

C O N T E N T S

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Editor's Note

I am pleased to introduce the special topic of “Persianate Pasts; National Presents: Persian Literary and Cultural Production in the Twentieth Century” in this issue.


Has the twentieth century rise of nation-states in the Persianate cosmopolis made the transregional Persianate world analytically irrelevant? Or do Persianate pasts endure in different ways in the modern period? The studies featured in the issue foreground the uneven and complex nature of this historical transition and locate the lingering presence of the Persianate in twentieth-century Afghanistan, Iran, India, the Soviet East, and the Caucasus. They neither take the nation-state as a teleological outcome, nor do they romanticize the premodern Persianate as an overarching system from Bosnia to Bengal. Ultimately, these contributions demonstrate how the Persianate was reconfigured in new guises both nationally and trans-nationally. It is our hope that this special topic opens windows for further inquiries into all subfields of Persianate studies including music, ethics, law, and beyond.

In this issue we also introduce a series of short reviews of books written in Persian and anticipate extending this feature to include books written in other non-European and regional languages. We will encourage more authors who are based in Iran and neighboring countries to contribute to such reviews, and hope that this would be a first step toward expanding publishing opportunities in the journal for scholars from the region.

Sussan Siavoshi
Editor-in-Chief, *Iranian Studies*

INTRODUCTION

Persianate Pasts; National Presents: Persian Literary and Cultural Production in the Twentieth Century¹

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Persianate pasts die hard. Despite the birth of nation-states, advent of colonialism, rise of national literatures, and emergence of new global technologies, the Persianate connections defining the texts, idioms, and vocabularies that bound together large swaths of Islamic Eurasia throughout the early-modern period continued to shape and inflect cultural and literary production in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries established the high-water mark of Persianate transregionalism, then the following two centuries were defined not so much by the undoing of this world in toto, but by its redeployment, reimagining, and regeneration in new cultural guises and (trans)national contexts. Exchanges across borders and languages helped to articulate new meanings for Persian texts. Educational practices in British India and journalistic ones in Central Asia provided venues for Persianate norms to be preserved, contested, and consecrated. The internationalism of the Soviet East created a new avenue for dynamic conversations about the nature of Persianate heritage and traditions. While new national practices and political ecologies were taking shape across Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Iran, and Central and South Asia, refashionings of Persianate pasts persisted. It is an exploration of such refashionings and the people who participated in them that form the contents of this special issue.

Conceptualizations of the Persianate world continue to generate vigorous discussion. The term is utilized broadly to refer to modes of sociability, textual genres, circulation, reception, and ethical and aesthetic norms that formed the connective tissue of a transregional premodern cosmopolis. There also exists in the field a more restrictive understanding: the Persianate as an analytic category only concerns the generative interplay between the Persian language and Chaghatai, Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, and many others. While the articles of this special issue focus on the Persian language alone—and thus more closely cohere to an understanding of the Persianate as a transregional cosmopolis—the presence of other languages, such as Pashto, Uzbek, Russian, and Urdu, resonate in the articles' backgrounds. It is a stark reminder of the ways in which the bounded nature of Persian as a national language in the twentieth century was necessarily generated through contact with these others.

It is little surprise that the endurance of Persianate norms should remain an overlooked phenomenon in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Persianate turn in Iranian

¹ We are grateful to Cameron Cross who carefully shepherded this cluster through the peer review process and significantly strengthened it through his own editorial insights. We thank Sussan Siavoshi for her support and intellectual engagement from start to finish. We appreciate Assef Ashraf's editorial assistance with the book reviews. Last but not least, our deep gratitude goes to all the blind reviewers of *Iranian Studies* and our interlocutors: Ali Gheissari, Samuel Hodgkin, Alexander Jabbari, and James Pickett.

Studies and other related fields is still relatively new, and its methodological parameters and value continue to be explored, debated, and refined.² These debates are rightly focused on premodern periods. Even recent monographs employing a Persianate paradigm to address transregional phenomena up to the mid-nineteenth century, several of which are reviewed in the pages of this special issue, do so by discussing the Persianate world on its own terms, that is, preceding the emergence of the nation-state and invested in the world still defined by the Ottomans (c. 1299–1922), Timurids (1370–1857), and Safavids (1501–1722).³ But what of the worlds that succeed them? As Kaveh Hemmat noted in a recent essay in *Iranian Studies*,

when we pass from historiography of the early modern world to that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the nation state of Iran seems to simply appear in place of the gunpowder empires or Persian cosmopolis. We may instead ask how the Persianate world functioned as a context or matrix within which the Iranian nation state was generated—as we would say of the global enlightenment and the modern nation-state system.⁴

Part of the problem stems from the reality that Persianate political structures, modes of sociability, and hegemonic cultural forms were indeed threatened, and in many cases superseded, by the political, social, and cultural order of nation-states. This fact has made it difficult to avoid teleological narratives that see the former's replacement by the latter as unfolding in an ineluctable and linear fashion. As Mana Kia and Afshin Marashi noted in an essay entitled "After the Persianate," "the conventional, spatial and temporal partitions that have prevented critical transregional and transtemporal historical readings of the Persianate are products of intellectual genealogies rooted in mid-twentieth-century area studies paradigms, as well as the self-referential political ontologies of emergent nation-states."⁵ Thus far, what has most captivated scholars in Iranian and Persian Studies has been the formation of the nation-state and its attendant features as a process that constricts phenomena into nationally prescribed cantons of territory, language, ethnicity, and literature. Analyses have typically placed an overwhelming emphasis on how "post-Persianate" societies relied on engagement with Western models and concepts to redefine themselves in national terms over the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such a determinative framework, reliant on the apotheosis of the nation-state on the one hand, and East-West engagements on the other, overlooks the crucial role and enduring resonances of Persianate heritage and traditions outliving the environments in which they first took shape.

By "Persianate heritage and traditions," we are referring primarily to the texts and textual practices that connected peoples and places across the Persianate cosmopolis by way of embedded literary and cultural structures, found in the classification of poets in the biographical anthology (*tazkirah*) genre, conventions of the lyric (*ghazal*), courtly patronage for litterateurs, the organization and construction of poetic societies (*mushā'irah*), and social relationships and bonds (student-teacher, patron-client, etc.).⁶ It was these conventions and structures, among others, that established and guided literary authority, production, and circulation in pre-modern times.⁷ But by the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, while Persianate literary and cultural production continued to engage intellectuals, scholars,

² Green, *The Persianate World*; Amanat and Ashraf, *The Persianate World*; Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*; and Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*.

³ Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*; Khazeni, *The City and the Wilderness*; and Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*.

⁴ Hemmat, "Completing the Persianate Turn," 641–642.

⁵ Kia and Marashi, *After the Persianate*, 380.

⁶ Kia, *Persianate Selves*; Losensky, *Welcoming Fighani*; Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia*; Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*; Tabor, "Heartless Acts"; Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*; Maria Szuppe, "A Glorious Past and an Outstanding Present"; and Dudney, *India in the Persian World of Letters*.

⁷ Analyzing the resonances of other Persianate fields, such as politics and ethics, would be just as important, but such is beyond the purview of this special issue.

and poets on a cross-regional basis, the structures guiding its authority and the mediums shaping its dissemination and reception began to radically change.

New mediums, made possible in part by emergent global technologies and contact with Europe, became major sites of lively discussions about the nature, place, and value of Persianate heritage and traditions. Periodicals, literary histories, encyclopedias, radio, tape cassettes, anthologies, and educational textbooks all served as nodes for social networks, civic associations, and scholarly circles to define the relevance and marketability of Persianate pasts in the modern world. The outcomes of these discussions would diverge based on the particularities of newly formed local imaginaries and take on the characteristics and flavor of new national, regional, and international configurations: a Persianate past as debated in a Tashkent journal compared to one appearing in an Afghan encyclopedia would not mirror one another precisely.

But despite these divergences, the processes and trajectories undertaken across the Persianate sphere of memorializing and engaging aspects of a shared transregional past were not entirely discordant. The need to formalize a classical canon, historicize national literatures, systematize aesthetics, and cultivate poetic authorities according to local circumstances and national desiderata became paramount undertakings for actors invested in Persian cultural and literary production in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In fact, in many instances, intellectuals from Tehran to Kabul to Dushanbe forged methodologies that were mutually intelligible.⁸ As the contributions in this special issue make clear, from the Caucasus to South Asia, Persianate pasts were being reassigned in endeavors that proved every bit as consequential and pressing as contending with new European intellectual currents and political entanglements.

The first four articles in this special issue focus on the last decades of the nineteenth and earliest decades of the twentieth centuries. In “From Persianate Cosmopolis to Persianate Modernity,” Alexander Jabbari analyzes how early twentieth-century Afghan and Iranian scholars mediated the scholarly authority of the towering figure of Shibli Nu‘mani (d. 1914) through translation from Urdu to Persian in order to produce literary histories anchored in their local contexts. In “Soviet Persian Anthologies,” Samuel Hodgkin shows how Soviet Eastern literary anthologies of the interwar period balanced the drive to delimit the Persianate tradition along national lines against the unique opportunities that tradition presented for Eastern internationalism. In “The ‘Guide to Knowledge,’” Thomas Loy also takes aim at developments in Soviet Central Asia by addressing the brief yet generative period of Tajik literary production in the 1920s and 1930s, when the notion of good poetry was being hotly debated, contested, and shaped in the pages of the Persian-language periodical *Rahbar-i Dānish*.

In “Disciplining Persian Literature in Twentieth-century Afghanistan,” Aria Fani analyzes the politically fraught and discursively unstable process by which Afghan scholars systematized Persian aesthetics and literary style into a new informational medium, the encyclopedia, in the 1940s and 1950s. The last article turns its attention to the latter half of the twentieth century. In “Soundwaves of Dissent: Resistance Through Persianate Cultural Production in Afghanistan,” Meġan Massoumi explores how the emergence of radio and sound recording technology in the 1960s and 1970s helped to project Persianate poetic authority and express dissent amid changing social and political dynamics.

The “Sources Uncovered” section offers critical considerations of empirical evidence that has remained marginal to the field of Persian and Iranian Studies or has otherwise been poorly understood. In “*Marche Triomphale*: A Forgotten Musical Tract in Qajar-European Encounters,” Mohsen Mohammadi reassesses the history of European-style military bands in Iran through the discovery and analysis of a unique archival source. In “Persian Studies in India and the Colonial Universities, 1857–1947,” Gregory Maxwell Bruce sheds light on

⁸ Fani, “Becoming Literature,” chapter four; Green, “New Histories for the Age of Speed”; and Gould, “Dissidence from a Distance.”

the pedagogical role of Persian in twentieth-century India. Bruce's uncovering of curricula related to the teaching of Persian in colonial India should dismiss any doubt about the after-life of this language well into the twentieth century in South Asia. In "Forlorn Arabs and Flying Americans: National Identity in the Early Childhood Curriculum of Postrevolutionary Iran, 1979–2009," Shervin Malekzadeh's close engagement with educational materials of the Islamic Republic of Iran reveals that traces of a Persianate civilizational ethos do not feature in representations of Iranian culture, history, and identity in the instruction of primary school students; instead the main focus of these materials is to define Iran's place in the world vis-à-vis Arabs and Westerners. In spite of the fact that only a lingering presence of the Persianate remains in the Islamic Republic's primary school curricula, studies of this nature remain crucial to investigating the venues, conditions, and timeframes during which the Persianate evaporates from view.

Finally, Claire Roosien's "Not By Archives Alone"—an archival report from Russia and Uzbekistan—reminds us that so much of Persianate literary history has yet to be investigated, debated, and written. In her afterword, Rebecca Gould critically reflects on the relevance of the Persianate as a category of analysis in an era of emerging and intersecting nationalisms. She calls on the field to "redefine the Persian in light of the Persianate, inscribing a plurality of identities and even languages into the term itself, and returning to the original meaning of the term."

To think beyond the diffusionist model of West-led modernization and the totalizing framework of the nation-state, we must also refrain from reifying or centralizing the Persianate by attending to its contestations and diverse instantiations.⁹ Aijaz Ahmad, reflecting on Indian nationalists' adoption of Said's *Orientalism*, wrote that a historicist accounting of "the relationship between the Brahminical and the Islamic High textualities, the Orientalist knowledges of these textualities, and their modern reproductions in Western as well as non-Western countries" would require "the most incisive of operations, the most delicate of dialectics, to disaggregate these densities."¹⁰ The articles in this special issue each undertake this task with attention to the specific convergences involved in their particular case studies, and the result is not only a series of conclusions with national, regional, or transregional significance, but also a repertory of methods. The case of Persian language and literature is a crucial one for the cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in accordance with Ahmad's suggestion, we hope that our examination of this case suggests some ways to work through other such inquiries with incisiveness and delicacy.

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⁹ This is in keeping with Amirhossein Vafa, Omid Azadibougar, and Mostafa Abedinifard's caution that "the successful transplantation of Persian Literature into World Literature could also lead to intensified nationalism" and amnesia about the linguistic and cultural diversity of Persianate societies. "Introduction: Decolonizing a Peripheral Literature," 19.

¹⁰ Ahmad, "Between Orientalism and Historicism."

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ARTICLE

From Persianate Cosmopolis to Persianate Modernity: Translating from Urdu to Persian in Twentieth-Century Iran and Afghanistan

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Abstract

This article examines twentieth-century Persian translations of Urdu-language works about Persian literature, focusing on two different Persian translations of an influential Urdu-language work on Persian literary history, *Shi'r al-'Ajam* (*Poetry of the Persians*), by Shibli Nu'mani. The article offers a close, comparative reading of the Afghan and Iranian translations of *Shi'r al-'Ajam* in order to understand why two Persian translations of this voluminous text were published within such a short time period. These translations reveal how Indians, Afghans, and Iranians were invested in the same Persianate heritage, yet the emergence of a “Persianate modernity” undergirded by a cultural logic of nationalism rather than cosmopolitanism, along with Iran’s and Afghanistan’s differing relationships to India and Urdu, produced distinct approaches to translation.

Keywords: Persian literature; Urdu; Iran; Afghanistan; translation; Persianate; nationalism; *adab*

Introduction

Iran, Afghanistan, and South Asia have deep historic ties, and connections between them remain more salient in the modern period than is commonly understood. Over the past two decades, a new wave of scholarship has begun to break down the disciplinary divide between Iranian studies and South Asian studies, as scholars have paid increasing attention to modern Indo-Iranian connections in what some have recently termed the “Persianate turn.”¹ Some have focused on exchange between Iranians and Indian Zoroastrians (Parsis).² Others have located the roots of Iranian nationalism and modernization projects in India.³ These scholars laid important ground and successfully challenged nationalist paradigms that had long defined Iranian studies. However, by engaging only with Persian-language sources at the expense of Urdu materials, they have ignored the important role of South Asian Muslims in modern Iranian intellectual and literary trends, failing to recognize bilateral exchange between Persian and Urdu rather than unilateral “influence.”⁴ This

¹ Khazeni, *The City and the Wilderness*, 3; Hemmat, “Completing the Persianate Turn.”

² Ringer, *Pious Citizens*; Grigor, “Persian Architectural Revivals”; Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*.

³ Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*; Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*.

⁴ This parallels earlier trends in comparative scholarship on India and the Malay Archipelago, in which cultural transmission was seen as unidirectionally originating in India; see Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 11.

topic has been even more neglected in South Asian studies. Though Islamic religious networks connecting Iran and South Asia have been the subject of serious scholarly research, literary and intellectual connections between the two have been comparatively overlooked.⁵ Most recently, innovative monographs have sought to bring together Iranian studies and South Asian studies.⁶ They make valuable contributions, but as these books rely exclusively on Persian-language sources, they have the same blind spot for Urdu as the existing Iranian studies scholarship. Yet Urdu-language scholarship played an important role for the emergence of national literature and literary history in Iran and Afghanistan.

Historically, Persian was hugely influential on Urdu in ways similar to the impact of Arabic on New Persian; Urdu borrowed its script and a large proportion of its vocabulary from Persian, while Persian literature also offered Urdu important literary forms and a repertoire of imagery and references.⁷ In the modern period, there has been a significant amount of translation from Persian into Urdu. As Urdu and other “vernacular” languages took the place that Persian had once held as a language of letters in South Asia, institutions like Fort William College in Calcutta and organizations like the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-yi Urdu (Association for the Progress of Urdu) across India (and, later, Pakistan) attempted to bring the Persian literary corpus into Urdu through translation.⁸ While translations from Urdu into Persian have historically been less common, some have nevertheless had an outsized impact and are worthy of study. Iranians’ engagement with English dominates the field of Persian translation studies, but the impact of Urdu on Persian has received scant attention.⁹ Indian influences on Iranian languages and literatures are mostly acknowledged in studies of late antiquity, such as the translations of the *Panchatantra* from Sanskrit into Middle Persian in the Sasanian period,¹⁰ or a relatively limited number of Middle Persian loans from Sanskrit. Scholarship in South Asian studies has also increasingly addressed the Mughal-era translations from Indic languages like Sanskrit and Braj into Persian,¹¹ but twentieth-century translations from Urdu into Persian belong to different circumstances, different epistemological conditions, and reflect a different understanding of translation. Whereas early modern translations were often patronized by the courts, the twentieth-century translations were produced under the aegis of modern educational institutions.

Scholars of Afghanistan have paid closer attention to the influence of Urdu on modern Afghan culture, and there is no question that Urdu has historically played a more salient role for Afghans than for Iranians.¹² Knowledge of the language is much more widespread in Afghanistan than in Iran. Prominent Afghan political figures like the poet and foreign minister Mahmud Tarzi (1865–1933) were conversant in Urdu, and Afghans often learned Urdu through living in India or economic and educational exchange with the country.¹³ Yet this difference between Iran and Afghanistan may also have to do with the different character of official nationalism in the two countries. The prominent role of Pashtun nationalism in forming the modern Afghan state and the fact that Pashtun nationalists imagined themselves as a single people living on both sides of the Durand Line in Afghanistan and British India (now Pakistan) cannot be ignored. While the Baluch people were similarly divided between Iran and British India (today’s Pakistan), they have played no such role

⁵ Green, *Bombay Islam*; Fuchs, *In a Pure Muslim Land*.

⁶ Kia, *Persianate Selves*; Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

⁷ Matthews, “Urdu”; Shackle, “Persian Elements.”

⁸ On the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-yi Urdu, see Amstutz, “Finding a Home for Urdu.”

⁹ There are also few studies specifically addressing translation in the other direction, from Persian to Urdu. See Bailey, *History of Urdu Literature*, 80–82; and Kavusi-Nizhad and Islami, “Barrasi-yi Pishinah-yi Tarjumah.”

¹⁰ Riedel, “Kalila wa Demna.”

¹¹ Truschke, *Culture of Encounters*; Ernst, “Muslim Studies of Hinduism”; Sarma and Zamani, “On the Persian Translation of Bhāskara’s *Līlāvati*.”

¹² Green, “Trans-border Traffic”; Katib Hazarah, *Kabul Under Siege*, 11.

¹³ Faiz, *Afghanistan Rising*, 97.

in Iranian nationalism; unlike the Pashtuns of Afghanistan, in Iran the Baluch have been marginalized, sidelined by Persian-speakers.

This article closely examines Persian translations of Urdu-language works about Persian literature as a means of considering the less-studied side of the exchange between Urdu and Persian. In particular, it focuses on translations of an influential Urdu-language work on Persian literary history, *Shi'r al-ʿAjām* (*Poetry of the Persians*), by Shibli Nuʿmani. Bridging the gap between the *tazkirah* tradition and modern methodologies of literary historiography, *Shi'r al-ʿAjām* was an important work for literary modernity in India, Afghanistan, and Iran. The text was translated into Persian on two separate occasions: first by a group of Afghans in the 1920s and then again by an Iranian translator between the 1930s and 1950s. What was the significance of this text for twentieth-century Persian readers? What role did it play in burgeoning projects of producing national literary histories in Iran and Afghanistan? Why were two Persian translations of such a voluminous text produced within such a short span of time? This article's close and comparative reading of the Afghan and Iranian translations of Shibli's *Shi'r al-ʿAjām* offers an entry point into these questions.

Analysis of the translations reveals how twentieth-century Indians, Afghans, and Iranians were all invested in the same literary heritage: the poetry of the premodern Persianate world. Persian had been an important language of learning (among other functions) across much of Eurasia, linking societies together in a Persianate cosmopolis through a shared idiom and texts and common aesthetic, social, and political forms. The term "cosmopolis" need not suggest an idealized zone free of hierarchies, as scholars like Nile Green rightly warn against romanticizing the Persianate past.¹⁴ But the Persianate was cosmopolitan in the sense that Persian learning was not the purview of one religious or ethnic community, but rather the common language of varied groups, allowing for connections across a highly diverse *Kulturkreis* without a single geographic core or center.¹⁵

As the cultural logics underpinning the Persianate shifted in the nineteenth century, modernity and nationalism did not simply bring an end to Persianate affiliations as is often claimed.¹⁶ Instead, such historical ties endured—now strengthened by new physical infrastructure like drivable roads linking India, Afghanistan, and Iran—and even played a crucial role in generating national identities and national heritage.¹⁷ Modernizers reworked the Persianate textual tradition, producing a Persianate modernity which drew on the connections that the earlier cosmopolis had engendered.¹⁸ Yet, simultaneously, this Persianate modernity sought to cover its tracks, erasing the traces of its cosmopolitan connections so as to present an image of national heritage that appeared to be *sui generis*, independent, self-contained.¹⁹ In other words, what I term "Persianate modernity" is the form the Persianate takes after the transformations of the nineteenth century. It is the connected framework left over from the bygone cosmopolis that enables intellectuals from Iran, Afghanistan, and India to learn from each other in their modernizing projects, and to rework the literary texts of the earlier tradition into national heritage.

In the 1920s, Afghan translators produced what can be understood as a "cosmopolitan Persianate" translation: closely in line with the Urdu original, in a context of porous borders between Persian and Urdu, for an audience that defined itself as much in religious terms as

¹⁴ Green, "Frontiers of the Persianate World," 2.

¹⁵ Eaton, "The Persian Cosmopolis."

¹⁶ For examples of such claims, see Arjomand, "From the Editor," 3; and Spooner, "Epilogue," 303. I draw from Fredric Jameson's understanding of a "dominant cultural logic" as "the force field in which very different types of cultural impulses...must make their way" (Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 6).

¹⁷ On this infrastructure, see Green, "New Histories"; and Koyagi, "Drivers across the Desert."

¹⁸ As Eric Lewis Beverley suggests, cosmopolitan languages like Persian "provided templates whose elements could be disaggregated and recombined into new systems" (Beverley, "Documenting the World," 1051–52).

¹⁹ Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi describes a similar dynamic in which the contributions of Persianate native informants were erased from European Orientalism's self-narrative, producing what he terms a "genesis amnesia" (Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 18–34). He also first coined "Persianate modernity" (*ibid.*, 9, *et passim*).

national ones. The later Iranian translation is instead a “Persianate modern” translation, severing the text from its Indo-Persianate, Muslim context and more freely remaking it for a national, Iranian audience. The Afghan translation is a text within the expansive, fluid boundaries of the *adab* tradition, while the Iranian translation belongs to the discipline of discrete, nationally bounded literature. After analyzing these two translations, this article concludes by surveying some of the other noteworthy translations of Urdu texts into Persian.

Shibli’s Poetry of the Persians between Adab and “Literature”

By the end of the nineteenth century, Urdu had become a major vehicle for Islamic modernist thought, not only in South Asia but globally, including both Iran and Afghanistan. The Indian Muslim reformer Abu al-A‘la Maududi, for example, influenced Islamist political thinkers everywhere from Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb in Egypt to the Taliban movement in the Afghan-Pakistani borderlands and Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran.²⁰ While the global reach of Urdu and Indo-Muslim political and religious thought has been the subject of ample scholarly attention, the literary impact of Urdu has been neglected. Scholarship on these international connections reflects an artificial division, treating literature as a separate sphere from politics and religion. The latter two are recognized as international, ecumenically influencing and receiving influence from as far afield as South Asia, Lebanon, Egypt, and beyond, whereas literature appears as if it were a hermetically sealed domain within national borders. This division may in part stem from the way the sources describe themselves: while Iran’s Islamic revolutionaries made no secret of their internationalism, hoping to spread the revolution beyond the borders of Iran, its literary scholars were by and large nationalists who saw Iran as having a proprietary claim to Persian literature.²¹ Yet as recent scholarship has demonstrated, the project of modernizing and canonizing Persian literature was also an international one, participating in exchanges across (and beyond) the Persianate sphere, despite any pretensions to the contrary from the nationalist litterateurs.²²

Shibli Nu‘mani (1857–1914) was a key figure in Islamic modernist thought in South Asia, as well as in the project of modernizing the Persianate literary heritage. An Islamic scholar, reformer, and educator from Azamgarh in northern India, his life’s work was to develop Islamic education in India—and ultimately develop an approach to Islam—that could be compatible with colonial modernity, engaging with European historiographic methodologies in order to revitalize the Islamic tradition. Shibli’s *Shi‘r al-‘Ajam* (*Poetry of the Persians*) is a monumental work on Persian poetry, spanning five volumes totaling over 1,500 pages, written in Urdu and published between 1908 and 1918. The first three volumes outline periods of Persian poetry and are structured according to the traditional *tazkirah* format, organized around biographical entries on the major poets of each period and selections of their poetry. The final two volumes, however, move entirely beyond the biographical anthology format and offer literary history and criticism of a kind that cannot be found in the *tazkirah*

²⁰ Green, *Global Islam*, 82; Fuchs, “A Direct Flight to Revolution.” Despite their sectarian differences, Maududi and Khomeini shared a vision of a modern Islamic state. The two had met and discussed political ideas in Mecca in 1963 (Nasr, *The Vanguard*, 154, 253n29), and prior to Khomeini’s return to Iran in 1979, his emissaries visited Maududi in Pakistan (Wink, “The Islamization of Pakistan,” 45; Chaman, *Meri Yadgar Mulaqaten*, 48–53 [cited in Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, 434–35n246]). The extent of Maududi’s influence on Khomeini is debated. Saïd Amir Arjomand contends that “Khomeini’s idea of Islamic government...does not betray any influence of the ideological innovations of Mawdudi,” but nevertheless concedes that Maududi was read widely (in Arabic and Persian translation) by Khomeini’s followers, and significantly influenced the slogans and language of the 1979 Revolution (Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, 97, 104–5).

²¹ Historian Joan Wallach Scott warns against taking the terms used and claims made by historical sources at face value, lest the scholar become “an unwitting party to the politics of another age” (Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 137–38).

²² Hodgkin, “Classical Persian Canons”; Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

genre. Synthesizing Islamic historiographical methods with the techniques of European Orientalist scholarship, Shibli provides an account of Persian poetry guided by a continuous, progressive sense of time. Rather than merely discussing individual poets, each discretely bound within separate biographical entries as in traditional *tazkirahs*, in the fourth and fifth volumes of *Shi'r al-'Ajam* Shibli discusses poetic movements which build on literary and historical developments that precede them.

This text, which drew on a wide range of Persian *tazkirahs* and *divāns* from Iran and South Asia alike, played a vital role in the transition from *tazkirah* (a premodern genre of biographical anthology) to modern literary history,²³ and became a central textbook for the teaching of Persian literature in India. It later also found its way into the Persian literature curriculum in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. The Iranian literary scholar Sa'īd Nafisi (1895–1966) called it “the first book by a wise and forward-thinking man to analyze [*tajziyah va tahlil*] Persian *adab*,” expressing his surprise that though Shibli wrote his book in “one of the third-rate cities of India” (*az shahr-hā-yi darajah-yi sivvum-i hind*), it “paved the path of inquiry [*taḥqīq*] for those who wanted guidance,” to such an extent that Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926), “one of the famous Orientalists of his time,” relied time and again on Shibli's work.²⁴

Shibli's *Shi'r al-'Ajam* illustrates the difficulty in imposing clear divisions between Urdu and Persian, *tazkirah* and literary history, literary heritage and national community, secular culture and religious knowledge, as *adab* generally elided such neat distinctions. While the term is often translated as “belles lettres,” *adab* is a more expansive concept not limited to the strictly literary; it also encompasses moral behavior, perhaps better understood as something akin to “habitus.” The Iranian litterateur Muhammad-Husayn Furughi “Zuka' al-Mulk” (1839–1907) explained *adab* as

knowing the limits and extent of everything...*adab*...means *dānish* [knowledge]...but in the terminology of the literati [*udabā*] of the age, the science of *adab* [*'ilm-i adab*] is knowledge of poetry and prose, which they call “oratory” [*sukhan-sanji*] in Persian, and whoever possesses this knowledge is an orator, or *adīb* in Arabic. The meaning of *adabiyāt* is those forms of speech [*sukhan*] that teach knowledge and help a person to recognize divine favor and attain the light of clear-sightedness and the luster of awareness.²⁵

Thus knowledge informing proper social behavior (*adab*) is cultivated through the mastery of the literary forms (also *adab*) in which it finds its expression; Mana Kia has usefully defined *adab* as “proper form,” which captures both the aesthetic-literary and social-ethical dimensions of the concept.²⁶ From the nineteenth century on, the meaning of *adab* began to shift from belles lettres and “cultivated knowledge as well as character, conduct, and manners”; the term came to signify “literature” in a modern, narrowly defined sense: secular, finite, one part of a “world republic of letters.”²⁷

²³ Jabbari, “The Making of Modernity.” On the transition from *tazkirah* to literary history, see also Mufti, *Forget English!*, 131–44; and Grewal, “Urdu through Its Others,” 88–130.

²⁴ Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, 3: *hā-vāv*. In his review of Edward Browne's *A Literary History of Persia*, Muhammad-Taqi Bahar describes Shibli as the first person outside of Iran to write a critical, scholarly history of Iranian literature (*Bahar va Adab*, 1:340–42). For Browne's engagement with Shibli, see Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, 3:108, 261, 265–80, 286–98, 541; 4:163–65, 241–70, 299. In addition to his reception in Iran and Afghanistan, Shibli features in the Tajik educational textbook *Adabiyoti Tojik* (Toirov et al., *Adabiyoti Tojik*, 81).

²⁵ Furughi, *'ilm-i Badi'*, 23. On this text, see Fani, “Iran's Literary Becoming.”

²⁶ Kia, “*Adab* as Ethics of Literary Form,” 282, 288; Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 199–200; on *adab*, see also Metcalf, *Moral Conduct and Authority*; Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 380–81; and Mayeur-Jaouen, “Introduction.”

²⁷ Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature*, 6; Mufti, *Forget English!*, 80; Krämer, “Religion, Culture, and the Secular,” 60–61; Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*; Hallaq, “*Adab* e) Modern Usage.”

Yet to understand premodern *adab* as secular literature, as many now do, is to miss much about its historical function. *Adab* encompassed pious odes in praise of the Prophet as well as satires lampooning the faithful and flouting religious strictures; it cannot be accurately described as either secular or religious. As Thomas Bauer reminds us, the secular/religious binary is of little use for understanding much of the Islamicate world. In Europe, modern “secular” domains like literature or law took on distinct disciplinary identities only after achieving independence from the control of the church—the sphere of religion. But in the Islamicate world, in the absence of any such centralized church, “religion” constituted itself differently within each domain, according to the norms of that field. This is not to suggest that every aspect of Islamicate societies was primarily concerned with religious matters, but rather that religion did not constitute a separate sphere of its own.²⁸ Kia has articulated a definition of the Persianate with Islam and Persian *adab* at its core, refining Shahab Ahmed’s work which also considered Islam as a centrally constitutive element of the Persianate.²⁹ *Adab* was “the public culture of the Persianate ecumene,” as Brian Spooner describes it, and I argue that just as the Persianate endured well into the twentieth century and beyond—much later than conventionally thought—so did *adab*.³⁰ Kia’s formulation, understanding the “Persianate” and the “Islamic” as aporetically linked through *adab*, is most useful for making sense of how an Islamic scholar like Shibli approached Persian poetry, and how he was first received by his Afghan translators.

Shibli understood Persian poetry not as secular literature but as *adab*. Rather than a secular enterprise, *adab* was “part of knowledge (*‘ilm*)” as Astrid Meier aptly put it.³¹ As such, *adab* was within Shibli’s purview as an Islamic scholar (*‘ālim*).³² Moreover, the very notion of world literature—a world system of discretely bounded, mutually interchangeable national literatures—is absent in Shibli’s *Shi‘r al-‘Ajam*. For Shibli, Persian(ate) poetry was not one national literature among others but a world unto itself, a cosmopolis not divided by nation-states but united by Islam; it was the poetry of *‘ajam*, a category inclusive of many peoples.³³ Nor was Persian a completely discrete literature, but rather one with porous boundaries separating it from Arabic and Urdu.³⁴ Shibli’s mission was similarly not a secular one. He considered Persian poetry to play a religious role in Muslim education in the subcontinent: literary *adab* was the basis for moral cultivation. *Shi‘r al-‘Ajam* was written for use in Muslim educational institutions like the Nadwatul Ulama seminary; for Shibli, the era of Persian poetry begins with Islam, and any (Middle) Persian verse that predates Islam does

²⁸ Bauer, *Culture of Ambiguity*, 129–35.

²⁹ Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 9, 13–15; Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 83–85. Though Ahmed rejected the term “Persianate” in favor of a “Balkans-to-Bengal complex” in order to decenter the Persian language, Kia contends that such a complex “depends on the transregional reach of the Persian language.” It was not Turkic, after all, but Persian learning that the Balkans and Bengal had in common. James Pickett similarly offers a lucid definition of the Persianate, characterized by its relationship to a Persian literary canon and to Islam. Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*, 22–29.

³⁰ Spooner, “Epilogue,” 302–3; Kia and Marashi, “After the Persianate.” For a fascinating engagement with Indo-Muslim *adab* in the early twentieth century, see Mian, “Surviving Desire.”

³¹ This quote comes from Meier’s study of one of Shibli’s intellectual influences, the Hanafi scholar Ibn ‘Abidin. Meier, “*Adab* and Scholarship,” 95.

³² *Adab* was crucial for religious scholars, to the extent that Bauer describes the “*adabization* of the ulama” as early as the Saljuq period. Bauer, “Mamluk Literature,” 108–11.

³³ On Indian conceptions of *‘ajam* including Shibli’s understanding of the term, see Sharma, “Redrawing the Boundaries,” 57–60.

³⁴ Pickett’s description of the relationship between languages in Central Asia offers a fitting model for our understanding of Persian, Arabic, and Urdu. Drawing from Sheldon Pollock’s notion of cosmopolis (Pollock, “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular”; Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 10–30), Pickett describes Persian as simultaneously a vernacular of the Arabic cosmopolis, and a cosmopolis unto itself, of which Turkic is a vernacular, using the metaphor of Russian nesting dolls to explain how each system can both contain and be contained (Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*, 26–34). We might understand Urdu in similar terms to Pickett’s discussion of Turkic, as a vernacular of the Persian cosmopolis. The vernaculars drew much from the cosmopolis while contributing less to it, but the borders of such a hierarchy were nevertheless occasionally permeated.

not constitute poetry but merely rhymed prose.³⁵ He gave a particularly Islamic framework to his *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, counting Persian literature among the Islamic sciences and defining its territory according to the lands upon which Islam, a “cloud of munificence,” rained.³⁶

While Shibli's project can hardly be described as secular, it was certainly modern,³⁷ and displays cross-pollination between the Islamic mode of reading associated with *adab* and what Edward Said would later describe as a humanistic practice of “secular criticism,” criticism that is “skeptical, secular, reflectively open to its own failings.”³⁸ The fourth and fifth volumes of *Shi'r al-'Ajam* exemplify the humanistic project of historicism as they approach Persian poetry not as timeless but rather as a specifically historical entity. Shibli articulates his understanding of humanistic scholarship clearly in another text, his travelogue to Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. After visiting Cairo's renowned center of Islamic learning, the al-Azhar seminary, Shibli expresses his disappointment with Azharite scholarship: “several of the shaykhs and disciples of Azhar are thought to be accomplished masters in their subjects...but the entire foundation of their accomplishment rests on the memorization of minutiae, in which there is not even a suspicion of critical research [*tahqiq*] and innovative thinking [*ijtihād*].”³⁹ What Shibli wants, then, is “secular criticism,” but squarely within a committed Islamic framework, not a secular one—a model that would upset Said's neat binary between humanistic skepticism and religious dogmatism. Shibli's *Shi'r al-'Ajam* is a critical, historicist approach to an object—Persian poetry—conceived of in Islamic terms. It is therefore in many ways a hybrid, liminal text, complicating neat binaries between religious and secular, traditional and modern genres, *tazkirah* and literary history, *adab* and literature. Accordingly, the translation history of *Shi'r al-'Ajam* straddles these divisions as well.

A Tale of Two Translations

Shi'r al-'Ajam was translated into Persian on two separate occasions: first in Afghanistan, then in Iran. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Afghan state put Persian literature in the service of its modernizing policies and efforts to craft an Afghan national identity.⁴⁰ Under Amanullah Khan (r. 1919–26), new, modern schools were founded with Persian literacy at the heart of the curriculum, and in 1921 the Afghan Ministry of Education was established.⁴¹ Crucially, the ministry drew on an Urdu-language text, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, for its Persian curriculum. The first translation of *Shi'r al-'Ajam* was commissioned by the Afghan Ministry of Education and published in Kabul and Lahore between 1925 and 1927 by a series of Afghan translators including Mansur Ansari and Burhan al-Din Khan Kushkaki (clerics trained in Islamic law), Fayz Muhammad Khan (Afghanistan's foreign minister), Shir Muhammad Khan, Sardar Gul, and Sarvar Guya I'timadi (adviser to the Ministry of Education). For the sake of brevity, this team-translation is henceforth referred to as “the Afghan translation.” These translators would all go on to become members of the literary society Anjuman-i Adabi-yi Kabul (Literary Association of Kabul), inaugurated by Muhammad Nadir Shah (r. 1929–33) in 1931.⁴² As part of its nation-building efforts, the state established additional

³⁵ Shibli, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, 4:114.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:1, 2:1.

³⁷ For an analysis of Shibli's thought in terms of Islamic modernism, see Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu'māni*. For his modernizing innovations in *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, such as his distinctly modern sensibilities around homoerotic poetry, see Jabbari, “The Making of Modernity.”

³⁸ Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 26. Michael Allan similarly contrasted the mode of reading embedded in premodern *adab*, “a practice of reading based on memorization, embodiment, and recitation in Qur'anic schools,” with literary reading, a “practice based on reflection, critique, and judgment” (Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature*, 3).

³⁹ Shibli, *Turkey, Egypt, and Syria*, 183; Shibli, *Safarnamah*, 185.

⁴⁰ Green, “Afghan Literature between Diaspora and Nation,” 13–16.

⁴¹ On the modernizing educational reforms of this period, see Baiza, *Education in Afghanistan*, 67–93.

⁴² On the Literary Association of Kabul, see Ahmadi, “Kabul Literary Society”; and Fani, “Becoming Literature,” 82–86.

literary and cultural institutions in the 1930s and 1940s like the Literary Association of Herat, the Faculty of Letters at Kabul University, and journals like *Kabul* and *Aryana*. The translation of *Shi'r al-'Ajam* later served as both an important source of information and a historiographic model for Afghan scholars developing a modern approach to Persian literature.⁴³ Yet the translation, carried out in the 1920s, precedes much of the nation-building to come later in the century, and the translation practices in many ways reflect an older, cosmopolitan Persianate approach to language and literary heritage. In this *adabi* approach, the relationship between Persian and Urdu is capacious, with relatively fluid boundaries separating them, and the role of the translator(s) is obscured. These practices differ from the nationalist projects that would be undertaken later in the century.⁴⁴

The volumes of the Afghan translation lack any preface or introduction to situate the text, simply presenting *Shi'r al-'Ajam* as it is, without explanation. The translation itself is extremely faithful, cleaving closely to the original, even reproducing its mistakes. For example, Shibli gives the wrong year of death for Ya'qub-i Lays, and this error is repeated in the Afghan translation. Another example of this noteworthy faithfulness is where Shibli occasionally uses an English word in Urdu, such as *kariktar* "character." In the original Urdu text, the English word is written according to Urdu orthography, using the letter ت (the retroflex [t̤]) as is common in Urdu for representing the English consonant "t" (Fig. 1).⁴⁵

In the Afghan translation, even the Urdu spelling of an English word is precisely reproduced, despite the letter used being absent from conventional Persian orthography (Fig. 2).⁴⁶

This suggests fluid boundaries between Urdu and Persian. Elements such as Urdu-specific letters or English loanwords nativized in Urdu can appear in the Persian text. The only place where the Afghan translators' voice can be heard is in the occasional footnote: sequestered away from the text by a line and usually signed with an individual translator's name.⁴⁷

The manner in which the Afghan translators dealt with Shibli's citations of Urdu verse further illustrates the fluid boundaries between the two languages. Shibli frequently quotes from Urdu poets like Mir Anis (1803–74), Mir Taqi Mir (1725–1810), Mir Zamir (1775–1855), and Mirza Dabir (1803–75) in order to demonstrate points about poetics. For example, Shibli quotes from Mir Anis in his discussion of poetic intemperance (*bē-i'tidāli*). The Afghan translation maintains the quotation (accurately reproducing the Urdu spelling, including unique Urdu characters such as the undotted nasal *nūn* and the retroflex *rā*) and following discussion exactly. The translators added Persian interlinear translation in a smaller hand between the lines of Urdu poetry.⁴⁸ In another case, an Urdu couplet by Mirza Dabir is quoted in the original, followed by Persian explanation rather than interlinear translation.⁴⁹ The relationship between Persian and Urdu in Shibli's text—maintained in the Afghan translation—exemplifies what Nile Green termed "Persian plus," with Persian as a central but not sole language of the Persianate.⁵⁰ The presumed Afghan reader is still part of a Persianate

⁴³ Fani, "Disciplining Persian Literature."

⁴⁴ Senzil Nawid demonstrates how Afghan historiography took on a distinctly national character beginning under the rule of Muhammad Nadir Shah in the 1930s. See Nawid, "Writing National History."

⁴⁵ In fact, this Urdu spelling convention had only recently become more or less standardized, replacing the earlier convention of writing the retroflex with four dots as ت . Ambiguity persisted in Urdu orthography well into the twentieth century. While Pashto also features retroflex consonants, it does not represent them using this convention; it differentiates them from their non-retroflex equivalents with a unique "ring" (*panḍak*) character, as in ت [t̤].

⁴⁶ This is not necessarily always true of Persian texts from South Asia, however. For example, Ghiyas al-Din Rampuri's *Ghiyas al-Lughat* dictionary, written in Persian and published in Lucknow ca. 1847, includes a map where local placenames like *dhākah* "Dhaka" and *paṭnah* "Patna" are written with the same Urdu-style retroflex characters. I thank Sameer ud Dowla Khan for noticing this and Vaibhav Kaul for sharing the reference.

⁴⁷ For example, see Afghan translation, 1:15, where two footnotes are signed with "Ansari," or 5:32 where the footnote is signed "mutarjim Ansari," in order to distinguish these notes from Shibli's own footnotes.

⁴⁸ Afghan translation, 4:74–75; cf. Shibli, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, 4:55.

⁴⁹ Afghan translation 4:76; cf. Shibli, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, 4:56.

⁵⁰ Green, "Frontiers of the Persianate World," 8. Shahab Ahmed argues similarly for a "Balkans-to-Bengal complex" in which Persian is only one important language alongside others. Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 83–84.

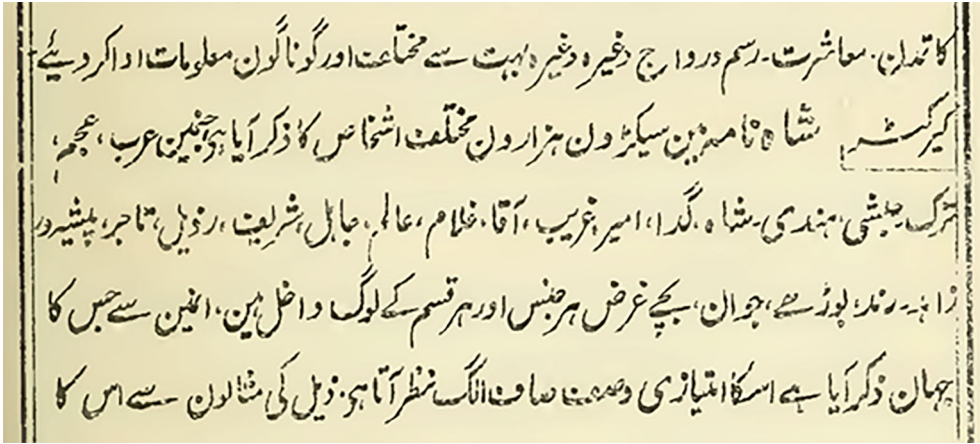


Fig. 1 - Colour online, BW in print

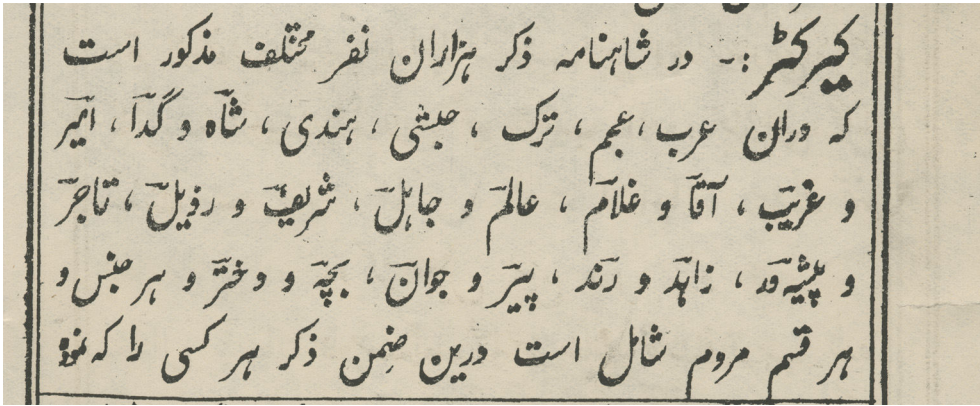
Figure 1. [The English loanword “character” (*kariktar*) as spelled in the Urdu text.]

