Protesting Shias, Popish Sultans: Cross-Religious Identification in the 17th C.

Kasra Ghorbaninejad

Thursday, October 4
5:00-6:00 p.m.
Clearihue, Room C112

While British Protestants of the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline eras tended to regard both Catholics and Sunni Muslims as enemies, they had an affinity for the Persian Shia state under the Safavids (1501–1722). Travel writers, pamphleteers, and playwrights in particular made the case that, as a result of political, historical and ideological similarities, Britain had a worthy counterpart in the Safavid state. But the list of similarities between Protestants and Shias was incorrectly extended to a putative “shared theology.” I shall argue that, despite the long political alliance building between Safavid Persia and Stuart Britain, there is in fact far more theological common ground between Catholicism and Shia Islam, and between Protestant Puritanism and later Sunni reform movements such as Salafism.

Kasra Ghorbaninejad is a postdoctoral fellow at UVic. His research interests include digital humanities, early modern literature and culture, and comparative and religious studies. Born and raised in Iran, he recently completed a PhD in English at Northeastern University.

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