

**Dr Leila Rahimi Bahmany**

*Goethe University*

*Frankfurt am Main*

### **Azeri Turkish Narratives of Iran**

Iran holds the second largest population of Turkish speakers after Turkey. However, official use of and publication in this language was strictly banned during the reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925 – 1979). The suppression of the minor languages was modelled on the western concept of monolingualism and part of the Pahlavi's struggle to establish a homogeneous nation – state. After the 1979 Revolution, the ban was no longer in effect. However, writing in any language other than the official Persian is still frowned upon as a separatist act. The author is often regarded as a dissident and traitor to the nation's integrity. For the writers in minor languages, it might involve language shame. They must constantly justify their turn to the mother language and emphasize their rejection of separatist tendencies. One might add other incentives for not publishing in Azeri Turkish to these hindrances, which I will turn to in my presentation.

Nevertheless, the number of writers turning to their mother tongue of Azeri Turkish in creating a literary field has been on the rise, particularly after the Iran – Iraq war (1980–1988). This presentation will address the delayed birth of a small literary field, its development and the present state. The study is concentrated on modern narratives (novels, novelettes, short – story collections and biographical memoirs) published in the book form. The complicated hindrances on the route of publishing in Azeri Turkish that account for this literary genre's delayed appearance will be sketched. Furthermore, I will provide a historiography of such literature within the cultural, social and political background of Iranian Azerbaijan province (mainly the city of Tabriz where most of these narratives are set and where they are mainly published). Finally, I will analyze the tensions with the linguistic and literary authority of “the centre”.