Fig. 2 - Colour online, BW in print

Figure 2. [The Afghan translation reproduces *kariktar* using the original Urdu orthography.]

cosmopolis; they may prefer to read in Persian but nevertheless have some familiarity with Urdu as well.

Slightly more is known about the circumstances of the second translation of *Shi'r al-ʿAjam* into Persian, and its translator, the Iranian Sayyid Muhammad-Taqi Daʿi al-Islam “Fakhr-i Daʿi” Gilani (b. 1260 HS/1881–82 CE in Tamijan, Gilan, d. 1343 HS/1964 CE in Tehran). Fakhr-i Daʿi was a political reformist and constitutionalist, as well as a Shiʿi *mujtahid* (religious jurist), having studied with Akhund Muhammad-Kazim Khurasani (1839–1911) and Ayatollah Shaykh ʿAbdullah Mazandarani (1840–1912) in Najaf. Unusually for religious scholars at the time, Khurasani and Mazandarani supported institutions which taught Persian literature, patronizing not only Islamic seminaries but also Iranian societies like the Anjuman-i Ukhuvat-i Iraniyan (Society of Iranian Brotherhood) in Najaf.⁵¹ In 1910, Fakhr-i Daʿi was dispatched by his teachers from Iraq to India for research and missionary work.⁵² He depicted Bombay as one of India’s prettiest and most populous cities, a “garden” (*bāgh*) of different religions and sects. Among these sects are what he calls the “Aryans” (*āriyā*, probably

⁵¹ Farzaneh, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*, 126–27; Hermann, “Akhund Khurasani”; Yaghmaʿi, “Iraq xii. Persian Schools in Iraq.”

⁵² Fakhr-i Daʿi, *Shi'r al-ʿAjam*, 1: alif.

referring to the Arya Samaj, a Hindu proselytizing movement), which he compares to Protestant Christians and describes as anti-Muslim fanatics.⁵³ Notably, given the city's diverse sectarian milieu, Fakhr-i Da'ī does not describe his mission as promoting Shi'ism, but merely a defense of an undifferentiated "Islam" against its detractors. He complained that Iranians in Bombay, despite their great numbers and wealth, did nothing to defend Islam against the onslaught of missionaries and Islamophobes—other than his similarly named friend Sayyid Muhammad-ʿAli Da'ī al-Islam Larijani (1878–1951). Larijani promoted Islam along with Persian language and literature, and founded the newspaper and *anjuman* (association) *Da'vat al-Islam* (*The Call of Islam*). Larijani later went to the Deccan to teach Persian at the Nizam College in Hyderabad, and for this reason Fakhr-i Da'ī had been sent to take Larijani's place in Bombay.⁵⁴

In India, Fakhr-i Da'ī writes, he "faced a new world...in which [he] felt [he] could not continue living according to the old ways [*uslūb-i kuhan*]." He therefore threw himself into the study of two languages which served as vehicles for modernity in the subcontinent: English and Urdu. Fakhr-i Da'ī's arrival in Bombay coincided with Shibli's visit to the city.⁵⁵ By chance, the two found lodging in adjacent, connecting rooms. Fakhr-i Da'ī was impressed with Shibli's stature, dress, and knowledge, and given their shared mission to modernize and protect Islam and Islamicate heritage it is no surprise that the two men became fast friends. They met often and spent a great deal of time in close conversation together.

Later, Fakhr-i Da'ī tired of Bombay's polluted air and the difficulty of life in the city. He moved to Indore, some 600 kilometers away in central India, where he taught Persian language and literature at Indore College. Ultimately, Fakhr-i Da'ī grew exasperated with his working conditions there as well. He was obliged to teach in English, an onerous task which required preparing his lectures in advance; Fakhr-i Da'ī claims that between research, teaching, and preparing the next day's lectures, he worked twenty hours a day. Despite his proficiency in reading—he eventually translated several books from English into Persian—his spoken skills in English were evidently poorer. After eight years in India, Fakhr-i Da'ī returned to Iran, and in Tehran he set about translating several of Shibli's works into Persian. He published the first volume of his translation of Shibli's *Shi'r al-ʿAjam* in 1935.

Why did Fakhr-i Da'ī choose to re-translate this massive work, spanning 1,500 pages, when it had already been translated into Persian just a decade earlier in Afghanistan? Sa'īd Nafisi offers three explanations in his 1955 introduction to Fakhr-i Da'ī's translation. Two are straightforwardly material: he mentions that copies of the book itself were not readily available, and also describes the uneven printing (*chāp-i nāhamvār*) of the Afghan translation as unappealing.⁵⁶ The scarcity of the Afghan translation in Iran certainly could have been a factor. Ronit Ricci observed in a different context that "the motives for translation and those for composing or for copying an existing text" were often identical: both were methods of keeping a text in circulation.⁵⁷ By "uneven printing" Nafisi may have been referring to the first edition of the Afghan translation, which was lithographed, but the original manuscript from which the lithograph was created had been penned in a clear and well-spaced hand, not at all difficult to read.⁵⁸ By the time Fakhr-i Da'ī published his new

⁵³ The Arya Samaj was founded in Bombay in 1875. See Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements*, 192–99. On competition between missionary societies and religious groups in fin de siècle Bombay, see Green, *Bombay Islam*, 24–48.

⁵⁴ On Larijani, see Ayvazi, "Mahnamah[-yi] al-Islam"; Marashi, "Print Culture and Its Publics," 99.

⁵⁵ Shibli, *Savānih-i Mawlavi Rumi*, vāv. Fakhr-i Da'ī may have remembered this detail incorrectly; according to Gregory Maxwell Bruce, Shibli was unlikely to have been in Bombay in 1910, but did visit the city in the summer of 1911. I thank Bruce for these details.

⁵⁶ Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shi'r al-ʿAjam*, 3: *hā-dāl*.

⁵⁷ Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 42. The different context Ricci analyzes (the Malay Archipelago between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries) should be considered, but her argument seems broadly applicable beyond that context.

⁵⁸ There is nevertheless some merit to the idea of differences between the Afghan lithograph and the later Iranian translation. The lithograph followed Afghan orthographic conventions (shared with Urdu and Indo-Persian), such as a consistent distinction between the *yā*²-i *muḥaqqāqah* [ی] and the *yā*²-i *mardūdah* [ے]. The

translation, the Afghan translation had begun to be serialized in print (with movable type) in the journal *Kabul*.⁵⁹

Nafisi's more telling justification for this new translation was his claim that Iranians did not find the Afghan translation suitable (*sāzgār*) because it was not in the kind of Persian language with which they were familiar. This declaration—that the Persian used in the Afghan translation was too different—is even more difficult to defend. The written standard of Persian has been highly conservative in both Iran and Afghanistan, and in the first half of the twentieth century there was little divergence in the literary language written in the two countries. For the most part, the language used in the two translations was remarkably similar, and where they did differ, the choice of vocabulary in the Afghan translation would have been familiar enough for an Iranian reader.

A rare example of lexical divergence between the two translations can be seen in the way English vocabulary was rendered, like the word “character” discussed above. As we have seen, the Afghans preserved the English loan, even retaining in Persian the Urdu orthography with which the English word had been spelled. The Iranian translation renders this word into Persian as *şifāt-i mukhtaşşah* (“particular qualities”). But differences in translating the occasional English word aside, the language used in the two translations was otherwise very close. For example, consider this line from the Urdu original and its two Persian translations:

irān kī khāk funūn-i laţifah kī qābiliyyat men b^hi sab se mumtāz t^hi, aur bi-l-khuşūş shā^cirī uskā khamīr t^hā (Urdu)

The land of Iran was also the most distinguished in its suitability for the fine arts, and especially [*bi-l-khuşūş*] poetry was its nature [lit. “leaven,” *khamīr*].

khāk-i irān qābiliyyat-i funūn-i laţifah az hamah fāyiqtar dāsh, ‘alā-l-khuşūş shā^cirī rawshan būdah (Persian, Afghan translation)

The land of Iran had a suitability for the fine arts superior to all, especially [*‘alā-l-khuşūş*] poetry had been clear.

khāk-i irān hamīshah dar tarbiyyat-i hunar va şanāyi^c-i zarīfah mumtāz az hamah khuşūşan shā^cirī kih gharīzah-yi vay būd (Persian, Iranian translation)

The land of Iran was always distinguished from all in training [the] art[s], especially [*khuşūşan*] poetry which was its nature [*gharīzah*].

In closely comparing the translations, the most obvious differences are seemingly arbitrary choices, like the different words used for “especially,” both of which differ from the original.⁶⁰ Although the Afghan and Iranian translations are worded slightly differently, they display the same noteworthy linguistic features, such as using the Arabic feminine adjective (*tā’ marbūţah*) to agree with broken plurals (*funūn-i laţifah*; *şanāyi^c-i zarīfah*) or the use of the word *shā^cirī* (poetry), as deployed in the original Urdu, rather than the more common *shī^r*. Rather than linguistic discrepancies in translation, as we might have expected to find, what can be generally observed instead in the two translations are divergences in framing and in the text’s relationship to the original Urdu, the products of two different contexts: 1920s Afghanistan, still part of a Persianate cosmopolis, and 1940s Iran, at the height of state-led nationalism and Persianate modernity.

former, also called the *choḡī ye* in Urdu, denotes the *ma^rrūf* vowel [i] whereas the latter, known as *baḡī ye* in Urdu, denotes the *majhūl* vowel [ē]. In western Persian dialects, these vowels merged together as [i] between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries (Perry, “Origin and Development,” 67), whereas in the east (including Afghanistan and India) the two sounds remain separate even today.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Sarvar Guya’s translation in *Kabul* 4, no. 9 (Isfand 1313/February–March 1935).

⁶⁰ This word in particular cannot represent differences in Afghan and Iranian Persian, as the Iranian translator Fakhr-i Da^ci himself uses *‘alā-l-khusūs* elsewhere (Shibli, *Savānih-i Mawlavi Rumi*, zā).

The Afghans' approach to translation was grounded in traditional Persianate sensibilities. The association of language and literature with nation and territory, still only incipient in the 1920s, had to compete with an earlier, cosmopolitan Persianate framework in which the boundaries between languages could occasionally be traversed or even muddled, as in the Afghan translation's retention of nativized English loans in Urdu, or its treatment of Shibli's quotations from Urdu poetry. More importantly, in the Persianate framework *adab* was not considered to be the property of any one people. The author Shibli's position as an Indian writing about Persian poetry was hardly unusual in such a framework and required no explanation; thus, the Afghan translators could efface themselves almost entirely from their translation, rendering their presence in the text nearly invisible. Islam was a crucial element in the burgeoning Afghan identity of the early twentieth century, and so Shibli's conceptualization of Persian literature within bounds defined by Islam rather than nation made sense.⁶¹ He began the book with a traditional Sunni prayer: "prayers and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad and all his family and Companions," which is dutifully reproduced in the Afghan translation.

While the Afghans in the 1920s approached Persian poetry in terms of *adab*, for the Iranian translator Fakhr-i Da'i in the mid-twentieth century Persian poetry was national literature (*adabiyyāt*), and he was uniquely positioned to translate it.⁶² As a Shi'i missionary and *mujtahid*, a religious jurist with the authority to issue legal opinions, Fakhr-i Da'i omitted the text's initial Sunni prayer. Endowed with a *mujtahid*'s confidence to respond and produce and the authority of an Iranian who believed he was engaging with his own national literature, Fakhr-i Da'i considered his translation something of a revised edition. He was unsatisfied with problems in his copy of the Urdu original (the lithographed edition had many copyist's errors), and set out to correct the text, a considerable task which involved consulting *dīvāns* and *tazkirahs* in several libraries.⁶³ Fakhr-i Da'i approached the text authoritatively, going beyond recension to confidently excise, add, and even change the original where he saw fit. For example, as mentioned above, Shibli gave the wrong date of death for Ya'qub-i Lays and the Afghan translators reproduced it; Fakhr-i Da'i silently changed the date to the correct one, not in a footnote, but in the text itself. He did not limit himself to correcting minor factual details like this one. Consider the following passage and its translations, on the Samanid court and the poet Rudaki (860–940). The original Urdu texts reads:

is vaqt tak jo kuc^h hu'ā vuh shā'iri kī abjad t^hi laikin khāndān-i sāmāniyyah ne daf'atan is zamīn ko āsmān banā diyā, rudakī jo fārsī shā'iri kā abu-l-ābā' samj^hā jātā hai usī darbār kā dast parvar t^hā heretofore whatever had happened was only the elementary stage of poetry, but the Samanid court suddenly turned this ground into sky [e.g. elevated it to great heights]. Rudaki, who is considered the Father of all Fathers of Persian poetry, was brought up in their court.⁶⁴

The Afghan translation is highly literal:

az īn pīsh chīzīkīh guftah shudah abjad-i shā'iri būd laikin khāndān-i sāmāniyyah daf'atan īn zamīn rā āsmān sākht, rūdakī kih ādam-i shā'iri-yi fārsī ast dast parvardah-[y]i hamīn khāndān ast heretofore that which had been composed was only the elementary stage of poetry, but the Samanid court suddenly turned this ground into sky. Rudaki, who is the Adam of Persian poetry, was brought up by this very court.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Tarzi, "Islam, Shari'a, and State Building," 142–43. For the way later Afghan litterateurs laid claim to the Persian literary heritage, contesting Iranian nationalist claims to the same, see Ahmadi, "Exclusionary Poetics." Ultimately, *Shi'r al-'Ajam* would be used in service of a shared discourse of literary nationalism in both Afghanistan and Iran.

⁶² On this transformation from *adab* into *adabiyyāt*, and the differences between them, see Fani, "Becoming Literature," 13–44.

⁶³ Fakhr-i Da'i, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, 1: kāf.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁵ Afghan translation, 1:33.

Fakhr-i Da'ī's translation takes significant liberties with the text: *khāndān-i sāmānī avval khāndānī ast kih dar tarvij-i zabān-i fārsī qadam-hā-yi vasi'ī bar dāshtah va adabīyyāt-i irān rā kih tā ānvaqt ghayr az nām chīz-i dīgarī nabūd dar andak zamānī bast va taw-sa'ah dādah ba-awj-i kamāl rasānīd. rūdakī kih vayrā pidar-i shī'r mīdānand dast parvardah-yi darbār-i sāmānī būdah ast.*

The Samanid court was the first court to take extensive steps toward the propagation of the Persian language. In a short time they expanded the literature of Iran, which until that time was not more than a name, and brought it to its peak. Rudaki, who is considered the Father of Poetry, was brought up in the Samanid court.⁶⁶

Fakhr-i Da'ī has changed the text to fit his own view of the Samanids and of Rudaki's greatness. It is noteworthy as well that he elevates Rudaki from the father of Persian poetry, as Shibli described him, to the father of poetry in general.

Furthermore, Fakhr-i Da'ī dispenses with Shibli's quotations of Urdu verse, which the Afghan translators had carefully reproduced and translated. He excises these passages entirely, without exception; sometimes this requires omitting as much as half a page. Fakhr-i Da'ī does not indicate that anything has been abridged nor otherwise offer an explanation.⁶⁷ The only reference to an Urdu poet that survives in his translation is when Shibli describes the Safavid poet Vali Dasht-i Bayazi as the Persian equivalent to Urdu's Mir Taqī Mir.⁶⁸ In another instance, Shibli depicts the New Persian language as emerging out of Persian's encounter with Arabic: "Gradually, as Persian and Arabic mixed, like Urdu a new language was born." While the Afghan translators rendered this accurately into Persian, Fakhr-i Da'ī omitted the words "like Urdu" in his translation.⁶⁹ Undoubtedly, this choice to remove Shibli's engagement with Urdu is partly informed by the Iranian audience for this translation, who, unlike the Afghans, cannot be expected to be familiar with the language. More significantly, in Fakhr-i Da'ī's translation, Urdu does not belong to the same Persianate cosmopolis as Persian does, sharing the same literary heritage of Persian *adab*; instead, Urdu has been left outside the national boundaries of Iranian literary history.

Fakhr-i Da'ī's authoritative approach can also be seen in his introductions. Unlike the Afghans, who present the text without introduction, Fakhr-i Da'ī offers one or two introductions for each of the text's five volumes, helping familiarize Iranian readers with Shibli. In his introduction written after the second printing of his translation, Fakhr-i Da'ī says "the greatest reward for an artist [*hunarmand*] is the pleasure that they take in their own success...now...your humble servant [*in tuhīdast*] is most pleased and satisfied."⁷⁰ Despite referring to himself humbly, Fakhr-i Da'ī has indirectly depicted himself not as a translator, but an artist. Describing how he has carefully studied the text of the original and revised and corrected it, he goes on to imply that the author himself, Shibli, saw the translation as an improvement on the mistakes and shortcomings present in the original. Fakhr-i Da'ī explicitly dedicates "this book" to his compatriots. For Fakhr-i Da'ī to be dedicating the book—and not just his translation—implies a sense of ownership, that it is his to dedicate in the first place. Considering the powerful Iranian state's investment in claiming Persian *adab* as national heritage, at a time when nationalism and the nation-state model had achieved

⁶⁶ Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 1:21.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 4:39–40, 52, 67, 69, 196.

⁶⁸ Shibli, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 5:67; Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 5:65. Mir Taqī Mir was one of the most esteemed Urdu poets, renowned for his *ghazals* and *marṣiyahs*.

⁶⁹ Shibli, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 1:16, emphasis added ("raftah raftah fārsī 'arabī makhliūt ho kar urdū kī tarḥ ek jadīd zabān paidā ho ga'ī, aur vuh gūyā khāṣṣ islāmī zabān t'īr"); cf. Afghan translation, 1:27 ("fārsī ba-'arabī makhliūt gashtah miṣl-i zabān-i urdū yak lisān-i naw ba-vujūd āmad va īn fārsī gūyā zabān-i islāmī būdah") and Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 1:18 ("fārsī raftah raftah makhliūt ba-'arabī shudah va gū'ī hamān, zabān-i khāṣṣ-i islāmī gardīd").

⁷⁰ Fakhr-i Da'ī, *Shī'r al-'Ajam*, 1: bā.

hegemony, his confidence is understandable.⁷¹ Fakhr-i Da'ī's translation exemplifies Persianate modernity. It draws on cosmopolitan connections, translating from Urdu and relying on an Indian scholar to analyze Persian poetry, but effaces those connections in translation in order to present Persian literature as the national heritage of Iran.

Additional Translations

The twentieth century witnessed the translation of numerous other texts from Urdu into Persian in Iran. Some were related to Shibli: Hafiz Mahmud Khan Shirani's (1880–1946) Urdu-language *Tanqid-i Shi'r al-ʿAjam-i Shibli Nuʿmani* (*Critique of Shibli Nuʿmani's "Poetry of the Persians"*) was translated into Persian.⁷² Shibli's protégé Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi (1884–1953) wrote an Urdu-language travelogue on his travels in Afghanistan, *Sayr-i Afghanistan* (1944), which was later translated into Persian by Nazir Ahmad Salami.⁷³ Fakhr-i Da'ī in particular was a prolific translator from Urdu (and English). His other translations from Urdu include Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Tafsir al-Qurʿan* (*Exegesis of the Qurʿan*, 1880–1904), and several of Shibli's works. While in Indore, Fakhr-i Da'ī had read Shibli's *Tarikh-i ʿIlm-i Kalam* (*History of Speculative Theology*) and proclaimed it a "masterpiece"; he published his translation of the first volume of the work in Tehran in 1328 HS/1949–50 CE with the publisher Rangin. Ibn Sina Press published the second volume the following year. It was well received in Iran, as evidenced by the numerous times it has been referenced and cited in Iranian works on *fiqh*.⁷⁴ Fakhr-i Da'ī also translated Shibli's *Kutubkhanah-yi Iskandariyyah* (*The Library of Alexandria*, 1892) as well as *Savanih-i Mawlana Rum* (*Biography of Mawlana Rumi*, 1892; published in Persian translation in 1953). His translations from English included the works of Indian Muslims, such as Syed Ameer Ali's *A Short History of the Saracens* (1899, translated as *Tarikh-i ʿArab va Islam [History of the Arabs and Islam]*), and works about India, like Claude Fraser de la Fosse's *History of India* (1905).⁷⁵ These translations help demonstrate that Iranian readers had an appetite for learning about South Asia, and in particular reading about Indian Muslims, not only Parsis.

Fakhr-i Da'ī also translated the French scholar Gustave Le Bon's *La Civilisation des Arabes* (1884) into Persian by way of Sayyid ʿAli Bilgrami's Urdu translation (*Tamaddun-i ʿArab*, 1896). In his preface, Fakhr-i Da'ī remarked on the difficulty of separating the author's own notes (*hāshiyah*) from those of the Urdu translator, leading him to end up translating both. This translation serves as another example of the dynamics of Persianate modernity: this Urdu translation offered Iranians a useful model for making sense of the premodern past according to modern methodologies. Fakhr-i Da'ī related how he became acquainted with European Orientalist scholarship during his time in India, and admired their novel historiographical methods. He saw this book as an important text to translate for its treatment of Islamic and literary (*adabi*) topics "in accordance with today's scientific principles and foundations," and described his relay translation as a "service to Iranian society" (*khidmatī bah*

⁷¹ Elsewhere, Fakhr-i Da'ī writes of his great joy at participating in the "sacred and auspicious movement" translating works into "our national language" led by "the glorious leader of the country, His Imperial Majesty [Riza Shah] Pahlavi." Le Bon, *Tamaddun-i Islam va ʿArab*, ch. His massive translation of Sir Percy Sykes's *History of Persia* was another act of patriotic devotion to Iran. Fakhr-i Da'ī explains that the value of this book is in its praise of the "land of Iran" and the "Iranian spirit of genius," arguing that it reveals how "the Iranian spirit of genius has shown its superiority in all issues" (Sykes, *Tarikh-i Iran*, 2: *hijdah*).

⁷² *Naqd-i Shi'r al-ʿAjam-i Shibli Nuʿmani*, translated by Shahid Chaudhari and Taufiq Subhani. Tehran: Danishgah-i Payam-i Nur, 1380 HS/2001–2 CE.

⁷³ *Sayr-i Afghanistan: Sih Hamsafar*, translated by Nazir Ahmad Salami (Zahidan: Tawhid, 2003). Salami is a prominent Iranian Sunni cleric who represents Sistan and Baluchistan province in Iran's Assembly of Experts. He is also a translator, and follower, of Maududi.

⁷⁴ For example, ʿAbbasi Furdaw'i, *Tarikh-i ʿIlm-i Kalam ta Qarn-i Chaharum*.

⁷⁵ For an argument considering English as Persianate, see Jabbari, "Sa'di's Gulistan in British India"; for a different argument about the relationship between English and the Persianate, see Beverley, "Documenting the World."

jāmi'ah-yi īrāni).⁷⁶ With translations like this one, Urdu became a conduit for European texts and ideas in Persian. While scholarship has long recognized Arabic, Azerbaijani, and Ottoman Turkish as important intermediaries for European thought in Persian, Urdu's similar role has never been acknowledged.⁷⁷

Given Afghanistan's deeper entanglements with South Asia, Afghans were also eager readers of Urdu in translation. Urdu literature, like the poetry of Muhammad Iqbal, was translated by Afghan translators like 'Abd al-Hadi Davi.⁷⁸ Members of the group that had first translated Shibli's *Shi'r al-ʿAjām* in Afghanistan also translated *al-Faruq* (1898), Shibli's biography of the caliph 'Umar, and *Tuhfat al-Aman fi Sirat al-Nu'man* (*The Gift of Peace, on the Biography of al-Nu'man*, Kabul, 1303 HS/1924–25 CE, translated by Burhan al-Din Kushkaki), his biography of Abu Hanifa (originally *Sirat al-Nu'man*).⁷⁹ Works similar to Shibli's *Shi'r al-ʿAjām* were also translated from Urdu by Afghan translators like Qari 'Abdullah Khan.

Qari 'Abdullah Khan (1871–1944) was the Afghan poet-laureate (*malik al-shu'arā*) and tutor to Amir Habibullah Khan and Crown Prince 'Inayatullah Khan Siraj. He also taught at the elite Habibiyyah high school in Kabul, Afghanistan's first modern educational institution, modeled after India's Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College (later reincorporated as Aligarh Muslim University, where Shibli had taught for nearly two decades). As such, Habibiyyah followed the Anglo-Indian curriculum and offered Urdu as an option for the second language requirement.⁸⁰ Qari 'Abdullah worked with many Indian Muslims, who at one point made up half of the faculty of Habibiyyah, including the principal of the school, 'Abd al-Ghani Khan of Lahore.⁸¹ In addition to his position as educator, Qari 'Abdullah led the Literary Association of Kabul, other members of which had produced the "Afghan translation" of *Shi'r al-ʿAjām* discussed above. He was also closely familiar with Shibli's work, having relied on it as one of the sources for the second-grade Persian literature textbook he compiled for the Ministry of Education.⁸²

Qari 'Abdullah translated Muhammad Husayn Azad's *Sukhandan-i Fars* ([On the] *Poets of Persia*, 1907) from Urdu into Persian. Azad was an Indian Muslim scholar of Persian and Urdu, and his work may have influenced Shibli's prose style. *Sukhandan-i Fars* comprised Azad's lectures on Persian literature and philology. The translation first appeared as a series of articles in the journal *Kabul*, and was later published in book form in 1315 HS/1936–37 CE.⁸³ The book is preceded by a brief introduction from "The Association" (*anjuman*), most likely the Literary Association of Kabul. This introduction describes *Sukhandan-i Fars* as a book on the linguistics (*fiqh al-lughah*) and phonology (*fiqh al-ṣawt*) of Persian literature, the first of its kind in the world of Persian letters.⁸⁴

Later in the twentieth century, as the project of developing a centralized Afghan state progressed, national literature came to replace the cosmopolitan Persianate *adab* in Afghanistan as well. The 1930s were a radical turning point for Afghan nationalist historiography, as reflected in Qari 'Abdullah's translation practices.⁸⁵ His translation of *Sukhandan-i*

⁷⁶ Le Bon, *Tamaddun-i Islam va 'Arab*, 2–3. On relay translation, see St. André, "Relay"; for discussion of a Persian case study of relay translation, see Rouhi, "Darbarah-yi Tarjumah-yi Dun Kishut."

⁷⁷ On Persian translations from European languages, and the role of Arabic, Azerbaijani, and Ottoman Turkish as intermediaries, see Meisami, "Iran"; Salihi, "Tarjumah az Zaban-i Turki-yi 'Usmani"; and Chelkowski, "Edward G. Browne's Turkish Connexion," 28.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Davi, *Asar-i Urdu-yi Iqbal*.

⁷⁹ For a contemporary review of Shibli's *al-Faruq* in an Afghan journal, see Anjuman-i Adabi-yi Kabul, "Taqriz va Intiqad-i al-Faruq."

⁸⁰ Adamec, "Ḥabibiya School."

⁸¹ On Afghan connections with the "Urdu sphere," see Green, "Trans-border Traffic."

⁸² Fani, "Becoming Literature," 35–36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 35n95.

⁸⁴ Unlike *fiqh al-lughah*, the term *fiqh al-ṣawt* did not gain much traction in Persian; it was used sparingly, but no nineteenth- or twentieth-century Persian dictionary records it. Today Persian and Pashto both prefer indigenous neologisms for "phonology": *āvā-shināsī* and *vāj-shināsī* in Persian and the equivalent *ghaḡ-pohana* in Pashto.

⁸⁵ Green, "From Persianate Pasts."

Fars is much freer than either the Afghan or Iranian translations of *Shi'r al-'Ajam*. He took great liberties in reworking Azad's colloquial lectures into more laconic prose and excising details he must have found unnecessary. For example, Azad describes the difficulty of translating English philological works into Urdu, noting that English scholars master English, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and other tongues and base their work upon these languages.⁸⁶ Qari 'Abdullah leaves Hebrew out, perhaps deeming the first three languages sufficient to make the point.⁸⁷ As a result of this concision, his Persian translation runs nearly a hundred pages shorter than the original Urdu. In contrast to the earlier Afghan translators of *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, who retained Shibli's English words in their translation, Qari 'Abdullah rendered Azad's *likchar* (lectures) as *khaṭābah*, and similarly translated other English words into Persian. As such, Qari 'Abdullah's translation—published during a decade of Afghan state-driven nation-building—demonstrates a move away from the liminal moment when *Shi'r al-'Ajam* was first translated, toward a more confident sense of literary authority backed by the state.

Conclusion

These instances of Urdu-to-Persian translation offer insight into the dynamics associated with literary and cultural exchange in the first half of the twentieth century. Translating works on Persian literature from Urdu into Persian was not only an opportunity for translators to add to the knowledge available about the literary tradition; it could also be an opportunity for the translators to demonstrate their authority over the subject and stake a claim to it. This seems to have been the case for Fakhr-i Da'i Gilani and Qari 'Abdullah, translators in a period of nationalist authority and Persianate modernity, whereas in the earlier Afghan group project no individual voice wished to shine through in the translation. Clearly individual personalities and institutional positions played a role in the differences in translation, perhaps much more so than any perceived linguistic differences between Afghan and Iranian Persian.

Important context for these differences is also to be found in the distinct relationships Afghanistan and Iran had with India. The ruler of Afghanistan, Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan (r. 1880–1901), had invited Shibli to visit Afghanistan so that the Ministry of Education could learn more about Shibli's educational reforms in India.⁸⁸ While Shibli was unable to make the trip, his protégé Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi visited. Later Afghan rulers like Muhammad Nadir Shah, born and educated in the northern Indian city of Dehradun, spoke Urdu fluently. At his behest, Amir Habibullah (r. 1901–19) visited Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in India.⁸⁹ There was no such equivalent of the Iranian government systematically learning from India; by contrast, when the poet Rabindranath Tagore was invited to Iran from India in 1932, he was lauded but also seen by Iranians as a relic of the past, a living embodiment of ancient Indo-Iranian shared heritage.⁹⁰

Iranian national chauvinism may have been an additional factor, with its claims to the Persian literary heritage made possible by an increasingly powerful state and institutions such as the University of Tehran. As much as Shibli was praised by Iranian scholars like Fakhr-i Da'i, Sa'id Nafisi, Muhammad-Taqi Bahar, and Zayn al-'Abidin Mu'taman, they also maintained a sense of being the proper heirs to the Persian literary corpus, such that an Iranian like Fakhr-i Da'i could confidently correct someone like Shibli; however much the Iranians respected Shibli's knowledge, they ultimately saw him as outsider to what they considered an Iranian tradition. Indeed, Nafisi remarks with wonder that Shibli never set foot in

⁸⁶ Azad, *Sukhandan-i Fars*, 12.

⁸⁷ Azad, *Sukhandan-i Fars* (trans. Qari 'Abdullah), 1.

⁸⁸ Shibli made these reforms after traveling in the Middle East to learn about educational reform there. See Shibli, *Safarnamah*, translated as *Turkey, Egypt, and Syria: A Travelogue*.

⁸⁹ Baqai, "Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan," 212.

⁹⁰ Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 105.

Iran.⁹¹ Similarly, Nafisi's characterization of the Afghan translation as different and unfamiliar, despite the linguistic similarities demonstrated above, says much about certain early twentieth-century Iranian assumptions and attitudes toward Afghanistan. The Literary Association of Kabul, for its part, insisted that there was no such linguistic divergence between written Afghan and Iranian Persian at the time.⁹²

These two approaches to translation, Persianate or nationalist, may ultimately reflect where the translators saw themselves, both within their own tradition and in relation to the tradition from which they translated, but they are also reflections of the translators' communities and epistemic conditions. As the Afghans translated *Shi'r al-'Ajam* in the 1920s, their community was still defined in Persianate terms, which meaningfully included other linguistic traditions like Urdu, producing what I term a "cosmopolitan Persianate" translation. In Iran in later decades, translating for a national community (defined by secular relationships), reified by a powerful central state, endowed Fakhr-i Da'i with the authority to confidently intervene in the text through his nationalist, "Persianate modern" translation.

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⁹¹ Fakhr-i Da’i, *Shi'r al-'Ajam*, 3: ha.

⁹² This was in the context of a series of published epistolary exchanges between the Kabul Literary Association and the Iranian journal *Ayandah* in 1945. See Anjuman-i Adabi-yi Kabul, "Pasukh-i Anjuman," 377–78. A possible counterexample can be found in the preface to a Persian translation by the Afghan translator ‘Abd al-Hadi Khan Davi of an Urdu article, published in the journal *Kabul* in 1932. Davi notes the benefits of translating literary material from other countries and adds that Iranian materials "have less need for translation" (*kamtar luzūm-i tarjumah dārand*; Davi, "Abu al-‘Ala al-Ma‘arri va Khayyam," 23). His intriguing use of the word "less" (*kamtar*)—rather than asserting that Iranian Persian has no need of translation—could suggest that he indeed perceived a difference between the written Persian of Iran and Afghanistan. I thank Aria Fani for these references.

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ARTICLE

Soviet Persian Anthologies: Transnational, Multinational, International

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Abstract

In scholarship on post-Persianate literary modernity, the emergence of the new institution of literature is often conflated with the delimitation and reification of national cultures as different manifestations of a single process. This article examines three anthologies of Persian literature from the interwar Persophone Soviet Union to reconsider the relationship between state cultural institutions' procedures of literary modernization and nationalization. The anthologies mark out the stages by which classical Persian literature was portioned out to Soviet Eastern nationalities, and in particular the advent of Tajik literary history, but they also reveal the degree to which national literatures coevolved with new post-Persianate literary cosmopolitanisms and internationalisms.

Keywords: Šadr al-Dīn; 'Aynī (Sadriiddin Aini); Azerbaijan; canon; internationalism; Iran; literature; Soviet Union; Tajikistan

Soviet Persian Anthologies: Transnational, Multinational, International

The elegiac scholarship that chronicles the end of the Persianate cultural ecumene has situated the transmutation of the Persian verbal arts from *adab* to *adabiyāt*—that is, from an organic system of practices and shared references to a reified object of discourse and state institution—within the global history of literary nation-building.¹ In fact, the advent of literary modernity, the replacement of *adab* with literature, and the delimitation and reification of national cultures often appear as different manifestations of a single process.² Recent studies have emphasized that these national canons emerged from conversations and polemics between intellectuals in Iran, South Asia, and Afghanistan, but even when the process was international, the product, it seems, was national.³

By all rights, the interwar Soviet East would seem more likely to exemplify this nationalization-modernization paradigm than to complicate it. After all, in accordance with Stalin's theory of the nation, only the “maximal development of national culture”

¹ Vejdani, *Making History*, 145–66; Schwartz, *Remapping*, 35–72. For the broader comparative literature of a literary modernity framed by national canon-building, cf. Beecroft, *Ecology*, 195–242.

² The literature on the Arabic transition from *adab/shi'r* to *adabiyāt*, by contrast, has consistently assumed an uneven and ambiguous relationship between literary modernity and nationalization. This is likely because the establishment of bordered, independent states came so much later for most Arabs, and was immediately accompanied by a briefly successful pan-Arabist political project, so that state literary institutions were always already imbricated in an Arab national project. Compare to al-Bagdadi, “Registers,” 451–52; Allan, “How Adab Became Literary,” 184–85; and Robyn Creswell's adaptation of Pascale Casanova's concept of “internal translation”: Creswell, “Modernism,” 129–30.

³ Jabbari, “Making of Modernity,” 418–34; Fani, “Becoming Literature.” One partial exception is Marashi, *Exile*, 97–133.

could make possible the transcendence of particular cultures by the culture of international communism.⁴ Given the particular significance of literature as a national cultural institution in Russia,⁵ it is unsurprising that the construction of new nations required the partition of a Persianate literary commons into isomorphic national units, whose cultural nationalization would compensate for the absence of political sovereignty.⁶ These national literatures centered on texts in vernaculars, sometimes supplemented by canons in quasi-local prestige languages that Soviet literary historiography treated as proto-vernaculars (Grabar for modern Armenian, Chaghatay for Uzbek, classical Mongolian for Buryat, etc.). National literatures of the Soviet East also included texts composed in regional prestige languages, especially Persian, by authors who were born or wrote within the borders of particular republics (since doctrinally, nations had to be autochthonous). Thus, in the symbolic realm, the delimitation of nations in Transcaucasia and Transoxania required the partition of national literatures as modular cultural institutions. Debates about which nation could lay claim to particular classical Persian writers often had high political stakes, and drew combatants from the top of the political hierarchy, including, in the cases of Ferdawsi and Nizami, Stalin himself.⁷ The significance of this delimitation of the Persian literary classics was such that a literary anthology came to be thought of as the unofficial founding document of the Tajik SSR, and its anthologist, Šadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī (1878–1954), as the “father of modern Tajik culture.”⁸

This narrative of delimitation captures certain aspects of Soviet Eastern literary history, providing a stark illustration of the relationship that late- and post-Persianate scholars have identified between modernization and nationalization. Furthermore, the ambiguous status of the Soviet East, at once semicolonial and postcolonial, underlines the broader structural similarities (and indeed causal relationship) between European imperial regimes for the production and management of difference and the national cultural projects pursued by their successor states in the decolonizing world. Lastly, the process of nationalizing the verbal arts of the transregional Persian cosmopolis involved the same tension in Tajikistan as in Iran and Afghanistan. There was an imperative for cultural planners to produce a tidy, neatly contained canon and history by excluding disputed figures and works, but there also was a temptation to increase national prestige by laying claim to as many well-known figures and as large a map and timeline as possible.

Because of this tension, the case of Persian language and literature complicates this picture of Soviet national cultures defined by their delimitation from each other, and suggests another possible vision of the Soviet multinational literary system. But the exceptional status of the Persian in the Soviet Union also tells us something about the distinctive role of the Persian verbal arts in Eurasia before and during the time of the nation. The mutual exclusivity of canons assumed by the model of national delimitation was sometimes but by no means always a feature of either post-Persianate or Soviet Eastern national literatures. For both the post-Persianate sphere and the Soviet East, classical Persian literature was a particular site of anxiety for cultural nation-builders, consistently drawing ostensibly autarkic canons into mutual dependency and imbrication. Furthermore, these national literatures in all instances coevolved with new post-Persianate literary cosmopolitanisms and internationalisms, although the relationship between national and international was never comfortable. In the Soviet East, where each cultural bureaucrat answered to the diktats of both national and multinational or international organizations, building a national canon that maximized reach, even at the expense of coherence, was a higher priority than in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, or India.

⁴ Maximenkov and Heretz, “Stalin’s Meeting,” 403.

⁵ Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 231–48.

⁶ Slezkine, “USSR,” 414–52. Subsequent scholarship has placed greater emphasis on the role of local activists in the creation of these cultural units; cf. Edgar, *Tribal Nation*; and Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

⁷ On Stalin’s Nizami speech in 1939 (reported only secondhand), see Tamazishvili, “Iz istorii izucheniia,” 181–82. On his reference to Ferdawsi in 1941, see Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 18, 212.

⁸ Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni*.

This article, therefore, examines three Soviet anthologies and chrestomathies of Persian literature assembled by Transcaucasian and Transoxanian scholars between 1922 and 1940 to clarify the relationship between the modern institutionalization of a classical Persian literary canon and its delimitation into national units, showing where these two processes do and do not coincide. The anthologies adopt different relationships to the literary *tazkirah*, the traditional Persianate genre of literary historiography that combines biographies with poetic samples, discussed elsewhere in this special issue. Over the three cases, changing conceptions of the function of poetry combine with changing modes of scholarly training to produce a widening methodological gap between the anthologists and the early modern *tazkirahs* that provide their most important sources.

Because the story of Soviet Persian literature is in large part a story of nationalization, the three case studies are increasingly national in their representative function: the first is assembled in 1922 as a textbook for Persian language learners, the second in 1926 as a corpus for consultation during the creation of a Tajik national language, and the third in 1940 as a textbook of Tajik literary history. The same arc also may be traced through their places of composition. The first was produced in Baku, a city that in 1922 had a substantial Persophone minority, but which was always considered Turkic or Azeri by Soviet nationalities policy. The second was composed as a resource for the Soviet Union's only designated Persophone national territory, the Tajik Autonomous SSR, but it was composed in Samarkand, a city which in 1926 had a Persophone majority that was excluded from Tajikistan and remained a minority in the Uzbek SSR. The third was published in 1940 in Stalinabad (now Dushanbe), the capital of Tajikistan, elevated ten years prior from an ASSR to the status of a full Soviet republic. The canonical texts of literary nationalization, as we will see, dealt with the problem of other, overlapping national canons in a variety of ways, and only sometimes through contestation or clarification of boundaries. As physical borders hardened, Soviet Eastern literary canons became at once practically bounded and potentially boundless, linked by a revolutionary Persianate literary commons that remained informal and tentative.

Overview of Terms: Transnational, Multinational, International

The interwar Soviet Union was at once defined by a political commitment to internationalism, whose practical import diminished in the increasingly xenophobic 1930s, and by the bureaucratic fact of the multinational state, which in the same period developed an ideological dimension that scholars refer to as multinationalism.⁹ Both internationalism and multinationalism assume the nation as the protagonist of intercultural solidarity or exchange, and the promulgation of these ideals heralded the destruction of actually existing transnationalism. The Persian cosmopolis before 1917 had been a broad-based phenomenon in which Persian provided a medium for first- or second-language communication in the population that circulated among the states of West, Central, and South Asia, including not only elites but also hundreds of thousands of Iranian migrant laborers in the Baku oilfields, who comprised one of the major proletarian communities of the Russian Empire.¹⁰ In the same period, what Nile Green has called “Persographia”—Persian as a language of reading and writing—was even more widespread than Persophonia, and classical Persian literature lay at the foundation of most Muslim vernacular poetic canons in Russian Eurasia.¹¹ Soviet internationalism, as an internationalism of representatives, not only failed to exploit these sociocultural resources on any large scale, but demolished them, or rather

⁹ On the shifting contours of interwar Soviet cultural internationalism, see Clark, *Moscow*; on the cultural interface between the Soviet multinational and international East, see Djagalov, *Internationalism*.

¹⁰ Atabaki, “Disgruntled Guests,” 40–41.

¹¹ Green, *Persianate World*, 4; the landscape of Persographia's secondary roles in Central Eurasia is surveyed in DeWeese, “Persian and Turkic,” 131–155.

transformed them into a purely symbolic historical basis for fraternal feeling. As a result, a functioning sociocultural cosmopolis, which had only a limited existence as a concept in the minds of its participants, was replaced by an ideology of cosmopolitanism with only a limited existence in the world.¹² An elite corps of functionaries, many of them writers and literary scholars, performed multinational and international friendship in miniature through their personal friendships and literary exchanges, whereas the previously vast cadres of ordinary Persophone or Persograph polyglots, who might have been an audience for such exchanges, ceased to circulate across tightened borders and, in the following generation, almost ceased to exist with the advent of state schooling in the national language and Russian.

This same principle of an internationalism of representatives also operated in the textual realm. Whereas *adab* produces a multilingual corpus of mutually referential texts comprehensible to variable subsets of those Persophone polyglots (depending on the regional sprachbund), the Soviet literary system delimits that corpus and thins it out to a few major “classical” writers and texts per nation, and it also recombines those classics into a pantheon of world literature, connected symbolically by the intertextual links between them. So, for example, the literary friendship of the Persian-language poet Jāmī and the Persian- and Chaghatay-language poet Navā’ī transforms from a reflection of the multilingual literary culture of Timurid Herat into a synecdoche of the historical friendship between the Tajiks and Uzbeks.¹³ Thus, far from erasing the history of the Persianate ecumene from the historical record or turning it into a basis for national cultural irredentism, as happened in South Asian and Iranian national historiography, Soviet culture builders and their fellow travelers in West and South Asia reified this historical commons as the prehistory of the multinational and international friendship of (likewise reified) peoples.

However, just as the Stalinist institutions substituted a symbolic internationalism of representatives for the previous, actually existing Persianate transnationalism, they substituted a discourse of “the classics” for the vital artistic system to which those classical texts had long contributed for readers, writers, and reciters of diverse cultural backgrounds, social strata, and political commitments. In the Western leftist tradition of working-class education, the Greco-Roman literary classics had long been regarded as the natural patrimony of ordinary people, to whom they needed to be restored so that everyone would have the opportunity to reach their full human potential, whether through public education in classical languages or comprehensible translations of the classics.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the declarations of certain early Soviet avant-gardists that old literature could not serve the new society, from the beginning it was much more common for Soviet party-affiliated writers and pedagogues to instruct young proletarian writers to “study the classics,” a dictum that was raised to the level of official doctrine with the advent of socialist realism in 1932, and came to include not only Russian but world classics.¹⁵ But as Persianate literary classics transformed from potentially feudal or nationalist objects of political suspicion into the natural heritage of the Eastern working classes over the course of the 1930s, this transfer of the Western idea of the “classics” disregarded a crucial difference: by contrast with the inaccessibility of Catullus or even Pushkin to the Russian proletariat and peasantry, classical Persian poets had always been part of everyday life for ordinary people in most of Transoxania and parts of Transcaucasia, whether they were literate or not and whether or not Persian was their home language.

