

Dr. Majid Labbaf Khaneiki

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Dr. Majid Labbaf Khaneiki is a human geographer specializing in socio-hydrology and hydro-social cycles in local communities, where water underlies a complex nexus of social and economic structures. He began his academic training with a bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering and subsequently earned his master's and PhD degrees in human geography from the University of Tehran, Iran. His PhD dissertation focused on water cooperation in traditional agrarian communities. Before joining the University of Nizwa in September 2021, he was a guest lecturer and researcher at the University of Augsburg in Germany, where he conducted a research project entitled "Hydro-Social Justice in the History of Iran" and taught a course on "Water Issues in the Middle East." He has also served as a senior researcher and scientific advisor at the International Center on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures (UNESCO-ICQHS). Throughout his academic career, he has conducted or collaborated on more than 25 research projects addressing water-related issues in Oman, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, India, and Azerbaijan. He has authored 13 books, including "Cultural Dynamics of Water in Iranian Civilization", which conceptualizes water as a pivotal element in the formation of Iran's historical identity and cultural dynamics. His peer-reviewed articles have appeared in several international journals, including Water Security, Journal of Borderlands Studies, Water History, Journal of Historical Geography, Human Ecology, and Journal of Arid Environments. He teaches courses at the University of Nizwa while conducting research on the socio-hydrological dimensions of traditional irrigation systems in Oman. He is currently conducting a research project entitled "Falaj Systems and the Making of Omani Social

Identity: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Implications," funded by Oman's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. This project investigates the historical role of falaj irrigation systems in shaping social organization, community cooperation, and collective identity in Oman. Adopting a historical and socio-hydrological perspective, it examines how falaj-based water governance, including water allocation, collective labor, and institutional regulations, interacted with tribal structures and contributed to social cohesion and the formation of Omani identity. The research also explores the contemporary implications of these historical institutions for cultural heritage and sustainability.

Academic Qualifications

PhD in Human Geography (Geography and Rural Planning), University of Tehran , 2019, Role of Territorial Cooperation in the Management of Sustainable Exploitation of Groundwater Resources

Research Activities

- Research Interests

Socio-hydrology

Water history

Territorial water cooperation

Falaj/Qanat systems

Water justice

Human-water relations

Indigenous water knowledge

- Conference Presentations

Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2023). Hydro-social cycles of the Middle East. International Webinar on Exploring the Social Aspects of Water-related Heritage through Indigenous Water Knowledge, UNESCO Chair Water, Ports, and Historic Cities, Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Universities. July 2023. The Netherlands.

- Publications

Article:

1. 2026 Stream of blame: navigating discourses of blame in water extractivism, Environmental Sociology, 1-20

2. 2026 Aquifer-Falaj dynamic modeling using VENSIM: a pathway to sustainable water management. Environment, Development and Sustainability

3. 2026 The female economy and the historical evolution of women's rights to water and land in Oman, SN Social Sciences, 6(8), 298

4. 2026 From Resilience to Collapse: Traditional Water Systems Under Transformational Stress in Meymand, Human Ecology, 54(5), 80

5. 2026 The socio-hydrology of traditional water systems: the case of falaj in Oman, Humanities and Social Sciences Communications

6. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2019). Qanat and Territorial Cooperation in Iran. Water History Journal. 11(3–4). 185–206. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-019-00236-1

7. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2020). Hydro-Political Organization in Iranian History. Water History Journal, DOI: 10.1007/s12685-020-00261-5

8. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2021). Water Footprint in the Village of Meymand (in Persian). Mardomnameh; People`s History Journal, No. 16 & 17.

9. Labbaf Khaneiki, M., & Al-Ghafri, A. S. (2022). The Circle of Water Justice in the History of Iran. Water Security, 16 (2022).

10. Labbaf Khaneiki, M., & Al-Ghafri, A. S. (2022). Hydro-Political Borders and Division of Space in the Sasanian Domain. Journal of Borderlands Studies, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2022.2104342

11. Labbaf Khaneiki, M., Al-Ghafri, A. S., Klove, B., & Torabi Haghighi, A. (2022). Sustainability and virtual water: The lessons of history, Geography and Sustainability, 3(4), DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geosus.2022.11.005

12. Labbaf Khaneiki, M., & Al-Ghafri, A. S. (2023). Water cooperation and ideology in local communities. Blue Papers, 2(1), 144–153. DOI: https://doi.org/10.58981/bluepapers.2023.1.14

13. Al-Ghafri, A. A., Labbaf Khaneiki, M., Al Saqri, N. A., & Al-Kindi, K. M. (2023). Falaj Indigenous knowledge in Oman and Iran. AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/11771801231168668

14. Labbaf Khaneiki, M., Al-Ghafri, A. S., Seyfi, S., & Torabi Haghighi, A. (2023). The illusion

of water justice at the expense of tourism. Current Issues in Tourism, DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2023.2220951.

Book:

1. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2007). Water Division Systems in Iran (in Persian). Tehran. National Iranian Water Museum (NIWM).

2. Kuros, G., Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2007). Water and Irrigation Techniques in Ancient Iran. Iran. Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (IRNCID).

3. Semsar Yazdi, A., Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2011). Qanat in its Cradle. Iran. International Center on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures (UNESCO-ICQHS).

4. Labbaf Khaneiki, M., Semsar Yazdi, A. (2015). Qanat Tourism (in Persian). Iran. International Center on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures (UNESCO-ICQHS).

5. Semsar Yazdi, A., Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2017). Qanat Knowledge: Construction and Maintenance. the Netherlands. Springer.

6. Semsar Yazdi, A., Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2019). Veins of the Desert. Denmark. River Publishers.

7. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2019). Territorial Water Cooperation in the Central Plateau of Iran. Switzerland. Springer.

8. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2020). Cultural Dynamics of Water in Iranian Civilization. Switzerland. Springer.

Book Section:

1. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2022). Hydro-Social Cohesion in Iranian Local Communities. In: Miguel Sioui (ed.), Indigenous Water and Drought Management in a Changing World. Elsevier Inc.

2. Semsar Yazdi, A., Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2018). Qanats of Iran: Sustainable water supply system. In: Water and Society from Ancient Times to the Present. Sulas, F., Pikirayi, I. (eds.) England. Routledge.

3. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2022). Qanat groundwater extraction system and its evolution in the context of climate change in Iran. In: Xiaoyun, Z. (ed.), Water History and Water Civilization Studies, Vol. 2, Social Sciences Academic Press (SSAP), ISBN: 978-7-5201-9689-5.

4. Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2020). Water and Cultural Landscape. In: A. Alehashemi, J. Coulais & G. Hubert (eds.), Water & City; Hydraulic Systems and Urban Structures (pp. 47-59), Paris: L`oeil D`or.

5. Semsar Yazdi, A., Labbaf Khaneiki, M. (2015). Overview on Technical and Cultural Heritage of Qanats in Bam Region. In: Cultural Heritages of Water: The Cultural Heritages of Water in the Middle East and Maghreb. France. ICOMOS.

Award and Recognitions

2024 Distinguished Researcher Award, University of Nizwa

Google Scholar Profile: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=AyBSf48AAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra