Amir A. Afkhami presents an overview of pandemic cholera’s seminal role in the emergence and development of modernity in Iran during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This includes details on cholera’s transformative impact on the country’s governance and perspectives on medicine, disease, and public health. It also sheds light on how cholera shaped Iran’s globalization and diplomacy and how it triggered revolutionary events such as the Tobacco Protest and the Constitutional Revolution. His presentation challenges the long held historical assumptions on the universal role of safe water and sanitation in ending the recurrence and severity of cholera and shapes our discussion around what Iran’s historical experience with cholera can teach us about contemporary public health questions.