¹² James Pickett makes this distinction between a cosmopolis in Sheldon Pollock’s sense of the term and Kantian ideologies of cosmopolitanism: Pickett, *Polymaths*, 21. In referring to Soviet and even Stalinist culture as cosmopolitan in a comparative, etic sense, despite the fact that this was usually a term of abuse in the Soviet Union, I follow Katerina Clark’s delineation of the overlapping but distinct phenomena of Soviet internationalism and cosmopolitanism: Clark, *Moscow*, 4–5.

¹³ E. E. Bertels, “Abdurakhman Dzhami,” 463–74.

¹⁴ Hall and Stead, *People’s History*.

¹⁵ On the history of the concept of the classics in Soviet Russia, see Dubin, *Klassika*; on this 1932 shift, see Dobrenko, *State Reader*, 154–62.

The Stalinist restoral of the Eastern classics to the Eastern masses, then, was an act of sublation. According to the logic of the dialectic, it completed the process that had begun with a massive negation: the reforms of culture, education, language, and script that had, in combination with the murder of an entire generation of intellectuals for supposed nationalism or pan-Islamism, deprived the masses of those same classics. The delimitation of transnational *adab* into national literatures was another kind of sublation, intended to produce a cultural internationalism that would not be an accident of cultural geography, as the Persianate had been, but a conscious political solidarity between the peoples of the East. In accordance with this logic, drives to nationalize culture alternated with campaigns against any perception of nationalism until the two impulses had combined into a single internalized reflex for critics, writers, and bureaucrats. The result was a set of linked, modular national canons that individually mediated between national and international, and cumulatively reified a conceptual unity of the East.

Baku 1922

Perhaps no single work better illustrates the problematic relationship between Persianate literary history's nationalization and its modernization than *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* (Sampler of the Literature of Iran), a chrestomathy published in Baku in 1922.¹⁶ Since 1905, Baku had been a crucial staging ground for Bolshevik involvement in Iranian revolutionary politics, and from April 1920 to March 1922, as the capital of an independent Azerbaijan SSR (AzSSR), it had steered its own, quite active policies in support of the similarly short-lived Iran SSR declared by radicals in the northern province of Gilan. But 1922 marked the end of this independent foreign policy, as the AzSSR was incorporated into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and the Bolshevik leadership in Moscow began to regularize relations with the government in Tehran.¹⁷ Just as Baku became host to a new wave of defeated Iranian leftists, who joined an already extensive population of Iranian migrant oil workers, the Persian language and literature instructor Mīrzā Muḥsin Ibrāhīmī (fl. 1909–1928) published *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* to serve as a textbook for his students at the Eastern Faculty of Baku State University.

As Ibrāhīmī explained in the work's preface, he prepared the anthology because "I couldn't find a suitable book from the point of view of contemporary literary history that I could recommend to students." Literary history, as he explains, "has entered the realm of the sciences and, like natural history, it explains about general laws, that is, it shows the laws of literature's growth and development, the means and reasons for its advancement or decline . . . and demonstrates a nation's civilizational level and its degree of essential vitality." Thus, a modern anthology must not be "content to enumerate a few fistfuls or nets full of literary masterpieces," but should "completely examine literary output from the standpoint of criticism and research."¹⁸ Accordingly, although the volume does include selections from most of the major belletrists down to Jāmī, it does excerpt some truly obscure figures and works, particularly in the poetry volume (where a greater diversity of selections did not require so much space).

Ibrāhīmī's cited sources give some indication of the basis for his conception of the state of the field. In addition to numerous lithographed publications of classical works, mostly from Iran and the subcontinent, he makes extensive use of editions by orientalists, including

¹⁶ At the time of the textbook's publication, the university was referred to as the Baku *Darūlfünun* (using the Arabic term adopted for the first modern state universities in the Ottoman and Qajar domains), but it would revert to Baku State University (*Bakı Dövlət Universiteti*) in 1924.

¹⁷ Nejad, "Oilfield."

¹⁸ Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*, 6–7. The Azeri language preface expresses this directive in somewhat more radical terms: scholars "must look attentively not only at literary masterpieces, but, as in civilizational history, at all literary works as a single picture." *Ibid.*, 3.

E. M. Quatremere, E. G. Browne, and V. A. Zhukovskii.¹⁹ An opening section, showing an especially clear debt to oriental scholarship, consists of Latin-script Avestan and Pahlavi inscriptions, glossed in New Persian.²⁰ Ibrāhīmī also draws on one previous teaching chrestomathy, the prerevolutionary *Muntakhabāt-i fārsīyah/Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti* (Selections of Persian Writing, 1906), edited by Mīrzā ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Tabrīzī (d. 1927), who taught at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow.²¹ Elements of *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*’s organizational scheme seem to be borrowed from *Muntakhabāt*, most notably the division of both works into separate chronologically ordered volumes for prose and then verse. Furthermore, Ibrāhīmī’s program echoes ‘Abd al-Ghaffār’s explanation that in addition to Firdawsī, Sa‘dī, ‘Aṭṭār, and Rūmī, “to serve as reference material for a course in the history of Persian literature, the compiler also took into account secondary poets, and those who are far from fully known to us,” particularly for the early periods.²²

Such continuities highlight the similarity between the imperial functions of pre-1917 orientalism, which trained natives for roles as informants and intermediaries, and the Soviet indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) of the professional intelligentsia.²³ Baku State University was an exemplary institution of this *translatio studii*, founded in 1919 by the leadership of the short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to train local doctors, jurists, and scholars. Both in this brief period of independence and after the establishment of Bolshevik control, most of the university’s administrators were Russians or other Europeans, and attempts to replace Russian with Azeri as the primary language of instruction met with limited success until its closure and reorganization in the early 1930s.²⁴

The orientalist who came to participate in the establishment of the university in the early 1920s often considered it their task “to nationalize scholarly work itself,” as the prominent linguist Nikolai Marr declared in a 1924 lecture there.²⁵ But in the early stages, the native intelligentsia-to-be was not always conceived of in national terms, least of all by its aspiring “Eastern” participants, as may be observed from the more expansive rhetoric of the 1920 Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East.²⁶ Notably, Ibrāhīmī’s Persian program was housed within a Department of the East whose distinct status within the Faculty of History and Philology was set from the first charter of Baku State University.²⁷ Whereas

¹⁹ Citations are provided only for the prose volume, which necessarily limits what can be said about Ibrāhīmī’s sources.

²⁰ Several orientalist histories had previously included pre-Islamic texts as a prelude to New Persian literature, notably E. G. Browne’s *Literary History of Persia from the Earliest Times until Firdawsī*. Rizā-Qulī Khān Hidāyat’s mid-nineteenth-century *tazkirah Majma‘ al-fuṣṣḥā* had already discussed pre-Islamic Iranian literature, establishing the basis for the subsequent historiographical convention “wherein Avestan, Pahlavi, and New Persian literatures came to be understood as belonging to a singular, ‘Iranian’ trajectory”; Jabbari, “Late Persianate Literary Culture,” 48.

²¹ Gaffarov’, *Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti*, vol. 2, *Poeziia*; the Arabic title is *Muntakhabāt-i fārsīya; az āsār-i mu‘allifīn-i Īrān az qarn-i chahārum-i Hijri ilā ayyāmunā haẓā*.

²² Gaffarov’, *Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti*, vol. 1, *Proza*, iii–iv.

²³ Indigenization was the Soviet policy of preferentially hiring members of the titular nationality into each republic’s mid- to high-level official positions, from shop stewardships and engineering assignments to academic posts, to reduce the overrepresentation of Russians and other European nationalities in the leadership of “backward” republics. On continuities from Russian imperial to Soviet oriental studies, see Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*; and Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Imperial Roots,” 29–46. On the Tajik case specifically, see Battis, “Soviet Orientalism,” 729–45; and Yountchi, “Politics of Scholarship,” 217–40.

²⁴ For the early history of the university (renamed Baku State University in 1924), see Alimirzoev, *Azerbaidzhanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet*, 42–119.

²⁵ Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 152.

²⁶ As Masha Kirasirova has shown, “the East” functioned as a central geopolitical category for the Bolsheviks. Kirasirova, “The ‘East,’” 8–9.

²⁷ The act of the Azerbaijan People’s Republic Parliament of September 1, 1919, stipulates “four faculties (Rus. *fakultet*, Az. *fakültä*); History-Philology, with an Eastern department (Rus. *vostochnym otdeleniem*, Az. *Şārq şöbäsi ilə birlikdə*), Science and Mathematics, Law, and Medicine”; “Zakon ob uchrezhdenii v gorode Baku gosudarstvennogo universiteta,” in *Azerbaidzhanskaia Demokraticeskaiia Respublika*, 98.

for Russian Bolsheviks the East was a political space of action defined by particular historically conditioned social features, for their post-Persianate comrades the East was semi-interchangeable with the Muslim nation, regardless of the speaker's commitment to religion or atheism. Ibrāhīmī's textbook thus instantiates the wider semi-national venture that was the Baku State University. The book was designed to teach Persian language and literary heritage to Azerbaijani citizens, in a city where Persian language remained a common second language and Persian literature a common touchstone across communal lines, but especially for Muslims (although decreasingly so). However, it relegated that language to the specialist sphere of oriental studies within a new state education system. This shift marks the final departure of Persographia from the primary and secondary schooling of Turks in the Russian-Soviet domain, a process that had begun with the civic education reform movements of the late imperial period.²⁸ Finally, even though it included literature composed in Transcaucasia—declaratively so, in the case of the chapter named for the Atabegs of Azerbaijan—by the book title, it labeled such works the “literature of Iran.”²⁹

Notwithstanding Ibrāhīmī's quintessentially orientalist conception of the organic development of civilizations, typified by his interest in the phenomenology of cultural decline, the mode of literary history that *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* instantiates is not simply a vernacularized variant of orientalism, but also draws on other literary-critical projects of its time. Whereas 'Abd al-Ghaffār explains his inclusion of noncanonical poets as a regrettable necessity when the literary record is thin, for Ibrāhīmī it is scientific rigor that demands a survey of the full corpus of “literary output.” Here we see a rapprochement of literary scholarship with the social sciences that has less in common with the old science of philology than with the late Ottoman positivist criticism of activist-scholars such as Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), one likely source for Ibrāhīmī's articulation of the methodological consensus.³⁰ As we will see, the presence of such a conception of literary history in scholarship from early 1920s Baku suggests a supplementary genealogy for the Soviet sociology of literature, an approach to literary history that achieved near-dominance at the end of the decade, including in the eastern republics.

In drawing on Western scholars for Persian literary history, Ibrāhīmī followed in the footsteps of Riżā-Qulī Khān Hidāyat (1800–1871; whose *Qābūs-nāmah* edition he cites), 'Abd al-Ghaffār, and Shibli Nu'mānī (1857–1914), the final volume of whose magisterial *Shi'r al-'ajam* had been published two years earlier. Unlike Hidāyat and Shibli, however, 'Abd al-Ghaffār and Ibrāhīmī produced works that broke definitively with the conventions of the *tazkirah*: beyond a short preface, each provides no commentary on its literary excerpts, aside from section titles indicating period or dynasty with Hijri dates, title and author (with dating of work where possible), meter (for verse), and citation of the source. Although this adheres to normative standards for a chrestomathy in the modern science of criticism to which Ibrāhīmī declares his allegiance, it means that his critical commentary on this literature must have remained unpublished, in the life of his classroom.

But the work's presumed pedagogical function, “sufficient for elementary, intermediary, and advanced study of this language,” reveals another aspect of this conception of literary history.³¹ Ibrāhīmī's intention that the process of reading through the book should mark the stages of a student's own progress sits uneasily with the work's chronological arrangement. As he admits, the Avestan and Pahlavi texts “aren't necessary for students of language,” and

²⁸ This transition also included changing destinations for Central Eurasian Muslims seeking higher education from Bukhara to Istanbul and Cairo, and then to Moscow. Bustanov, “Speaking,” 202–3.

²⁹ Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*, 58. This is one of the earliest works to identify the Persian canon as the literature of Iran.

³⁰ Discussions of literary history in the work of Gökalp in particular may be regarded as a precursor of the field of sociology of literature, albeit conducted in the mode of advocacy rather than positive analysis, and his popularity among Caucasian Turkophone intellectuals after the 1918 high-water mark of the Ottoman Caucasus campaign makes him a probable vector. Compare to Gökalp on “aesthetic Turkism,” in *Principles of Turkism*, 95–98.

³¹ Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*, 7.

before he begins early New Persian prose with Bal‘amī, he includes a few short tales in simple language, organized nonchronologically. After reading these, language students should “choose from the rest of the book appropriate for their ability, so that bit by bit, they gain the ability to understand the whole book.”³² Even with these accommodations, the arrangement reveals the connection between language pedagogy and literary history assumed by the orientalist chrestomathy-teaching tradition. The ontogeny of the individual language learner—the transformation from a novice into a fluent reader of Persian—is assumed to recapitulate the phylogeny of a civilization, as a journey from the prehistory of literary Persian through its historical development carries a student from elementary to advanced Persian proficiency. In this respect, the ambiguously quasi-national status of Ibrāhīmī’s “Iranian” literature prefigured the culture-building projects of the Soviet Eastern republics. Major Soviet Eastern writers were almost all involved in educational policy and language reform, and relied on a similarly organicist ontogeny-phylogeny model of the relationship between literacy and literature. Thus the entire field of Uzbek and Tajik state-sponsored literature moved from maximal stylistic simplicity toward increasing complexity, in its authors’ attempts to draw citizens out of ignorance and into their national culture.

Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān also prefigures certain features of the literary textbooks produced in interwar Iran, in both format and disciplinary framing.³³ Given this Soviet textbook’s presence in the catalogs of libraries in Iran, it is likely that some of the first generation of Pahlavi-era textbook writers and educational policy makers were aware of the curriculum of Baku State University as a possible model. At present, though, this remains a supposition, and this textbook disappeared from the subsequent literary historiography of Persian in both Iran and the Soviet Union. However, one trace of the work’s influence has survived, in the most influential of all Soviet Persian literary anthologies.

Samarkand 1926

The Bukharan writer and scholar Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Tājīk* (Sampler of the Literature of the Tajiks, 1926) is rightly regarded as the foundational work of Tajik literary historiography, and indeed of the Tajik national project.³⁴ The work was originally commissioned as a literary corpus to guide the Soviet Tajik language reform commission in its deliberations, but the ideological stakes of ‘Aynī’s research immediately rose, given debates about the status of Persian speakers in the newly founded Uzbek SSR.³⁵ Throughout the early 1920s, many Transoxanian intellectuals argued that Tajiks were Uzbeks who had been superficially Persianized during the hegemony of Persian culture and needed to be brought back to their true, Turkic language. Based on this logic, the Uzbek republican leadership disputed the designation of Tajiks as an ethnically distinct minority, entitled to their own Persian-language schools and other cultural institutions, and in part territorialized through the establishment of a Tajik Autonomous SSR in the east of the Uzbek SSR.³⁶ Against this backdrop, ‘Aynī staked a claim for the legitimate autochthony and longevity of a Tajik nation. In the first sentence of his introduction to *Namūnah*, he asserts: “From the first recorded history until today, in the region of Transoxania and Turkestan, a great people (*qawm*) has endured, called Tajik or Tazik, and likewise their language and literature has been widespread.” Far from being imposed by Persian rulers or introduced by immigrants from Iran, he insists, the Persian literature of

³² *Ibid.*, 29–30.

³³ Compare the critique of the *tazkirah* mode of literary historiography in Jalāl al-Dīn Humāzī’s foundational textbook *Tārīkh-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* (1929), discussed in Vejdani, *Making History*, 162–63.

³⁴ Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni*, 39; Rzehak, *Vom Persischen zum Tadschikischen*, 154–64.

³⁵ Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 78–79.

³⁶ Large urban populations of Persian speakers remained outside the ASSR’s borders, including ‘Aynī himself, who wrote *Namūnah* at his home in Samarkand.

Central Asia proves “the existence in these places of a major people called Tajik, belonging to the Aryan race.”³⁷

The influence of *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Tājīk* on the eventual consensus narrative of Tajik national culture is remarkable, considering that, once completed, it was initially deemed unpublishable by the state publishing organs of the Tajik ASSR. Indeed, after its eventual publication in Moscow, it became the subject of such widespread attacks in the Central Asian press that, by 1930, it was removed from circulation and most copies were collected for destruction, just as Tajikistan embarked upon a new phase as a union-level republic.³⁸ In spite of such a problematic ideological status, this literary anthology played a crucial role in establishing the scholarly basis for the renegotiation of the status of Persian speakers in the Soviet nationalities dispensation.

However, scholars have often overstated the degree to which ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* undertook to delimit or nationalize a subset of Persian literature as the sole possession of a Tajik nation. This is in part a legacy of the subsequent consolidation of Tajik national historiography in the 1930s and, as we will see, especially during and after World War II, a consolidation whose teleology shadows our reading of earlier periods of Soviet Persian scholarship and nation-thinking. But it also is the result of this anthology’s internal contradictions: modern scholars in search of programmatic statements on the Tajik nation are most likely to read the volume’s preface and introduction, beginning with the declarative statement quoted above, and they less frequently engage with the story told by ‘Aynī’s editorial choices within the anthology or his shorter critical introductions to particular sections and poets.

Finally, like ‘Aynī’s contemporaneous critics, scholars today are most interested in his treatment of the classical canon down to the Timurid period, which constitutes only 100 of the anthology’s 626 pages and is the only section in which the Tajik national story overlaps substantially with Iranian and Afghan nationalist historiographies. But ‘Aynī’s focus on later periods should not surprise us: the second and third volumes, covering periods from the late eighteenth century to the Soviet period, provided more relevant precedents than Rūdakī for establishing a standardized Persian that reflected the contemporary Central Asian vernacular. Furthermore, as ‘Aynī points out in his introduction, extant pre-sixteenth-century Central Asian Persian literature was much better represented in scholarship and in printed editions, whereas although post-Timurid poets “have been collected in commonplace books and *tazkirahs*, they aren’t widely known among the general public because they haven’t been printed.”³⁹

‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* may be better understood not as a prelude to Tajik national intellectual history but as a significant episode in Persophone literary historiography as a whole. Although the work’s reception in Iran, Afghanistan, South Asia, and the former Ottoman Empire would be belated and limited, ‘Aynī’s book was itself the product of ‘his wide reading and sophisticated engagement with criticism, scholarship, and printed editions from all of those regions, as well as Western orientalism. Based on frequency of citation, three previous moments of canonic consolidation were particularly important for the work’s image of Persian literature down to the sixteenth century: the late Timurids, represented by Dawlatshāh’s *Tazkirat al-shu‘arā’* (1487) and Jāmī’s *Bahāristān* (1487) in Persian, as well as Navā’ī’s *Majālis al-nafā’is* (1491) in Chaghatay; the early *Bāzgasht*, represented by Āzar’s *Ātashkadah* (1760); and the post-Constitutionalist functional curriculum of Ibrāhīmī’s *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* (1922).⁴⁰ The latter two collections account for respectively 38

³⁷ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 3.

³⁸ Aini, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 118.

³⁹ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11, 14, 15, 92, 104. Although ‘Aynī cites Jāmī in Nawal Kishore’s Lucknow lithograph (likely the 1870 ed.), when citing Dawlatshāh he uses a manuscript of his *tazkirah* held by the Uzbek state, writing in his discussion of the excerpt, “It is too bad that this work hasn’t yet been published; although it was printed in London in 1900, it hasn’t circulated to our country. . . (I hope that the government of Uzbekistan, keeping in mind the historical and literary importance of this book, will have it printed, with properly careful editing)”; *ibid.*, 104–5. ‘Aynī cites *Ātashkadah* as

percent and 34 percent of citations in ‘Aynī’s first volume, so that in precisely the section where scholars have located ‘Aynī’s Tajik nationalist claim to the classics, his debt to non-Transoxanian narratives of the Persian literary tradition is greatest. To complete our transregional picture of Persian literary historiography, it need only be added that ‘Aynī cites both Jāmī and Āzar in editions printed in British India.

‘Aynī’s method and sources can be seen from his entry on the fourteenth-century poet Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad, who was born in Chach (now Tashkent) but spent his poetic career in India (pen-name “Badr,” often called Badr-i Chāchī). Following the poet’s name and date of death, the entry begins by crediting the source of the selections, an 1841 *sharḥ* (explication) of Badr’s works by the great lexicographer Muḥammad Ghiyās al-Dīn Rāmpūrī (1785–1852), printed in India in 1895.⁴¹ There follow excerpts from five *qasidas* (mostly from their prefatory lyric sections, or *nasībs*), including footnoted glosses of difficult lines attributed to the *sharḥ* and definitions of unusual words given without citation, as well as a ghazal requiring no glosses. The final section is a biography and commentary, which quotes in full the brief entry on Badr in the Ottoman encyclopedia *Ḳamūs-ül a’lām* (1889–1899), assembled by the Albanian intellectual Şemseddin Sâmi Bey Frashëri (1850–1904) (in ‘Aynī’s Persian translation), and then part of the introduction of the Indian *sharḥ*, with ‘Aynī’s own additional deductions about Badr’s life.⁴² He acknowledges the extreme difficulty of Badr’s style, noting, “In this collection only his easy poems have been selected.” He has included Badr’s verse, he explains, to show “that five hundred years before this date, in Tashkent, which is the heart of Turkistan, such an abstruse Persophone (*fārsī-zabān*) poet thrived, or that poems whose comprehension is dependent on explication, glosses, and acquaintance with many fields of knowledge could have pleased connoisseurs among the literateurs of Fārs.” Last, he apologizes that the section is a bit long, “since Badr-i Chāchī’s biography hadn’t [previously] been written in *tazkirahs*.”⁴³

Ghiyās al-Dīn and Sâmi Bey mark out the geographical bounds of ‘Aynī’s maximalist community of Persograph scholars. In their periodicals, Soviet Eastern reformists such as ‘Aynī frequently placed their efforts to modernize language, literature, and habitus in the context of other state modernization projects within the same zone. We encounter this same geography in this account of Badr-i Chāchī’s life and works: by contrast with Iranian contemporaries such as Bahār, ‘Aynī is unconcerned with finding boundary demarcations in the space of Persianate literary composition and reception. ‘Aynī could have explained Badr’s difficult style with reference to the supposed connection, asserted in the Iranian post-Bāzgasht critical texts that he read, between excessive stylistic complexity and the bad literary taste of “foreign” Indian readers.⁴⁴ Instead, both here and in later discussions of what he calls the Bīdilian style, he focuses on the reception of particular poets rather than regionally defined movements. Furthermore, he makes Badr’s complexity a mark of the sophistication of supposedly peripheral Turkistan, indicating its synchronization with tastes in both India and Iran.

‘Aynī is careful not to identify Badr as a Tajik poet, and indeed, he includes several poets for whom he clearly wasn’t making such a claim, such as the Timurid ruler Abū al-Qāsim Bābur Mīrzā, the foundational Chaghatay poet ‘Alī-shīr Navā’ī, and members of the royal family of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Kokand Khanate. In some instances, such as the inclusion of Navā’ī but not his friend and contemporary Jāmī (whose Persian poetry was far more famous and influential), it is clear that the purpose of inclusion is to insist on the prevalence of Persian poetic production among Central Asians generally,

having been published in Lucknow (*ibid.*, 14), but given his cited publisher and year, it is likely this edition was printed in Bombay: Āzar, *Ātashkadah*.

⁴¹ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 66. On Rāmpūrī’s career, see Bruce, “Ġiāt-al-Din Rāmpuri.”

⁴² Sâmi, *Ḳamūs-ül a’lām*, vol. 2, 1256. On Frashëri and *Ḳamūs-ül a’lām*, see Bilmez, “Shemseddin Sami Frashëri,” 341–71.

⁴³ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 70–72.

⁴⁴ Iranian and orientalist polemics against the “Indian style” are surveyed in Kinra, “Make It Fresh,” 15–19.

Turk and Tajik alike. In his entry on the nineteenth-century queen of Kokand, Nādira, a key figure in the Chaghatay poetic revival, he complains about a 1923 Uzbek publication: “Even though it provides her biography and Turkic poems, her Persian poems are not mentioned.”⁴⁵

Adeeb Khalid is correct to identify ‘Aynī’s works of the 1920s as “the first time in history that the Persian-speaking population of Central Asia had been conceptualized as a transhistorical community, a nation in its own right.”⁴⁶ In this respect, ‘Aynī’s geopoetics come into focus when set alongside the eighteenth-century Iranian *Ātashkadāh*, a *tazkīrah* from which ‘Aynī drew some of his excerpts. The evident pride that the *Ātashkadāh* takes in the poetic accomplishments of Iran (relative to Hindustan) has often been read as proto-national but, as Mana Kia has shown, the work instead places Iran at the center of the Persian poetic world through a decidedly nonnational delineation of multiple and overlapping geographies of belonging.⁴⁷ By contrast with *Ātashkadāh*, *Namūnah* attempts to carve out an exclusive community associated with a bounded space, but to do so it eschews any claim to centrality within the Persophone domain, arguing only for distinctiveness. But the drive to nationalize Central Asian Persian literary history competes with the work’s other imperatives. Whereas Turkists of the early 1920s had claimed that all Central Asian culture was really Turkic, even if sometimes covered by an Arabo-Persian veneer, ‘Aynī emphasized the Persian dimension of all Central Asian culture, and the Persophone component of a literary tradition that, as he acknowledged, was multilingual. In this respect, the messiness of geography and identity in *Namūnah* is not so different from that of *Ātashkadāh*: by reintroducing Persophonia into regional literary historiography, ‘Aynī restored the transregional dimension of Transoxanian poetry.

This was a corrective to the Turkic chauvinism of early 1920s Transoxanian literary culture, but it simultaneously rescued the Turkist project of historical recovery just as interest in the classics became unacceptable in the Uzbek cultural arena. From 1918 to 1920, a “Chaghatay Conversation” (*Chighatāy gurungi*) group had formed (with the slogan, “Make use of the historical and literary heritage”) as a community for sharing research in fields from lexicography to oral history, from literary criticism to archaeological fieldwork. As Ingeborg Baldauf has pointed out, from 1924 on, Transoxanian scholars who continued work in these fields increasingly did so in national or local “bureaus of *kraevedenie*.”⁴⁸ The term refers to a Russian academic discipline, best translated as “regional or local studies” (its German counterpart is *Heimatkunde*), that brings together materials from any humanistic, social-scientific, or scientific disciplines relevant to a holistic understanding of a particular locale or community. In Central Asia it was sometimes used interchangeably with “uzbekology” or “tajikology” (*uzbekovedenie*, *tadzhikovedenie*). The post-Timurid, pre-1905 sections of ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* continue the work initiated by the Chaghatay group and codified by his contemporary local studies scholars, as he recovers minor writers and works from local and sometimes privately held manuscripts. However, at its most nostalgic, such research risked accusations of bourgeois nationalism, as had already become clear in 1921 with the Bolsheviks’ forcible disbandment of the Chaghatay Conversation group. By the Soviet cultural revolution of the late 1920s, the push to “proletarianize” Central Asian culture—that is, in the absence of an indigenous proletariat, to represent the Central Asian lower classes—spurred academies to support more folkloristic and ethnomusicological research into the verbal arts of the masses, and less study of “feudal” classical literature.

The overlap between Uzbek and Tajik state-sponsored *kraevedenie* work was substantial, whether regarding objects of study or the administering bodies and participants. In fact, in the same year as he received the commission to produce *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik*,

⁴⁵ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 185.

⁴⁶ Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 309.

⁴⁷ Kia, “Imagining Iran,” 89–112.

⁴⁸ Baldauf, “*Kraevedenie*.” On the discipline more generally, see Johnson, *St. Petersburg*.

‘Aynī also was commissioned by the Scientific Committee of the Uzbek SSR to produce a volume entitled *Türk adabiyāti namūnaları* (Samples of Turkic Literature), although this was ultimately fulfilled by his colleague ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf Fiṭrat (1886–1938).⁴⁹ As ‘Aynī explains in his introduction, he produced *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik* to correct the lack of awareness of Tajik writers of the Soviet state’s appreciation for “the language and literature of the nations” and the “value and prestige that they gave to literature generally.” This ignorance, he suggests, was the result of the Uzbek government’s neglect. As cultural authorities and critics in the Uzbek state institutions became more hostile to “the classics,” ‘Aynī is suggesting, the cultural organs of the Tajik Republic (mostly still headquartered in cities of the Uzbek SSR until the early 1930s) could fulfill the mandate of Soviet nationalities policy on behalf of Transoxanian “literature generally.”⁵⁰

Scholars have generally explained the defection of many former enthusiasts of Chaghatay to Tajik literature and cultural work as a matter of self-preservation, but I propose that it also had an element of triage. That is, in political terms, Tajik identity certainly began as what Khalid has called a “residual category” from the national delimitation, but in cultural terms, the Tajik national project ultimately became a vessel for those aspects of the Chaghatay project that no longer had a place in Uzbek public culture in the late 1920s.⁵¹ ‘Aynī thus set the course for other Transoxanian intellectuals who decided, at a moment of state hostility to tradition, that the heritage that they wanted to rescue from oblivion was not specifically Turkic but more broadly classical.⁵² In this respect, his effort to turn this residual category into an essential one was a remarkable success.

This semi-national reading of ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* is in line with his statements on classical literature during the ensuing language reform debates. Unlike many of his colleagues, he does not suggest that a specifically Central Asian version of the Persian language can be found in pre-sixteenth-century literature.⁵³ “A Tajik or an Iranian,” he wrote in 1928, “understands and likes the works of Sa‘dī, Ḥāfiẓ, Niẓāmī, and so on to the same degree as the works of Rūdakī, Kamāl Khujandī . . . and so on. Whatever difficulties a Tajik encounters in understanding some words taken from Old Persian [sic: Pahlavi] by Firdawsī, an Iranian will have too.”⁵⁴ In the defensive preface that ‘Aynī’s Iranian colleague Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī (1887–1957) appended to *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik* to ensure its approval in Moscow, he emphasizes this aspect of the work. Describing Central Asia as “the oldest source and wellspring of Persian literature,” Lāhūtī suggests that today, as in the time of Rūdakī, it is the Central Asian “Persian writers” such as Fiṭrat, Zihni, and ‘Aynī who can resurrect “a dead literature.” This is both a task of new writing and proper anthological recontextualization of the classics. “The contemporary literature of the Tajiks,” he explains, “is like a rose garden that for many years has had no gardener and hasn’t been watered, and needs a lot of

⁴⁹ Baldauf, “Kraevedenie,” 10.

⁵⁰ ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 3–4.

⁵¹ Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 291–92, 306–7.

⁵² Following these interwar Turks on their intellectual journey from rejection to recuperation of classical Persian literature should remind us of the ways in which the term “Persianate” is inadequate, and may help us understand the absence of an equivalent emic term. There are costs to an excessive emphasis on the relationship between this multilingual tradition and the Persian language specifically, a language in which some but not all of its participants could read and write, and in which some but not all of its rhetorical and generic conventions developed.

⁵³ That argument was made in a puzzling form by the poet and journalist Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī (1895–1944), who explained that medieval Persian can be divided already between the “city language,” heir to the “Pahlavi language,” and the “mountain language,” heir to the “Dari language”—the former implied to be Iranian Farsi, and the second Tajik. He evinces as evidence couplets from Rūmī’s *Maḡnavī-i ma‘navī* and one of Ḥāfiẓ’s ghazals that refer to Pahlavi and Dari, and takes the two poets as models of two literary languages, nearly mutually incomprehensible (a difficult conclusion to imagine): “if you put these two divans by ancient poets before you and become acquainted with them, you will understand well what kind of difficulty to understanding the poet Rūmī presents, having composed his speech in city language, and how easily comprehensible to the masses Ḥāfiẓ is, having composed his discourse in mountain language.” ‘Azīzī, “Bah zabān,” 360. See also Zihni, “Maṣlaḥat-i man,” 436–37.

⁵⁴ ‘Aynī, “Dar aṭrāf-i zabān-i fārsī,” 162.

arrangement and trimming. I am certain that the honored master has established literary masses [sic] among the new, earnest Tajik youths, and they will make very firm steps toward the unity of a literary movement in the Persian language."⁵⁵ For Lāhūtī, the distinctness of the Tajik case offered a vantage point from which to reframe the Persian canon and remake Persian literature on an international basis. Like the Transoxanian intellectuals who redirected their hopes for the preservation of heritage from Turkophone to Persophone scholarship and literary production, Lāhūtī regarded Tajik literature as a particularizing project whose results could then be generalized.

In a sense, this conception of national culture is in perfect agreement with Stalin's framing of the national question in his speeches and writings of the second half of the 1920s, which emphasized the dialectical process by which differentiation of more distinct nations would eventually permit the development of an international socialist culture. 'Aynī's wavering image of the Tajik nation in his anthology, both primordial and provisional, reflects the tensions in that framing. By the early 1940s, however, these tensions were more or less resolved. In the process, a transhistorical category of Tajik literature was reified in ways that far exceeded the polemical position of 'Aynī's *Namūnah*, whereas "pan-Iranism" gained wide currency as a term of abuse for orientalists and cosmopolitans like Lāhūtī who regarded Persian literature as fundamentally nonnational.

Stalinabad 1940

'Aynī's inclusion of Persian poetry composed by Turks, and the defection of Chaghatayist intellectuals to the Tajik cultural sphere, suggested that the ambit of Persian literature exceeded the Tajik political project. In the late 1920s, one of these defectors, the Samarkandi critic Nazr-allāh Biktāsh (1903–1938), derived from this mismatch a radically negative conclusion. As he wrote in a manifesto circulated privately in 1930, "after the advent of Islam, for the entire Muslim East, a court language, the feudal Persian style, became recognized as universal," such that "even the language of the Turks' dynasties and their courts couldn't be rid of it." The historical relationship of the Tajik people to literary Persian, he argued, must likewise be understood as an alien imposition of "the feudal language and style of Iran," and not a basis for a new national literature.⁵⁶ Biktāsh's manifesto, together with the contemporaneous pulping of *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik*, marks the high-water mark of "cultural revolution" in Transoxanian literary criticism. Biktāsh and his circle of young radicals, seeking to "proletarianize" Central Asian literature, developed a trenchant sociological critique of the cultural capital functions of Persianate classics in education, and turned to folkloristics as an alternative to literary classics as such. In the second half of the 1920s, an orientation of literary criticism toward sociology and class analysis was widespread in the Soviet academy and literary journals, and Biktāsh's stance was no doubt inspired in part by prominent Russian "vulgar sociologist" critics such as Valerian Pereverzev (1882–1968).⁵⁷ But, as we have seen, the sociological orientation of late Ottoman Turkist literary criticism was already part of Ibrāhīmī's milieu in 1922 Baku, and the orientation of Chaghatayists toward Istanbul and Baku makes this a likely supplementary source for Tajik class analysis of literature. By the end of the 1930s, Biktāsh had perished in the purges, whereas 'Aynī had survived, and the Tajik literary establishment had definitively embraced the Persian canon. But the relationship between the Persian canon, the Soviet Eastern nations, and Iran continued to drive Soviet debates about Persian literary history throughout the Stalin period.

Between the 1926 anthology that initiated Tajik literary historiography, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik*, and the 1940 anthology that cemented a durable consensus narrative,

⁵⁵ 'Aynī, *Namūnah*, viii.

⁵⁶ Biktāsh, "Dar aṭrāf-i zabān-i tājikī," 536–37.

⁵⁷ Emerson, "Literary Theory," 76–79, 85–87.

Namunahoji adabijoti toçik (Samples of Tajik Literature), four distinct episodes in succession changed the Soviet Eastern literary-critical landscape. First, as we have seen, during the “cultural revolution” years of the first Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), proletarian writers’ organizations questioned the relevance of the Persian canon to Tajik national literature. Second, the establishment of the union-wide Union of Soviet Writers with republic-level affiliates in 1932–1934 delegitimized the proletarian organizations’ attacks on the canon. The formation of the writers’ union also spurred the institutionalization of modular national literatures with long, distinct histories and provided a range of institutional opportunities for writers and literary bureaucrats from different republics to learn from each other’s formulations.⁵⁸ Third, Soviet participation in the international Firdawsī Millennium Celebration of 1934 inspired a series of jubilee celebrations (1937–1941, then continued after the Second World War) for prestigious canonical writers who could be connected with particular Soviet national literatures, which cumulatively heightened the value of classical Persian poets within the symbolic economy of Soviet literature.⁵⁹ Fourth, as a result of the second and third developments, the question of the relationship between the historiography of Soviet Eastern national literatures, Iran, and the Persian language came to a head in the polemic over pan-Iranism (at its height 1938–1941, but continuing until 1953).

All of these developments left their mark on the palimpsestic *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, produced by a committee of young and old writers and critics of diverse backgrounds and ideological commitments, with an unsigned introduction by the Russian Jewish orientalist Iosif Braginskii (1905–1989).⁶⁰ An examination of this anthology will therefore reveal a picture of Soviet Persian literary historiography, for Transcaucasia as well as Transoxania, at the moment when it solidified into a consensus narrative, while also suggesting the contingencies and polyphonic aspects of that consensus and its relationship with other visions of the Persian classics, both national and nonnational. In spite of its title and its emergence from anti-pan-Iranist polemic, this anthology’s vision of Persian literature strays from its national or even regional focus to an even greater degree than ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah*. Thus, although *Namunaho* may be accurately described as an end product of the transformation of cosmopolitan Persianate *adab* into a set of nationally delimited canons, it also shows us the new international and interregional visions of Persian literature that this delimitation produced.

Namunaho draws from *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik* many of its choices of authors, much of its argumentative framing, and its apparatus of non-Soviet sources for texts and scholarly background. It also owes a deeper structural debt to ‘Aynī’s anthology, from its division between pre-1917 and post-1917 literature to its arrangement of the elements of each entry. But the gap between 1926 and 1940 is visible on each page, in the anthology’s use of exclusively Gregorian dates (‘Aynī used Hijri dates for preconquest writers) and Latin script (in fact, by the time of *Namunaho*, the Latin script adopted a decade earlier had already been legally replaced by Cyrillic, but the transition would take several more years to complete). In accommodation of the late-1920s reevaluation of folk culture, it includes sections on “folklore before the revolution” and “Soviet folklore” (the term was rendered in Latin script as “folklor”). The volume contains almost no literature produced between 1905 and 1917, reflecting the purge and execution of most of the former Jadids and, even in the

⁵⁸ The best study of the 1934 Congress from the standpoint of nationalities policy is Kathryn Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku.” On the generation split in Tajik literature, see Nicholas Seay, “Soviet-Tajik Writing,” 119–35.

⁵⁹ On the Soviet Firdawsī Jubilee, see *Literaturnaia gazeta*; and “Tysiacheletnyi iubilei Ferdousi,” 1. The Pushkin Jubilee has been the subject of intensive scholarly analysis: see Sandler, “The 1937 Pushkin Jubilee,” 193–213. On other jubilees for national writers, see Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics*, 81–88; and Kaplan, “Art of Nation-Building.” The Iranian writer Buzurg ‘Alavī described his experience of the Navā’ī Jubilee in *Ūzbakhā*, 20–54. On the Iranian Firdawsī commemoration, see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 124–32; and Grigor, *Building Iran*, 46–75.

⁶⁰ Ajni et al., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*; Ahmed, Haag-Higuchi, and Nölle-Karimi, *Modernity and Modernism*, introduction by Thomas Loy (where I quote the introduction, the translation is my own). For fuller context on this anthology, see Samuel Hodgkin, introduction to “Preface to *Namūnahā-i Adabiyāt-i Tājik*.”

case of those who survived, like ‘Aynī, the rejection of their pre-Soviet experiments with indigenous literary modernity. Although the later anthology contains more pages covering precolonial literature, it is far less concerned with recovering minor poets, sampling only twenty-three precolonial writers to ‘Aynī’s eighty-three, but providing more extensive introductions to those who are included. In short, it is less of a sourcebook, and more of a solidified curriculum for future teachers in the Tajik state educational system.

Of those twenty-three precolonial writers, only ten had appeared in ‘Aynī’s anthology, five of them canonically significant beyond Central Asia (Rūdakī, Daqīqī, Ibn Sīnā, Niẓāmī ‘Arūzī, and Kamāl Khujandī), and only five from ‘Aynī’s vast collection of less famous local writers. Of the remainder, almost all were canonical writers who occupied prestigious positions in the orientalist and Iranian nationalist canon of Persian literature. Some of these had originated or had careers in Khurasan or Transoxania, but had been excluded from ‘Aynī’s collection for one reason or another (Firdawsī, Nāṣir Khusraw, ‘Umar Khayyām, Jāmī, and Ḥilālī),⁶¹ but even more were definitively non-Central Asian, hailing from either Iran and the Caucasus (Khāqānī, Niẓāmī Ganjavī, Sa’dī, ‘Ubayd Zākānī, Ḥāfiẓ) or from Mughal India (Zīb al-Nisā’, Bīdil). Some of these non-Central Asian poets had been mentioned in ‘Aynī’s anthology without formal inclusion, as in his repeated allusions to Bīdil’s influence on eighteenth- to early twentieth-century Central Asian literary style. In *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, however, they were included alongside the Tajiks, albeit without any claim that they were themselves Tajik (beyond the title of the anthology itself).

In fact, whereas the poets most clearly associated with Central Asia are presented without ethnic markers, it is the disputed figures for whom ethnic identifiers are provided. Most Iranian and Transcaucasian poets are explicitly identified as part of “Perso-Tajik” (*fārs-tājik*) literature, whereas Niẓāmī Ganjavī is a “brilliant poet of Azerbaijan.”⁶² In many of these cases, special emphasis is placed on the poets’ reception not only in Central Asian Persian literature, but also in classical “Uzbek,” “Azerbaijani,” and Indo-Persian literature. In fact, the classical portion of the anthology is everywhere deeply concerned with premodern and modern reception. That is, the anthology as a whole is teleologically focused on providing Soviet Tajik readers, unschooled in *adab*, with a sufficient sense of the literary tradition that set the conditions for the postclassical and early Soviet Persian literature of Central Asia. That traditional background, however, is emphatically de-territorialized by the *fārs-tājik* designation and through frequent and unapologetic references to geographies beyond Central Asia. This hyphenated designation, in various forms (*tājiki-fārsī*, *fārsī-yi tājiki*), preserves a certain ambiguity. ‘Aynī had used it in his writings of the 1920s to distinguish a local subset of Persian language and literature, whereas in 1930s polemics, scholars such as E. E. Bertels (1890–1957) had used it to stake out the internationalist position that was ultimately rejected as pan-Iranism. By the 1940 anthology, the hyphenated amalgamation was safe again, insofar as it claimed all Persian literature, in a nonexclusive sense, for Tajikistan.⁶³ But in the postwar revival of anti-pan-Iranism, these hyphenated terms would be definitively excised from the Tajik critical lexicon.

This is not what we might expect from the end product of Soviet anti-pan-Iranism and literary nationalization, but in fact *Namunaho* provides us with an accurate microcosm of how classical Persian literature would be treated in subsequent Soviet scholarship, curricula, and public culture, whether in Moscow, in the eastern republics, or in cultural diplomacy with India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. Very little remains of ‘Aynī’s vision of the anthology as a means of recovering the forgotten local literary past. Instead, in a complete reversal of the late 1920s sociological critics’ radical suspicion of the Persian canon, the

⁶¹ The scholar S. Uluğ-zoda explicitly frames Nāṣir Khusraw’s inclusion as an act of reclamation, rescuing a progressive poet from his association with Isma‘ilism and the malign, British imperialist influence of the Agha Khan: Uluğ-zoda, “Nosir Xisrav,” 44.

⁶² Ajni et al., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, 13, 69, 85, 90, 103, 155.

⁶³ Shukurov, *Khuroson ast in jo*, 167.

volume's editors are fully invested in the currency of literary prestige, as defined by the multinational and international marketplace of cultural capital. Rather than intervening in the internecine and regional polemics among Transoxanian critics and cultural bureaucrats, *Namunaho* curates a literary pantheon with a cache recognizable not only to Turkish or Indian diplomats, but even to Russian and Western elite readers only casually acquainted with Persian poetry. Whereas 'Aynī introduces the reader to non-courtly poets to suggest that classical Persian verse was not an elite phenomenon but an outgrowth of the cultural life of the people, *Namunaho* reconfirms the progressive credentials of familiar figures, from 'Ubayd's harsh satire of religion and feudalism to Sa'dī's humanism.⁶⁴ The dimension of contestation with Turkic chauvinism in 'Aynī's earlier work is likewise entirely absent from *Namunaho*, along with the Persian compositions of poets such as Navā'ī and Mashrab, because for the Tajik literary scholars and cultural bureaucrats who received their training from *Namunaho* and the textbooks that followed it, classical literature no longer needed to prove the existence of an autochthonous Tajik nation.

