (Native fluency: reading, writing, speaking); Punjabi (Native fluency: reading, writing, speaking; proficient in Shahmukhi script); Arabic (Reading proficiency)

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Audio and Media Production: Cubase, FL Studio, Sonic Pi, Adobe Creative Suite, FFmpeg
- Programming and Data Analysis: Python, SQL, Matlab, Praat Signal Processing, OpenCV