By 1940, the Tajik SSR was already an institutionalized fact, under no threat of erasure, and its representatives were in the ascendant. In fact, for much of the post-Stalin period, Tajik literature and culture would be disproportionately visible in the multinational and international spheres, because of the institutional clout of two intellectuals of the generation who rose to prominence during the purges as opponents of pan-Iranism: Bābājān Ghafūrov (1908–1977) and Mīrzā Tūrsūnzādah (1911–1977).⁶⁵ Ghafūrov, a historian and cultural bureaucrat, benefited from the shake-up of the Soviet academy during de-Stalinization, ascending in 1956 to the directorship of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow, which he occupied for over twenty years, advocating a maximally expansive vision of Tajik history on a union-wide stage. Tūrsūnzādah, a prominent poet in the Stalin period, became a key figure of thaw internationalism as the long-term chairman of the Soviet African-Asian Solidarity Committee and published collections of verse that highlighted the shared heritage of Central and South Asia. As Artemy Kalinovsky has shown, during the Khrushchev thaw, in the economic and cultural spheres, Central Asia underwent a process partially analogous to decolonization.⁶⁶ This shift cemented the presence of classical Persianate writers in the general secondary and university curriculum of the Eastern republics, each now associated with only one nationality, but some appearing in other republics' curricula under the rubric of world literature, and in translation.⁶⁷ This was far from the delimitation of Persian literature suggested by Ibrāhīmī's position at Baku State University in 1922. The situation more closely resembled the position of Persian classics in the Iranian state school curriculum than in India or Turkey, where young people only read Persian classics in specialized upper-level courses or in religious settings outside of formal schooling.

The primary task for representatives outside of Tajikistan, then, was to situate the cultural history of the Tajiks, formally recognized but permanently somewhat obscure, in relation to a Persian canon that commanded universal familiarity and respect. That is, Tajik literary representatives did not need to be armed for interethnic disputation within the region (as in the 1920s) or for contestation of shared heritage with other Persophone nations (as in the late 1930s). Rather, they needed to establish a field of reference that would be familiar to their peers in other cultural bureaucracies, whether these were Russian intelligentsia raised to admire Ḥāfiẓ through fin de siècle Symbolist translations or committed South Asian writers who would appreciate a reference to Amīr Khusraw. As a result, although postclassical canons and folkloristics continued to differentiate along national

⁶⁴ Ajni et al., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, 117, 105.

⁶⁵ Kirasirova, "Sons of Muslims," 106–132; Kalinovsky, *Laboratory*, 43–66.

⁶⁶ Kalinovsky, *Laboratory*.

⁶⁷ On translations of classical Persian poets to other Soviet Persianate languages for a young readership, see Hodgkin, "Persian Poetry."

lines in the Cold War period, national canons of pre-Timurid Persian literature underwent not a further parting of ways, but a convergence.

Conclusion: From Tajik Nation to Persianate International

The path of canon formation marked out by these three anthologies allows us to see not only the process by which Central Asian Persian literature came to represent the newly nationalized Tajik folk before the world, but also the transformation of this nationalized Tajik canon into an institution of surrogate representation for Persophone peoples everywhere. Thus, the introduction of *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik* justifies its inclusion of Iranian poets by pointing out that “the Tajik common people consider the entirety of this civilizational heritage to be their own, and they recognize the great writers and poets of this literature to be their own writers and poets.”⁶⁸ By the same token, the volume’s epigraph, from Stalin’s 1925 telegram of congratulations to the new Tajik ASSR, urges the Tajik workers to “show the entire East that you are the best of your ancestors’ progeny, holding firmly aloft in your hands the flag of liberation.”⁶⁹

Although this post-national approach to canon formation owed much to the old Russian imperial dream that Central Asia might become a bridgehead for domination of the East, it also prefigured postcolonial internationalism. In 1949, during a revival of anti-pan-Iranist discourse as part of the all-union anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the future star of Soviet Persianate internationalism, Tursunzadah, explained the inclusion of Iranian poets in Tajik literature as a sort of custodianship. The Iranian bourgeois press, he explains, “not only doesn’t appreciate the classics, but even openly rejects or falsifies them. . . . We, by contrast, lovingly and carefully preserve the best in the works of Sa’di and Hafiz.” After the Iranian revolution, “the Tajik people will return to the Persians (*persam*) the legacy of their poets in its original glory and brilliance.” Tursunzadah preserves the nationalist conceit that literary heritage is a form of property that can only belong to one nation at a time. However, by combining this fiction of national heritage with a notion of kinship among the Persophone nations, he derives a non-European variant of orientalist surrogacy that disrupts the fiction of autochthonous national culture. The Tajik nation, as a young and vigorous relative, can act as an executor for Iran’s national property until it recovers. In completion of the cycle initiated by Ayni’s coinage of “Tajik-Persian” literature, Tursunzadah declares: “Then, we saw in this term a means of restoring our indisputable rights to the literary heritage, to protect ourselves from the frenzied ‘Iranization’ of our Tajik culture. Now it is obvious that this term has become obsolete.”⁷⁰ Lähuti, who by this point had been out of official favor for over a decade, could only complain in an appeal to Stalin that the advocates of this maximalist Tajik canon had effectively declared, “what’s mine is mine, what’s yours is mine.”⁷¹ Stalin did not reply.

And yet, in a real sense, Iranians of the constitutionalist generation had drafted precisely the critique of Iran’s inadequate guardianship of its literary heritage that Soviet Central Asian literary bureaucrats now took up. Furthermore, it was precisely that generation’s demands for the institutionalization of Persian literature that the Soviet literary system fulfilled. Lähuti himself, in his journalistic writings before his 1922 escape to the Soviet Union and subsequent transformation into a communist, contrasted Western nations’ “provision of the necessaries for literature’s advancement” with the situation in Iran, where so many “great ones’ divans have disappeared and their works remained behind the veil of oblivion.”⁷² In the Stalin period, the Soviet state’s preservation of Persian manuscripts, its careful

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv–xv.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, v.

⁷⁰ Tursun-zoda, “Protiv kosmopolitizma,” 3.

⁷¹ RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 878, doc. 4, 19.

⁷² Lähuti, “Iran,” 49, 53.

and lavish printed editions of Persian classics, and its statues and public celebrations of Persian and Persianate poets were popular talking points in Iranian travelogues of the Soviet Union.⁷³

As James Pickett has suggested, “The Soviet and Iranian leftist visions of modernity overlapped more than they diverged and Iranian intellectuals found ample room to pursue their cultural reform project.”⁷⁴ But the appeal of the Stalinist program for cultural memorialization and monumentalization had an appeal for Iranian intellectuals beyond the political left. Sa‘īd Nafīsī (1895–1966) is the most famous instance of an Iranian scholar and writer who became an important cultural ambassador precisely because of his distance from Iranian Communist politics. As secretary of the Pahlavi state-sponsored Iranian Literary Society, he was invited to speak at the Moscow celebration of the 1934 Firdawsī Jubilee. He later recalled the experience of that speech:

Until that day I had never heard my own voice through an amplifier. While the first sentence in Persian came out of my mouth, and my voice reverberated in that huge space in the presence of all those men and women under the high vault of the theater, I entered a state that is difficult for me to express. The translator translated my speech sentence by sentence. Obviously, my speech was about the greatness of Firdawsī’s place in the world, the importance of his epic in world literature and for relations between Iran and the peoples of the Soviet Union. Every time I spoke a sentence that excited [their] sentiments, the sound of the attendees’ applause resounded through that vast space, and filled me with such rapture, I can’t say.⁷⁵

The scale of the Stalinist echo chamber, with its institutional capacities for amplification and translation, offered Iranian nationalists a place in world culture to suit their most chauvinistic fantasies. Meanwhile, the element of contestation—the notion that Persian literature could only belong to the world by not belonging to Iran—remained for the most part a polemic directed at Soviet insiders, infuriating émigrés such as Lāhūtī more often than foreign Iranian visitors.

Well into the period of post-Stalin Cold War internationalism, the second-world cultural apparatus of literary magazines and conferences would remain a favored megaphone for Persianate nostalgists from across West and South Asia, as well as from the Soviet East. In articles in *Lotus* and speeches at jubilees for poets such as Sayat Nova (1963) and Amīr Khusraw (1975), they emphasized the multilingual and transregional dimensions of the Eastern classics, their simultaneous national exemplarity and humanistic universalism. The relationship between these non-Soviet and Soviet Eastern writers and literary scholars served the competition and sometimes the shared interests of nations and multinational states. By the same token, those states’ violent internal and international politics set the terms for the writers’ and scholars’ mutual engagement. Still, on both the interpersonal and the institutional level, this was a mutually beneficial conversation that was only sometimes routed through Moscow. The legacy of that conversation was a new framing for a world literary heritage whose influence would go far beyond the former Persianate world.

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⁷³ See Nafīsī, “Safarhā-yi man bih mā-varā’ Khazar,” 49; and ‘Alavī, *Ūzbakhā*, 29–30, 33–34.

⁷⁴ Pickett, “Soviet Civilization,” 817.

⁷⁵ Nafīsī, “Safarhā-yi man bih mā-varā’ Khazar,” 48–49.

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ARTICLE

The Guide to Knowledge: The Journal *Rahbar-i Dānish* and Its Role in Creating a Soviet Tajik Literature (1927–1932)

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Abstract

Despite being in operation for a mere five years, the Soviet-era Tajik (Persian) journal *Rahbar-i Dānish* (1927–1932) was a key venue for exploring and debating the merits of Tajik literature in the context of new ideological and literary trends. Established litterateurs as well as literary newcomers published examples of their literature and literary criticism in this first Tajik monthly social, educational, and literary journal. The present article reviews the history of *Rahbar-i Dānish* and some of its authors to trace their influence on Tajik literature and literary criticism in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The article addresses the difficulties of creating a Soviet Tajik literature and scrutinizes the various genres featured in the literary section of the journal. Finally, it presents the trajectories of two literary newcomers, Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām (who later became known as Jalol Ikromi) and Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī (who died in a Soviet prison in 1944), whose short stories were most prominent in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. This article is based on an almost complete set of the forty-five issues of the journal, published between August 1927 and March 1932.

Keywords: journals; literary criticism; Soviet Central Asia; Tajikistan; Tajik literature

Yes, the cave of the Khoja Sokter cemetery was frightening. Not merely because of its narrow entrance that led into a deep and dark hole, but more especially because people said that inside this abyss was the roost of demons, the hiding place of fairy folk and evil spirits, and the retreat of dragons.¹

Despite being in operation for only five years, the Soviet-era Tajik monthly journal *Rahbar-i Dānish* (1927–1932) was a key venue for exploring and debating the merits of Tajik literature in the context of new ideological and literary trends. In this forum, established litterateurs as well as literary newcomers published examples of their literature and literary criticism. The journal could count among its contributors Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī, Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī, and many others among the local (and Iranian emigrant) pre-Soviet elite. Almost the entire younger generation of Tajik writers who later became known as “the Second” or “Komsomol” generation of Tajik literature took their first literary steps in the pages of this journal.² The same applies to literary scholars, who also had their first literary analyses, reviews, and translations published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. Some of them made careers in the Soviet Union after World War II and attained important positions in the cultural administration apparatus of Tajikistan. Others, such as Narzullāh Ḥaidari “Biktāsh” and much of the cohort of Iranian communist refugees, fell victim to the terror of the 1930s, and their

¹ ‘Ainī, “Aḥmad-i dīvband,” *Rahbar-i Dānish*, 8/9 (1928), 46.

² Still valuable as a short introduction to the lives and work of the Komsomol generation are Bečka’s “Tajik Literature” and “Men of Letters.”

works and biographies were largely suppressed and deleted from Soviet memory.³ The debates of this multivocal ensemble and their controversial texts are printed side by side, and often counterposed to one another, in the forty-five issues of the journal published between August 1927 and December 1930 in Uzbekistan and from October 1931 to March 1932 in Tajikistan.⁴ This article reviews the history of *Rahbar-i Dānish* and some of its authors to trace their influence on Tajik literature and literary criticism in the late 1920s and early 1930s. During this period, a “Tajik” nation was carved out of the Persianate sphere, and the Persian language “was divested from a multiethnic, transregional, cosmopolitan high culture” and Sovietized as “Tajik.”⁵ After a brief description of the difficulties of creating a Tajik literature and literary criticism in the Soviet cultural environment, the article focuses on the journal’s founding and rise to prominence. It then scrutinizes the various genres featured in the literary section of *Rahbar-i Dānish* and finally presents two short stories (*hikāya*) of Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī and the trajectories of two literary newcomers whose prose writings were most prominent in the journal: Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām and Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azizī.

The Soviet Literary and Cultural Environment in the 1920s and 1930s

In the first two decades of Soviet rule, culture was of constant and major concern to the political leadership. Literature in particular was considered an essential tool for educating individuals and nations and turning them into suitable members of Soviet society. Along its promised “road to Communism . . . written texts assumed enormous importance in the political life of the country.”⁶ To translate Soviet ideology and make the Soviet narrative accessible to the masses, or proletariat, borrowing Kathryn Douglas Schild’s apt phrasing, “Soviet society didn’t just need new literature, it needed new writers.”⁷ As if the creation of different national-language literatures was not a big enough task, especially in the newly created republics in Central Asia with their rather small pro-Soviet cultural elite, these new writers also were needed as state workers—in publishing houses, as newspaper and textbook editors, and as administrators and educators.⁸

Between 1927 and 1932, the political atmosphere, economic order, and ideological framework in the Soviet Union changed radically. These five years saw Stalin’s victory over his internal competitors, the declaration of yet another “great transformation,” and the departure from Lenin’s New Economic Policy and move toward an authoritative command economy. The forced collectivization and sedentarization campaigns led to famines, armed resistance, and excessive use of state violence against “enemies” all over Central Asia. In terms of culture and literature, this revolutionary period saw an aggressive fight against

³ Biographical information on contributors to *Rahbar-i Dānish* is given where they or their works appear in this text.

⁴ While writing this paper I had access to a limited number of issues of *Rahbar-i Dānish*. In my sample the years 1928 and 1929 were complete (a total of twenty-four issues, seven of which were double issues). From the three issues published in 1927 I had a full copy of issue 3 (published in November 1927) and half of issue 2 (October 1927). From 1930, four issues (7, 10, 11, and 12) out of twelve were missing. Altogether, I had access to a total of 1,025 printed pages—897 of which were in Arab script, with 128 in Latin script. I had no access to the issues of 1931 and 1932 (it is not clear how many issues were published in this period, but there were most probably six; see note 42). My thanks go to Lutz Rzehak, who in 1993 obtained the copies of *Rahbar-i Dānish* from the National Library of Russia in Moscow and shared them with me. Samuel Hodgkin kindly provided the copy of issue 2 of 1927, held at New York Public Library.

⁵ On the destruction of the Persianate sphere in the Soviet Union, see Pickett, *Polymaths*, 248–56, quotation 255. On the process of transforming Persian into Tajik in the first half of the twentieth century, see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*.

⁶ Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture*, xii.

⁷ Schild, “National Literatures,” 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 57. For Tajikistan, see for example Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī’s anthology of Tajik literature *Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik*, which lists only a handful of writers for the post-revolutionary period (1917–1925). On this work and its reception in *Rahbar-i Dānish*, see later discussion.

all signs of backwardness and the first show trials against the “old elites,” who were replaced by a first cohort of Soviet-educated intellectuals and liquidated step by step.⁹ The introduction of a Latin-based alphabet put an end to the centuries-old Perso-Arabic script, established a standard pronunciation for Tajik (and other languages in Central Asia), and helped to produce new Sovietized readers.¹⁰

The year 1932 marked a watershed moment in the field of Soviet literature. In April 1932, the political, ideological, and institutional struggles of the cultural revolution culminated in a resolution of the Central Committee on “restructuring literary and artistic organizations,” which aimed at the streamlining of literary voices. It was the prelude to the formation of a unified Soviet Writers’ Union. The proclamation of socialist realism one month later finally put an end to the aesthetic and cultural pluralism of the revolutionary 1920s and helped strengthen direct party control over literary production and its various stakeholders.¹¹ When the First Congress of Soviet Writers was finally held in Baku in 1934, Tajik literature and literary criticism were still in the identification stage, and a school of professional writers and criticism was just starting to develop.¹²

However, there was not much time for development in Stalin’s Soviet Union. By the mid-1930s, the political climate had become so tense that every Soviet Central Asian intellectual “felt like an acrobat . . . stumbling along a thin tightrope barely keeping his balance.”¹³ A little later, this unpredictable and dangerous tightrope act led directly to the Great Terror of 1937 and 1938. In contrast to the literary scene in neighboring Uzbekistan, which at the end of the 1930s found itself deprived of its leading figures and “deprived . . . of the best of its ingenuity and creative potential,” in Tajikistan at least two literary heavyweights with a pre-Soviet past survived the Stalinist repressions of the late 1930s relatively unscathed.¹⁴ Šadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī and Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī were declared Soviet heroes and became the undisputed icons of Tajik prose (‘Ainī) and poetry (Lāhūtī) in the post-purge phase, especially after their deaths in 1954 and 1957.¹⁵

⁹ On Soviet Russian literature and literary criticism in this early Stalinist period, see Dobrenko, “Transformations.” On Tajikistan and accusations against Tajik intellectuals in the late 1920s and early 1930s, see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 292–306; and more recently Roberts, “Old Elites,” 319–25, who relies mainly on Jalol Ikromi’s recollections *Yoddoshtho*.

¹⁰ On the process and effects of the Latinization of Tajik, see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 222–58.

¹¹ Clark and Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture*, 3–6. General guidelines for socialist realism were established during the First Congress of Soviet Writers held in August 1934; *ibid.*, 139–49.

¹² On the congress and the two years of preparation, see Schild, “National Literatures.” On the Tajik delegation and Lāhūtī’s role, see *ibid.*, 105–6. On the long and conflict-ridden process of creating a Tajik Union of Writers, see Nabiev, *Ta’rikh*, esp. 24–36.

¹³ Mordekhay Bachaev, cited in Loy, *Bukharan Jews*, 47.

¹⁴ Baldauf, “Educating the Poets,” 201. In a letter to Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī dated November 6, 1937, ‘Ainī expressed great concern about fierce ideological attacks and accusations against him launched in two newspapers in Uzbekistan; *Mukotiba*, 34.

¹⁵ Šadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī (1878–1954), the so-called founder of Soviet Tajik prose (Bečka, *Sadriiddin Ayni*, 43), was born in a village in the oasis of Bukhara. He studied in several madrasas in Bukhara and became part of the local Jadid movement. In the early twentieth century, ‘Ainī cofounded a new-method school, wrote textbooks, and contributed articles to periodicals published in the Emirate of Bukhara and Turkestan. After being arrested and tortured by officials of the last Emir of Bukhara in 1917, he was moved out of the Emirate and spent the rest of his life in Samarkand. In 1933, he became the first president of the newly established Tajik Union of Writers. In 1951, he was elected the first president of the Tajik Academy of Sciences. Bečka, *Sadriiddin Ayni*, 29–94; Hitchins, “‘Aynī.”

Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī (1887–1957) was born in Kermanshah. In 1922, he led an unsuccessful revolt in Tabriz and was forced to leave for the newly established Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. He went on to Moscow in 1923, where he joined the Communist Party in 1924. In the same year he authored the lyrics for the national anthem of the newly created Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and translated the Soviet national anthem into Persian. In 1926, his anthology *Adabiyāt-i surkh* (Red Literature) was published in Moscow and became famous among literates throughout Central Asia. Hodgkin, “Lāhūtī,” xv–xxii; Holt “Performing,” 217–23.

On the role modeling and mythmaking around ‘Ainī since 1935, see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 307–12. On ‘Ainī, Lāhūtī, and their followers, the so-called Komsomol generation of Tajik writers, see Seay, “Writing Intelligentsia.”

Yet, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a period that became known as the formative years of the Tajik nation and Tajik literature, this outcome was not at all predictable. As in many other national literatures of the Soviet Union, the Tajik literary landscape was largely unknown and its literary canon and core cadre of writers remained to be formed.¹⁶ When Stalin sent his first greetings to Dushanbe, the capital of the newly established Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), and “all the working people of Tajikistan” in March 1925, it was still far from clear who belonged to this Tajik nation and what this new Tajik language and literature (or culture in general) should look and sound like.¹⁷ In the years to come, cultural and political activists of all kinds participated in making Tajiks and Tajikistan: politicians, scientists, writers, literary critics, and translators—sometimes all one and the same person—contributed to this Soviet nation-building project.¹⁸ Their debates were publicly discussed and disseminated in a newly created Tajik press. In August 1924, the weekly *Āvāz-i Tājik* (The Voice of the Tajik) was created for this purpose in Samarkand. In 1925, it was followed by *Tājikistān-i Surkh* (Red Tajikistan) and, two years later, by *Rahbar-i Dānish* (The Guide to Knowledge), a multi-thematic monthly “social, educational, scientific and literary journal” (*majala-i ijtimāʿī, tarbiavi, fannī va adabī*), as the subtitle of its masthead aptly put it.¹⁹

A Short but Varied History: *Rahbar-i Dānish* (1927–1932)

Although the first Tajik monthly, *Rahbar-i Dānish* was mainly aimed at informing and guiding Tajik schoolteachers, right from the start it also was the main platform for writers, poets, and intellectuals to debate and discuss a new Tajik language and literature. In an editorial on the occasion of *Rahbar-i Dānish*'s first anniversary, the journal's main goals were described as eliminating the shortcomings of the Tajik education system and supporting the “red teachers” (*muʿallimān-i surkh*) in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in their daily pedagogical work. In this endeavor, the authors of the editorial assigned a significant educational role to literature and literary criticism.²⁰ To support the Tajik government in its massive literary campaigns and the formation of a new Soviet Tajik elite, the editors of *Rahbar-i Dānish* considered it “absolutely necessary to establish and develop a new Tajik literature.”²¹ The editorial suggests that this was not easy to implement. Directly addressing intellectuals and teachers (*munavvar al-fikrān va muʿallimān*), the editorial asked them, first, to actively participate in the magazine and, second, to spread its ideas and read from it to those who were not yet able to do so themselves. Already by its second issue the journal was proclaiming: “Hey Tajik teacher! The journal *Rahbar-i Dānish* will teach you all social necessities and guide you in acquiring all methods of teaching. Never miss buying and reading it.” The masthead of almost every issue declared in bold type that “every teacher should subscribe to *Rahbar-i Dānish*.”²² But the path to knowledge was not straightforward for the journal.

¹⁶ On the creation of the Soviet Tajik literary canon, see Samuel Hodgkin's contribution in this volume, as well as later discussion in this article.

¹⁷ On “the awakening of Tajik national consciousness” as a result, rather than a precondition, of the creation of the Tajik ASSR in 1924 and its elevation to a Soviet Republic in 1929, see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 154–68; and Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 75–85. On “Tajik as a residual category,” see Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 291–315.

¹⁸ Finally, this project was defined and institutionalized by a new generation of Soviet-educated Tajik intellectuals in the post-World War II era; Yountchi, “Politics of Scholarship,”; Kalinovsky, *Laboratory*, ch. 2, 43–66.

¹⁹ For basic information on these periodicals and the meaning of the term *tājik*, as it was used from the mid-1920s in constructions such as “*zabān-i tājik*” and “*adabiyāt-i tājik*,” see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 149–57, 180. On *Tājikistān-i Surkh*, see also note 78.

²⁰ “*Dāvām-i yaksāla-i Rahbar-i Dānish*,” 1–3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2. Another goal mentioned in this article was to reach out to all Persian-speaking intellectuals (*ʿumūm-i zīāyān-i fārsizabān*), women, and workers in neighboring Afghanistan and Iran.

²² “Ey muʿallim-i tājik! *Majala-i rahbar-i dānish* tu-rā darkārhā-yi ijtimāʿī, dar āmūkhtan-i uşul-i tartīb va taʿlim rahbari khʾāhad kard. Hij vaqt az giriftan va khʾāndan-i ān ghaflat nakun,” *Rahbar-i Dānish* (hereafter RD) 2 (1927): 14. “Bāyad hij yak muʿallim ba *rahbar-i dānish* ābūna shuda namānad,” RD 2 (1927). See for example RD 8/9 (1928): 68.

In the five years of its existence, the editorial office was based in three different cities: Samarkand, Tashkent, and Stalinabad. Between 1927 and 1932 the post of editor in chief also was filled several times. Only the print run (1,500 copies) and the price of the journal (40 tin, with a discount for subscribers) remained more or less the same throughout these years. *Rahbar-i Dānish* was founded in Samarkand. The first issue, published in August 1927, had the title *Dānish-Bīnīsh* (Knowledge and Vision). The second issue, published in October 1927, opened with Manāfzāda Sābit announcing that henceforth the new title of the journal would be *Rahbar-i Dānish*.²³ “As the first issue had many weaknesses,” Manāfzāda informed readers, “I was commissioned by the editorial board to shape the journal according to contemporary standards,” and he convinced the editors to change the layout (*shakl*), the format (*andāza*), and the style (*nafāsāt*), and have the journal printed in Tashkent, where higher quality could be achieved.²⁴

In a letter to *Rahbar-i Dānish* published in issue 3 (1927), ‘Abd al-Qādir Muḥiddīnūf, then head of the Council of the People’s Commissars of Tajikistan (prime minister), congratulated the editors on their progress and assured them of continued and additional financial support from the Tajik Ministry of Education (*naẓārat-i ma‘ārif*).²⁵ However, he stipulated that the journal must reach Tajik teachers throughout Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and that half of the running costs be generated through sales. It is unlikely that these operational benchmarks were ever met.²⁶

This third issue of *Rahbar-i Dānish* was dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Almost all the articles in it celebrated the achievements in politics, culture, and education made since then, as well as workers, peasants, and women in the entire Orient. A number of Tajikistan’s successes also were reported in this issue. The establishment of the journal was seen as one element in a far larger undertaking to create a Tajik culture and identity in Soviet Central Asia. The members of the newly established Science Council of the Republic of Tajikistan (*shurā-yi ‘ilmī-i jumhurī-i Tājīkistān*) and the members of the Latin Committee (*ḥay‘at-i alifbā-yi nau*) were named.²⁷ These comrades had to cope with seemingly endless demands and an extreme scarcity of resources. The Science Council’s plan for the coming year envisioned that in 1928, in addition to the urgently needed textbooks for primary and secondary schools, books on health and hygiene (these also were continuously important topics in *Rahbar-i Dānish*) as well as four works of belles lettres (*adabiyāt-i nafīsa*) would be published on a total of twenty-three quires (printer’s sheets).²⁸

²³ Muḥammad ‘Alī Manāfzāda (1888–1940) was an Iranian communist (born in Tabriz) and is also known by his pen name “Sābit.” After the defeat of the constitutionalists Manāfzāda fled to Istanbul. In 1913, he continued to Baku (in 1913) where he wrote for the satirical magazine *Molla Nāsrāddīn* and other periodicals. In the early 1920s, he worked for some time as a teacher in Ashgabad. In 1925, he moved to Tashkent and led the first Tajik teachers’ training college. Manāfzāda contributed extensively to *Rahbar-i Dānish* and wrote the first review of the journal (published in the newspaper *Āvāz-i tājīk*, September 1927). He was arrested in 1937 and died in a Soviet labor camp.

²⁴ Manāfzāda, “Akhtār,” 2. On the members of the first editorial board see later discussion.

²⁵ ‘Abd al-Qādir Muḥiddīnūf (1892–1934), whose portrait was published along with his letter, was the son of a wealthy Bukharan entrepreneur and a leading member of the revolutionary movement in Bukhara. He had joined the Communist Party in 1919 and held senior positions in the state and party apparatus of Tajikistan in the 1920s. Muḥiddīnūf contributed several controversial articles to *Rahbar-i Dānish*. He was arrested in 1933 and shot in June 1934. On his career and biography, see Abdullaev, *Historical Dictionary*, 291; and, more extensively, Fedtke, “Soviet Nationalities Policy,” 25–38; finally, see Shakuri, *Fitna-i inqilob*, 49–55, and note 50.

²⁶ Muḥiddīnūf, “Khāṭīrahā-yi majala-i rahbar-i dānish,” 11. In this article Muḥiddīnūf explained his positivity by saying that “comrade Manāfzāda” had presented him the second, qualitatively improved issue of *Rahbar-i Dānish* in Tashkent.

²⁷ The nine members of this Scientific Council (Uyghūr, Fiṭrat, ‘Aīnī, Manāfzāda, Dhīhnī, Kāmelī, Bīktāsh, Jabbārī, and Saīd Rizā ‘Alīzāda) provided a large number of the articles published in *Rahbar-i Dānish* in the years 1927 to 1932. In the fourteen issues of the years 1927 and 1928, more than thirty articles came from these authors, and it is possible that some of the articles written without author information or with a pseudonym also may be attributed to them.

²⁸ These twenty-three quires (*varaqa-i maṭbu‘*) were part of a total of 600 quires scheduled for Tajikistan in 1928; RD 3 (1927): 36. Paper shortages were a major concern and an obstacle to the dissemination of literature (not only) in the first decades of the Soviet Union; Schild, “National Literatures,” 52–53.

Initially the editorial board (*ḥay'at-i taḥrīriya*) of *Rahbar-i Dānish* consisted of five people and was based in Samarkand, the capital of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). The editors involved were: Muḥammad Mūsavī, Muḥammad Hasanī, Uyghūr, Jab(b)ārī, and Bīktāsh.²⁹ Printing and distribution took place in Tashkent and were supervised by Sābit Manāfzāda. The spatial separation of these areas of responsibility caused many problems and delays and finally led to the relocation of the editorial team to Tashkent in May and June 1928, together with the entire Tajik State Publishing House. On this occasion, the editorial board was redesigned and Muḥammad Mūsavī was appointed the new single chief editor (*muḥarrir-i mas'ūl*).³⁰ The move to Tashkent brought another major change in the appearance of the journal. Beginning with the double issue 8/9 (1928), an extra section for contributions in Latin script was established.³¹ Yet it seems that the journal did not develop in a way that pleased everyone.

In May 1929, Mūsavī was replaced by Lāhūtī as the chief editor of *Rahbar-i Dānish*. This change in leadership was explained in the editorial of the double issue 5/6, which appeared in June 1929 (and was probably written by the new editor in chief). Here, without mentioning his name, the shortcomings and omissions of the previous disgraced editor were enumerated, and an “ideological turn” was announced. Although the first year of *Rahbar-i Dānish* was very successful, from the perspective of the new management, “the hopes for the second year [1929] [had] so far not been fulfilled. . . [since] the magazine could not keep up with the changes in society.”³² Especially in the field of literature, Lāhūtī saw major shortcomings. He believed the journal urgently needed a semblance of Marxist-Leninist informed literary criticism. In the future, he advised, “classic Tajik literature (*adabiyāt-i kilāsiki-i tājiki*) must be analyzed and criticized through a Marxist lens, so that this world-famous literature does not plant its old and contaminated ideology (*mafkūrahā-yi kuhna va pūsīda*) in the minds of the younger generation.” Just as problematic from the new editor’s point of view was the failure of the previous editorial team to bring forward a new generation of local intellectuals and writers, “which was considered one of the main goals of the journal.”³³ The articles in the central section, “Teaching and Education” (*ta'lim va tarbiya*), of the previous issues of the journal also were viewed critically in the editorial, because the texts printed there were “of no use for the teachers in the villages.” The new editors proclaimed that theory of pedagogy and child-rearing should be

²⁹ All of them also were members of the Scientific Council and/or the commission for the new Tajik (Latin) alphabet. All of them fell victim to the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. There are no entries for them in current Soviet and post-Soviet reference works. The exception is Narzullāh Ḥaidarī Bīktāsh, on whom there is a monograph written by Abdulkholiq Nabiev. On Bīktāsh’s biography and career, see Nabiev, *Narzullo-i Bektosh*, 28–78, and note 56.

³⁰ In the standard Tajik works on the history of journalism, Muḥammad Mūsavī’s name is only mentioned in passing. We do not know the years of his birth and death. Most probably Mūsavī belonged to a cohort of Iranian communists, like Lāhūtī, Manāfzāda, Kāmīlī, and others who found refuge in the Soviet Union and were then sent to Central Asia to help build up Soviet Tajikistan. Many of them (including Mūsavī, Manāfzāda, and Kāmīlī) fell victim to the purges of the 1930s. On Iranian communists and their tragic faith in the Soviet Union, see Atabaki and Ravandi-Fadai, *Zhertvy vremeni*. However, the Iranians who worked for or published in *Rahbar-i Dānish* are not mentioned in this publication.

The relocation of the editorial board, its new address in Tashkent, and the new editor in chief were announced in RD 7 (1928): 36–37.

³¹ In this issue the Latin section consisted of six pages. On the last page of the Latin section in this issue there is information (in Arabic script) that the special print types for the long “ū” and the long “ī” are not yet available and therefore could not be properly displayed in this edition. For a discussion of the new Latin alphabet for Tajik (which was largely published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*) see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 235–48.

³² This and the following quotations are from the editorial “*Rahbar-i Dānish dar rāh-i ijrā kardan-i vaẓīfahā-yi naubatī-i khūd*,” in the May/June 1929 issue.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2. The number of national authors writing in *Rahbar-i Dānish* was considered too small: “Only 20 to 25 percent of the articles stem from local writers (*navisandagān-i mahallī*).” Exceptions were the “Language and Literature” (*qism-i zabān va adabiyāt*) section and the “General Section” (*qism-i ‘umūmī*), which covered politics and society, where the percentage of local authors was slightly higher. It is not clear if authors with an Iranian background were seen as locals by the author (who was Iranian himself).

conveyed, and above all practical help should be provided. Another goal of the new editor was to offer easily understandable texts (in translation from Russian) to make Marxist-Leninist ideology more accessible to the mass of Tajik teachers and workers. Crucially, however, there had never been a reliable distribution system in place to ensure the journal reached its potential readers. In many rural regions the journal was only irregularly or not at all available.³⁴ Finally, in a short message published on the title page below the list of contents announcing the change in management, the “red teachers and writers” and the “Tajik workers” were asked not to leave the editorial team alone on its new path to improve the journal and its accessibility.”³⁵

Yet Lāhūtī remained in this leading position for only six months and was responsible for publishing only seven issues.³⁶ Despite the announcement about imminent changes to the structure of the journal, the sections remained practically the same during his tenure as editor and in the following editions.³⁷ The featured authors, frequency of publication, and distribution problems more or less went unchanged. In December 1929, after a failed attempt to go to Iran as a representative of the Comintern, Lāhūtī returned to Moscow, where he lived throughout the 1930s. With his close ties to the Kremlin, he represented and lobbied for Tajik culture and interests in the Soviet capital.³⁸

Starting with issue 12 (1929), Sīrūs Bahrām took over as “temporary editor in chief” (*muḥarrir-i mas‘ul-i muvaqqatī*), and he remained in this position until the journal was moved to Stalinabad, the capital of the Tajik ASSR, at the end of 1930.³⁹ This relocation from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan had already been announced in a decree issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Tajikistan) and published in the Latin section of *Rahbar-i Dānish* 4/5 (1930). In preparation for this relocation the Tajik Ministry of Education was instructed to create a building for the printing facilities and set up a special financial budget for publishing by the end of 1930.⁴⁰

According to Jalol Ikromi, who was offered a job as the journal’s new executive secretary (*kātib-i mas‘ul*), there was a six-month break before publishing continued in Tajikistan.⁴¹ But

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁵ Idāra, “Akhtār.” The start of the first Five-Year plan was announced by Stalin in October 1928. For a list of shops (*kiāskhā*) in Central Asian towns where *Rahbar-i Dānish* was sold, see *RD* 9 (1929): 29.

³⁶ He was chief editor for issues 5/6, 7, 8, 9, and 10/11 in 1929.

³⁷ The first section of the journal was always a “General Section” (*qism-i ‘umūmī*) consisting of political and social topics, followed by a “Pedagogical Section” (*qism-i ta‘līm va tarbiya*) and a “Literary Section” (*qism-i adabī*), sometimes supplemented by “Literary Investigations” (*taḍqīqāt-i adabī*). Other recurring sections were the “World of Women” (*jahān/dunyā-i zanān*), the “Scientific Section” (*qism-i fannī/fann va šanā‘at*), the “Health Section” (*qism-i tandurustī*), “Language” (*zabān*), the “New Alphabet” (*alifbā-yi nau*), the “Village” (*qishlāq*), “Regional Geography” (*kishvarshināsī*), “Miscellaneous” (*khabarhā-yi gunagūn*), and correspondence with readers (*quṭtī-i pochta*).

³⁸ Lāhūtī had visited Central Asia for the first time in May and June 1925. He held numerous key political posts in Soviet Central Asia (among others he was head of the national minorities section of the Central Asian Bureau, deputy commissar (minister) of education of the Tajik ASSR, and secretary of the Samarkand city commissariat). In 1929, Lāhūtī was based in Moscow but commuted frequently to Tashkent; Hodgkin, “Lāhūtī,” xviii–xx.

³⁹ Sīrūs Bahrām (1885–1981) was born in Lenkoron, Azerbaijan, and received his early education in a local Russian-language school. He graduated from the Moscow International Institute in 1925 before moving to Tashkent and later to Dushanbe. He joined the Communist Party in 1926 and held various positions in the educational sector and in the media in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Sīrūs started writing poetry in 1932 and joined the Soviet Writers’ Union in 1944. His first collection of poetry did not appear until 1975. He died in Dushanbe.

⁴⁰ *RD* 4/5 (1930): 4 (Latin section). To “eliminate illiteracy” and for the “creation of new cadres” further instructions were for construction and establishment of a central state library and a house of education and the development of a plan for the preparation of a new elite group of writers, translators, and pressmen (*ibid.*, 1–5).

⁴¹ Jalol Ikromi / Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām (1909–1997) was born in Bukhara into the family of a judge. His father died in 1924. Ikromi entered the teacher training college in Bukhara. In 1927, he published his first short stories and articles (as Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām) in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. In mid-1931, he moved from Bukhara to Stalinabad and started to work as an editor for *Rahbar-i Dānish*. He was arrested in September 1937 but released in December 1938. In 1940 the first volume of his novel “Shādī” was published. Before his death, Jalol Ikromi published ten novels and many short stories and plays in Tajikistan. On his early pieces of prose, see later discussion.

it seems that the disruption lasted even longer. From October 1931 to the end of March 1932, only six further issues of *Rahbar-i Dānish* were published.⁴² Jalāl ad-Dīn Ikrām was assisted in his daily work by a young graduate from Samarkand. In his memoirs Ikrōmi recounts the difficult restart in Stalinabad. According to him, the editorial team consisted of only two persons and the office was housed in one room, with two chairs, two tables, and two closets. “We did not even have our own typewriter,” Ikrōmi recalled. There was no corrector (*musahhih*), no accountant (*bukhgalter*), no secretary (*māshinistka*), and no typesetter (*metrampazh*). All contributions had to be written by hand and were then forwarded to the printer or typed on the typesetter of one of the other newspapers.⁴³ It is not clear if there was a manuscript ready for the April edition in 1932, but after the Central Committee’s 23 April resolution “on restructuring literary and artistic organizations,” no further issue of *Rahbar-i Dānish* was published.⁴⁴ After the proclamation of socialist realism as the only possible literary method, no other “guide to knowledge” or multivocal debate about the new Tajik national literature was required. *Rahbar-i Dānish*’s short life was over. In March 1932, after forty-six issues and more than 1,000 printed pages, the journal was discontinued. Responsibilities were redistributed and a few months later a new literary journal, *Barā-yi Adabiyāt-i Sotsiālistī* (For a Socialist Literature), continued on the path that *Rahbar-i Dānish* had taken, with some of the same staff and using only Latin script.⁴⁵

Literary Criticism in *Rahbar-i Dānish*: Searching for Tajik Literates and Literature

When Manāfzāda took over the lead role on the editorial board of *Rahbar-i Dānish* in 1927, he opened the literary section with a programmatic statement about the journal’s new plans for publishing “revolutionary literature.”⁴⁶ He invited more submissions from younger writers, reassuring them that they need not worry about the traditional Persianate gatekeeping mechanisms for excluding those insufficiently familiar with formal conventions or canonic models, as they would be evaluated instead “from the standpoint of new technique and contemporary literature.” Furthermore, he explicitly invited all readers to participate in the criticism of the works that were published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. In other words, he sought to democratize critical authority and empower less educated (“proletarian”) readers to value and express their opinions.⁴⁷ Manāfzāda (much like the political leadership in Stalinabad) recognized *Rahbar-i Dānish* as the ideal platform for the endeavor of creating a new Tajik literature, and pushed for a new beginning: “The age of imitation, with its worn-out forms and techniques, has died. Hereafter, new pens and young seekers (*nauqalamān va havaskārān-i javān*) must get to work to give birth to a contemporary literature.”⁴⁸

Yet, the “new pens and young seekers” Manāfzāda referenced here first needed to be convinced to become Tajik writers. Most of them were bilingual and wrote in both Uzbek and

Kātib-i mas‘ul (executive secretary) was a calque from the Russian *otvetstvennii sekretar’*. The person in charge of this position was responsible for managing and controlling the editorial office, strategic development, functioning of the editorial mechanism, and delivering the journal on time. See Ikrōmi, *Yoddoshtho*, 200, 208. Ikrōmi also mentions that Muḥammadjān Ḥasanī was announced as the new editor (*muḥarrir*) in 1931, but only two persons (Ikrām himself and Maqṣūdī, the literary assistant, or *korkun-i adabī*) were actually running the journal.

⁴² Rustamzoda, “Tā’rikh-i bāsharaf.”

⁴³ Ikrōmi, *Yoddoshtho*, 208–9. Ikrōmi also describes the poor, cramped housing situation for the small group of writers and cultural workers in the emerging capital and how this contributed to the ongoing tensions among them; *ibid.*, 194–207. See also Roberts, “Old Elites,” 292–99, who relies mainly on Ikrāmī’s recollections.

⁴⁴ On this far-reaching resolution, see also note 11.

⁴⁵ The first issue of *Barā-yi Adabiyāt-i Sotsiālistī* appeared in August 1932. The journal was withdrawn from the Ministry of Education and assigned to the newly founded Tajik Writers’ Union. Two years later it was renamed *Sharq-i Surkh* (Red Orient; 1934–1941, 1946–1964). Since 1964, the journal’s title has been *Ṣadā-yi Sharq* (Voice of the Orient). In 1936, a new journal for teachers, *Barā-yi Ma‘ārif-i Kāmmunistī* (For a Communist Education), was established in the Tajik capital.

⁴⁶ Manāfzāda, “Inqilāb-i adabī,” 19–20.

⁴⁷ Hodgkin, “Manāfzāda Sābit.”

⁴⁸ Manāfzāda, “Inqilāb-i adabī,” 20.

Tajik early on in their careers. Born in the first decade of the twentieth century, they all came of age in towns belonging to the Uzbek SSR, outside the demarcated Tajik territory—in Bukhara, Samarkand, Uropteppa, or the Ferghana Valley. And many of them initially identified and registered as Uzbeks.⁴⁹ But there were several reasons that members of the younger generation might opt for a Tajik rather than an Uzbek identity.⁵⁰ The first was the need for Tajik writers, journalists, and other Persian-speaking cadres and the many opportunities for employment and quick promotion connected to it, especially after Tajikistan was declared a Soviet republic in 1929. A second reason was related to family background. Many of these “new pens” decided to concentrate on being Tajik based on the fact that they were the sons of the former religious, scholarly, and economic elite of the Emirate of Bukhara (and Russian Turkestan), and they and their families were well known in Soviet Uzbekistan.⁵¹ But even in distant Stalinabad this family background was a liability: they were openly addressed as “sons of mullahs” (*mullābachahā*) or “rich kids” (*bāybachahā*), and always feared being exposed and denounced because of the wrong family origins. A clear decision to become Tajik seemed the only way out, and Tajikistan became a preferred destination for members of scholarly families fleeing from harassment and repression in Uzbekistan. After 1929, many of them moved to the new Tajik capital where they formed the new intellectual and cultural elite. However, some could not withstand the pressure and left Stalinabad after being mocked or threatened there.⁵²

Critical Shortages

During the entirety of its run, literature and literary criticism comprised roughly 10 percent of the content of *Rahbar-i Dānish*. In some issues these topics were gathered under the header “Literary Section” (*qism-i adabī*) and in others under “Literary Investigations” (*tadqiqāt-i adabī*). As mentioned, when Lāhūtī took over responsibility he complained that much more of the latter was needed to achieve the goals of the *Rahbar-i Dānish*. Yet, as in the rest of the Soviet Union of the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was “a critical shortage of critics.” According to Katharina Schild there were several reasons for this shortage—namely, that “criticism presented bigger political risk than writing, offered less potential reward than organizational work, and required a higher level of education.”⁵³

In Central Asia, this shortage of critics was accompanied by a critical shortage of theory. A clear idea of what a new Tajik literature and literary criticism should look like was missing. More often than not, “young literary critics made little effort to grasp the essence of the works they examined,” but instead simply imposed their own tastes on literature.⁵⁴ Or, even worse, their criticism turned “into a mouthpiece of the party, and de facto into an exponent of Stalin’s opinion.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹ See Ikromi, *Yoddoshtho*, 124–28, for Ikromi’s recollection of his early literary experiences, his own first steps in writing poetry, and his 1927 meeting with ‘Ainī, who encouraged him to write in Tajik and convinced him to change his nationality from Uzbek to Tajik.

⁵⁰ For some of the older generation (like ‘Abd al-Qādir Muḥiddīnūf and Abbās ‘Aliev) personal rivalries with political leaders of the Uzbek SSR also contributed to their commitment to Tajik statehood. Fedtke, “Soviet Nationalities Policy,” 19–50; Shakuri, *Abbos Aliev*, 103–39; and Shakuri, *Fitna-i inqilob*, 3–102.

⁵¹ On the trajectories of Central Asian scholarly families, see Dudoignon, “Faction Struggles”; and Pickett, *Polymaths*, esp. 196–217.

⁵² See Ikromi, *Yoddoshtho*, 170–79, 190–201, and 206–7 for a vivid description of the tense situation in Dushanbe (Stalinabad)—especially for himself and other “sons of [former] rich men and judges” (*farzandon-i boyho va qozihō*; 196), such as Pairau Sulaimānī and his friend Baḥā al-Dīn Ikrām—and how they were recruited for work in Tajikistan.

⁵³ Schild, “National Literatures,” 58.

⁵⁴ Kleinmichel, “Uzbek Short Story Writer,” 143.

⁵⁵ Dobrenko, “Transformations,” 49. On literary criticism as a weapon in Uzbekistan, see Baldauf, “Educating the Poets,” 193–98. According to Katharina Schild, in the 1920s and 1930s, “Soviet literary analysis meant commending or condemning writers for their ideological soundness”; “National Literatures,” 60.

Since too few Tajik scholars, critics, and theorists were available, the editorial team of *Rahbar-i Dānish* also sought to recruit authors from outside Central Asia. There were good relationships with Azerbaijan, where some Central Asian intellectuals of the younger generation had completed study visits at the Eastern Faculty of the Baku Darülfünun in the first half of the 1920s, among them Narzullāh Ḥaidarī Biktāsh and Sharīfjān Husainzāda.⁵⁶ There they encountered and became acquainted with the Russian school of literary criticism of Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) and Aleksandr Voronsky (1884–1937) and their notion of historical materialism.⁵⁷ And it was Biktāsh who convinced his former teacher and head of the Persian program in Baku, Mīrzā Muḥsin Ibrāhīmī, to contribute several articles for *Rahbar-i Dānish*.⁵⁸

Half a year after his first call to young writers, Manāfzāda was disappointed with the results they had achieved. In an article published in early 1928, he vented his anger and stated that most authors had not yet grasped the meaning of “literary criticism” (*tanqīd-i adabī*). “It is completely unknown to most people in Tajikistan, because when they hear the term *tanqīd*,” Manāfzāda complained, “they immediately think of personal humiliation or insults (*taḥqīr yā taubīkh*).”⁵⁹ Manāfzāda then harshly criticized some of the poems and a short story (*ḥikāya*) recently sent to the editors of *Rahbar-i Dānish*. In only one of the writers did he see a promising future for Tajik prose. Manāfzāda praised Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām for choosing a contemporary setting for his short story “Shīrīn.” He criticized, however, the author’s character descriptions and the artificial or unnatural (*ghayr-i ṭabīʿī*) nature of the events depicted. In Manāfzāda’s view, “this type of description is usually only found in ancient and classic fairy tales of the Orient” (*in gūna taṣvīrhārā faqat az afsānahā-yi kuhna va kilāsikī-i sharq paydā kardan mumkin ast*).⁶⁰ Therefore, he suggested that Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām should instead study the European “naturalists” and “realists” and avoid using too many “incomprehensible” words from his hometown, Bukhara. He concluded the article with the advice that the young author should not take the criticism personally or be offended because “not only novices make mistakes, but they also are to be found in the works of the masters” (*na in ki dar navishtahā-yi nauqalamān-i havaskār, balki dar aṣarhā-yi ustādān ham bisyār khaṭāhā-yi shāyān-i tanqīd dīda mīshavad*).⁶¹

⁵⁶ Narzullāh Ḥaidarī “Biktāsh” (1900/3–1938) was born in Samarkand and attended a traditional *maktab* and a Russian-language school. In the early 1920s, he worked for several journals, authored poems in Uzbek, and participated in the influential Chaghatay Conversation Circle (*Chaghatay gurungi*). Along with others, he also was involved in founding the newspaper *Āvāz-i tājik* (1924–1931). In 1925, he graduated from the Baku university. After his return to Tashkent, he worked as a lecturer on Tajik literature and joined the Tajik State Publishing House. In 1928, he joined the editorial board of *Rahbar-i Dānish* and became a leading member of the newly created scientific research institute in Dushanbe. Biktāsh and his writings were denounced repeatedly, and he was arrested in 1929 and 1933. Although he largely refrained from publishing after his second release, Biktāsh was arrested again in summer 1937 and died in jail.

Sharīfjān Husainzāda (1907–1988) was born into a merchant family in Kān-i Bādām and attended an Uzbek-language school in Kokand. In 1926, after graduation from the Baku university, he returned to Uzbekistan, where he continued his studies and worked as a lecturer. In 1931 and 1932, he taught literature and held several positions in Dushanbe. In 1933, he returned to Tashkent for postgraduate studies at the Institute of Language and Literature. He graduated in 1935. Five years later, Husainzāda was appointed head of the Department of Tajik Language and Literature at the State Pedagogical Institute in Stalinabad. From 1963 until 1984, he served as head of the Department of Classical Tajik Literature at Tajikistan State University and became one of the most influential scholars of Tajik literature.

⁵⁷ Nabiev, *Narzullo-i Bektosh*, 10–12, 55, and 67–74.

⁵⁸ Ibrāhīmī’s contributions to *Rahbar-i Dānish* were “Adabiyāt-i zabān-i pahlavi”; “Tā’rikh-i adabiyāt-i Irān (daura-i islāmī)”; “Az ta’rikh-i adabiyāt-i fārs,” which was published as a serial in three subsequent issues of *RD* in 1928; “Adabiyāt va ṣan’at dar proto-marxizm”; and “Mas’ala-i alifbā-yi nau.” On Mīrzā Muḥsin Ibrāhīmī and his influential anthology *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Irān* (Sampler of the Literature of Iran), which was published in Baku in 1922 and served as a textbook at the Eastern Faculty of the university, see Samuel Hodgkin’s contribution in this volume.

⁵⁹ Manāfzāda, “Pārchahā-yi adabī-i mā,” 37.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 40. On Ikrām’s short story “Shīrīn,” which was published in the same issue, see note 102.

⁶¹ Manāfzāda, “Pārchahā-yi adabī-i mā,” 39–40.

In 1928, this final comment drawing attention to the mistakes of “masters” would easily be understood as referring to Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī’s anthology of Tajik literature *Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik* (Samples of Tajik Literature), which was published in 1926.⁶² Even before its publication, ‘Ainī’s compilation aroused severe criticism among scholars and Uzbek politicians.⁶³ A year later, in 1927, the handling of prerevolutionary literature changed in the Soviet Union, and it was decided that from then on “the publication of poetry from the era of feudalism can no longer count among our tasks. . . . In the future it has to be refrained from printing the works of Makhtumqulī as well as collections of ancient poetry from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan.”⁶⁴ This course correction was aimed directly at the sampler compiled by Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī and similar endeavors related to Uzbek literature.⁶⁵

In December 1929, three years after ‘Ainī’s book was published in Moscow, a critical review article on *Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik* appeared in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. The article was signed by Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām.⁶⁶ The critic considered the six-hundred-page anthology, which “consists of forty printer’s sheets and was printed in an edition of 5,000 copies,” to be “a waste of resources.” Although he acknowledged ‘Ainī’s efforts to compile the anthology, Ikrām—in the typical dialectic approach of the time—sharply attacked ‘Ainī and highlighted several conceptual mistakes and ideological shortcomings in his work. In his view, the anthology had been compiled without “Marxist methodology” (*uṣūl-i markīsistī*) and a proper “theory of class” (*naẓariya-i ṣinfi*), lacked a clear intended audience, and arbitrarily selected poems without necessary explanation. Furthermore, according to the critic, ‘Ainī failed to contextualize the “poems of the old poets” (*she‘rhā-i shu‘arā-i qadīm*), provided no answer as to why the old poets wrote the way they did, avoided properly comparing the old poems with contemporary ones, and did not positively rate the literary progress since the revolution. As a result, the anthology benefited only a tiny group of Tajik men of letters (*ahl-i sukhan*) and was “useless for its intended audience”—namely, a whole generation of novices (*nauāmūzān*) in need of literary instruction. Given these flaws, he reached the conclusion that ‘Ainī’s collection “failed to respond to the current needs of Tajikistan” and, even worse, “provoked and increased national enmity” (*sabab-i ziyād shudan-i dushmanī-i milli mishavad*), particularly between Tajiks and Uzbeks.⁶⁷

When literary debates became overly confrontational, the editors of *Rahbar-i Dānish* also weighed in and commented on the inconclusive nature or excessiveness of criticism: “We do not see the *Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik* as an error-free work without weaknesses, but we also do not agree with some of the criticisms listed in this article. We will explain our thoughts on this in detail in a later issue.”⁶⁸ Yet this did not happen, because a short time later ‘Ainī’s anthology was banned and withdrawn from circulation by the Soviet authorities. In 1930, the

⁶² On the publication of *Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik*, see Samuel Hodgkin’s contribution in this volume.

⁶³ Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 163, 298.

⁶⁴ The eighteenth-century poet Magtymguly Pyragy (in Persian: Makhdūmqulī Farāghī) was stylized as the Turkmen national poet in the 1920s. In the early 1930s, he was considered a reactionary poet; Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 154–55. Cf. Shakuri, *Khuroson ast injo*, 209.

⁶⁵ In 1928, ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf Fītrat had compiled the first volume of *O‘zbek adabiyati namunalari* (Samples of Uzbek Literature). Besides this volume on medieval Uzbek literature, no further volumes were published.

⁶⁶ Ikrām, “Naẓare ba ‘*Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik*.’” According to Muhammadjon-i Shakuri, however, the author behind this critical article was not Jalāl Ikrāmī but Abbās ‘Aliev (1899–1958). Shakuri, *Abbos Aliev*, 114.

⁶⁷ Ikrām, “Naẓare ba ‘*Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik*,’” 23–24. These enmities came to a climax after Tajikistan was declared a Soviet Republic in 1929 and the new Tajik government demanded that territories including Samarkand and Bukhara be attached to it—a request that was ultimately turned down. See, Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 100–24; and ‘Abd al-Qādir Muḥiddinūf’s most controversial contribution to this debate, “Mardum-i shahr va aṭrāf-i Bukhārā tājikand yā ūzbak,” which was published in *Rahbar-i Dānish* in September/October 1928 and in a concurrent Russian version by the Central Asian Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union communist party. Fedtke “Soviet Nationalities Policy,” 32. On this fateful contribution, see also Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 159–60, 302–4.

⁶⁸ Ikrām, “Naẓare ba ‘*Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik*,’” 24. It is significant that the critique was published in the first issue of *Rahbar-i Dānish* after Lāhūtī dropped out as the journal’s editor in chief. Lāhūtī wrote the introduction to

year in which ‘Ainī published his much acclaimed first Tajik novel *Dākhunda*, the fate of his anthology was sealed when politicians in Tashkent and Moscow accused it of containing counterrevolutionary and pro-monarchic messages.⁶⁹

Translations and Radicalizations

In search of proper models for future Tajik literature, the literary section in *Rahbar-i Dānish* also offered space for portraits of non-Central Asian writers and translations of their works. But here too no clear line can be discerned. The selection was probably based primarily on the taste of the respective translator and biographer.⁷⁰ In addition to the well-known short stories “One Night” by Rabindranath Tagore and “The Tunnel,” taken from Maksim Gorky’s cycle *Skazky ob Italii* (Italian Fairy Tales, 1911–1913), a number of lesser-known works of mainly Russian authors from the collection Library of the Youth Organization of the World in Struggle (*Kitābkhāna-i kāmsāmālān-i jahān dar mubāriza*) were translated and presented to readers from 1929 onward. The translators do not elaborate on the selected authors and their works, nor do they give reasons for the selections made.⁷¹

Slightly more revealing are the portraits of writers also presented in this period. The first of these, by Raḥīm Mīm, appeared in issue 4/5 (1928) and summarized the life and work of Mirzā Faṭḥ-‘Alī Ākhūndzāda (1812–1878).⁷² In the same issue Maksim Gorky and his writings were introduced to Tajik readers.⁷³ On the occasion of the hundredth birthday of Lev Tolstoy, Manāfzāda took the opportunity to propose the work and style of this world-famous Russian “classic” and “romantic” littérateur as a model for young Tajik writers. However, as a precaution he added that in today’s time of revolution and class struggle Tolstoy’s “ideology of nonviolence is of course no longer appropriate.”⁷⁴ In the following year, Raḥīm Mīm dedicated himself to the “skilled and prominent playwright and short story writer” Anton Chekhov on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, although the article is preceded by the author’s warning to the readers that the works of this “bourgeois writer do not deal adequately with the subject of work nor of workers.”⁷⁵ Conflicting messages also can be found in a 1930 obituary written by Biktāsh in which he commemorated and bemoaned the early death of the “Russian revolutionary and red poet” and “truly proletarian writer” Vladimir Mayakovsky. However, in Biktāsh’s view, Mayakovsky had betrayed the ideals of the revolution and done harm to the proletarian cause by committing suicide.⁷⁶

‘Ainī’s anthology and was instrumental in the publication of the work, which was already controversial at the time of its creation. Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 160–4.

⁶⁹ Shakuri, *Khuroson ast injo*, 206–7. Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī remembers the critique and prohibition of his *Namūna-i adabiyāt-i tājik* in his short autobiography “Mukhtasar-i tarjima-i hol-i khudam,” 97–98.

⁷⁰ Between 1928 and 1930, a total of twelve literary translations by at least six different translators, as well as five writer biographies, were published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*.

⁷¹ The translation of Tagore’s short story “Yak shab bā Sa‘ādat” was published without any reference to the translator. Gorky’s “Tūnal” was translated by Tūraqul Dhihnī. A more detailed description and analysis of the translations is beyond the scope of this essay.

⁷² Raḥīm Mīm, aka Raḥīm Ḥāshīm, (1908–1993) was born in Samarkand and graduated from a Russian-language school. In the 1920s and 1930s he worked for several Tajik periodicals and for the Tajik State Publishing House in Samarkand and Stalinabad. In the late 1930s he was arrested. In 1954 he returned from the labor camp. In the following decades Raḥīm Ḥāshīm was a well-known and respected translator and literary historian.

For Ākhūndzāda article, see Raḥīm Mīm, “Mirzā Faṭḥ-‘alī Akhūndūf.” This portrait does not deal with Ākhūndzāda’s literary works but with his early attempts to develop a Latin alphabet for Persian and Azeri.

⁷³ Mūsavi, “Māksīm Gūrki.”

⁷⁴ Manāfzāda, “Līv Nikulāivij Tālstūi,” 25. Following this six-page introduction, Raḥīm Mīm contributed “Yak shudān žarūr ast,” a translation of Tolstoy’s 1905 short story “The One Thing Needful.”

⁷⁵ Raḥīm Mīm, “Antun Chekhūf,” 10.

⁷⁶ Biktāsh, “Vilādīmīr Māyākūvīski.” For Pairau Sulaimānī’s Mayakovsky-style poem “on the occasion of the suicide of the Russian revolutionary poet,” *ibid.*, 20.

So it seems that at the beginning of the 1930s nobody knew any longer who exactly the Persianate or European literary models for young Tajik writers should be. With this growing uncertainty, the tone of criticism also changed in Soviet Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, the heated atmosphere of the cultural revolution and the upcoming first Five-Year Plan “favored a general rhetoric of struggle and acceleration . . . and the fiery youth was ready to adopt this verbal radicalism rather than following some Party publicists’ call for patience.”⁷⁷ This aggressive tendency also can be observed in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. However, most contributions in the journal were less ideologically “committed” than those appearing in other Tajik language periodicals of the time, such as *Tājikistān-i surkh*, run by the twenty-year-old Ghulāmrižā ‘Alizāda and his circle, most notably Sātim Ulūghzāda.⁷⁸ For all of them, literary criticism was a powerful weapon in the intensifying “class war” announced by the political leaders. ‘Alizāda did not accept any literary figure except Lāhūti. In a 1932 serial article, ‘Alizāda wrote that he “witnessed the appearance of a bourgeois ideology in our literature” and demanded that his contemporaries “intensify the struggle against the rotten liberalism and the agents of class enemies on the battlefield of ideology.”⁷⁹ ‘Alizāda’s ideological outlook was built upon similar ideas published in *Tājikistān-i surkh* three years earlier by the eighteen-year-old ‘Alī Khush, who wrote:

Right now, it is our main and stern duty to put the proletarian class literature that already exists in Tajikistan on the right track and to make sure that our literature does not deviate one millimeter from the tasks assigned to it. This includes portraying the building of socialism and the class struggle of the proletariat.⁸⁰

By the end of the decade, the more radical writers and critics had pushed their way into the journal. In the first two years of its publication, articles that were too abrasive were still being rejected by the editors of *Rahbar-i Dānish*. In issue 3 (1927) the following editorial note was addressed to Sātim Ulūghzāda: “The things that you criticized are not in the article. Read the article again carefully.”⁸¹ Having his contribution rejected did not discourage the young critic. Only two years later, Ulūghzāda’s damning review of a short story by Manāfzāda was published in the journal. Spanning three pages, Ulūghzāda’s review was even longer than the work he criticized. He accused Manāfzāda’s short story “Latāfat-āy firib khūrd” (The

⁷⁷ Baldauf, “Educating the Poets,” 197.

⁷⁸ The publication organ of the Tajik Communist Party and government appeared for the first time in 1925 under the title *‘id-i Tājik* and later *Bidāri-i Tājik*. In 1928, it was renamed *Tājikistān-i Surkh* (Red Tajikistan).

In his publications on the history of Tajik literary criticism, Abdulkholiq Nabiev (Nabavi) mentions that not much is known about Ghulāmrižā ‘Alizāda (1908–1937) and many other Tajik publicists of the late 1920s and 1930s. Many of them are not included in Soviet encyclopedias or in the *Encyclopedia-i adabiyot va san‘at*. According to Nabiev (*Ta‘rih-i tashakkul*, 20–21), ‘Alizāda was “probably sent to Tajikistan after graduation from one of the Party faculties” and from 1929 onward worked for various Tajik newspapers. His first article appeared in July 1929 in *Tājikistān-i Surkh*, where he was head of the public relations department. In April 1930, he was announced as executive secretary (*kātib-i mas‘ul*) and editor (*moħarrir*) of the newspaper *Javānān-i Tājikistān*. From 1931 until its dissolution in April 1932, Ghulāmrižā ‘Alizāda was executive secretary (*kātib-i mas‘ul*) of the Tajik branch of the Association of Proletarian Writers (APP).

Sātim Ulūghzāda (1911–1997) was born in a village in the Ferghana Valley (in today’s Uzbekistan) and was educated in a Soviet orphanage. In 1929, he graduated from the Tajik teachers training college (*dār ul-mu‘allimin-i Tājikistān*) in Tashkent. A year later he moved to Stalinabad and worked for several Tajik periodicals. Beginning in the late 1920s, he published many literary critical essays. In 1934, he became the executive secretary (*kātib-i mas‘ul*) of the newly established Tajik Writers’ Union, and in the late 1930s he started his own very successful career as a Tajik prose writer.

⁷⁹ ‘Alizāda, “Mubāriza barā-yi firqagī-i adabiyāt”; cf. Nabiev, *Ta‘rih-i tashakkul*, 22.

⁸⁰ ‘Alī Khushmuhammadzāda (1912–1942) was born in the Rasht region (Tajikistan). In 1928 he entered the Tajik teachers’ college in Samarkand and two years later he was sent to Stalinabad and worked there in various positions for various periodicals. He was arrested in 1937 and died in 1942. Quotation is from ‘Alī Khush, “Mulāhizahā-yi mā dar jabha-i adabiyāt-i prūletārī”; cf. Nabiev, *Ta‘rih-i tashakkul*, 21.

⁸¹ Idāra, “Alāqa-i mā bā kh‘ānandagān,” 36.

Deceived Latāfat) of not being literature because its author delivered a “mere journalistic” report “based on pure chance and random encounters.” Ulūghzāda did not see the text or the female protagonist described in it as a “typical” (Russ. *tipichnyi*) representation of his own generation.⁸² Now, in the early 1930s, the editors had little choice but to add in small print at the end of Ulūghzāda’s harsh review that those who read it also should have a look at the criticized work. Be that as it may, the critically panned work remained Manāfzāda’s only short story published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*.⁸³

Yet, in general, the literary criticism in *Rahbar-i Dānish* was more moderate than in other contemporary periodicals. As late as 1930, it was still possible to publish an article in which the virtues of prerevolutionary Jadid literature—especially ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Fiṭrat and his prose writings of the 1910s—could be praised and proposed as models of a new Tajik literature.⁸⁴ Sharīfjān Ḥusainzāda viewed Fiṭrat as “the first to pioneer prose and novel writing in Tajik literature” and a master who “uses the commonly understandable Tajik language in his prose and the fine and beautiful style of courtly literature in his poetry.”⁸⁵ Although he criticized the Jadids (as was customary at the time) and especially Fiṭrat as “moral preceptors of the local bourgeoisie” and saw severe shortcomings in Jadid “content and ideology,” he contextualized this Central Asian enlightenment movement as caught in a historical quandary, as they had to fight a two-front battle against “foreign capital” (*sarmāya-i ajnabī*) and the “remnants of the [local] feudal system” (*anṣarhā-yi bāqīmānda-i daur-i fiādālizm*).⁸⁶ In Uzbekistan, the former members (and sympathizers) of the Jadid movement had fallen out of favor as early as 1927 and subsequently became prime political targets.⁸⁷ From that year, Fiṭrat, after not having published any texts in Persian or Tajik for almost a decade, became engaged in the creation of Tajik culture and literature. In 1927, Fiṭrat authored the first ever play in Tajik, and for two years he published articles in *Rahbar-i Dānish* mainly dealing with the Tajik Latinization program.⁸⁸ Apparently, he was supported by the very influential educator and cultural functionary Niṣār Muḥammad Afghān, who won him over to the Tajik cause.⁸⁹

⁸² Ulūghzāda, “Yak nigāh ba naṣr-i tājiki.” In his review, Ulūghzāda consistently referred to Manāfzāda as an editor (*muḥarrir*) and not as a writer (*navisanda*). In a subordinate clause he praised Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām’s thematically similar short story “Chī bāyad kard?” published in *RD* in 1929.

⁸³ Manāfzāda, “Latāfat-āy firib khūrd.”

⁸⁴ ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Fiṭrat (1886–1938) was born in Bukhara and studied in Istanbul, where he wrote his first prose works. In 1927, Fiṭrat became a member of the Scientific Board of the Tajik Republic (*shūrā-i ‘ilmī-i jumhūrī-i tājikistān*), and a year later did the same in Uzbekistan. He was arrested in 1937 and shot in October 1938; Borjan, “Feṭrat.” For a recent discussion of the Jadid movement in Central Asia, see Baldauf, “Jadidism,” and Eden et al., “Moving Beyond.”

⁸⁵ Sharīfjān Ḥusainzāda (1907–1988) was born in Kān-i Bādām. He attended an Uzbek-language school in Kokand until 1923 and graduated from the Baku Pedagogical Institute in 1926. Ḥusainzāda’s early professional career unfolded between the capitals of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 1940, he was appointed head of the Department of Tajik Language and Literature at the State Pedagogical Institute of Stalinabad. He directed the Institute of History, Language, Literature, and Archaeology (1943–1947) and the literary branch of the Institute of Tajik Language and Literature (1948–1958). From 1963 until 1984, he served as head of the Department of Classical Tajik Literature at Tajikistan State University. In 1983, he was awarded the Rudaki State Prize.

⁸⁶ Husainzāda, “Mubāriza.”

⁸⁷ Baldauf, “Educating the Poets,” 194–198.

⁸⁸ It is noticeable that Husainzāda in his article makes no mention of this first play in Tajik, a milestone for Soviet literature, probably because already, at the end of the 1920s, Fiṭrat’s version of the play was no longer in line with political guidelines. On Fiṭrat’s controversial play “Shūrish-i Vāze,” see Holzwarth, “Aufstand.” Fiṭrat’s outline and defense of a new Tajik alphabet were published in *RD* 3 (1927): 12–14; 4–5 (1928): 13–16; and 10 (1928): 8–10. For a discussion see Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 235–37. Two further articles of Fiṭrat appeared, in *RD* 1–2 (1928): 12–14 (on a fifteenth-century dictionary); and in *RD* 3 (1928): 11–17 (on the divan of Saif al-dīn Isfarangī). For a list and analysis of Fiṭrat’s writings, see Allworth’s *Preoccupations and Evading Reality*.

⁸⁹ Niṣār Muḥammad Afghān (1887–1937) was born near Peshawar in British India. In 1920, he emigrated to Tashkent and became a Soviet citizen. After heading the Tajik teachers’ college in Tashkent from 1924 to 1926,

Prose and Poetry

The literary section in *Rahbar-i Dānish* was divided into prose and poetry, poetry having been considered the true essence of Persian literature for centuries. An average of two to three poems appeared in every issue. Poetry in *Rahbar-i Dānish* was dominated by a handful of names. Most prominent among them were Ātajān “Pairau” Sulaimānī, ‘Abdullāh “Suhailī” Jauharizāda, Aḥmadjān ‘Abd al-Saidzāda “Ḥamdī,” and, outshining all others, Lāhūtī.⁹⁰ More than 80 percent of the poetry published in *Rahbar-i Dānish* came from these authors. Another poet featured in *Rahbar-i Dānish* was the nineteen-year-old ‘Abd al-Salām Pīrmuḥammadzāda “Dihātī,” who in February 1930 also contributed a literary critique in which he attacked his older colleague Suhailī for his use of Arabic and old-fashioned Persian words and his frequent repetition of motifs as a negative example of backward poetry.⁹¹ Condemnation of the “old poetry” was a running theme throughout the issues of *Rahbar-i Dānish*. But there was no consistent idea about how to properly replace the old and outdated poetic forms. It is telling that despite the fact that Suhailī was often criticized quite sharply in *Rahbar-i Dānish*, he was one of the most frequently printed poets in the journal. In response to Dihātī’s criticism of Suhailī, the editorial staff again felt compelled to submit its own position on the criticized work. The editors emphasized that it did not suffice to simply condemn old-fashioned poetic usages and demanded a more proactive approach and concrete suggestions for a reform of the literary language and poetry.⁹²

But at the end of the 1920s, poetry was no longer regarded as the prime genre of Central Asian literature. Prose writing gained importance, and even the generation of young poets like Pairau and Dihātī tried their hands at writing short stories (*ḥikāya*), albeit without much success.⁹³ In issue 2 (1927) the editors of *Rahbar-i Dānish* announced a competition for young Tajik writers (*nauqalamān-i tājik*) and suggested some topics for future works of poetry and prose. They promised to select the best submissions and publish them in the journal. The proposed topics for prose writing were the following: (a) How did Raḥmatullāh Īshān get his fourth wife?; (b) Why was Fāziljān excluded from the youth [organization]?; and (c) What were the atrocities committed by Būtābāi Qūrbāshi in the village Jūibār during the Basmachi revolt?⁹⁴ A few months later Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām’s short story “Raḥmatullāh Īshān” was published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*.

However, many of the submissions did not meet the demands of the journal. Shortly before he was dismissed from his post, the editor in chief Muḥammad Mūsavī complained in February 1929 that “during the last months we have received some short stories that

he held various prominent posts in the Communist Party of Tajikistan, including that of People’s Commissar for Education (Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 148–49).

⁹⁰ Ātajān Pairau Sulaimānī Bukhārāī (1899–1933) was born in Bukhara. He came from a Mashhadi Jewish family and received a traditional Muslim education as well as private instruction in Russian. Pairau’s poetry was promoted by Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī but attracted severe criticism in the late 1920s and early 1930s. He died of typhoid fever in Samarkand in June 1933. On Pairau Sulaimānī and his works, see Hitchins, “Solaymānī” and “Bukharan Poet.”

⁹¹ ‘Abdullāh “Suhailī” Jauharizāda (1900–1964) was born in Uroteppa (present-day Istaravshan), received a traditional school education, and graduated from the teacher training college in Samarkand in 1924. Bečka names Suhailī as one of the founders of revolutionary poetry; “Tajik Literature,” 569.

Aḥmadjān ‘Abd-al Saidzāda “Ḥamdī” (1875–1946) was born in Bukhara and was a close companion of ‘Ainī. He worked as a representative of the Bukharan government in Moscow (1920–1924). In the 1930s he also translated works by Pushkin and other Russian poets into Tajik; *Adibon-i Tojikiston*, 616–17.

⁹² ‘Abd al-Salām Pīrmuḥammadzāda (1911–1962) was born in Samarkand and moved to Stalinabad in 1935. He was also known as “Dihātī” and belonged to the Komsomol generation of Tajik literature. For the critique, see Pīrmuḥammadzāda, “Adabiyātamān-rā.”

⁹³ See Noelle-Karimi “Pīrmuḥammadzāda Dihātī.”

⁹⁴ Dihātī’s three short stories in *Rahbar-i Dānish* were “Ḥamida-i siyābakht”; “Dāgh-i farzandi”; and “Ajinahā-yi chūpānatā.” They were modeled on works by his mentor Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī and received no further attention. Pairau Sulaimonī’s “Gulandām,” a love story situated in a Tajik village, was heavily criticized one and a half years after its publication for being “implausible” and far from the reality of village life (A’lāzāda, “Pārchahā”).

⁹⁵ Idāra, “Mauzū’ḥā-yi mā.”

have only little scholarly and artistic value. . . . Since we have to keep the scientific standard of the journal we cannot publish every single one of these texts.” At the same time, he calls on the literary clubs in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Uroteppa to follow the example of Khujand and set up a “literary wall-newspaper” (*rūznāma-i adabī-i dīvārī*) for young and inexperienced writers to increase their skills and enthusiasm for literature.⁹⁵ A few months earlier, Mūsavī had been dissatisfied with the “endless and fruitless” debates on the renewal of the literary language, and he called on writers to finally translate their words into deed: “Everyone keeps repeating that the literary language has to be changed—but we all know that—now we finally need results in lexicon and style.”⁹⁶

‘Ainī and the “Young Pens” of New Tajik Prose: Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām and ‘Azīzī

Following the publication of the serialized story of the “poor Tajik” Ādīna, its author, Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī, was regarded as the “undisputed leading . . . writer” of Soviet Tajik prose literature.⁹⁷ Two of his early short stories were published in *Rahbar-i Dānish*: “Aḥmad-i dīvband” in 1928 and “Māhrūy” in 1929.⁹⁸ The former, which had autobiographical features, over the years became ‘Ainī’s most famous short story. The latter was reprinted only once, posthumously, in the fifth volume of his collected works. “Māhrūy” is a fictionalized story based on the alleged murder of a young Tajik Red Army soldier by an anti-Soviet (Basmachi) leader in 1926. It tells the story of Māhrūy, the fiancée of the murdered hero, and can be seen as a literary showpiece for young writers, as requested in the announcement mentioned above.⁹⁹

Next to ‘Ainī, the two most productive and widely discussed young Tajik prose writers in the late 1920s and early 1930s were Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām and Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī. Ten out of twenty-four short stories published in *Rahbar-i Dānish* between 1927 and 1930 were written by them: five by Ikrām and five by ‘Azīzī.¹⁰⁰

In his memoirs Ikromi remembers his first meeting with Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī in Bukhara in summer 1927. When he showed ‘Ainī his first poems and a piece of prose, the latter advised him to stop writing poetry and instead concentrate on prose. With the support of ‘Ainī, Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām’s first piece of prose, “Shabe dar rīgistān-i Bukhārā,” was then printed in issue 2 of *Rahbar-i Dānish* “without any editorial changes,” as Ikromi proudly emphasized in retrospect.¹⁰¹ But the situation didn’t last. Jalol Ikromi recalls that ‘Ainī corrected and revised his three-and-a-half-page short story “Shīrīn,” about a young bride who is kidnapped on her wedding night by a gang of brutal Basmachi, “six or seven times” before he considered it publishable.¹⁰² Even after its publication, some commentators were very critical of Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām’s short story.¹⁰³

⁹⁵ Idāra, “Dar aṭrāf-i yak mas‘ala-i muhim.” “Wall-newspapers” (a literal translation from Russian *stengazeta*) were printed in limited editions and glued on boards.

⁹⁶ Mūsavī, “Maktūb.”

⁹⁷ Grassi, “Soviet Tajik Fiction,” 693. On the story “Ādīna, yā ki sarguzasht-i yak tājik-i kambaghal” (Ādīna, or The Destiny of a Poor Tajik), which was published in the monthly *Āvāz-i tājik* between August 1924 and April 1925, see later discussion.

⁹⁸ ‘Ainī, “Aḥmad-i dīvband” (part 1); ‘Ainī, “Aḥmad-i dīvband” (part 2); ‘Ainī, “Māhrūy.”

⁹⁹ ‘Ainī, “Mohrūy.” On “Aḥmad-i dīvband,” see later discussion.

¹⁰⁰ Jalāl Ikrāmī’s short stories published in *Rahbar-i Dānish* were: “Shabe dar rīgistān-i Bukhārā,” “Shīrīn,” “Raḥmatullā Īshān,” “Āyā chī bāyad kard?” and “Yak ḥauza-i purkhūn.”

Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī’s short stories were: “Buzkashī,” “Bīdānabāzī,” “Pādīshāh- Pādīshāh,” “Nikāḥ-i Dilkhāh,” and “Gul.”

¹⁰¹ Ikromi, *Yoddoshtho*, 127–30.

¹⁰² Ikromi, *Yoddoshtho*, 131–33. After her father and groom are killed by the Basmachi, the bride Shīrīn manages to escape from her kidnappers. In the middle of the night a Red Army search party finds her. The soldiers kill the ringleaders and capture the rest of the Basmachi. This plot comes close to what the editors of *Rahbar-i Dānish* had suggested as suitable topics for prose works in *RD 2* (1927).

¹⁰³ See, for example, Manāfzāda’s critical comments on Ikrāmī and his second short story “Shīrīn” in the same issue, 39–40.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, it was not Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām (the 1960s to 1980s hero of Soviet Tajik prose), but Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī who was considered the most talented young Tajik writer. Most critics highly praised his simple language and fluid style as well as the up-to-date content of his prose. From the autumn of 1929 onward, the twenty-five-year-old ‘Azīzī published short stories as well as contributions to the regional geography and ethnography section (*kishvarshināsī*). Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī was born in Uroteppa in 1894, the son of the poet Mullā ‘Abd al-‘Azīz “Jazmī.” He visited the madrasa in Uroteppa and, beginning in 1916, continued his education in Bukhara. In the early 1920s, he completed a two-year teacher training course in Tashkent and then worked as a teacher and member of the executive committee in his birthplace. During his studies in Bukhara he wrote in Turki and Persian using the pen name “Azmī.” In the 1920s he also signed his works as “Tarsānchak” and “Tarsakī” (the coward). He was best known for his contributions to the satirical weekly *Mullā Mushfiqī* and for his articles critical of language and literature. ‘Azīzī was arrested in 1937 and died in prison in 1944.¹⁰⁴

In an article published in June 1930, Sharīfjān Ḥusainzāda views Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī as “one of the promising newcomers” in Tajik literature and “a typical example of our newborn peasant literature. He solely stands out from our contemporary poets and writers in his simple style and language.”¹⁰⁵ Ḥusainzāda saw ‘Azīzī’s “biggest achievement” as his “simple style,” remarking that along with his aim “to acquaint the readers with village life and the living conditions of the peasants . . . ‘Azīzī is in touch with the emotions and worldview shaping the peasant outlook. . . . He does not refer to the feudal past but to the socialist reforms introduced at the village level.” But, as was usual in the 1920s and 1930s Soviet dialectical approach, this positive review did not come without criticism: “At the same time, ‘Azīzī’s idealization of peasant life is one of his greatest shortcomings. His stories fail to reflect the ongoing class struggle at the village level. He does not show the struggle of the poor against the old elites and parasites. . . . He does not show the role of the Party and the Soviets in the villages. . . . His stories bear witness to his failure to highlight the salient aspects of present-day village life.”¹⁰⁶ What Ḥusainzāda does not mention is that Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī was not the son of a peasant but came from a family that belonged to the pre-Soviet religious elite—like most of the other literary newcomers in the late 1920s.¹⁰⁷ In his short stories and other pieces of prose in *Rahbar-i Dānish*, ‘Azīzī turns away from the obsolete and outdated beliefs of his father and forefathers.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, his writings also show the powerful nature of old thought patterns in rural Tajikistan—even under the conditions of the new Soviet power and modern science.

‘Azīzī’s naive village heroes are easily seduced by the allure of the non-socialist life. Most of the people around them still cling to their old traditions, amusements, and beliefs. Status symbols (horses) and gambling (quail fights) are more important to them than working for the common good. The weak heroes in ‘Azīzī’s short stories are hurled into the abyss: their children die of curable diseases (“Gul”), they go into debt and drag their families to ruin

¹⁰⁴ Rzehak, *Vom Persischen*, 189.

¹⁰⁵ Ḥusainzāda, “Mubāriza,” 20.

¹⁰⁶ All quotations: *ibid.*, 19–20.

¹⁰⁷ Other young writers with pre-Soviet religious nobility (*aşilzādagān*) backgrounds were Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām and his friend Bahā al-Dīn Ikrām, who in 1927 and 1928 also contributed two short stories (and some articles) to *Rahbar-i Dānish*—“Faqirazan va klūb-i zanān,” and “Yatīma.” On Bahā al-Dīn Ikrām, see Ikromi, *Yoddoshtho*, 155–60, 180–82.

¹⁰⁸ Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī also contributed two texts in the section “Regional Geography” (*kishvarshināsī*), “Istarafshan – Uroteppa”—here he analyzes and compares the different names of his birthplace; and “Chil hujra”—in which he describes a former pilgrimage site near Uroteppa and the superstitions and beliefs connected to it. The style of these prose texts does not differ from that of his literary pieces; however, the hero in them is not fictitious but the author himself. He also contributed two articles commenting on the main literary topic of these years, the development of a new Tajik literary language: “Ba zabān-i darī-i durri,” and “Darbāra-i zabān-i adabī-i tājik.” Cyrillicized versions of both texts are reproduced in the collected volume *Zabon-i tojiki dar mabno-i mubohisaho*, 357–63 and 653–65.

(“Bedānabāzi”), or they pay for their naivety with their lives (“Buzkashī,” “Pādishāh-Pādishāh”). If there weren’t clear references to Soviet modernization and technical innovations in these short stories, their content would be difficult to distinguish from the progressive prose of the 1910s in Central Asia.¹⁰⁹

It can be assumed that depicting (and praising) ‘Azīzī as a writer who continued the pre-Soviet literary tradition of the Jadids would have been impossible in other Soviet periodicals in 1930. It is very likely, however, that Husainzāda’s positive assessment of ‘Azīzī’s works did him a disservice in the years to come. Moreover, the critic also judged negatively one aspect of Azīzī’s writings that was thoroughly praised by many other contemporaries. In Husainzāda’s view the language used by ‘Azīzī “cannot keep up with the fast pace of the ongoing progress. It is that of a certain locality, and therefore it is not and will not become the language of all Tajiks. It cannot constitute the basis of the Tajik literary language.”¹¹⁰

Instead, Husainzāda preferred the language of ‘Ainī as someone who, like a few others after the October Revolution, “had turned his back on the bourgeois milieu’s prose” and “was the first to side with the Soviet writers.”¹¹¹ Šadr al-Dīn ‘Ainī’s recent prose works, and especially his novella (*qiṣṣa*) “Ādīna,” also were praised by other commentators in *Rahbar-i Dānish*. Raḥīm Mīm wrote a synopsis and review of this “first Tajik revolutionary novella,” which was published at the end of 1927 and was “out of print just two months after its publication.”¹¹² In this novella, ‘Ainī described the tragic fate of the “poor Tajik” farmer Ādīna, who had to leave his mountain home to earn a living in the factories of Russian Turkestan. After the October Revolution he returned to his homeland, where the old elites were still in power. After an unsuccessful attempt to take action against them, Ādīna leaves the mountains again and finally dies alone in Tashkent. In this story, Raḥīm Mīm did not see the fate of an individual person, but the portrait of a “damned and oppressed social class and the atrocities before the [revolutionary] reckoning” (*tabaqa-i maḥkūm . . . va zulmīda va jafāhā pīsh az ḥisāb*) and the birth of a revolutionary Tajik language and literature.¹¹³

In the short story “Aḥmad-i dīvband” (Ahmad the Exorcist) ‘Ainī succeeded in “transmitting” folk beliefs from the Bukhara oasis in a humorous and yet ethnographically accurate way to present-day Soviet readers. Although at the end of the story the Central Asian spiritual world is explained scientifically, this tale preserves the world and religiosity of the people of Central Asia for later generations.¹¹⁴ But ‘Ainī’s gaze into the menacingly dark throat of the prerevolutionary Central Asian world of ghosts—as depicted in the epigraph of this article—was only a tepid foretaste of the horrors and the “devils’ dance” of the coming decade in the Soviet Union.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ On the beginnings of a new, modern (*jadīd*) literature in Central Asia in the early twentieth century, see Kleinmichel, *Aufbruch*.

¹¹⁰ Husainzāda, “Mubāriza,” 19–20.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹¹² Raḥīm Mīm, “Yakumīn qiṣṣa-i inqilābī-i tājīk,” 38.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 38–39. Raḥīm Mīm described the language of the novel as “Persian, which is easy to understand and written in a simple and natural style” (41). It also is interesting and clear-sighted that throughout the text he refrained from using the ethnic term “Tajik” to describe Ādīna’s origins but offers instead the social category of “a poor peasant . . . born in one of the villages of Qarātegin,” a region in the heart of the newly founded Tajik SSR. Probably Raḥīm Mīm opted for this circumspection to avoid being accused of being a Tajik nationalist (*millatgarā, tājīkparast*), an accusation repeatedly used against publicists and politicians in Central Asia beginning in the late 1920s.

¹¹⁴ “Aḥmad-i dīvband,” which also features fantastic descriptions of pre-Soviet nature and the landscape around the burial mound of its author’s birth village in the oasis of Bukhara, was republished several times in the Soviet Union (1936, 1938, 1963, 1969, and 1978). Translations of the short story are available in Russian (1961 and 1973), English (1998), and German (2021).

¹¹⁵ *The Devils’ Dance* is the title of a recently published novel by Hamid Ismailov, an Uzbek writer in exile, who describes in it the fate of three famous Uzbek writers of the early twentieth century, all of whom were arrested in 1927 and shot on the same day in October 1938. These were ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Fītrat, Chūlpān, and ‘Abdallāh

Epilogue

The late 1920s and especially the 1930s in the Soviet Union often seem enigmatic, with myriad political and ideological changes and insecurities. The political climate worsened rapidly, and rivalries among intellectuals intensified as violence spread from the central regions of the Soviet Union to the southern periphery. New players were thrown into Moscow's political-ideological arena, and a new generation of Central Asian writers and intellectuals was formed in this period. Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām—one of the young Tajik literary figures who closely followed the political and editorial guidelines of *Rahbar-i Dānish*—tried to justify himself in his memoirs: “We did not know [then] that all of this ‘criticizing’ (*tanqidhā*) . . . was only the introduction to the upcoming murders, arrests and exiles,” he wrote, and concluded, somewhat complacently: “We were naive and believed in the party.”¹¹⁶ But in the 1930s, naivety, opportunism, and political conviction did not protect the actors from the mercilessness and brutality of the Stalinist apparatus. Jalāl al-Dīn Ikrām himself was arrested in 1937. He was fortunate enough to survive prison and, after being released in December 1939, he (now going by the name Jalol Ikromi) rose to become the star of the new Soviet Tajik prose. Others, like Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī and almost all of the pre-Soviet Central Asian cultural elite, did not survive Stalin's rule. Their biographies were erased, their works withdrawn from circulation, and their first attempts to create and shape a new Tajik literature on the pages of *Rahbar-i Dānish* almost forgotten.

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¹¹⁶ Ikromi, *Yoddoshtho*, 192, 201, 212. Ikromi refers here to the denunciations of the 1930s and his role in them.

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ARTICLE

Disciplining Persian Literature in Twentieth-Century Afghanistan

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Abstract

How was Persian literature disciplinized in the twentieth century? This article addresses this question by focusing on twentieth-century Afghanistan and outlining the sociohistorical processes that helped to transform scholarly and literary production into a social enterprise. A major outcome of these underexamined processes was the making of *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā* (1949–79) in Kabul, the first modern encyclopedia produced in Persian. The article explains the multilayered significance of *Āryānā*'s literary taxonomies, reading practices, and historiographical models that reified Persian literature as an object of academic study and national veneration in Afghanistan. A close reading of *Āryānā*'s account of Persian literary history illustrates its complex relationship with both Iranian and Afghan nationalisms of the 1940s and 1950s and its contributors' adherence to a modern methodology. The present study places *Āryānā* squarely within a transregional ecosystem that brought about the institutionalization of literature in Persian-speaking lands.

Keywords: literary historiography; twentieth-century Afghanistan; *Encyclopedia Āryānā*; literary style/*sabk*

In 1944, a cadre of Afghan scholars founded the Encyclopedia Association in Kabul.¹ They would go on to create *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, the first encyclopedia in Persian (1949–79).² The publication of *Āryānā* marked a significant moment in the institutionalization of Persian literature by codifying a new mode of literary knowledge into an encyclopedic category that posed as bounded and settled. I first came across *Āryānā* on the bookshelf of my Afghan neighbor in California ten years ago.³ What I encountered then, having been ignorant of its history, was a well-structured nugget of information, a reference point for knowledge pertaining primarily to Afghanistan. In writing this article a decade later, I aim to critically

¹ In Persian, *Anjoman-e dāʿerat ol-maʿāref*. For an entry on *Encyclopedia Āryānā*, see *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye adab-e Fārsi*, 3:128.

² In Iran, *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Fārsi* or the *Persian-Language Encyclopedia*, directed by Gholām-Hosayn Moṣāḥeb and his associates, was published in three volumes in 1966, 1977, and 1995. In 1975, Ehsan Yarshater launched *Dāneshnameḥ-ye iran va islam* or the *Encyclopedia of Iran and Islam*. In its title, the Persian term “*dāneshnameḥ*” (literally, “book of knowledge”), dating back to Ebn Sīnā's *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye ʿalāʾī* (1034–49), replaced the Arabic loanword *dāʿerat ol-maʿāref*. In the 1980s, the name of the project was changed to the *Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, which is still ongoing. In Central Asia, the first Persian-language encyclopedia developed in the late 1970s as an outgrowth of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. The *Tajik Soviet Encyclopedia* (Энциклопедияи советии тоҷик) was published in eight volumes between 1978 and 1988.

³ This reminds us that encyclopedias like *Āryānā* had a different material life in the age of their prevalence. For one, they were not just found at institutions but were also (used and enjoyed) in homes.

outline historical processes that culminated in the production of this landmark work of scholarship, which has yet to receive critical attention in English or Persian.⁴

At a time when Pahlavi-era scholars were bringing Persian literary history into congruence and synonymy with Iran as an ethno-territorially defined entity, *Āryānā* offers us a more ecumenical approach to conceptualizing literary history. In their cultural undertaking, Afghan scholars faced a challenging task, one that involved navigating parochial accounts of Persian literature produced in Iran, on the one hand, and reactionary ethnocentric politics and policies of certain Mosāhebān officials, on the other.⁵ As my analysis shows, *Āryānā* as an end product is entirely irreducible to any single discourse or ideological impulse. *Āryānā* responds to Iranian nationalist efforts by highlighting the poetic contributions of Central and South Asian poets and dynasties, shifting the center of gravity away from Iranian territorial nationalism. Similarly, it counterposed the ethnocentric impulses of the state that aimed to valorize Pashto as a national language at the expense of Persian. Overall, a close reading of *Āryānā* illustrates that slippery categories like modern and national advance a scholarly discourse only if critically examined in light of their historical contingencies, internal tensions and contradictions, and muted potentialities.

This article outlines particular cultural-historical contexts that help explain *Āryānā*'s salient features vis-à-vis different facets of Afghan nationalism in the latter part of the twentieth century and Persian literary nationalism more broadly. First, it traces the formation of literature as a modern conceptual category in twentieth-century Afghanistan. Then, it examines the language policies and politics of the 1930s and 1940s to set up the right historical context. The final sections delve into *Āryānā*, its making, contributors, source materials, and distinct historiographical features. The focus of this article is volume three of the encyclopedia, which contains an extensive account of Persian literary history. Without bearing these contexts in mind, we run the risk of rendering *Āryānā* a standalone text and separating it from its disciplinary history.⁶

Literature: The Rise of a Modern Concept

The institutionalization of literature as a discipline took place through multiple sites of cultural production.⁷ Many of the activities that contributed to these disciplinary processes were based in literary and historical associations or *anjomans*.⁸ Some were centered around state schools and universities while others revolved around linguistic and philological connections.⁹ Collectively, these sites formed integral parts of print culture that made inroads without which such disciplinary processes would have been unimaginable. As such, these

⁴ *Āryānā* is absent from critical studies on the formation of literary history written in Persian. See, for instance, Fotuhi, *Nazariyeh-ye tārikh-e adabiyāt*. Fotuhi examines works of critical theory on literary history and literary histories of Persian composed in various languages. Yet, he fails to mention a single Afghan literary history of Persian. This omission is particularly noteworthy since the literary historiographical part of volume three of *Encyclopedia Āryānā*, the focus of this article, has been edited and republished in Iran as a standalone work. See Kahdu'i, ed., *Adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*. Sadly, glossing over Afghan cultural production is all too common inside Iran, as evident in the work of Fotuhi, a literary scholar whose institution (Ferdowsi University of Mashhad) is much closer to Herat than it is to Tehran.

⁵ On Zhubal's scholarly response to Iranian literary historiography, see Ahmadi, "The Cradle of Dari." For more on the language politics of this period, see Farhang, *Afghanistan dar panj qarn-e akhīr*, 690–94.

⁶ Since this article makes use of "institutionalization" and "disciplinization" as analytical categories, it is important to comment on their distinction. I see the latter as a sub-phenomenon of literary institutionalization; as such all disciplines are institutions, but there are many institutions that are not disciplines. In this article, there is an implicit distinction between literature and literary history and scholarship. Literature is seen as an institution and literary scholarship as a discipline, and therefore a sort of institution. Quite naturally, there exists a great deal of slippage, particularly when one speaks of literature as a discipline.

⁷ For an account of the disciplinization of Persian literature in Iran, see Fotuhi, *Darāmadi bar adabiyāt-shenāsi*.

⁸ For the role of *anjomans*, see Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 1.

⁹ Vajdani, "Indo-Iranian Linguistics."

sites should not be seen as standalone or sealed off from one another. Instead, they should be conceptualized as co-habitual, each creating its own unique center of gravity while simultaneously contributing to the creation of literature as a national enterprise. The institutionalization and nationalization of literature in the twentieth century is a uniquely transregional phenomenon whose processes and local manifestations in the Persian-speaking world have been analyzed in this special issue of *Iranian Studies*.

Any examination of literature as a modern discipline will have to begin with the rise of literature as a conceptual category. The idea of *adabiyāt* or literature in Persian as a canon of writings that embodies the literary and civilizational achievements of a unitary people defined by a certain ethnic genealogy and territorial sovereignty goes back no further than the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Literature as a concept was first introduced to elite Afghan readers in the pages of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals. In 1911, Mahmud Tarzi, a towering Persian-language intellectual and a pioneer of journalism in Afghanistan, established *Serāj ol-akhbār* (The torch of news) in Kabul, a biweekly periodical that produced one of the earliest articulations of the notion of *adabiyāt* in Afghanistan.¹⁰

The first issue of *Serāj ol-akhbār*, printed on October 9, featured an essay under the novel rubric of *adabiyāt*. It was written by Mowlawi ‘Abdol Ra’uf Ākhundzādah, poet, scholar, and chancellor of Kabul’s Madrasah-ye Shahi, the country’s most prestigious seminary.¹¹ An editorial note mentioned that ‘Abdol Ra’uf contributed the article at Tarzi’s request, which was then printed “word for word” in the newspaper.¹² ‘Abdol Ra’uf opened his article with a rhyming line: *adabiyāt chistand / va az che bahs mirānand*, or “what are *adabiyāt* / and what topics do they discuss?”¹³ He evoked *adabiyāt* as a plural term, similar to its use in premodern texts such as *Nafā’es ol-fonun fi ‘arā’es ol-‘oyun* (The jewels of science and the brides of the eyes), composed by Mohammad ebn-e Mahmud-e Āmoli (d. 1353) in the fourteenth century.¹⁴ The use of *adabiyāt* in that text alongside *tabi‘iyāt* (natural sciences), *shar‘iyāt* (religious sciences), and *riyāziyāt* (the science of mathematics) denotes its earlier disciplinization in the post-Mongol scholastic milieu in which it served as a designation for sciences pertaining to *adab*.¹⁵

In his article, ‘Abdol Ra’uf asserted that *adabiyāt*, or the knowledge derived from *adab* (‘*olum-e adabiyah*), was first studied in *madrasahs* and constituted an integral component of Islamic learning.¹⁶ But in the early twentieth century, he wrote, *adabiyāt* entered a new site of literary production: periodicals. ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article is extremely important for two reasons. Firstly, it illustrates that the semantic boundaries of *adabiyāt* in the early twentieth century were far from settled. The supple ambiguity with which ‘Abdol Ra’uf conceptualized *adabiyāt* closely mirrors the term’s polysemy in Mohammad Hosayn Forughī’s late nineteenth-century *Literary History*.¹⁷ In the 1910s, the term “*adabiyāt*” had not yet accrued its meaning as a *singular* designation for a nationally anchored canon of literary works. It remained closely tied to *adab* as “proper forms of aesthetic style and

¹⁰ For critical studies on Tarzi’s ideas and consequential career, see Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature*, chaps. 2 and 3; Schinasi, *Afghanistan at the Beginning*, 97–101; Gregorian, “Mahmud Tarzi”; Arbabzadah, “Modernizing.” In Persian, see Sakhāwarz, *Tarzi va Serāj ol-akhbār*.

¹¹ *Serāj ol-akhbār*, no. 1 (1911): 10–12. Digitized in Afghanistan Digital Library, New York University Libraries. Accessed August 14, 2017.

¹² For an examination of ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article, see Arbabzadah, “Modernizing.”

¹³ *Serāj ol-akhbār*, no. 1 (1911): 10.

¹⁴ For an analysis of this text regarding its importance for the term *adabiyāt*, see Fani, “Becoming Literature,” chap. 1.

¹⁵ For Āmoli, these sciences included *khatt* (calligraphy), *loghat* (lexicography), *eshteqāq* (derivation), *tasrif* (morphology), *nahw* (syntax), *ma’ani* (semantics, a component of rhetoric), *bayān* (clarity, a branch of rhetoric focused on metaphor and simile), *badi‘* (rhetorical figures, also means elocution), ‘*aruz* (prosody), and others. Āmoli, *Nafā’es ol-fonun*, 16.

¹⁶ *Serāj ol-akhbār*, no. 1 (1911): 11.

¹⁷ On the importance of the Forughis to this project, see Fani, “Iran’s Literary Becoming.”

ethical conduct.”¹⁸ Secondly, ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article displayed critical awareness of the fact that writing in *Serāj ol-akhbār* marked an important shift from older (*madrasah*) to modern (periodicals) sites of learning and literary production. ‘Abdol Ra’uf may be the only literary intellectual who has given such a clear nod to the rise of a new disciplinary formation.

As Mana Kia has recently argued, *adab* was more than just a discourse of self-comportment. *Adab* entailed certain aesthetic and moral values embedded in a literary corpus and systematized forms of knowledge that were transmitted through education and other forms of sociality. As such, “we can consider *adab* as the mode by which Persians identify.”¹⁹ The *adab* of ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s world was undergoing a radical conceptual realignment in order to produce and denote civilizational and national affiliation and distinction. The idea of civilization, once associated with civility, was itself undergoing an important transformation. Its twentieth-century iteration invoked “a world community consisting of multiple civilizational blocs existing alongside one another and each characterized by a distinctive moral-aesthetic essence.”²⁰ In other words, the moral community of *adab* was being overshadowed by the civilizational-national community of *adabiyāt*. And while *adab* sided more closely with becoming, *adabiyāt* largely sided with identity or being. Instead of arriving at Persian as a shared language of learning, under the logic of *adabiyāt*, one was simply born as a Persian.²¹

‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article heralded a programmatic engagement with the notion of literature in *Serāj ol-akhbār*. Tarzi established a column that produced the most lucid expression of literature in early twentieth-century Afghanistan. For instance, in a column on *akhlāqiyāt* or ethics, Tarzi wrote, “Every people is alive through its language, and every language through its literature.”²² He argued that the existence of a people depended on how well they safeguard their language, forming an organicist idea whereby the nation and its literature constituted a whole. Tarzi’s views on language were closely echoed by literary intellectuals in Iran as well as by a global network of intellectuals writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the framework of many other literary traditions.²³

During its seven-year run from 1911 to 1918, *Serāj ol-akhbār* introduced a set of new concepts like *adabiyāt* and turned them into fixtures in the Afghan cultural landscape. Tarzi’s biweekly periodical helped to identify language and literature as entities affiliated with a national community defined on the basis of territorial and ethnic belonging.²⁴ Tarzi did not just initiate conversations about what it meant to speak of a distinctly Afghan literature and language; he also helped to create the ‘Enāyat publishing house and gestured towards the need to establish literary institutions in order to make the literary patrimony of Afghanistan more recognizable inside and outside of the country. What Tarzi had in mind was an entity, supported by the state, which would be tasked with safeguarding and regulating Persian and Pashto, and that would hold a culturally authoritative and socially prevalent position in Afghanistan.

The rise of national education and literary and historical associations in Afghanistan in the second quarter of the twentieth century led to the codification of not only *adabiyāt*, but also a host of other conceptually realigned notions. For instance, *tārikh* came to signify a positivist account of a unitary people’s history with the nation-state posited as its national subject.²⁵ During the 1920s, Qāri ‘Abdollah Khān (d. 1943), the distinguished *malek ol-sho‘arā* or poet laureate, educator, and scholar, developed a number of literary textbooks for

¹⁸ Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰ See Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 100.

²¹ The question of how *adab* operates within the discourse of *adabiyāt* today deserves extensive analysis better reserved for another article.

²² Farhādi, *Maqālāt*, 632.

²³ See Allan, *Shadow of World Literature*; Mufti, *Forget English!*

²⁴ Fani, “Becoming Literature,” chap. 1.

²⁵ On the formation of history as a national enterprise in Afghanistan, see Green, ed., *Afghan History*.

elementary and secondary education in emerging state schools in Afghanistan. Qāri's textbooks helped to turn *adabiyāt* into an object of pedagogy.

In his literary textbook for secondary education or *roshdīyah*, printed in 1930/31, Qāri wrote the following under the heading "Literature and Other Sciences": "Adabiyāt is connected to and interacts with some sciences, at times it speaks of them; through its sweet language it makes their benefits accessible."²⁶ He commented on how *adabiyāt* conveys ideas derived from *falsafah* (philosophy), *akhlāq* (ethics), *tasavvof* (mysticism), 'elm-e *ejtemā'* (sociology), and *tārikh* (history). On the connection between literature and history, Qāri wrote:

Literature is one of three [types of] sources [used in] history. In the same manner that one can decipher the state of a nation through oral narratives and ancient artifacts, one can decipher the customs and manners of that nation through literature. Also, the inscriptions of monuments, fragments of history, and the biography of people may all be literature, but they also aid with [the writing of] history.²⁷

The common denominator of literature and history, according to Qāri, is how they both embody the nation. The task of drawing shared elements between entities called *adabiyāt* and *tārikh* (history), imagined as self-contained, would not have made any sense to Qāri's literary predecessors in the early nineteenth century who operated outside national educational institutions. That said, the entwinement of literature and history did not fully take shape in Qāri's literary textbooks, which remained beholden to the *tazkerah* genre in their biographical orientation.

The historicization of *adabiyāt* within an emerging narrative of Afghan national history would ultimately take place in the 1930s, thanks in large part to the rise of literary associations in cities like Kabul and Herat.²⁸ *Anjomans* helped to expand the domain of print culture and created a new structure of networking centered around bylaws and formal positions such as president and secretary, modeled on European and Indian language academies that had preceded them.²⁹ The ideas that literary intellectuals like Mahmud Tarzi had forged in the 1910s gained currency as a state-sponsored cadre of literary intellectuals became professionally preoccupied with conventionalizing certain discursive practices that aimed to reify and regulate Persian literature as its nationally enshrined object of analysis.³⁰ Journals like *Kābol* (1931–79), *Herāt* (1932–80), *Āryānā* (1942–86, published irregularly after 1979), *Erfān* (1950–78), and many others became venues for the formation of a new mode of literary knowledge. As such, these *anjomans* cannot be described as "merely" language academies that aimed to reconfigure and standardize Persian-language grammar and vocabulary for the needs of an emerging reading public and educational institutions; they also crucially reconceptualized language and literature as part of a national imaginary.

The establishment of *Puhanzi-ye adabiyāt va 'olūm-e bashari* or the Faculty of Letters at the University of Kabul in 1944, less than a decade after the University of Tehran's Faculty of Letters, put in place a literary curriculum, as well as academic rules and practices, that cemented Persian literature as a disciplinary formation.³¹ In the 1950s, the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters launched three scholarly journals: *Adab* (1953–78), written mostly in Persian but periodically featuring articles in Pashto and English; *Wazhmah*, meaning

²⁶ 'Abdollah Khān, *Adabiyāt*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

²⁸ On the rise of national historiography in Afghanistan, see Nawid, "Writing National History"; Green, ed., *Afghan History*, 1–51.

²⁹ This proliferation of *anjomans* in British-ruled India had preceded both Iran and Afghanistan. See Stark, "Associational Culture"; Perkins, "New Pablik."

³⁰ Ahmadi, "Kabul Literary Society"; Zhubal, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*, 166. On the history of literary associations in general in Afghanistan, see Anusheh, ed., *Dāneshnāmeh-ye adab-e Fārsi*, 3:126–33.

³¹ Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 309–11.

breeze, printed entirely in Pashto with some articles in English; and *Joghrāfiyā*, or *Geography*, published in both Persian and Pashto.³² The university department began to operate with a core faculty of eighteen domestic professors, two foreign professors, and ten students who majored in Persian and Pashto literature.³³ The faculty offered courses on history, linguistics, literary history, poetry, journalism, and geography. It also employed sixty-five domestic and seven foreign lecturers on a permanent basis to teach its courses.³⁴ The Kabul Faculty established connections with its institutional counterparts in the region by hosting and sending students and visiting professors to institutions like the University of Tehran. It produced educators and scholars of Persian literature trained for the first time within a local university setting.³⁵

Let us draw together the institutional transformations outlined above. The institutionalization of *adabiyāt* as a new disciplinary formation in the 1940s and 1950s ratified earlier developments from the early twentieth century which were rooted in associational culture and civil society. In the course of half a century, literature became the prized object of a national discipline through the creation of co-habitual spaces such as *anjomans*, faculties of letters, printing houses, libraries, and state schools. These spaces were frequented by many of the same literary intellectuals who played multiple roles across several organizations; nonetheless they strove toward a single aim that concerned the making and edification of a civilizational and national community. The radical conceptual realignment of *adabiyāt* produced and was itself inaugurated by new modes of historiographical production.

While *adab*, with *balāgha* or the sciences of rhetoric as its main instrument, emphasized the cultivation of skill sets and behavioral dispositions regardless of birthplace and origin, *adabiyāt*, with literary history as its main instrument, served as a discourse through which people learned to think of themselves in relation to a national territory and identify with its history through the sanctioned narratives of its past. It took half a century for the processes outlined above to play out; *Āryānā*'s entry on Afghan literary history provides perhaps the most overt and structured product of these historical processes. One of the novel qualities of *Āryānā* is the fact that a new genre called encyclopedia contributed to the reification and codification of literary history as another new genre, making the latter appear more structured and authoritative.

Language Policies and Politics of the 1930s–1940s

It is important to briefly detail key language policies and politics implemented by the Mosāhebān dynasty in the 1930s and 1940s. These sociopolitical realities provide a crucial background against which *Āryānā* needs to be understood. The term “*Āryānā*” itself encapsulates key intellectual developments during a period in which “Afghan historians claimed that ancient Aryana or Aryanam Vaejah (that is, the territory defined in the *Avesta* as the land of Aryas) composed the regions that formed modern-day Afghanistan.”³⁶ These concerted efforts, aimed at bringing Afghanistan as a political entity into alignment with an ancient cultural geography called *Āryānā*, primarily took place within the framework of

³² In the literary and academic domains of the period, one may not neatly separate Persian from Pashto or vice versa. Many articles composed in Persian extensively quoted Pashto verses and often left them untranslated. Pashto articles quoted Persian poetry even more regularly. Topics related to Pashto literature (e.g. the Pashto *qasida*) were sometimes written in Persian. Overall, the two languages are inextricably entangled as they seek to chart a disciplinary domain in the 1940s and 1950s.

³³ *Shāyān, Āshenā'i*, 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵ Iranian scholars such as Sādeq Rezāzādeh Shafaq, Sa'īd Nafisi, and later Mohammad 'Ali Eslāmi Nodushan all spent time as visiting professors at the University of Kabul. In 1958, fifty-eight students, most of whom were from the Soviet Union and the United States, enrolled at the University of Kabul to study Persian and Pashto. *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁶ Nawid, “Writing National History,” 191. On Aryanism in Russian imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet Central Asia, see Laruelle, “Return of the Aryan Myth”; Battis, “Soviet Orientalism.”

the disciplinary formation described in this article. The historian Mir Gholām Mohammad Ghobār (d. 1978) was the first to link Āryānā and Bactria to the idea of ancient Afghanistan.³⁷ Āryānā was not only a pre-Islamic cultural geography, but also a racial³⁸ geography for Ghobār and his cohort; the key term used here was “*nezhād*.”³⁹

Ahmad ‘Ali Kohzād, who later served as a member of the Encyclopedia Association, significantly expanded on the ideas of Ghobār and ‘Abdol Hayy Habibi (d. 1984) in the journals *Kābol* and *Āryānā* and later in his monographs.⁴⁰ Kohzād’s writings helped codify Āryānā into a stable historiographical fixture in the modern genre of national history in Afghanistan.⁴¹ Overall, in the 1930s and 1940s the term “Āryānā” accrued a new historiographical referent: ancient, pre-Islamic Afghanistan. As such, Āryānā signaled the historicity of Afghanistan as a political entity, an effort to back-shadow the existence of a modern nation-state.⁴² This story, however, would be necessarily incomplete without critically taking into account language policies in Afghanistan. In order to better understand how the rise of Persian literary history relates to broader conceptions of Afghanistan as Āryānā, one must place its formation in the context of the Pashtun nationalism which was ascendant in the 1930s and 1940s.

Pashtun nationalism made inroads into the domains of policy, civil society, and state apparatus in the 1930s.⁴³ During the rule of Mohammad Nāder Shah and early years of Mohammad Zāher Shah (r. 1933–73), the state began to promote Pashto.⁴⁴ In 1936, Pashto was declared “the official language of Afghanistan” by a state decree.⁴⁵ In 1937, the Ministry of Education decided to make Pashto the language of elementary-school instruction across Afghanistan.⁴⁶ The Kabul Literary Association, established in the early 1930s, was disbanded in 1940 in favor of the Pashto Tolana or the Pashto Academy that began to operate in

³⁷ Ghobār, “Tārikhcheh-ye mokhtasar-e Afghanistan,” *Sālnāmeḥ-ye majallah-ye Kabul* (1932): 7–40; “Afghanistan joghrafiyā’i,” *Kabul* 1, no. 4 (September 1931): 44–57. See also Nawid, “Writing National History.”

³⁸ For instance, see Ghobār’s article “*Adabiyāt dar Afghanistan*” in the first issue of *Kabul* 1, no. 1 (1931): 13. In it, Ghobār writes, “The countries of Persia [*Mamlekat-e Fārs*] and Afghanistan appear to possess a shared Aryan race. The languages of the two countries such as Sogdian of Transoxiana have a shared genealogy.” Other intellectuals contributed to the development of Āryānā as an ethno-historical discourse; see, for instance, ‘Abdol Hayy Habibi, “Nokāti chand az tārikh va zabān-e keshwar-e mā,” *Āryānā* 1 (February 1943): 21–23.

³⁹ For a summary of a debate on the racial valences of ethno-nationalism in Afghanistan, see Nawid, “Writing National History,” 193–94. On Afghanistan–Germany intellectual connections, see Wardaki, “Rediscovering Afghan Fine Arts.” Wardaki’s research reverses the passive syntax with which we examine Afghan nationalism, attributing all ideas of racial, linguistic, and literary nationalism to contact with European cultures.

⁴⁰ See Kohzād, *Āryānā*. For more on the role of Kohzād and ancient studies in the formation of Afghan nationalism, see Green, “Afghan Discovery of Buddha.” Relevant to this study is Green’s statement “In a radical revision of its historical identity, between around 1930 and 1960 Afghanistan was transformed from an Islamic Amirate and a Pashtun dynastic dominion into a monarchical nation-state that was the heir to the ancient land of ‘Aryana’” (48).

⁴¹ Another work that shows the pervasiveness of the idea of Āryānā in Afghan historiography in the 1930s and 1940s is Turwāyānā, *Aryānā yā Afghanistan*. This book was originally published in Kabul in 1945.

⁴² Before colonial modernity, political divisions did not neatly match natural designations (*Māvarā’ on-nahr* or Transoxiana, for instance, is a natural designation). The idea of Afghanistan as a unitary nation-state took form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term “Afghanistan” itself appears to have been used for the first time by the British “probably in the upper corridors of the administration in Calcutta in the 1830s.” Schiffman and Spooner, “Afghan Languages,” 6.

⁴³ For analyses on earlier decades, see Wide, “Demarcating Pashto.” The following passage is particularly relevant: “It was not until the 1910s, through a concerted effort of state-backed reformist intellectuals, that Pashto was imagined as a language of the ‘modern’ Afghan nation state. Even here, however, the project remained incomplete: in escaping its status as subordinate to Dari-Persian, it never escaped its status as a symbol, rather than living and breathing component, of the Afghan state” (112).

⁴⁴ Showkat ‘Ali Mohammadi Shāri outlines some of these policies in detail in “Zabān-e Pārsi, sāzeh-ye howiyyat-e melli-ye Afghanistan.” For a survey of secondary sources on the social and political space of Pashto and its linguistic variations, see Hakala, “Locating ‘Pashto’ in Afghanistan.”

⁴⁵ Nawid, “Language Policy in Afghanistan,” 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

its place.⁴⁷ The association's journal, *Kābol*, continued uninterrupted under the same name, but it became an exclusively Pashto-language publication. The Pashto Academy was tasked with the production of dictionaries and standardization of Pashto grammar.⁴⁸ While the Constitution of 1923 did not state a clear language policy, the Constitution of 1964 unequivocally stated that "It is the duty of the state to prepare and implement an effective program for the development and strengthening of the national language, Pushtu."⁴⁹

Many of these policies faced serious roadblocks. For instance, given the historical primacy of Persian as a language of education, the state struggled to implement its Pashto-only language policy. In a reversal of its previous policies, the government restored the status of Persian as an official language in 1946.⁵⁰ One of the central questions at the heart of language policy was who counted as Afghan. The term underwent different conceptual alignments in the twentieth century, shifting from an older sense limited to Pashtuns, to a radical reframing that claimed all those residing within the country of Afghanistan,⁵¹ and back again to Pashtuns only in the 1930s and 1940s. Overall, the monolingual policies and politics of the state in this period based on Pashto-language nationalism "utterly failed" and were largely "abandoned."⁵² In summary, Pashtun nationalists drew on Aryanist theories, anchored in archeological and nationalist linguistic discourses, in order to position themselves as Afghanistan's autochthon.⁵³ The critical attention paid to linguistic, literary, and ancient history in this period must be understood within this sociopolitical context.⁵⁴ However, as my analysis illustrates, the pursuit of such policies by the state did not produce a literary discourse that would reflect in any stable or straightforward way the principles of an ethnocentric nationalism.

A Transregional Collaborative Process

The Encyclopedia Association, founded in 1944, developed its own bylaws in 1954 and operated semi-independently, supervised by the Secretary of Education.⁵⁵ It commissioned and published books in Persian and Pashto on the history, geology, geography, literature, and educational history of Afghanistan, both ancient and modern.⁵⁶ The association's grand project was called *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā* or *Encyclopedia Āryānā* (henceforth *Āryānā*). *Āryānā* is the first Persian-language encyclopedia carried out by a team of collaborators and conceptualized within an associational framework, making it a new genre of scholarly production. *Āryānā* was focused on the languages, literature, politics, history, religions, folklore, and the

⁴⁷ For a study on the different literary figures of this time and the Persian-Pashto cultural interplay, see Hewādmal, *Roshd-e zabān*.

⁴⁸ Nawid, "Language Policy in Afghanistan," 36. Reshtin's *Pashto Grāmer* is one such example.

⁴⁹ See Article 35 in the *Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*, 19. Digitized Afghanistan materials in English from the Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection, Collection at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

⁵⁰ *Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*, 37.

⁵¹ For instance, Article 8 of the Constitution of 1923 states, "Any person [*hamah-ye afrādī*] who resides in the country of Afghanistan, regardless of religion or sect, is considered a citizen of Afghanistan [*taba'ah-ye Afghanistan*]." This article redefines Afghan-ness not in (Pashtun) ethnic terms, but national and territorial terms. *Nezām-nāmah-ye asāsi-ye dowlat-e 'alīyah-ye Afghanistan*, 3. For more on the formation of Afghanistan's first constitution, see Ahmed, *Afghanistan Rising*. Article 1 of the Constitution of 1964 adds another sentence to this article for further clarification: "The word Afghan shall apply to each such individual." *Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*, 3.

⁵² Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature*, 48–49.

⁵³ The category "Pashtun nationalists" is not stable or homogenous. There existed a plurality of opinion among nationalist-minded Pashtuns, the examination of which lies outside the purview of this article.

⁵⁴ On more strictly political ramifications of Pashtunization, see Bezhan, "Pashtunistan Issue and Politics."

⁵⁵ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:i. In 1955, the Encyclopedia Association became affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

notable figures of Afghanistan.⁵⁷ It was organized alphabetically and included diagrams and illustrations. All six volumes were first composed in Persian and then translated immediately into Pashto by the Pashto Tolanaḥ. The first volume of *Āryānā* was released in 1949 and the last was printed exactly two decades later.⁵⁸

The subentry on Afghan literary history was subsumed under the entry on Afghanistan, included in the third volume, released in 1956. The subentry had synthesized the most recent research on language theory, literary history, and cultural archaeology into a coherent historical narrative. *Āryānā* took a significant step in gathering, consolidating, and structuring two decades of research that had been published in Afghanistan, Iran, India, and elsewhere. In writing this subentry, Afghan encyclopedists grappled with such questions as: How have different literary traditions contributed to the making of Afghan culture and literature? What is the role of the Eastern Islamic lands in the rise of New Persian as a polycentric literary tradition? In 228 pages, Afghan scholars produced the first collaborative and most capacious narrative of Afghan literary history yet in existence. In doing so, they helped to chart literary history as an emerging field of study marked by its own set of methodological tools and primary sources.

Thus far, *Āryānā* has been primarily mined for its knowledge of Afghanistan. As a result, some of its other key features, particularly its historiographical innovations that pertain to Persian literary history more broadly, have not been understood or analyzed.⁵⁹ I will lay out my main arguments at the outset to guide the reader through different parts of this section. The compilation and publication of the entry on Afghan literary history represents the first entwinement of *adabiyāt* and national historiography in an encyclopedic format. It puts forth an innovative method of periodization that reconciles a long-standing modern tension between periodological and typological approaches to literary periodization. Finally, *Āryānā*'s entry on literary history evinces an inherent tension between ecumenical and territorial visions of Afghanistan as a cultural entity. Highlighting this inherent tension is key to understanding *Āryānā*'s place within the discourse of literary nationalism.

The team that contributed to researching and writing this section included Mir Gholām Mohammad Ghobār, Ahmad Jāwid, Ahmad 'Ali Kohzād, Khāl Mohammad Khastah, 'Abdol Haq Bitāb, 'Abdol Ra'uf Binawā, 'Abdol Ghafur Rawān Farhādi, and Mohammad Hosayn Behruz.⁶⁰ Ghobar and Kohzād served as members of the Kabul Literary Association and Afghanistan Historical Society. Bitāb, Afghanistan's last poet laureate, taught at the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters. Jāwid was a graduate of the University of Tehran's doctoral program in Persian literature while Behruz was a graduate of the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters. Rawān Farhādi, who later served as Afghanistan's ambassador to the United Nations, was a lecturer at the University of Kabul. Khastah was a scholar and poet from Bukhara who had moved to Afghanistan in the early twentieth

⁵⁷ *Encyclopedia Āryānā* is, to the best of my knowledge, the first work self-classified as a "*dā'erat ol-ma'āref*" in the Persian language. As Eliās Muhanna has noted, the term is an Arabic calque for the pseudo-Greek term "enkuklopaideia" (literally, "child-rearing or training in a circle," i.e. the circle of arts and sciences), and its usage in this instance is novel. *World in a Book*, 10. Encyclopedism is a more general category that has a long-standing history in the Islamic tradition. Here, I am not broadly referring to works that possess encyclopedic features and techniques or an expansive compilatory scope. What specifically concerns my framing in this article is the encyclopedia as a new informational medium that took shape within a specific disciplinary formation called Persian literature. For a history of Persian-language encyclopedias, see Moqaddasi, *Dāneshnāmeḥ'hā-ye Irāni*.

⁵⁸ The dates of release for other volumes are as follows: second (1951), third (1956), fourth (1962), fifth and sixth (1970).

⁵⁹ This entry on *Encyclopedia Āryānā* clearly underscores this approach. It states: "[The encyclopedia's] value primarily lies in its articles and titles related to Afghanistan." It frames the rest of *Encyclopedia Āryānā* as a poorly edited derivative of Iranian and European sources. Anusheh, ed., *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye adab-e Fārsi*, 3:6.

⁶⁰ The latter had earned his bachelor's degree in Persian language and literature from the University of Kabul, connoting the fulfillment of the recently developed discipline of literature within the national educational system. He went to Moscow to earn his PhD and worked with a group of Soviet Orientalists on a critical edition of the *Shahnameh*.

century. And Binawā was a Pashto-language poet and writer. It is important to note the affiliations of these scholars because they demonstrate the extent to which institutional sites of literary production were distinctly co-habitual, whereby graduates of university education end up co-authoring sections of *Āryānā*. This is an example of the self-perpetuation of this institutional process.

More research should be done on *Āryānā*'s drawing on (or lack thereof) different informational ecosystems. Such inquiries could tell us a lot about the varied and multidirectional elements of Afghan intellectual history in this period. For example, in his brief preface to the third volume, Sayyed Ahmad Shah Hāshemi stated that *Āryānā* made extensive use of many European sources in French, German, Russian, Italian, and English.⁶¹ According to Hāshemi, English-language sources predominated. Did the dominance of English have anything to do with the fact that the US embassy had opened in 1941 in Kabul as a prelude to the many Afghan students that were later sent to study in the United States via Fulbright? Concerning non-European sources, did Afghan scholars primarily access those texts through Iranian imprints? Were these imprints recent or from decades earlier? Does the same pattern form when it comes to both literary and nonliterary topics? Arriving at a more nuanced sense of *Āryānā*'s citational ecosystem (and its exclusions) will require a close reading of different entries.

Āryānā's entry on literary history drew on and repurposed a large number of texts reproduced in various time periods and through different discursive practices: biographical dictionaries (*tazkerahs*), poetic anthologies (*jong*), literary histories (*tārikh-e adabiyāt*), *divāns* (collected works), historical studies, periodicals, and lecture notes developed for modern educational institutions. Unlike the linguistic section of *Āryānā*'s literary history that referenced Orientalist knowledge in European languages, the section of New Persian literature only drew on non-European sources. This may be because the conceptual framework and insights of European sources like E. G. Browne's *A Literary History of Persia* had been fairly internalized by Persian-language periodicals and literary histories that proliferated in the first half of the twentieth century.

Among sources used by *Āryānā*'s entry on New Persian literary history, one sees texts primarily produced in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and India: Shibli Nu'māni's *Shi'r ul-'Ajam* (The poetry of Persians), Sadr ol-Din 'Aini's *Examples of Tajik Literature*, Bahār's *Sabk-shenāsi*, Sādeq Rezāzādeh Shafaq's *History of Iranian Literature*, Khāl Mohammad Khastah's personal manuscripts, as well as the journals *Kābol*, *Āryānā*, *'Erfān*, and *Adab*. As Alexander Jabbari has argued, the construction of literary history as a modern genre was necessarily a socially and linguistically mediated act of repurposing and synthesis, not a clean break from the "premodern" modes of literary and cultural production.⁶² What makes these multi-discursive source texts appear seamlessly within a standalone narrative of Afghan literary history is their positioning within the discourse of *adabiyāt*.

Adab(iyāt) and Āryānā

One may ask: Why produce an encyclopedia? The idea that "evolved" nations engage in the production of encyclopedias in order to historicize and showcase their folklore, ethnicity, music, poetry, and other cultural fixtures resonated with scholars around the world in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶³ In this period, the production of ethnically

⁶¹ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:alef-be (A–B).

⁶² Jabbari, "Late Persianate Literary Culture."

⁶³ For example, in an article called "Ahamiyat-e tarjomah" (The importance of translation) in *Kabul* (no. 4, 1931: 31–44), Ahmad 'Ali Khān Dorrāni called on Afghan intellectuals to undertake the translation of 'olum-e jadidah or "modern sciences." As an example, he mentioned "*Dā'erat ol-Ma'āref-e al-Bostāni*" or al-Bustani's encyclopedia (43). For another example that highlights the importance of encyclopedias to the nation-state and its civilizational achievements, see Gholām Jilāni Khān Jalāli, "Dā'erat ol-Ma'ārefhā," *Ā'inah-ye 'erfān* 2.5 (1935): 17–32. This essay, which was published as a series, had been inspired by a similar article in the Arabic-language periodical *al-Hilāl*.

oriented encyclopedias proliferated.⁶⁴ The case of Butrus al-Bustani (d. 1883) is particularly instructive here. In 1876, al-Bustani created the calque *Dā'irat ul-ma'ārif* or “Circle of Knowledge” as a title for his project *Encyclopédie arabe*.⁶⁵ *Encyclopédie arabe* may have been primarily conceptualized by al-Bustani, but it was carried out by a team of collaborators.⁶⁶ It has been dubbed the first modern encyclopedia in Arabic, an assertion made, according to Francesca Bellino, for reasons described below.

As a cultural enterprise, its publication, distribution, and importance would have been difficult to conceive before the rise and accessibility of the printing press. The writing of *Encyclopédie arabe* had been informed by “positivist, empirical, secular, and scientific” forms of knowledge.⁶⁷ If *Encyclopédie arabe* “provided the Arabic reading public with a current catalog, albeit a partial one, of man’s knowledge about his nature, his world and his accomplishments,” then *Āryānā*, produced around three quarters of a century later, provided Persian and Pashto readers with a distilled body of knowledge created by a new disciplinary formation in twentieth-century Afghanistan.⁶⁸

There are other discursive similarities between these two landmark projects. Al-Bustāni’s differentiated use of *adab* is particularly insightful and relevant here, as explained by Bellino:

In the entry on *adab*, al-Bustani distinguishes between the singular (*adab*) and plural (*ādāb*) forms. The former has a technical sense and designates a certain branch (*adab ul-qaḍi* or *adab ul-shā'ir*) of science (*‘ilm ul-adab*) that requires a technical terminology. The latter covers the general meaning of knowledge, as a synonym of *al-‘ulum* and *al-ma'ārif*. In addition, al-Bustani adds the meanings of the various forms derived from the root to those two meanings.⁶⁹

Encyclopédie arabe holds an important place in the conceptual realignment of *adab*, which culminated in its twentieth-century disciplinization as literature across much of the Arabic-speaking world.⁷⁰

Released in 1952, the second volume of *Āryānā* dedicates a five-page entry to *adab*.⁷¹ The entry draws on a number of different sources such as Muhammad Farid Wajdi’s Arabic-language encyclopedic work *Kanz al-‘ulūm wa-l-lughah* (1905), Ja’far Ibn Muhammad Baytī’s *Mawāsim al-adab wa-āthār al-‘Ajām wa-l-‘Arab* (1908), Jalāl Homā’i’s *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Irān* (1930), and an uncited American encyclopedia. The entry defines *adab* as an *‘elm* or science (invoked here in its older sense as any systematized form of knowledge) and ascribes two senses to it, a capacious sense that deals with language in general (*adab-e lesān*) and a narrower sense that is concerned with the literary (*adabiyāt*). The former, more general sense is encapsulated by *adab* as a discourse of proper conduct.

⁶⁴ On *Qazaq sovet èntsiklopediyası* or the *Kazakh Soviet Encyclopedia* (1972–78), for instance, see Baker, “Ethnic Words,” 141–53.

⁶⁵ This Arabic calque generates valences that need to be analyzed. Premodern encyclopedic works utilized different plural nouns as a way of indicating their scope and comprehensiveness. As such, the idea of a circle of knowledges or *ma'ārif* signals a certain continuity with premodern encyclopedic texts. Whereas, *Dā'irat ul-tarbiyah* or *ma'rifaḥ*, a more literal Arabic translation of the corrupted Greek term “enkuklopaideia,” would have signaled more of a departure in that sense. On the other hand, the term “*ma'ārif*” implies a nonspecific sense of knowledge, in comparison to more specific terms like *wafāyāt*, *masālik*, *‘ajā’ib*, or *funun* deployed by premodern texts. See Tuttle, “Educational and Social Worlds.” I am grateful to Cameron Cross for this observation and reference.

⁶⁶ Bellino, “Arabic Encyclopaedias,” 154. Afghan scholars were well aware of al-Bustani’s encyclopedia and referenced it in periodicals such as *Kabul*. For instance, see Ahmad ‘Ali Khan Dorrāni, “Ahamiyat-e tarjomah,” *Kabul* 1, no. 4 (September 1931): 43.

⁶⁷ Bellino, “Arabic Encyclopaedias,” 124.

⁶⁸ Jandora, “al-Bustāni’s *Dā'irat ul-ma'ārif*,” 89.

⁶⁹ Bellino, “Arabic Encyclopaedias,” 153.

⁷⁰ El Shakry, *The Literary Qur'an*; Allan, “How Adab Became Literary.”

⁷¹ *Dā'irat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 2:598–602.

Following this general note, the entry provides two subcategories: the science of *adab* in the East and in the West. In its note on the Eastern iteration of *adab*, *Āryānā* emphasizes *adab*'s two valences as literary form and proper conduct. It then enumerates different branches that pertain to the science of *adab*, not dissimilar to *Āmoli's Naḡā'es ol-fonun*, and briefly discusses various literary genres in poetry and prose. *Āryānā's* section on the Western iteration of *adab* similarly ascribes two senses to the idea of literature, one broadly used to refer to a body of written or printed works on any particular subject and a narrower sense to mean literary form. The subentry enumerates different literary genres common in Western European literary traditions. What differentiates the Eastern and Western iterations of *adab*/literature, Afghan scholars argue, is the fact that the etymology of "literature" in European languages mutes any connections to orality while *adab* is not etymologically limited to writing.

Curiously, the term "*adabiyāt*" in *Āryānā* was itself subsumed under the entry on *adab*. This entry was devoted exclusively to the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters.⁷² It included a note about the founding of Afghanistan's first department of literature in 1944 and a list of courses such as "Persian Literary History" taught therein. "Faculty of Letters" is quite an appropriate entry to be placed next to *adab* for it not only signifies *adab(iyāt)*'s conceptual transformation and disciplinization within an academic paradigm, but it also demonstrates the co-habitual, multi-generic, and self-perpetuating nature of this historical process. The takeaway here is clear: *adab* does not just seamlessly become *literary* through a handful of texts or even institutions, no matter how seminal they may be. It happens through complex social processes whose local and transregional contexts must be critically examined. The alternative would be to attribute the rise of literature to a taken-for-granted contact with colonial modernity.

Āryānā's entry on *adab* shows that Afghan scholars, and Middle Eastern intellectuals more broadly, were not passively receiving and importing a model of literariness into their local cultures. To the contrary, the formation of *adabiyāt* as literature necessitated grappling with, debating, and reconfiguring concepts such as *adab*. Writing in the 1950s with limited access to primary resources, Afghan scholars displayed a critical awareness of the fact that the idea of *adab*, both in the East and West, was far from fixed or universal.⁷³ The *adab* entry alone demonstrates the precision and inventiveness with which Afghan encyclopedists aimed to define and parse out one of the most culturally consequential and pervasive concepts of their milieu.

Āryānā and the Codification of Literary History

In the early 1930s, the concept of literary history needed to be defined clearly in the pages of journals like *Kābol*. In delineating models for the writing of literary history, Afghan scholars drew on a wide variety of sources, including 'Abbās Eqbāl Āshtiyāni's column "Tārikh-e adabi" in the journal *Dāneshkadeh*, Shibli Nu'māni's *Shi'r ul-'Ajam*, Edward Browne's *A Literary History of Persia*, and many others. By the mid-1950s, literary history posed as a more bounded category, occupying a central place in the national historiography of Afghanistan.⁷⁴

Āryānā's subentry on Afghan literary history included the following sections:

1. Indo-European Languages⁷⁵

⁷² It was titled "Adabiyāt (Fakultah)." *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 2:602.

⁷³ Consider, for instance, a note at the end of the section on *Adab* in the West explaining that the idea of literature as a canon of works on any particular subject is a contemporary usage of the term. *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Two major literary histories of Afghanistan were published in the 1950s. See Kohzād, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghānistān*; Zhubal, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*. On the latter, see Ahmadi, "The Cradle of Dari."

⁷⁵ Indo-European and Indo-Iranian were separate categories in the encyclopedia. *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:937–43.

2. Vedic Literature as It Relates to Afghanistan
3. Avestan Language and Literature
4. The Origins of Orthography and Its Variations in Afghanistan
5. The Proliferation of Greek Language, Literature, and Orthography in Afghanistan
6. Parthava or the Pahlavi Language and Literature of Khorasan
7. The Reviving and Flourishing of Sanskrit Literature in the Kushan Period in Afghanistan
8. Afghanistan and Middle Persian Literature
9. New Persian Language and Literature

These section headings clearly demonstrate the expansive research scope of Afghan encyclopedists and their inclusive understanding of literary history, which entailed wide-ranging topics such as orthography, literary canon, and scripture. These sections included scholarly discussions on the ways in which such literary traditions as Greek, Sogdian, Sanskrit, and Eastern Middle Persian shaped the literary culture of contemporary Afghanistan. As such, these encyclopedists did not seek to chart the literary history of a territorially defined and self-contained political entity or highlight the role of a single literary tradition at the expense of others. Instead, they aimed to situate Afghanistan within a distinctly multilingual and transregional ecumene. Essentially, Afghan encyclopedists deployed the Indo-European hypothesis in order to weave together fragmented and discontinuous cultural episodes into a national unit that is both geographically and historically coherent. Their emphasis on *Āryānā* as an organizational concept—as opposed to the more contested and limited term “Afghan”—dovetails well with the task of composing a national literary history out of Vedic, Greek, and Persian traditions.

The entry on Afghan literary history opened with the following statement: “A new avenue of inquiry was created in 1876 in linguistics and scholars discovered that there are similarities among European and Indian languages such as Greek, Latin and Sanskrit.”⁷⁶ Inspired by and in response to the work of Sir William Jones, a body of language theories by such linguists as Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (d. 1779), Franz Bopp (d. 1867), Jacob Grimm (d. 1863), and Karl Verner (d. 1896) emerged in the nineteenth century that elaborated on the idea of language families.⁷⁷ Afghan encyclopedists offered summaries of these scholars’ work and asserted that formal similarities among languages are explained by the fact that there once existed a single primordial Indo-European tongue, an idea referred to as proto Indo-European by linguists today.⁷⁸ They contended that each Indo-European language is in possession of a unique set of features and that geography is the key factor that determines those unique features.

Indo-European language theory opened new horizons for Afghan scholars who sought to historicize the ethnic constitution of their nation and locate its distinctive place in an emerging cultural configuration within which every nation was imagined as possessing its own unique literary tradition.⁷⁹ This objective found its most lucid expression in the following paragraph, which prefaced subentries on Indo-European languages:

If the speakers of the initial and primordial Indo-European language are enfolded in the layers of prehistory, the speakers of the Indo-Aryan family of languages enter the scene in the beginning of the historical period. They consisted of a series of tribes that used to live in Aryana Vaeja, in the upper range of Syr Darya and Amu Darya, and the domain of their common living extended to the region of Bactria [Bākhtar] in northern Aryana or

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3:408.

⁷⁷ 1876 may refer to the publication year of Verner’s article “Eine Ausnahme der ersten Lautverschiebung” or “An Exception to the First Sound Shift” in the journal *Comparative Linguistic Research*.

⁷⁸ *Dā’erat ol-ma’āref-e Āryānā*, 3:408.

⁷⁹ Mufti, *Forget English!*

present-day Afghanistan. The communal life and position of Aryans or Indo-Aryans has had a significant impact on the literary history of our country, because this living together is what led to the formation of Aryan language(s), from which common Indian and common Aryan languages have derived. The oldest contrasting branches [*shākhah-hā-ye motaqābbelah*] of these languages are Vedic Sanskrit and Avestan languages, which have been identified by present-day linguistic research as the origin of the Indian and Aryan families of languages, respectively.⁸⁰

The idea that the proto Indo-European language originated in present-day Afghanistan was informed by a broader scholarly impetus to shed light on the role of Central Asian languages and cultures in the making of the Sassanian Empire before the advent of Islam and the rise of New Persian in the courts of Persian-using dynasties between the early ninth and tenth centuries. It drew on archaeological findings and historical writings regularly published in journals such as *Āryāna*, the main organ of the Afghanistan Historical Society. This was also an effort to reorient Persian literary history as conceptualized by Iran-centric accounts produced in Tehran.

Iran-centrism refers to the idea that Iran, posited as a primordial geo-cultural entity, is the exclusive and native domain of Persian literature. For instance, Eqbāl Āshtiyāni's series of essays titled "Literary History," which appeared in *Dāneshkadeh* in the late 1910s, offered one of the earliest schemata of Persian literary periodization from an Iran-centric perspective. His schema fragmented previously overlooked Persianate empires whose centers of power fell outside the borders of late Qajar Iran.⁸¹ *Āryānā* focused on Persianate polities such as the Ghurid (879–1215) and Kurt (1244–1381) dynasties, which ruled from a territory most of which falls into what is today Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the authors consistently emphasized the polycentric nature of Persian literary culture.⁸² Afghan encyclopedists' instinct to push against the marginal place assigned to Central Asia has been widely accepted today.⁸³

Highlighting the place of Central Asia as an integral part of a Persian-speaking ecumene, and not as a marginal land in between civilizations, was integral to the reification of an Afghan literary history that was itself subsumed under a larger encyclopedic entry on Afghanistan. The ecumenical and polycentric thrust of *Āryānā*'s literary history, placed within a strictly territorially defined idea of Afghanistan, produced an inherent tension not just in *Āryānā*, but in the making of literary nationalism more broadly. One of the main objectives of the Encyclopedia Association, funded by the Mosāhebān dynasty, was to produce a text at the service of a territorially and ethnically defined idea of Afghanistan. Yet, the final outcome in many ways is counterposed to any parochial and ethno-territorially defined project.

There are two points here that broadly pertain to the study of literary nationalism. Firstly, the discourse of literary nationalism should not be reduced to a singular thrust. In fact, ecumenical and parochial impulses often exist side by side, creating irresolvable tensions, and the extent to which one is muted or animated at the expense of the other should be subject to analysis in individual circles and texts and at different times.⁸⁴ And secondly, it is important to remember that twentieth-century intellectuals were not working within ready-made scholarly models whereby they would import a universal model of literature and literary history into their local environment. Literary histories created in the shadow

⁸⁰ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:408–9.

⁸¹ Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 2.

⁸² For instance, the mass migration of Persian-speaking scholars and poets to Mughal South Asia was marked as a normative event given that the Persian language had made inroads into the subcontinent in previous centuries. See *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:516.

⁸³ For a recent study of the place of Central Asia in shaping Persian and Perso-Islamic empires, see Rezakhani, *Reorienting the Sasanians*. For a study on modern Central Asia, see Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*.

⁸⁴ Marashi analyzes a similar tension between Iranian and Parsi scholars in the 1930s. See *Exile and the Nation*.

of romantic nationalism were seldom aligned with the dominant discourse of power in ways that could be straightforward and predetermined.

Periodizing Persian Literature

The bulk of Āryānā's literary history was focused on New Persian literature, organized as follows:

1. The Persian Language and Literature
 - a. Nomenclature
 - b. The Place of Origin and Development of the Persian Language
 - c. The Earliest Persian-Language Poets
 - i. Oldest Prose Works
 - d. Arab Domination and Arabic-Persian Interplay
 - e. Tahirid Dynasty (821–73)
 - i. Poets
 - f. Saffarid Dynasty (861–1003)
 - i. Poets
 - g. Samanid Dynasty (819–999)
 - i. Samanid Poets
 - ii. Prose in the Samanid Period
 - iii. The Characteristics of Samanid Prose and Poetry
 1. Poetic Style (*Sabk*) and Historical Periods
 - h. The Poetic Style (*Sabk*) of the Ghaznavid Period (977–1186)
 - i. Scientific Production in the Twelfth Century
 - i. Arabic-Language Works by Ghaznavid Scholars
 - j. Literature in the Seljuq Period (1037–1194)
 - k. The 'Erāqi Style
 - l. The Ghurid Dynasty (879–1215)
 - m. Persian Prose in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Centuries
 - n. The Rise of the Mongols and Its Influence on Persian Literature
 - o. The Kurt Dynasty (1244–1381)
 - p. The Timurid Period (1370–1507)
 - q. The Second Period of Persian Prose
 - r. Literary Works of the Sixteenth Century
 - s. Afghan Literature after Sultan Hosayn Mirza (d. 1506)
 - i. The Indian Style or Alternatively, the Style of Modern Poets (*Mote'akherin*)
 - t. The Poets of the Seventeenth Century
 - u. The Third Period of Persian Prose
 - i. The Published Prose Works of the Seventeenth Century
 - v. Afghan Literature from Nāder Shah Afshār (d. 1747) to Mohammad Nāder Shah (d. 1933)
 - i. Afghan Poets of the Twentieth Century
 - ii. The Fourth Period of Persian Prose
 - w. Sources
 - i. Tazkerahs
 - ii. History
 - iii. Literary History
 - iv. Collected Poems (*Divān*)
 - v. Selected Works and Anthologies
 - vi. Collected Periodicals
 - vii. Miscellaneous Works

This section aimed to cover more than a millennium of Persian literary production by placing the works of dozens of Persian-language poets and scholars in historical and stylistic contexts. In conceptualizing and transforming this history into more manageable units, Afghan encyclopedists did not commit to a singular organizing principle. They employed a multitude of methods such as dynastic (e.g. Timurid), fields (e.g. history), stylistic (e.g. Indian), and formal genres (e.g. ghazal). As a result, they represented Persian as a multi-discursive and multi-dynastic literary tradition. The use of both periodological and typological approaches to the writing of literary history, which were often separated under the ethos of Western European modernism, was highly innovative.⁸⁵ This hybrid scheme shows that Afghan scholars resorted to different tools in order to carry out the task of nationalizing Persian as a distinctly polycentric and transregional literary tradition. Writing an Afghan literary history would only be possible in reference to trends, political and linguistic, that took shape outside of the nation-state's territory. *Āryānā* is by no means a singular text in that regard. Recent scholarly works have demonstrated the trans-regional scope and outlook of Afghan historiography in Persian.⁸⁶

The idea of poetic styles and extrapolating a critical vocabulary with which to study them has a long-standing history in Arabic and Persian poetic debates, rhetorical treatises, and *tazkerahs* or commemorative compendia. The question of *sabk* or style was particularly pertinent in twentieth-century Iran and Afghanistan, a certain iteration of which in the form of Mohammad Taqī Bahār's *Sabk-shenāsi* became an integral part of Persian literature as an academic discipline in the 1940s. The idea of *sabk* afforded literary historians a robust mechanism for periodization, a blend of literary typology and strictly political demarcations. It also produced a set of philological features with which scholars and students would attempt to identify undated manuscripts.⁸⁷ By the early 1950s, Bahār's classification of Persian prose (and to a much lesser extent poetry) into the four styles of Khorāsāni, 'Erāqi, Hendi (Indian), and Bāzgasht or Return had become distinct historiographical signposts for more than a millennium of Persian literary production. Bahār's classification was first articulated in the pages of journals such as *Armaḡhān* and *Mehr*, and later published in three volumes commissioned by the University of Tehran. Afghan scholars were in conversation with scholarly trends in Iran.⁸⁸ As such, Bahār's insights entered an encyclopedia entry through *Āryānā*. But this inclusion was far from uncritical.

Under the heading "The Characteristics of Samanid Prose and Poetry," *Āryānā* introduced its readers to the idea of style.⁸⁹

In the Arabic language, *sabk* (or style) means to melt and pour gold or silver. In the terminology of contemporary *odabā'* it refers to a distinct kind of prose or poetry as well as to the comprehension and articulation of ideas through the configuration of words, selection of vocabulary, and modes of expression. The branch of knowledge that discusses different styles in a language is called *Sabk-shenāsi* [Stylistics].⁹⁰

Following this definition, the encyclopedists recognized the fact that the classics (*qodamā*) had their unique critical vocabulary such as *fann* (art or technique), *tarz* (way or method),

⁸⁵ For a critique on separating the two in modern literary historiography, see the opening chapter of Kronfeld's *Margins of Modernism*.

⁸⁶ See Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*; Nawid, "Writing National History"; Green, ed., *Afghan History*; Crews, *Afghan Modern*.

⁸⁷ *Āryānā* itself became available to Iranian readers soon after its publication. We know this because each volume of *Āryānā* would feature notes that were sent to Kabul in praise of the project from other cities, domestic and international. On Iran-Afghanistan literary connections, see Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 4; Rasikh, "Orientalism from Within."

⁸⁸ See Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 4; Rasikh, "Orientalism from Within."

⁸⁹ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:442.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

and *tariqa* (road or pathway), and discussed literary style through many different conceptual frameworks.⁹¹ Ultimately, they argued that Stylistics is a new discourse and few others have contributed to its development more than Mohammad Taqi Bahār.⁹² I left the term “*odabāʿ*” untranslated in the above passage because its valences could not be covered by a single English term. *Adib* broadly refers to someone not only learned but also with a commanding grasp of Arabic rhetorical techniques.⁹³ This reference in *Āryānā* is particularly fascinating since the *odabāʿ* as a class had largely given way to new classes of professionals such as teachers, university professors, and literary scholars. But mediated continuity in forms of knowledge—from which *sabk* was derived—echoes even in a modern encyclopedia composed by a cadre none of whom are professionally called *adib* anymore.

Āryānā's characterization of Bahār's stylistic classification afforded it greater flexibility, adding more caveats to understandings of *sabk* that carried with it certain value judgements about poetic language and comprehensibility. Afghan scholars wrote, “Each style includes many schools and the characteristics [of those schools] differ in nuance but they broadly adhere to the [main] category. Furthermore, there also exist ‘in-between’ styles which have their own masters.”⁹⁴ The recognition that there are other stylistic categories beyond what Bahār had identified in his book added complicated philological approaches to the study of Persian literature. For instance, Afghan scholars did not only explain but also qualified the Khorāsāni style, or “ancient Afghanistan” as they alternatively called it. They added this caveat: the Khorāsāni style may have originated in Khorāsān but it was not strictly limited to that region; the question of style has to do with era not location.⁹⁵ They then offered another important caveat: “In classifying different styles, some have identified a style called Fārs (the region) distinctly separate from the ‘Erāqi style. One should remember that these classifications have a general objective. Should we go by subtle distinctions, one can mention many other styles and even come up with a separate style for each poet.”⁹⁶

The encyclopedists recognized that literary styles need to be carefully qualified and that each stylistic category serves a particular purpose, some general and some more specific. At the core of that recognition lies the idea that *sabk* needs to serve as a descriptive category modified by the specificities of Persian poetry and prose, rather than a fixed analytical category employed to mark sharp historiographical breaks in literary history. Recent scholarly debates on the merit of retaining *Sabk-e Hendi* or the Indian Style as a descriptive category and applying it to the study of Persian literary production from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries have taken into account that, ultimately, *sabk* may not serve as a monolithic and fixed category of aesthetics and that many poets possess their own unique styles.⁹⁷

Bahār's fourth stylistic category was called *Bāzgasht-e adabi* or Literary Return, which he understood as a movement led by Iranian poets emulating “pre-Indian” style poets such as Hāfez, Saʿdi, and Ferdowsi. *Āryānā* shared Bahār's impression that “literary return” as a literary movement was happening in Iran.⁹⁸ But unlike Bahār, *Āryānā* did not give sole primacy

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Adib* as a designation denoted both specific professional skills and many general types of expertise that were usually not mutually exclusive. For more careful definitions of *adib*, see Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*.

⁹⁴ *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:442.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Similarly, in “Sheʿr beh sabk-e Khorāsāni dar Hend” (Khorāsāni style of poetry in India), Bahār emphasized that poetic style was not determined by the region where it was produced. He examined a few verses by the Persian-language poets of India and claimed that they were composed in the Khorāsāni style. *Mehr* 2, no. 3 (1934): 298–99.

⁹⁶ *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:442.

⁹⁷ Mikkelsen, “Of Parrots and Crows.”

⁹⁸ “... and *bāzgasht* in the styles of Khorāsān and ‘Erāq which has had currency in Iran since the nineteenth century until today.” *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:442. Kevin Schwartz has challenged the idea that Literary Return was happening only in Iran by looking at the ways in which Afghan and Indian poets and *tazkerah* writers were engaged with the work of the masters of Persian poetry in different ways and contexts. *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

to Literary Return by adding the words “or new styles” before each category.⁹⁹ In referring to “new styles,” Afghan scholars broadened their historiographical horizon to include Central Asian poets well beyond Afghanistan from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were overlooked by Bahār’s Iran-centric classification. Similarly, in their characterization of Indian Style poetry (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), the encyclopedists did not exclusively commit to a single category (*Sabk-e Hendi*) by creating an alternative fixture subsumed under “or the style of modern poets.”¹⁰⁰

The crucial inclusion of the disjunctive “or” functioned as a critical mechanism of historiographical rewriting, bringing marginalized and sub-canonical poets back to the center of canonical debates on Persian literary history. It also reflected the broader scholarly impetus of *Āryānā* to highlight Central and South Asia as a formative site in the formation of the Persianate ecumene. In fact, one of the most valuable features of the entry on Afghan literary history is its extensive list of Central and South Asian poets and samples of their work, many of which must have been compiled and edited by Mawlānā Khāl Mohammad Khastah (d. 1973), who played an important role in anthologizing the work of two generations of Persian-language poets in Afghanistan.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The nation-state as a political formation was entirely new to the Persian literary ecosystem, giving rise to new configurations of identity and social and cultural institutions to produce and safeguard them. But the idea that Persians’ relationships (invoked here in the sense used by Mana Kia) with their textual tradition were mediated by both local and trans-local connections and contestations is not peculiar to the nation-state or its nationalisms. As Kia reminds us, connections to place, self, and community were multiple or “aporetic,” simultaneously accommodating and negotiating different forms of distinction or even opposition.¹⁰² We must then resist the urge to universalize literature as a conceptual category and remain attentive to local knowledge and politics. That is why the work of Mosāhebān-era scholars in producing *Āryānā* must be understood against the backdrop of both local and trans-local cultural and historical contexts.

This article is inspired by and a response to the growing scholarly impetus to interrogate concepts that have been treated as universal and timeless. It is thanks to this body of scholarship that literature is gradually becoming a contested category. Michael Allan’s *In the Shadow of World Literature* examines the most salient features of literature as a modern notion. Allan shifts our attention away from literature as a fixed canon and toward particular reading practices that become enshrined as literary and modern.¹⁰³ Similarly, in *Forget English!*, Aamir Mufti argues that the idea of literary history is an outgrowth of colonial modernity that conceptualizes the world as an assemblage of different civilizations, each in possession of a unique literary tradition.¹⁰⁴ Both studies begin decidedly right *after* the formation of literature as a conceptual category and analyze its impact on our understanding of what counts as literary.

This article unpacked the internal processes by which a new disciplinary formation of literature took form in twentieth-century Afghanistan. Because when we begin only in the aftermath of the inauguration of literature as a modern discourse, it is more likely that we will take for granted the historical process by which literature took anchor and as a result present it as more bounded and settled than it actually is. Such an outlook also runs the risk of affording too much agency to discourses of colonialism in shaping local iterations of

⁹⁹ Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

¹⁰⁰ *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:516.

¹⁰¹ His two anthologies include *Moʿaserin-e sokhanwar* and *Yādi az raftagān*.

¹⁰² Kia, *Persianate Selves*.

¹⁰³ Allan, *Shadow of World Literature*.

¹⁰⁴ Mufti, *Forget English!*

literature and literary history. Even though both Allan and Mufti explicitly allude to the conceptual multiplicity of literature in different local contexts, readers may be forgiven for thinking that the idea of literature spread in a modular fashion in the aftermath of colonial modernity. By placing *Āryānā* squarely within a new disciplinary formation, this article strove to show the contingent and multivalent nature of texts produced in the emerging shadow of nation-states.

Further extensive research on the disciplinization of music, education, and literature in Afghanistan will more forcefully challenge the facile idea that the nationalization of Persian literary culture was a strictly Iranian enterprise or that it was a West-East phenomenon, whereby the latter uncritically imported new forms of knowledge and distributed it seamlessly and unproblematically.¹⁰⁵ If there is a single takeaway from this article, it is the following: the cadre of professionals that produced *Āryānā* was committed to a modernist methodology that resisted the conscription of their product into romantic and territorial nationalism. In a sense, their methodology makes visible the inherent desire within nationalism for rendering the past knowable through historical positivism. But since not every element of that past is the desideratum of the nation, there arises an irresolvable tension between a nationally sanctioned past and the past reified through modernist methodologies. This discursive incompatibility and all of its attendant contradictions lie at the heart of Persian literary nationalisms in the twentieth century. The way we read modern texts like *Āryānā* determines the degree to which the nation can emerge as a coherent unit of belonging in our own milieu.

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ARTICLE

Soundwaves of Dissent: Resistance Through Persianate Cultural Production in Afghanistan

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Abstract

In the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, sound recording technologies—including radio and cassettes—proliferated in Afghanistan and reached transnational lengths. While the state came to dominate these technologies, it could not prevent users from circumventing its censors with alternative perspectives and discourses. This article highlights the examples of Farīda ‘Usmān Anwārī, a noted radio announcer, producer, and journalist, and Aḥmad Zāhir, Afghanistan’s most popular musical icon to date, to showcase the ways in which the Persianate literary canon served as the medium for sounding dissent amid the changing social and political dynamics of the time. Pushing the boundaries of recorded speech created an alternative space where dissent became possible and the strategic use of mass media paved the way for transnational sonic solidarities among a diverse community of listeners across the Persian-speaking world and beyond.

Keywords: Radio; Poetry; Performance; Cassettes; Persianate Afghanistan; Farīda Anwārī; Aḥmad Zāhir

For Afghans, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s marked their engagement with new forms of global communication technologies and political experimentation.¹ The establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1964 ushered in certain civil rights, including freedom of speech, which directly impacted radio, music production, and other forms of art. A coup in 1973 led to a republic that inaugurated formal state cultural institutions for film, theater, and performing arts. By 1979, experiments with communism fused radio and television through the state-sponsored media corporation Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA), and further popularized regional *maḥālī* (local folk music). World historical events complemented these domestic affairs, and Afghans came to see themselves at the center of the ideological struggles spanning the globe. The Cold War, the rise of student protest movements, decolonization, anti-imperialism, and new modes of identity formation inspired revolutions from Kabul to Herat, Panjshir to Bamiyan, and Kandahar to Balkh. Radio broadcast the pulse of these events, revealing the ways in which the Afghan people responded to these historical accidents through music, poetry, and literature.

If this special issue of *Iranian Studies* considers the national and cultural diversity of Persianate societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from a variety of perspectives, this article’s main concern is how Afghans used communication technologies to

¹ I use “Afghan” here to describe a geographic and civic identity, not an ethnic one. Citizens of Afghanistan spoke multiple languages and applied a variety of ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographic and other terms of self-identification.

engage a transregional Persianate heritage and participate in local and global politics. I elucidate this through three specific examples: first, literary-focused radio programs produced by Afghan women that refashioned local traditions of poetry recitation with music and commentary, serving as a medium to respond to everyday challenges in social and political life; second, popular music that traversed broadcasting censors through the circulation of cassettes and the poetry of state-supported political activists; and third, the performance of poetry and song that considers the symbolic, affective, and embodied dimensions of Persian culture and literary production as acts of political resistance to local Afghan politics.

These examples center on two important historical figures from Afghanistan: Farīda ʿUsmān Anwārī (b. 1947), a noted radio announcer, producer, and journalist; and Aḥmad Zāhir (1946–1979), Afghanistan’s most popular musical icon to date. While Anwārī, through reciting the classical works of Persianate poets, used her voice as a medium to respond to the challenges of everyday life amid growing authoritarian rule and Cold War politics, Zāhir subverted the soundwaves to critique state and society by drawing on the poetry of more radical and leftist contributors of the Persianate literary canon. Due to their emphasis on orality *and* aurality, the contributions of Anwārī and Zāhir also exemplify how a combination of performance, radio, and cassette tape technology became the most accessible mediums for sharing knowledge across a diverse spectrum of listeners.² In other words, because these mediums placed a premium on *speaking* and *hearing*, as opposed to reading and writing, they reached a broader audience and cut across literacy barriers to disseminate information and knowledge. Moreover, the fact that Dari (Afghan Persian) served as one of the predominant languages of communication, poetry, and song allowed for subversive Afghan voices to be heard across a vast landscape of listeners, creating the space for transnational sonic solidarities among diverse communities.³

The praxis of broadcasting oral traditions (story, song, and poetry) equipped Afghan sound technology producers and consumers with the emotional, social, and intellectual capacity to cultivate forms of resistance to the state’s cultural hegemony, particularly through the 1973 and 1978 coups. Deploying their oratory skills and cultural capital, these actors countered official ideology, thus turning tools of state making (radio and recording technologies) into means of self-liberation. Within this frame, the interpretive task at hand is to look for patterns of meaning and ask what divergent interpretations and inconsistencies in popular culture might tell us about the mainstreams and margins of society. By placing subversive and state-sponsored voices in conversation with one another, and by bringing radio performers and producers into the historical fold, a more nuanced understanding of Afghanistan’s past comes into focus. In this new iteration, the oral and aural qualities of language and literature serve as keynote elements of change.

On Persian As A Transnational Language

While Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society, this article’s singular focus on Dari elucidates the language’s important historical role in mass communications and points to the various cultural functions it affords in the Afghan context. At varying times in Afghanistan’s modern history, as Aria Fani discusses, the state attempted to create a mono-lingual society by advancing Pashto as the national language. However, given the primacy of Persian as the language of education and bureaucracy, such attempts were curtailed.⁴ This resulted in recognizing both Dari and Pashto as the national languages of Afghanistan in

² My use of aurality is inspired by the work of ethnomusicologist Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, who discusses how listening has been central to the production of notions of language, music, voice, and sound that determine the politics of life. See Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality*.

³ While the constitution of 1964 designates Dari as one of the official languages of the state, to maintain consistency with this special issue’s other contributions, I use Dari and Persian interchangeably.

⁴ Fani, “Disciplining Persian Literature.”

the 1964 Constitution.⁵ While radio began broadcasting in these official languages, other regional languages—including Uzbek, Turkmen, Balochi, Pashayi, and Nuristani—also received airtime, particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s, with the arrival of a leftist regime that promoted Afghanistan’s regional cultures and traditions on radio and television. Nonetheless, Persian remained the cohesive cultural force throughout the country.⁶ Parallel to regional and local languages within a given cultural setting, Persian operated as a *lingua franca* and often adopted elements of local cultures and modes of expression, leading to the existence of various Persian dialects, including Herati, Hazaragi, Badakhshani, and others. The wide dissemination of Persian poetry and song capture this linguistic versatility and adaptability.

In this regard, the element of language as a category of analysis in the Persianate performs an important historical and aesthetic function that demands critical attention. In the twentieth century, even as its global reach had significantly waned, Persian served as a medium of transnational communication and international prestige for Afghan artists, as historical and contemporary literary authorities were summoned in order to frame and comment on local issues of cultural and political import.⁷ Their use of Persian amounts to leveraging linguistic authority and prestige in order to challenge the state’s power and build cultural capital. In other words, it is the eminence of Persian as a vernacular language that directly concerns my analysis here. As such, the examples in this article showcase the diversity and multiplicity of linguistic modernity in various zones of Persianate lands. Wali Ahmadi’s reminder of Persian’s polycentric history is particularly apt here:

The engendering of a national imagination in Persian has been a complicated one, largely because the present extent of Persian cultural space does *not* correspond to any one “national soul.” Persian literature has historically transcended well-defined territoriality and has never been exclusively “Iranian literature” or “Afghan literature” or “Tajik literature” (or, for that matter, “North Indian literature”).⁸

In this sense, detaching Persian from a specific national imaginary allows for its transregional performance and function to be critically examined, even in the era of intersecting nationalisms. Indeed, many states and nations (and nation-states) can claim and contest a common literary and cultural heritage rooted in Persian. By then considering the diverse linguistic usages of Persian—in this case, through mass media in Afghanistan—what comes to the surface is the language’s variegated socio-historical reception and the complexity and intimacy of Persian literary and cultural dynamics from within and without.

Towards this end, to distill how mass media technologies allowed for expressions of social and cultural resistance through Persianate literary cultural production, I begin with a brief discussion of regional connections that showcase the *longue durée* history that precedes and informs these twentieth-century sonic collaborations. If literary radio programs and music from Afghanistan resonated with diverse communities spanning the Middle East, Central and South Asia, it is precisely due to centuries of vernacular cultural practices that entwined millions of inhabitants across regions.⁹ Poetry, performance, song, and sonic collaborations recall and rewrite more than a thousand years of textual history, and even more years of cultural memory. Against this backdrop, I then provide the historical journey of Afghanistan’s modern political formations through sound—in other words, through the aural landscape that imparted meaning on Afghan identities. Attuned to sound, content,

⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the politics of language making in twentieth-century Afghanistan, see Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan*; and “Article 3” in *Constitution of Afghanistan 1964*.

⁶ Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan*, 2.

⁷ For a collection of critical scholarship on language and literature in modern Afghanistan and its transnational connections, see the co-edited volume, Green and Arbabzadah, *Afghanistan in Ink*.

⁸ Ahmadi, “Exclusionary Poetics,” 408.

⁹ For a discussion of the history of music in Afghanistan that considers transregional influence, see Baily, “Music and the State”; Sakata, *Afghanistan Encounters*; and Slobin, *Music in the Culture of Northern Afghanistan*.

and context, this article is a starting point for further reconstructions of Afghan history and its enduring importance as a central producer of Persianate culture.

Persianate Poetic Soundscapes

Thinking about poetic soundscapes in twentieth-century Afghanistan requires a historical understanding of Persian as a shared language that linked diverse peoples across regions and polities. Recently, historians of the Persianate world have examined conceptions of place and movement through languages, literature, customs, and cultural imaginations. These formations spanned a broad geography and existed outside the anachronistic shadow of nationalism.¹⁰ Up through the early nineteenth century, Persian was the language of power and knowledge across the Middle East, Central and South Asia. As the *lingua franca* of literature, poetry, storytelling, and spirituality, Persian encompassed multiplicity, relationality, and similitude.¹¹ As Kevin Schwartz writes, “Turks, Arabs, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Persians, and many others used the language with little thought that doing so would define them in strict ethnic or territorial terms.”¹² Proximities and similarities constituted a framework that distinguished people while simultaneously accommodating plurality.

This growth in vernacular culture was not limited to a written tradition. It combined orality, practice, and daily rituals where various strands of spiritual knowledge were found in new forms, including songs. From the seminal *masnawī* (rhymed couplets) of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī (d. 1273) to the poetry of the scholar-singer Amīr Khusraw (d. 1325) and the *ghazals* (lyric poems) of ‘Abd al-Qādir Bīdil (d. 1720), a diverse literary culture translated sacral and mystical sentiments into music that was shared among communities across space and time.¹³ These songs and texts served as the soundtrack of everyday life across the vast plains of the Persian-speaking world. Melodies, lyrics, and rhythms were preserved and disseminated through generations via oral traditions. The *bā-sawād* (literate) read, translated, and transported poetry to the *bī-sawād* (illiterate) of their communities. Songs preserved poems and people. Embedded in music are idioms, imagery, metaphors, and stories that recall a deeper past and have been reinterpreted by different cultures over time. Even in the prevalent tradition of *tadhkira* writing (biographical anthology), it was often hearing poetry in tea/coffee houses or recitation circles that allowed for its recording and preservation.¹⁴ Reading against this long history compels us to recognize the everyday soundscapes of the diverse societies and peoples of the Persianate world as a reflection of centuries of transregional coexistence and cultural memory.

In the 1960s and 1970s, we hear the reverberations of these transcultural connections through sonic collaborations broadcast on the radio. A lesser known, yet prevalent example comes from the duet sung in 1965 between renowned Afghan female singer Khānum Zhilā (1943–2009) and Muḥammad Rafī‘ (1924–1980), the famous Indian playback singer of Bollywood films. Together, they sang in Persian. Using the poetry of Bāriq Shafī‘ī, an Afghan contemporary, sacral and mystical imagery conveyed the theme of love.¹⁵ Khānum Zhilā and Muḥammad Rafī‘ took turns singing each line of the chorus:

¹⁰ Persianate refers to the social and cultural formations associated with the Persian language and to forms of expression and practice inspired and generated through contact and engagement with Persian across the Islamicate world. The term was first coined by Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, 293–294. For more recent studies, see Ahmed, *The Loss of Hindustan*; Green, *The Persianate World*; and Kia, *Persianate Selves*.

¹¹ Kia, *Persianate Selves*.

¹² Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

¹³ Mawlānā is traditionally associated with Balkh, and given the *nisba* Balkhī, a name that holds particular pride for Afghans (in contrast to the Turks, who emphasize the “Rumi” part of his name).

¹⁴ For more on the production, circulation, and citation networks of *tadhkiras* of Persian poets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Schwartz, “A Transregional Persianate Library.”

¹⁵ A brief discussion of Bāriq Shafī‘ī’s works and his later involvement in the leftist party of Afghanistan can be found in Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan*, 99.

Rafīʿ:

Ay tāza gul tū zīnat-i gulzār-i kistī?

Oh, fresh rose, whose garden did you come from?

Zhilā:

Ay murgh-i bāgh-i dil tū giriftār-i kistī?

Oh, the songbird of the garden's heart, who has captured you?

Rafīʿ:

Giriftār-i tūstam

I am captured by you

Zhilā:

Zi gulzār-i tūstam

I reside in your garden

Zhilā and Rafīʿ:

Māim hardū zīb-i gulistān-i zindagī

We are both the beauty of the garden of life.¹⁶

For Afghans, Indians, Iranians, and many others with shared Persianate culture and tradition, the imagery of the beloved, the songbird, and the garden are as familiar as the instrumental sounds of the *tabla* (drum) and accompanying harmonium. Part of this is due to the fact that Persian, particularly its literary form, has remained relatively accessible to a contemporary speaker of the language. As Dick Davis notes, a modern Persian speaker can read the works of a tenth-century poet with relative ease due to the continuity of poetic rhetoric from the earliest poems to the mid-nineteenth century and beyond.¹⁷ Moreover, Afghan classical music as a sub-branch of North Indian classical music shares instruments, *ragas* (melodies), and rhythms that resonate across borders and, like poetry, have a deep, connected history.¹⁸ Song in the realm of Bollywood films combines various genres and linguistic registers, yet speaks in a cultural vernacular that continues to hold valence across South and Central Asia and the Middle East.¹⁹ Along these lines, to imagine a community of listeners across a diverse ethnolinguistic terrain responding to the Zhilā-Rafīʿ duet is to recognize a pre-existing cultural space where textual, oral, and aural translation flowed across and between diverse communities. To situate how these cultural connections persisted well into the twentieth century, the remainder of this article turns to three sonic vignettes—radio, performance, and cassettes—that explore the historical and affective ramifications of Persian poetry in Afghanistan.

Radio

As communication technologies like the radio became a staple of twentieth-century commerce and industrialization, the Afghan state's ability to operate the technology became critical to managing the nation and demonstrating its fitness as a modern state. To this end, the state began purchasing radio technology almost immediately after its global commodification in the 1920s. After winning diplomatic independence from Britain in the victory of the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919, Afghan officials were deeply invested in proving they were worthy of sitting at the international policy table. Incorporating the latest

¹⁶ I thank Ahmad Rashid Salim for his assistance in translating these lyrics. For a sound recording of Khānūm Zhilā and Muḥammad Rafīʿ singing *Ay tāza gul tū zīnat-i gulzār-i kist- ī?*, see the YouTube video provided by Afghan Music HD, “Mermon Zhila & Mohammad Rafi.” This song was originally performed as a duet between Khānūm Zhilā and Ustād Khiyāl, her mentor and a notable singer, songwriter, and composer of Afghan music.

¹⁷ Davis, “A Brief History of Metaphor in Persian Poetry,” 15–16.

¹⁸ For detailed studies on the classification of Afghan classical music as a sub-branch of North Indian classical music, see Slobin, *Music in the Culture of Northern Afghanistan*; and Sakata, *Music in the Mind*.

¹⁹ Ahmed, “Future's Past,” 52.

global communication technology would bolster Afghan desires to appear competitive on an international scale alongside other nation-states emerging out of decolonization.

From the time the radio transmitter was first introduced, the state relied on international support to build its broadcasting infrastructure. This began with sending Afghans abroad to gain the technical knowledge required to operate radio. In 1926, King Amān Allāh Khān (r. 1919–1929), the royal architect of Afghan modernism, sent engineer ‘Atā’Allāh to Germany for the training necessary to establishing and installing radio in Afghanistan.²⁰ After a year of dedicated learning, he returned to Kabul with German technicians and two radio transmitters. In 1927, for the first time, radio was broadcast from Afghanistan. The official radio station—*Rādiyū Kābul*—was housed in a small room of the Kūtī Landanī building near Artal Bridge in Kabul.²¹ Literally meaning “London Box,” the building’s name was inspired by its British colonial architecture. Some accounts indicate that Kūtī Landanī was originally a café that was later appropriated for the radio station.²² However, transmissions were limited to only a few people in Kabul who could afford the broadcasting set.

By the 1960s, radio broadcasting in Afghanistan had expanded to the entire country.²³ Once again, German technicians helped the Afghans acquire advanced Siemens transmitters that allowed radio waves to reach longer distances. King Zāhir Shāh (1933–1973) and Prime Minister

Muḥammad Dā’ūd Khān (1953–1963) revived Amān Allāh’s vision for modernization, placing a premium on radio as the prime instrument to educate the population, create a unified nation, and propel it into the future. In 1964, with the construction of seven recording studios, two concert studios, and a large auditorium, the Ministry of Information and Culture changed the station’s name from *Rādiyū Kābul* to *Rādiyū Afghānistān*.²⁴ It also became the center for the patronage and promotion of new popular music suitable for radio broadcasting. In addition to Persian and Pashto, daily radio programs of one hour to an hour-and-a-half were available in English, German, Russian, and Urdu.²⁵ The state’s support for these languages reflected Afghanistan’s bilateral relationships in the Cold War era, during which it remained non-aligned.²⁶ Moreover, the state invested in casting bilingualism as a vital survival skill in a twentieth-century world defined by international trade and business.

In 1964, like national broadcasting, the Afghan constitutional monarchy was new. King Zāhir Shāh’s (r. 1933–1973) experiments with democratic values coincided with his modernizing agenda for Afghanistan, as he sought to integrate the population outside Kabul into the national communication system through the creation of the Mūdīriyat-i kunfirāns-hā (Department of Conferences) in 1964. This bureaucratic arm of the state was responsible for organizing meetings at provincial centers and in villages with the objective of increasing the level of information circulating among local populations. These efforts were part of the plan to integrate Afghanistan into the international information system and showcase a “progressive” nation where the press reflected differences of opinion.²⁷ By the mid-1970s, the plan had worked. Afghanistan had 70 different dailies, weeklies, trade publications, tabloids, and 16 daily newspapers. Many of these publications were anti-establishment

²⁰ For more on the scientific and technical knowledge exchange between Afghans and Germans, see Wardaki, “Rediscovering Afghan Fine Arts.”

²¹ Ghīyasi, “Nīm-qarn Irtibāt wa Paywand az Tārīkh Sadā”; Shākir, “Az Āghāz Tāh Imrūz”; and Ḥusaynzāda, “Az Rādiyū Kābul tā Rādiyū Afghānistān.”

²² Ḥusaynzāda, “Az Rādiyū Kābul tā Rādiyū Afghānistān.”

²³ Anon, *Afghanistan, Ancient Land with Modern Ways*.

²⁴ Malyar, *Tārīkh-i Rādiyū-i Afghānistān*, 2.

²⁵ Upon surveying *Pashtūn Zhagh*, a state-sponsored periodical produced by the Ministry of Information and Culture and Radio Afghanistan, these foreign languages were featured in nearly every printed radio schedule throughout the 1960s and 1970s. See also, *Republic of Afghanistan Annual 1977*, 268–70.

²⁶ For a historical discussion of Afghanistan’s entanglements during the Cold War, see Crews, *Afghan Modern*; Nunan, *Humanitarian Invasion*; and Westad, *The Global Cold War*.

²⁷ Rawan, “Modern Mass Media and Traditional Communication in Afghanistan,” 159.

periodicals produced mainly by leftist intellectuals, some of which were later banned, including *Kumak*, *Parcham*, *Khalq*, *Waḥdat*, *Mardum*, *Payām-i Wijdān*, and *Afghān Millat*, among others.²⁸

Broadcasting followed the subversive tide of print media. Although the government was keen to use radio technology as a propaganda machine to keep the public informed of its programs, edicts, and policies, the radio's social side effects were sometimes unpredictable and unintended. Programs that began as poetry readings and folktale recitations turned into platforms for conversations around issues of language, nationalism, and identity.²⁹ At the forefront of these programs were Afghan women. They served as the producers, creative directors, and announcers whose voices were broadcast on the airwaves. Farīda ʿUsmān Anwarī is one such example. As an intellectual, she used her voice as an art form to celebrate and popularize the poetry of the Persianate world's most enduring poets, most notably of Mawlānā. As a celebrated journalist, announcer, and reciter of poetry, Anwarī's aural and literary imprint suggests new ways to think about sound and mass media during this period.

Anwarī began her broadcasting career in 1966 while still studying as an undergraduate in journalism at Kabul University. Radio administrators—including her professor, Ḥusayn Rīyāzī, who oversaw the radio's *Prugrām-i maʿārif* (the Education Program), and Karīm Ruhīnā, the General Manager of Radio Programs—recognized her talent for public speaking and recruited her to work for the station.³⁰ Inspired by the examples of the earlier generation of trailblazing women and radio announcers—including Laṭīfa Kabīr Sirāj, Shafīqa Ḥabībī, Shukriya Raʿd, Nafisa ʿAbbāsī, Fahīma Amīn, and Nūrjān Farhānī—Anwarī took the job, with her first assignment being to manage *Prugrām-i maʿārif*. Soon thereafter, she produced other popular radio programs, including *Az har chaman samani* (Flowers from Every Garden), *Surūd-i hastī* (The Song of Being), *Tarāzū-yi ṭilāʿī* (Golden Scales), *Naqd-i adabī* (Literary Criticism), and *Bāz-shināsī-yi khabragān-i hunar va adab* (Getting Reacquainted with Experts of Arts and Literature). She co-hosted one of her most popular radio programs, *Zamzama-ḥā-yi shabhangām* (Nocturnal Whispers), with noted Afghan writer and novelist Akram ʿUsmān.

Farīda Anwarī's broadcasting career coincided with the fluid and experimental moment of radio's transition from a local station to a national one. This presented Anwarī with the space to test the boundaries of radio speech and create new spaces for women's voices on the airwaves. Following the adoption of the 1964 Constitution, state-led modernization programs encouraged more women to join the workforce. As in other countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, there was also an attempt, if modest, to eliminate gender inequality through state action.³¹

In 1975, during a week-long seminar on the life and work of Mawlānā, Radio Afghanistan featured songs, music, and poetry recitations in his honor.³² Anwarī's recitation of Mawlānā's poems became so widely popular that events honoring the poet's life and work became a regular part Radio Afghanistan's programming. Not only did these programs have the positive effect of raising awareness and literary appreciation among both the intelligentsia and general public with access to radio, but they also exemplified the ways in which

²⁸ Āhang and Siddiq, *Dā Afghānistān Matbūʿāt- Yewā Katana*, 41. Quoted in Rawan, "Modern Mass Media and Traditional Communication in Afghanistan." Faridullah Bezhān also discusses the emergence of independent newspapers in the post-1964 period that served as one of the driving forces in the political and cultural dynamics of the time. See Bezhān, "Artist of Wonderland." The Hoover Institution Library & Archives at Stanford University holds an inventory of Afghan partisan serials.

²⁹ *Az har chaman samani*, *Surūd-i hastī* and *Tarāzū-yi ṭilāʿī* were among the radio programs that featured poetry, literary critiques, and commentary on contemporary music, politics, and culture. For a short biography of the Afghan women who worked in radio, television, cinema and theater, see Daro, *Awāzi Mandagār-i Zanān*.

³⁰ Radio Āzādī, "Ba Bahāna-yi Shašt-u Panjumīn Bahār-i Ṣadā-yī Hamīsha Sabz-i Farīda Anwarī."

³¹ Al-Ali, *Women's Movements in the Middle East*; Russell, "Women's Mobilization in Latin America"; and Armstrong, "Before Bandung."

³² *Republic of Afghanistan Annual 1975*, 292; "Seminar on Life, Works of Maulana Balkhi Opens," *The Kabul Times*, October 2, 1974.

Afghans were using global technology and refashioning it to reflect local image-making practices. Indeed, the strategic use of global radio technology affected the programming the producers created and, ultimately, their relationship to their listening communities.

Poetry has played a lasting and important role in the Persian language's expression of social critique and political discontent. In her discussion of evolving forms of poetic protests in Persian, Nahid Siamdoust describes how some classical poets of the Persian canon openly criticized their social and political milieus.³³ Siamdoust contends that, in the Iranian context, it was not until the creation of the popular *Gulhā* radio programs in the 1950s that classical Persian poetry and music was disseminated via broadcasting technology to a wider public.³⁴ Similarly, in the 1940s, radio in Afghanistan helped reintroduce and circulate classical Persian poetry and music to an Afghan audience, particularly through the introduction of the Kabuli *ghazal*, a song form that uses Persian texts from a variety of sources. In musical terms, the Kabuli *ghazal* style is related to *ghazal* singing in India and Pakistan, but the setting of the texts to music is distinctly Afghan, with interpolated couplets sung in free rhythm, fast instrumental sections, and dramatic rhythmic cadences.³⁵

By the 1960s, Anwarī's literary radio programs were reaching a broad audience and gaining in popularity due to her ability to embody poetic forms that were simultaneously both old and new—old in their lyrics, new in their performance. As I explain below, while Anwarī's programs did not formally serve as a channel for political opposition, as their content was artistic rather than political, the choice of declamation based on the texts of classical Persianate poets allowed her to offer subversive political commentary while retaining an air of deniability.³⁶ This careful, albeit deliberate, meditation of dissent followed the changing pulse of all major political, social, and cultural developments of the period. While political magazines used novel tools like the publication of cartoons and caricatures—largely absent from print media in Afghanistan before 1964—to express political criticism, in the space of the mass media recording industry, Anwarī's use of Persian poetry took full advantage of the social and political context; she was able to employ this medium to voice dissent without censorship.³⁷ The new era ushered in by the 1964 Constitution needed new media, and poetry provided an ideal means for new ideas and new ways of engagement.³⁸ In addition, being the producer of her own show allowed Anwarī to control its content and strategy.

Anwarī deployed selected texts from the repertoire of classical Persian poets to suit her audience's situations and reflect their moods. Specifically, while Afghanistan's political experiments continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s—a constitutional monarchy in 1964, a republic in 1973, and a leftist government in 1978—the Sufi poetry of the classical period helped Anwarī frame the challenges of everyday life. Marī Wāhīdī (b.1950), Anwarī's contemporary and a teacher of Dari in the 1970s, recalls her illiterate mother being moved to tears while listening to recitations of the opening lines of Mawlānā's *masnawī*:

Bishnaw az nay chun shikāyat mīkunad
Now listen to this reed flute's deep lament

Az judā'ī-hā hikāyat mīkunad
As it tells the tale of separation³⁹

³³ Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 50.

³⁴ Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 50, 58.

³⁵ Baily, *War, Exile and the Music of Afghanistan*, 24–25.

³⁶ Nahid Siamdoust makes a similar conjecture in the case of Mohammad Reza Shahjarian's effect while singing his most famous ballad *Bird of Dawn*, which is based on a Persian poem that became a song of protest. See *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 37–38, 63–85.

³⁷ Bezhan, "Artist of Wonderland," 634–635.

³⁸ Bezhan, "Artist of Wonderland," 636.

³⁹ I thank Ahmad Rashid Salim for his insights into the variable ways this poem has been translated.

At a very young age, Wāhidi's mother, Bībī Lāl, had to leave her home in Badakhshan, a northern province of Afghanistan, to join her husband's family in Kabul. Mawlānā's verses provided comfort in a world that had separated her from her family. Bībī Lāl imagined these verses were written precisely for her. "Mīguft, īn az man hast" (this is mine), Bībī Lāl would say.⁴⁰ Here, metaphor enables multiple layers of meaning, especially around the crucial theme of love and separation, particularly from the beloved. As Breyley contends, in the works of classical Persian poets, the beloved may represent many ideas, including romantic partners, a spiritual companion, the divine, or "an ideal such as justice or freedom."⁴¹

Anwarī, as the performer, was guided by Mawlānā's words and works to create new meanings and relevance for a contemporary audience by playing with the multiple layers of meaning and allegorical references expected by readers and listeners of Persian poetry.⁴² Bībī Lāl's reception of Mawlānā's poetry illustrates how the timeless quality of verse could be interpreted by a listener in twentieth-century Afghanistan; in this case, the separation from one's family home demanded by societal gender norms. Moreover, one did not need to know how to read in order to understand the sorrows of Mawlānā's reed. Before literacy became widespread, the performance of poetic texts was central to cultural and social life. That these recitations occurred over the radio and reached thousands of listeners not only allowed for its dissemination, but also its multivarious interpretations. Melodic recitation and music were the primary means of transmitting poetry across social classes, including to people without access to books or other inscribed art, making it a major medium for all types of listeners to find relevance and meaning for their everyday lives. Poetry here stands for both composition and affect. In Afghan culture, there is a profound connection between poetry and experience, to the extent that many Afghans, like Bībī Lāl, consider poetry to define the essence of their identity.⁴³ Centuries of rich poetic tradition in Persian became an axis through which a national discourse was articulated and resonated with personal experiences.

Anwarī's recitation over the airwaves represented an alternate space wherein a community of listeners interested in intonations of Persian poetry and the possibility for diverse usage in the context of daily life existed. When Anwarī recited Mawlānā's poems, fused in her voice were not only a thousand years of a poetic tradition, but also the long arc of a modern political struggle for freedom and identity. Anwarī's attraction to and performance of the rich tradition of classical Persian poetry circulated as currency in the symbolic market of the Afghan search for a contemporary identity, whether in the case of Bībī Lāl and her attachments to notions of a home or in the case of a broad Afghan audience struggling to express its self-conception as a community while grappling with the contradictions inherent in it.

Anwarī capitalized on a shared language and literary heritage to create a forum for dialogue about life, spirituality, belonging, unbelonging, and love. If the state was invested in creating a national culture based on the work of these poets, that goal was inconsequential to the larger work of Anwarī's recitations: giving people comfort in the face of political and social turmoil. Drawing on the canon of classical Persian poets afforded Anwarī protection from an increasingly authoritative state in the 1970s and, despite its restrictions, allowed her to embody indigenous literary traditions that carried and fueled shared sentiments and the variegated experiences of her Afghan audience. For centuries, palaces, teahouses, and private courtyards served as venues for the dissemination of poetry in the Persianate world.⁴⁴ By the 1960s, radio was serving as one such venue for taking pleasure in the sounds

⁴⁰ Marī Wāhidi (Afghan school teacher in the 1970s) in discussion with the author, January 28, 2019.

⁴¹ Breyley, "The Language of Love," 160.

⁴² Breyley, "The Language of Love," 161.

⁴³ Baily, *The Spiritual Music of Ustad Amir Mohammad*; and Sakata, *Music in the Mind*.

⁴⁴ Breyley, "The Language of Love," 164.

and semantics of classical Persian poetry and music, while continuing to entertain and inspire.

Alongside the important role broadcast radio played in connecting classical Persian poetry to the experiences of daily life, popular music aired on the radio contributed to the era's growing sense of dissent. As seen further below, it was once again a Persian literary heritage that amplified this "revolution in sound." Perhaps no other musician from the 1960s and 1970s is better remembered for his imprint on pop music than Aḥmad Zāhir. Born on June 14, 1946 in Kabul, Aḥmad Zāhir established himself as a singer in the 1960s. His popularity swelled over this decade and the next as he took advantage of the burgeoning radio and recording industries and developed a broad repertoire of romantic, self-reflective, and politically charged songs. As the son of a court doctor, minister of health, and influential politician, valuable social connections enhanced Zāhir's artistic success. He forged long-lasting relationships with cultural leaders, including musicians, composers, and poets across the region and world. He socialized among a diverse spectrum of people, from elites to everyday Afghans, and was extremely charitable to the poor. Distinguished musically by his vocal stamina and new compositions, he sustained his career by producing an immense corpus of songs totaling over 20 albums, surpassing what many singers produce in a lifetime.⁴⁵

Like Anwarī, Aḥmad Zāhir's rise to stardom corresponded with the political transformations of the 1960s and 1970s. When, while still in high school, he began his musical career, the constitutional monarchy formed under King Zāhir Shāh in 1964 provided some civil liberties, including freedom of speech. This provision impacted musicians, specifically, by protecting recording artists like Zāhir from censorship. With President Dā'ūd Khān's coup in 1973, Aḥmad Zāhir recorded songs that celebrated the change in guard and establishment of the Afghan republic.⁴⁶ However, as the political climate between 1973 and 1978 became increasingly autocratic, Aḥmad Zāhir once again took to the airwaves to sing of society's social ills, including the famine of 1977 and the general poverty of the nation.⁴⁷ When Dā'ūd Khān and his family were brutally murdered inside the Presidential Palace and another regime change inaugurated the arrival of communism in Afghanistan in 1978, Aḥmad Zāhir again took to music to record songs of liberation and critique hegemonic power. The increasingly political tone of his songs now received pushback from state censors, who did not allow their broadcast on radio. However, these songs were circulated through cassettes and underground channels across Afghanistan and the broader region. In 1979, Aḥmad Zāhir died in what is officially reported as a car accident, although his father—a doctor—confirmed a bullet was shot in the back of his head.⁴⁸ His funeral was televised and drew thousands of Afghans, who followed his hearse through the streets of Kabul.

Radio in the 1960s and 1970s in Afghanistan, whether broadcasting the poetry of Mawlānā or the songs of Zāhir, provided a medium for political expression and social commentary that often outweighed verbal communication and behavior. While poetry and song can be analyzed for the weight of their content, their significance also lies in their reception as

⁴⁵ Nūrmal, *Aḥmad Zāhir*; Razzāq, *Aḥmad Zāhir Chigūna Tirūr Shud?*; and Madadī, "Taḥāwul-i Mūsīqī-yi Afghānistān Dar Qarn-i Akhīr."

⁴⁶ The song, *Mubārak, Jumhūrī-yi Mā Mubārak* (Congratulations to Our Republic) was performed by Aḥmad Zāhir and recorded at the studios of Radio Afghanistan on the inauguration of Dā'ūd Khān's presidency in 1973. See, Nūrmal, *Aḥmad Zāhir*, 87–88.

⁴⁷ The song, *‘Ajab Ṣabrī Khudā Dārad* (Astonishing is God's Patience) was recorded on the Ariana Music label; the lyrics capture the sentiment of disparity amid social impoverishment. The song was censored in 1977 for containing lyrics that equated God to man. Shams al-Dīn Shāhābī (producer and owner of Ariana Music studio) in discussion with the author, June 22, 2018. For the full lyrics of *‘Ajab Ṣabrī Khudā Dārad*, see Nūrmal, *Aḥmad Zāhir*, 175–176.

⁴⁸ In an interview, Aḥmad Zāhir's sister, Zāhira Zāhir, describes how her father and other family who saw the corpse confirmed a bullet was shot to the back of his head. See, Nawabī, "Interview with Zahira Zahir." For various theories surrounding Aḥmad Zāhir's death, which has not been the subject of any government investigation to date, see Razzāq, *Aḥmad Zāhir Chigūna Tirūr Shud?*

political acts. Indeed, the reception of radio extends well beyond the technology's determining function to address transformations that occur in listener perceptions of the sounds broadcast, altering the soundscape.⁴⁹ Figures like Anwarī and Zāhir captured the sentiments of their milieus not just through their subversive critiques of society, but also through literature that allowed some to imagine an alternate present and future. These figures also illustrate how producers and musicians in Afghanistan shaped national broadcasting culture as much as geopolitics did throughout the 1960s and 1970s. As material and sonic limits were imposed on radio by successive Afghan regimes, the state did not anticipate how radio's producers and musicians would circumvent censors and use the technology to sound dissent.

Performance

While radio as a site of state control is important to understanding the state's performativity of its professed values, principles, and aesthetic and acoustic expressions (in short, its identity), it is also pertinent to locate the artists' position within this spectrum. "Performativity," as Nahid Siamdoust argued in the context of Iran, "relies on citationality, referencing fragments of traditions, cultures, discourses, and communal memories."⁵⁰ Similarly, in Afghanistan, to the extent that Afghans validated the state's existence and authority through the expression of their discontent, they also resisted it through artistic mediums, including the performing arts. To perform alternative subjectivities, Afghan artists like Anwarī and Zāhir drew on various traditions and repertoires of contention. In doing so, they challenged ideas surrounding issues of gender, freedom, religion, and politics. Anwarī and Zāhir's examples of literary and aural performativity allowed for diverse interpretations of the past and engagement in a national discourse about the future. In other words, their poetic and musical performances were simultaneous expressions of identity and political or social dissent.

While Anwarī was not a self-proclaimed feminist, her on-air personality certainly rubbed against traditional gender norms that relegated women to the private sphere and did not value the amplification of female voices on the radio. In her poetry recitations, she relayed strong emotions, changed the pitch of her voice to cater to the tone of the poem she was reciting, and used her voice to connect with her listeners. She was a self-identified artist, and she imagined her audience to understand this, declaring in a 1973 interview:

[S]omeone who can recite a poem and attract listeners is a true artist, in the way that an actor in theater can capture the attention of the audience. The declamation of poetry is, for this reason, close to the performance of theater and drama artists.⁵¹

Anwarī's talent—as a gripping orator capable of drawing in her audience—transformed radio in Afghanistan into a medium of (re)introducing and performing classical Persianate literature for the nation. By combining poetry with music and declamation, she not only encouraged contemplation of the poetry itself, but also extended and amplified localized traditions of performance and artistic expression. In this sense, her programs helped solidify her reputation as a purveyor of Afghanistan's linguistic and literary cultural heritage. At a time when various global musical and poetic influences infiltrated Afghanistan, figures like Anwarī helped deploy the popularity of Afghan arts and local cultural practices that celebrated the rich cultural tradition of reciting and reflecting on classical poetry. For Afghans, the arts embodied a unique form of cultural expression and possible space for autonomy, especially as the state attempted to enforce its legitimacy through ideological and disciplinary apparatuses that included mass media. Reproducing the legitimacy of the

⁴⁹ For more on soundscapes, see, for instance, Schafer, *The Soundscape*; and Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.

⁵⁰ Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 10–11.

⁵¹ "Wa Ḥālā Farīda Anwarī Sukhan Mīgūyad," 22.

Afghan state, particularly in the 1970s, was often enacted performatively through discourse and practice, as evidenced by the political speeches, new forms of governance (including constitutions), edicts, and proclamations following the coups of 1973 and 1978. Citizens embodied and replicated these signifiers of state legitimacy through their choice of clothing, recitation of national anthems, and participation in national events and rituals. Nonetheless, while many accepted the state's attempts to infringe on its citizens' daily lives and activities, others resisted through subversive acts. Here, poetry and music afforded a great sense of freedom and often functioned as means of offering discreet dissent and social criticism.

In the case of Aḥmad Zāhir, his public performances and concerts allowed for a communal sharing of critical views not available elsewhere, particularly for what they allowed in terms of the spontaneity of live action. The concert space enabled the deliberate coming together of strangers who engaged with each other through certain texts via songs and became involved in a conscious act of intentionality, awareness, and an interest in imagining the ways in which the world could be. Inherent in this process was the unconscious human impulse to build the world from social conditioning, scientific rationality, artistic traditions, and the individual struggle for survival.⁵² Gatherings around music were also important because they were based on local and long-standing engagements with the embodied sense of sound, rooted in poetry as the master sonic form. Both the concert atmosphere and poetry and song as artforms and image-making practices allowed the space of public performance to turn into a national conversation outside official parameters.

In May 1978 in Kabul, only weeks after a coup brought a Soviet-aligned government to power in Afghanistan, Aḥmad Zāhir performed a concert in one of the city's main movie theaters, Dā mirmanu tulāna. At the time, Zāhir's relations with the new government were increasingly hostile, mainly due to years of tension and his refusal to publicly support Afghan leftist parties. As they began to take on political undertones, his songs were increasingly censored on Radio Afghanistan. He had already been the victim of a Soviet smear campaign that accused him of murdering his second wife, Khālida.⁵³ This confluence of events inspired a marked shift in Aḥmad Zāhir's lyrical focus. He became even more political and partisan in his song choices and more provocative in his live performances. A concert attendee, Malālī Mūsī Niẓām, recalls, "As hundreds of spectators watched, the singer with the golden voice and unique humble disposition came out onto the stage alone and took the microphone to his hand and his eternal, magical voice resonated through the entire hall, singing"⁵⁴:

Zindaḡī ākhir sar āyad, bandaḡī dar kār nīst
Life will eventually end, there is no use for submission.
bandaḡī gar shart bāshad, zindaḡī dar kār nīst
If submission is mandatory, there is no life.
bā ḡaḡārat gar bibārad bar sarat bārān-i durr,
If pearl raindrops were to come down on you in humiliation
āsmān rā ḡū: biraw, bārandaḡī dar kār nīst
Go and tell the heavens: go, there is no use for such downpour
gar fishār-i dushmanān ābat kunad, miskīn mashaw,

⁵² Nelson Goodman analyzes the philosophical value of symbols and their use in artistic practices (including performance), among other human activities. He offers a compelling argument for how humanity needs art, as much as science, to understand human existence. See Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*.

⁵³ Aḥmad Zāhir was allegedly forced to marry Khālida, the daughter of Sa'īd Dā'ūd Tarūn, an Afghan leftist and the Chief of Police under President Nūr Muḡammad Tarakī (1978–79). In 1978 Aḥmad Zāhir was imprisoned on suspicion of murdering Khālida, but was later found not guilty. See Nūrmal, *Aḥmad Zāhir*, 1–22. Ustād Armān, a noted Afghan musician and vocalist, recalls visiting Aḥmad Zāhir in prison and his contempt for those suggesting he had murdered a woman. See Yousofi, "Studio 19 – Haroon Yousofi with Ustad Arman," 19:24–20:38.

⁵⁴ Niẓām, "Zindaḡī Ākhir Sar Āyad."

If the pressure from the enemies deluges you, do not despair
mard bāsh, ay khasta-dil, sharmandaḡi dar kār nīst
 remain a man/firm, oh you tired soul, there is no shame.
zindaḡi āzādī-yi insān-u istiqlāl-i ūst
 Life is a human being's freedom and independence
bahr-i āzādī jadal kun, bandaḡi dar kār nīst
 Fight for freedom, for submission is not an option.⁵⁵

The lyrics of *Zindaḡi ākhir sar āyad* (Life will eventually end) belong to renowned Iranian poet Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī (1887–1957), who spent much of his life in exile in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic.⁵⁶ Originally written in 1930, the chain of transmission by which Lāhūtī's *ghazal* passed through West and Central Asia is a testament to the enduring relevance of the work. Samuel Hodgkin notes that *Zindaḡi ākhir sar āyad* was formally published as a song in 1942, which coincided with World War II and thus permitted Soviet publishers and critics to read it as a rejection of fascism. As Soviet cultural influence accelerated in Afghanistan over the course of the 1970s, Lāhūtī's works were sold in Kabul bookstores and recited over the airwaves on Persian-language Radio Moscow. Given the spread and circulation of his poetry, it is no coincidence that Zāhir was singing Lāhūtī's love *ghazals* over the airwaves and in his concerts well before the Soviet invasion. It is when Zāhir's songs took on an increasingly political tone in the final years of his life that he drew from Lāhūtī's more revolutionary verses, such as *Zindaḡi ākhir sar āyad*.⁵⁷ The groundedness and musicality of Lāhūtī's poem, its depiction of oppression and freedom, and, most crucially, its avoidance of historical or geographic specificity all contributed to its successful circulation and adaptation to a variety of contexts, including Zāhir's popular song.

At a time when a strict code of conduct emanated from the established Afghan political authority, the lyrics and feelings associated with this song, and Aḡmad Zāhir's performance of it, allowed for political and cultural dissent through music. Using the poetry of a leftist sympathizer (and poet laureate) enabled Aḡmad Zāhir to initially pass through the radio censors. Indeed, it was through the usage of the state's official register (i.e., radio) that the creation of an alternative space was born, where dissent became possible in a discreet yet clever way. In his performance of this song, Aḡmad Zāhir succeeded further by traversing the space between what James C. Scott termed the "public transcript" (authorized by the dominant power) and the "hidden transcript" (the critique of power spoken behind its back) to create new meanings through an act of musical subversion and defiance.⁵⁸ According to Scott, the "public transcript" is used to invoke what is permitted by the state. The enforcement of censorship, including on the radio, is one way the Afghan state exercised its official authoritative culture and promotion of a "public transcript." The disciplinary nature of this act reinforced the state's relationship to its subjects by intruding into a very personal sphere via monitoring lyrics and sounds that evoked feelings and various emotions.

In the realm of cultural production and music, musicians like Aḡmad Zāhir had to submit to official regulations to obtain clearance for lyrics and permits for performances. The lyrics of *Zindaḡi ākhir sar āyad*, however, provided a pointed depiction of Afghanistan as captive to an oppressive state. Zāhir's performance of the song was intended to embody the people's sentiments and, in this way, helped promote the "hidden transcript," or that which was not officially approved. Zāhir used his medium—music—to widen the parameters of the

⁵⁵ Song transcribed from another performance, Aḡmad Zāhir, 4th live (majlisī) album, track 10, with the addition of the *ghazal's* final lines, which Nizām specifically recalls from the performance she witnessed.

⁵⁶ Lāhūtī is the author of [the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic's](#) anthem. See Hodgkin, "Lāhūtī: Persian Poetry in the Making of the Literary International, 1906–1957."

⁵⁷ Hodgkin, "Lāhūtī: Persian Poetry in the Making of the Literary International, 1906–1957," 363.

⁵⁸ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* as quoted in Siamdoust, *Soundtrack of the Revolution*, 11.

“public transcript” through this subtle, subversive act. Persian poetry transformed into popular song, and connecting concert attendees in collective performance, augmented the possibility of its circulation. Sung anthems encouraged simultaneous and collective vocal articulation in ways that poetry alone typically did not. In doing so, music then had the power to generate senses of alliance, cohesion, and solidarity.⁵⁹ Music became the message and medium for political action.

The 1978 concert attendee concludes her recollection with thoughts on the poem’s significance. She imagined that Lāhūtī produced his *ghazal* “in loathing for the suffocation and dependence that he too had experienced under similar conditions of Soviet occupation and subjugation in a country like Afghanistan, in Tajikistan.”⁶⁰ Whether or not Lāhūtī’s intention was to be subversive in his prose is inconsequential. More importantly, the poem’s ability to traverse space and time and attract collective experiences of oppression gave new power to its declaration of defiance. The poem’s lives are a testament to the continued durability and portability of traditional Persianate poetry, which can be repurposed for new occasions, new ideologies, and new revolutions.⁶¹ The concert attendee and Aḥmad Zāhir’s shared reading of Lāhūtī’s poem indicates the poet’s literary relevance to the political moment, when a despotic leftist government took shape in Afghanistan, and the power of musical performance to connect like-minded citizens in opposition to the state.

As Farzaneh Hemmasi contends, song—particularly popular songs and political anthems—augments the possibilities of poetry’s circulation and collective performance.⁶² The effect of one of Aḥmad Zāhir’s politically and socially charged songs reveals how Persianate poetry played a strong role in connecting a diverse community of listeners. As a celebrity-type figure who embodied “freedom of expression,” he broke through the constraints of the dominant culture to experiment with new ways of being, using his voice and selected poetry as his source of cultural resistance. For many, Aḥmad Zāhir’s lyrical voice, music, and performances became a focal point for imagining an alternative world and longing for political and social change. He attracted audiences that perceived him as a symbol of change and the embodiment of their aspirations. In his quest to challenge the predominant social-political order through song choice and lyrics, he represented the aspirations of those who wanted to change the status quo, becoming an icon of dissent. But Zāhir’s deployment of Persian poetry as an act of dissent was also one of cultural preservation: he relied on a body of literature familiar to the listener, one which could withstand the test of time. Recently, with Afghanistan’s seizure by the Taliban in August 2021, *Zindaḡī ākhīr sar āyad* served as a clarion call, as people repeated Lāhūtī’s words: “*Bahr-i āzādī jadal kun, bandaḡī dar kār nīst*” (Fight for freedom, for submission is not an option).

As the United States ended its twenty-year “War on Terror” in Afghanistan, paving the way for the return of the Taliban, Afghans faced a confluence of multiple crises. Beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, drought, and dire economy, they confronted a resurgent Taliban movement that quickly mobilized to seize power. Many scrambled to leave the country, fearful that living under despotic rule would destroy any aspirations for a better future. As Afghans—particularly women—are determined to fight and deny the Taliban the opportunity to reimpose their rule, slogans of freedom, justice, and peace are bolstered by the poetry and songs of the Lāhūtī/Zāhir variety, particularly Dawood Sarkhosh’s *Sarzamīn Man* (My homeland).⁶³ The circulation of this song signals a sense of collective participation in what has become an informal anthem of resistance and the struggle for survival.

⁵⁹ Farzaneh Hemmasi, “Rebuilding the Homeland in Poetry and Song,” 193.

⁶⁰ Niẓām, “Zindaḡī Ākhīr Sar Āyad.”

⁶¹ Hodgkin, “Lāhūtī: Persian Poetry in the Making of the Literary International, 1906–1957,” 364–65.

⁶² Farzaneh Hemmasi, “Rebuilding the Homeland in Poetry and Song,” 193.

⁶³ In anti-Taliban protests after August 2021, the song *Sarzamīn Man* by Dāwūd Sarkhush has been used as an anthem for rallying shared sentiments of loss and belonging. See, Makoi, “My Homeland.”

Cassettes

The audiocassette was another form of mass media that proliferated during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s and profoundly affected the dissemination of sound and sonic experiences. Radio recording significantly improved with the advent of the tape recorder and magnetic tape, as such allowed sound to be recorded, erased, and re-recorded on the same tape multiple times. Indeed, the small, portable, and plastic audio cassette was conducive to creative energies that flowed through and beyond it, making it a highly malleable product that could be distributed on a mass scale. In Afghanistan, the production and mass distribution of commercial audio cassettes of Afghan music began in Kabul in the early 1970s. Outside the official radio station, the three major recording studios of the time were Afghan Music, Music Center, and Āriānā Music. These businesses were registered with the Ministry of Information and Culture and subject to governmental approval for printing labels, distribution, and censorship.⁶⁴

In recent decades, the term “cassette culture” has been frequently employed by scholars engaged with media and communications to describe the variety of social practices generated by audiocassette hardware. In their infancy, cassettes represented what Peter Manuel described as “an emancipatory use of media,” as it was decentralized, provided space for signal feedback, and enabled collective and self-organized production, unlike one-way transmissions of mass media like the radio.⁶⁵ As a living archive that engages people in social habits, and through which culture might be accessed, cassettes served as a vehicle for meaning, offering a secure space to create a sense of autonomy and self-determination. Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi’s study of the important role small media—including leaflets and audio cassettes—played in the revolution that deposed the Shah of Iran reveals how deeply embedded cultural modes of communication, alongside media technologies, helped mobilize a population within a repressive political context.⁶⁶ Moreover, well before the technology of recorded sound, singing devotional poetry and scripture marked the soundscape of religious life across the Islamic world. Charles Hirschkind’s study of cassette-sermons in Cairo’s popular neighborhoods shows how small-time preachers, whose voices were suppressed by authoritarian regimes in the Middle East in the 1970s, could reach large audiences through the physical (hand-to hand) dissemination of tapes. While many believe that the clandestine transfer of Islamic sermons is associated with militancy, when they first appeared, their messages were rarely about inciting violence; instead, they were primarily used as instruments of promoting ethical self-improvement and pious living. Hirschkind situates cassette sermons in relation to Egypt’s Islamic revival and sheds light on the ethical labor undertaken by Cairo’s Muslim listeners in the mid-1990s. In short, the cassette-sermon contributed to the Islamic revival in various ways, manufacturing its own success through addressing counterpublics.⁶⁷

Access to audio hardware and the societal impact of literacy were closely connected in the context of Afghanistan in the 1960s and 1970s, helping to usher its own type of counterpublic. In 1978, Anwarī recorded three cassettes of her poetry recitations with the Āriānā Music recording studio. This marked the first time that a recording of poetry was in high demand and sold in the market in Afghanistan. The cassettes featured poems by Mawlānā, Hāfiẓ-i Shīrāzī, and Ḥamid Muṣaddiq (1940–1998).⁶⁸ Recordings of Anwarī’s recitations reveal a warm and invitingly pitched voice that inflects the anxiety or calmness of the poetry. Her

⁶⁴ Shams al-Dīn Shāhābī (producer and owner of Ariana Music studio) in discussion with the author, June 22, 2018.

⁶⁵ Manuel, *Cassette Culture*, 4.

⁶⁶ Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution*.

⁶⁷ Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*.

⁶⁸ Dānīshnāma Aryānā, “Farīda Anwarī”; and Ahrārī, “Farīda Anwarī.” A newspaper article from 1983 details high-demand recordings in Afghanistan, including Anwarī’s cassette of poetry. See, “Taking Music to Every Home,” *Kabul Times*, February 16, 1983.

delivery is measured and professional, speaking at a natural, if not soft, pace while clearly articulating all the words. The new circulatory potential of cassette tapes allowed Anwarī's recitation of classical Persian poetry to reach a broad audience, creating cultural literacy and an affect that attracted listeners. Furthermore, the new objectlike quality of poetry recorded on tapes transformed Anwarī's speech into individual assertions, and oral mnemonics into analytical memory.⁶⁹ Equipped with these newfound abilities and the autonomous reasoning they facilitated, Persian-speaking listeners were able to reconnect with aspects of their literary cultures as well as reflect and revise their meanings within daily life.

Instrumental music served as another important aspect of both literary programs and cassette recordings featuring poetry. As popular foreign styles began exerting influence on Afghan music and performance art in general, there was growing interest to preserve the native classical "art music" of Afghanistan; music that featured eastern instrumentation including the *rubab*, harmonium, *tabla*, and sitar. This, however, does not mean that western music was altogether absent from these programs. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Madadī, a former Radio Afghanistan Director, recalls that in radio programs featuring European and western music, Anwarī was the only person familiar with the appropriate languages and capable of pronouncing the associated technical words correctly when explaining song choices.⁷⁰ The distinction here is that when the programs featured poetry, the choice of eastern music complimented the recitations in an effort to garner listener appreciation for both poetry and music.

In an interview published in 1974, Anwarī commented on the importance of poetry in contemporary society, stating:

[T]ruly speaking, these days the phrase of a contemporary Arab poet that has become popular is: "a poem is the whisper of a human being to himself or the whisper of a poet to his contemporary." But I do not agree with this because a poem is not always a whisper, sometimes it can be aggression. It can be a loud cry, and sometimes it is directed at an individual or thing. If we imagine a poem to be a whisper then it is like a soft dream, then we cannot think of the *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī to be a poem because it mostly deals with protests of the poet and his dissatisfaction and objection to his land. Why should the prophecy of a poem be so small that a poet should be confined to writing it only for his contemporaries? When we read Sa'dī, Māwlānā, Hāfiẓ and Niẓāmī, we are not their contemporaries, but we still appreciate their poetry...a poem is a melody that surpasses time and that is what makes it last.⁷¹

Anwarī's assertion of the multivalent significance of Persian poetry and its ability to transcend meanings across space and time points to the medium's diverse contestations and instantiations. Anwarī would argue that it is the declamation of Persian poetry that gives it power and preserves its longevity. Cassette tapes and literary programming amplified this power by deploying speech and sensory modes of understanding as public practice and participation. The mass distribution of cassettes aided figures like Anwarī in the ongoing task of preserving language and Persian literature in Afghanistan.⁷² Via cassettes, the acoustic modulation of emotion through the declamation of classical Persian poetry was rebirthed,

⁶⁹ Charles Hirschkind pointed out the functional efficiency of the cassette tape in Egypt as a vessel for transporting Islamic sermons to a broad audience. See, Chapter 3 "Cassettes and Counterpublics" in Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape*, 105–142.

⁷⁰ Radio Āzādi, "Ba Bahāna-yi Shaṣt-u Panjumīn Bahār-i Ṣadā-yī Hamīsha Sabz-i Farīda Anwarī."

⁷¹ Anon, "Reciting Poetry a Delicate Art."

⁷² John Baily discusses the importance of documenting music censorship in Afghanistan in order to support suppressed cultural expressions and the preservation of Afghan music in the diaspora. See, *Can you stop the birds singing?* and "Kabul's music in exile." For a discussion of the circulation of Persian ballads in the Afghan context, as well as their recording in historical manuscripts, see Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*, 124–164.

providing another space where the concerns and characters of the Afghan public could be elaborated and understood.

Cassettes were also increasingly important for circulating otherwise censored sounds and lyrics. Indeed, some of Aḥmad Zāhir's songs circulated via informal cassette recordings. Here, cassettes represented a particular advantage in the transmission of sound. In addition to the technology's immense mobility and low price point, cassettes also allowed citizens of diverse backgrounds to play a part in disseminating Afghan culture in ways other devices could not.⁷³ In this regard, the informal circulation of cassettes was particularly key to bypassing state censors and enabling the proliferation of evolving forms of artistic and poetic protest to a mass audience.

One of the last songs performed by Aḥmad Zāhir borrowed from the poetry of celebrated Persian poet Sīmīn Bihbahānī (1927–2014). Although this song was never formally released, it gained popularity through its informal, underground circulation via cassette tape. This speaks to the longevity and efficacy of this technology, as it allowed people to build vibrant cultures under the thumb of repressive institutions. In this sense, cassettes played an important role in the construction of such spaces. While it would be easy to dismiss the informal circulation of cassettes as a channel of mass media distribution, such a view overlooks the fact that it was actually a rich site in which people constructed and enacted ambivalent subjectivities in relation to the state.

As a purveyor of political poetry, Bihbahānī's verse lent itself to transnational mobilizations across the Persian-speaking world. An interesting aspect of her treatment of the *ghazal* is that while she retained its poetic structure, she also expanded its subject matter to include a woman's experience of romantic love, desire, and disappointment, as well as increasingly took on political and social issues.⁷⁴ While Aḥmad Zāhir's repertoire included a broad range of poets from across the Persianate canon, his selection of a contemporary feminist poet from Iran had as much to do with his cosmopolitan sensibilities as it did the political climate of the time.⁷⁵ The chosen lines (turned into lyrics) borrowed from the poetry of Sīmīn Bihbahānī were as follows:

Āsmān khālīst khālī, rawshanānash rā ki burd?
The skies are empty, who took away its light?
Tāj-māhash, sīna rīz kahkashānash rā ki burd?
Its moon's crown, its galaxy's necklace, who took them?
Bāghbān tanhāst, tanhā, gird-i ū juz khār nīst
The gardener is alone, lonely, surrounded by thorns
Bīd mushkash rā, gulash rā, arghawānash rā kī burd?
His fragrant willow, his rose, his judas-tree, who took them?
Pīsh az īn-hā īn zamīn rā asmān-i sabz būd
Before this, this earth and its sky were green
Nīst īnak juz siyahī, asmānash rā kī burd?
It's nothing but barren now, who took away its sky?⁷⁶

⁷³ Andrew Simon argues this point in the context of Egypt's cassette and mass media culture. See, Simon, *Media of the Masses*. Blake Atwood discusses the informal circulation of videocassettes in Iran after their ban in 1983. See, Atwood, *Underground: The Secret Life of Videocassettes in Iran*.

⁷⁴ Hemmasi, "Rebuilding the Homeland in Poetry and Song," 194.

⁷⁵ In addition to Persian, Aḥmad Zāhir sang in English, Hindi, Pashto, Urdu, and Russian. For an anthology of his musical repertoire and collection of recorded albums, see Nūrmal, *Aḥmad Zāhir*.

⁷⁶ For a recording of Aḥmad Zāhir singing *Āsmān khālīst* with these selected lyrics, refer to YouTube video "Ahmad Zahir: Asoman Khalist Khali." For Sīmīn Bihbahānī's full poem from which Aḥmad Zāhir selected lyrics, see Nūrmal, *Aḥmad Zāhir*, 379. For an analysis of Sīmīn Bihbahānī's poetry in Aḥmad Zāhir's songs, see Paymān, "Jāyghāh-i Shī'r"; and Muḥammadi, "Yādbūd-i Sīmīn-i Bihbahānī."

Sung in 1979 in the shadow of the increasingly authoritative atmosphere created by the rule of President Nūr Muḥammad Tarakī (1978-1979) and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), these lyrics can be read as a response to the state's oppressive, bullying, and stringent policies. Cold War sentiments of disillusionment and loss of meaning are captured in the song: "The gardener is lonely, alone, surrounded by thorns." Those elements of nature and life that used to sparkle like the "moon" or grow like a "flower" no longer existed. The "empty skies" demonstrated the fear and desolate environment left in the wake of the morally bankrupt regime that rose to power through a bloody coup.⁷⁷ The rhetorical questions scattered throughout the *ghazal* also serve the purpose of confronting power, speaking back to it. While Bihbahānī's avoidance of historical specificity allows for the poem's malleability in different contexts, Zāhir's adoption of her poetry presents an alternative iteration of the nation and call to engage Afghanistan's problems through questioning the identity of the perpetrators. The refrain "Who took them?" reveals a callous and complacent political system and the unfortunate stifled truth of despotism.

As Afghanistan experienced political changes in yet another coup in 1978 and entered a new era of repression, Zāhir positioned himself as an agent willing to both articulate and question the country's transformation. Here, informal cassette circulation played a key role in distributing Zāhir's message and also raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of censorship. Despite the broad bans imposed by state authorities, the distribution of cassettes on the informal black market allowed for the extensive, illicit enjoyment of prohibited music. Banned music and songs—like Zāhir's *Āsmān khālist* and *Zindaḡi ākhir sar āyad*—were able to bypass censors and circulate among the general populace. The widespread popularity of Zāhir's songs is indicative of his ability to capture the Afghan popular imagination during a specific moment of political and social change, as well as the search for an alternative world. While the censorship of music reflected a profound and persistent concern about the fate of national culture, alongside freedom of speech, the state was also testing official boundaries and the limits to which artistic and creative work could be controlled and suppressed. At best, oppression through sound entailed recalibrating calls to action into something discreet to bypass censors. At worst, reducing creativity to the production of state-controlled propaganda created an emboldened public, leading impregnable violence, not change.

Recorded music became a weapon in the cultural war advanced by successive Afghan leaders, including the PDPA. Such leaders used recorded music as a medium to persuade people how to behave and act, a "soft power" to be wielded in larger cultural battles around religion, tradition, modernity, and freedom. Musical styles and content were carefully considered before being broadcast or circulated to the world, but the gap between what the state sought to promote and the realities of everyday life for a typical Afghan is evident in the popularity of Aḥmad Zāhir's songs, despite the fact that such songs had to bypass censorship and circulate informally. While the state enforced different criteria around the production and selection of appropriate cultural work, musicians like Zāhir were not as easy to manipulate. These performing artists were not without agency in the messages they produced and embraced through their lyrics. As increasingly autocratic regimes took strong measures to ban freedom of speech, thought, and creativity, Afghans engaged in cultural dissonance through music, poetry, and protest, ultimately forging their own revolutions. Informal cassette circulation triggered significant anxiety, as it decentralized the state-controlled Afghan media. Entangled within this anxiety was a struggle over what constituted Afghan culture and who had the right to create it. Indeed, circumventing censors enabled the success of that deemed forbidden and prohibited; that which would ultimately make its way into Afghanistan's historical record.

⁷⁷ Leftist Nūr Muḥammad Tarakī came to power through a bloody coup involving the seizure of the Afghan presidential palace and death of President Dā'ūd Khān, along with his family members, in 1978.

Conclusion

This article articulated how radio, cassettes, and performance served as important political, societal, and ideational spaces, as well as how Afghans—producers and consumers alike—imbued such media with meaning and importance in their cultural lives. Indeed, there are many reasons to consider Persian poetry, poetic recitation, sung poetry, and song as a continuum of expressive cultural forms that rely on words, sound, and affect.⁷⁸ The examples of Farīda Anwarī and Aḥmad Zāhir showcase the ways in which the Persianate literary canon served as the medium to preserve the traditional Afghan cultural practices of reciting, memorizing, and singing poetry, as well as sounding dissent during a time of social and political upheaval. While Anwarī's declamation of Mawlānā's poems promoted a sense of comfort, identity, and stability in turbulent times, Zāhir's usage of Lāhūtī and Bihbahānī reflected dissent. Taken together, both artists' use of classical and modern Persian poetry indicates the central and important role this literature and its concomitant sounds played in Afghan historical memory and everyday life.

As Afghanistan transformed from a constitutional monarchy to a republic, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s revealed the disjuncture and fissures inherent in the project of nation-building. Against this backdrop, the voices of Anwarī and Zāhir sought to capture and relate public sentiments of these tumultuous events by engaging with and drawing inspiration from the classical and modern masters of Persian poetry. These texts were employed to help articulate and memorialize local events and identities amid chaos, a usage of poetry that is not uncommon to Persian-speaking communities across Central and South Asia and the Middle East.⁷⁹ Given this history, Anwarī and Zāhir's deployment of Persianate literature reveals that Afghans were actively engaged in forms of experience and thinking that transcended the assumption that the nation's political borders determines the nature of its experiences, ideas, or politics.

If one of the functions of the "Persianate" as an analytic category is to question the character and role of political boundaries and state structures, then, as described here, radio, music, and poetry are among its fiercest advocates. The movement of aural technologies and sounds transcended political boundaries and embedded Persian linguistic cultural practices across a diverse terrain of people and communities, which continue into the modern period. Lyrics by Persian-speaking poets served as the textual fabric upon which the Persianate universe thrived and sustained, despite the creation of modern states and ethno-linguistic nationalisms. Poetry imbued into music and song often received a wider audience due to its ability to transcend literacy and the emphasis on memory that helped circulate it. The common motifs in musical systems and the development of musical instruments are areas of lost commonality. Lyrics as a method of memorizing intricate details of a vast repertoire, vocal styles, and the transmission of an oral musical tradition are not unique to specific nations, but rather attest to a larger regional and cultural sphere where such practices are common and sustained.

In Afghanistan, the practice of collective listening to Persian poetry through recitation or song was founded on a certain discursive openness, understood as a necessary condition for the task of collectively rethinking the past's contribution to an unfolding future. As both a new and modern phenomenon of its time, radio represented this space of possibility for a variety of experiments in thought and culture, as well as their unexpected outcomes. Subsequent recording technologies like the cassette also changed the ways in which Afghans were able to actively participate in the recreation of their social and political milieus. They formulated their own sonic revolutions rooted in classical and modern Persian texts and aided by musical improvisations and the circulation of sound. Protecting and preserving a vast literary heritage through sound became one of the most

⁷⁸ Hemmasi, "Rebuilding the Homeland in Poetry and Song," 193.

⁷⁹ Kevin Schwartz provides an erudite discussion of the place of war-ballads within Afghanistan's literary and national history. See Chapter 3 in Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*, 124–162.

potent weapons to combat various state attempts at remaking Afghan culture and redefining Afghan pasts.

One of the attractive features of the category of the Persianate world is the varied range of its application. While many scholars have leaned primarily towards explorations of literary, textual, and linguistic matters, this study of the space of sound and music provides a unique aural guide to the social, cultural, and political formations and activities in which notions of the Persianate have resonance. The boundless and ethereal qualities of sound also aids the study of the “Persianate” through the extent to which we conceptually grasp it as a way to question the character and role of boundaries and state structures, as well as probe socio-cultural complexity. Nonetheless, it is important not to use the term restrictively. Explorations of its fluidity and heterogeneity across space and time allow for nuance and its stronger impact as an analytical tool. Borrowing from Joanna de Groot’s discussion, the Persianate is employed to indicate something continuously in process, rather than a fixed or uncontested entity.⁸⁰ In short, this study of soundscapes in Afghanistan has attempted to offer a fresh standpoint from which to engage and appreciate Afghan identities and their centrality in the making of poetry, music, and art in the Persianate world.

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⁸⁰ de Groot, “Inclusion and Exclusion in the ‘Persianate World,’” 196–215.

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ARTICLE

Persian Studies in India and the Colonial Universities, 1857–1947

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Abstract

The establishment of the colonial universities in India was a watershed moment for the history of Persian studies on the subcontinent. Despite the rise of English and vernacular literatures in the nineteenth century, Persian remained an essential language of instruction in colonial colleges, with generations of Indian students studying Persian to pass university examinations. By closely studying university calendars and courses, this article demonstrates that the colonial universities created and sustained an ecosystem for Persian studies throughout the colonial period, as Orientalists and increasingly Indian Persianists continued to invest in Persian instruction and curricular development. The breadth, diversity, refinement, and expansion of Persian college curricula—which included texts from the classical Persian canon and contemporary literature written by Iranians and Indians—testify to the continued fluidity and dynamism of Persian studies throughout the period. Such a phenomenon demonstrates that the debates and engagement around the Persian language in colonial India contradict its depiction as an obsolete or entirely classical language, and also that colonial college curricula influenced which texts were edited, compiled, printed, translated, and commented upon.

Keywords: colonialism; education; India; nineteenth century; Persian studies

The founding of the colonial university in British India in 1857 was a watershed moment for the history of education on the subcontinent. For the first time, colleges were affiliated with a central examining body, degree programs and curricula were standardized, and Indian students and teachers across imperial British India and the princely states studied the same corpus of prescribed literature in preparation for the university's examinations. The transformations wrought by the rise of the colonial university have been studied as the outgrowth of early colonial knowledge systems and as mechanisms of colonial and imperial power.¹ These studies have chiefly focused on Orientalist scholarship, British imperial policy, and English literary education. Far less attention has been paid to the ways in which the curricula of colonial universities influenced the study of what were called classical languages and literatures—such as Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit—in colonial India.

The foundation and incorporation of the colonial universities also brought widespread changes to the study of Persian in India. The uniformity of the university curriculum contrasted sharply with the variable corpuses of texts and methods that characterized the

¹ For an outdated yet useful English-language overview of the foundation of the colonial universities, see Ashby, *Universities*. For Orientalist scholarship and the university, see Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture*. For the university as a mechanism of imperial power, see Allender, *Ruling through Education*. For the formative work on the role of English literature in the project of colonialism, see Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*.

transmission of Persian from teachers to students in the Mughal period.² As this article will demonstrate, the institutionalization of Persian created and sustained demand for Persian teachers at colonial colleges across British India and in the princely states. From the foundation of colonial universities until the 1947 partition, the Persian curriculum underwent a gradual process of expansion as Indian Persianists came to exercise greater control over it. What began as a small selection of texts, such as *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, *Anvār-i Suhailī*, and the *Sikandarnāmah* of Niẓāmī, grew to include a much wider corpus of Persian classics, Persian translations of texts ranging from English-language Orientalism to contemporary Turkish dramas, and works by contemporary Indian and Iranian writers.

The curricular reforms wrought by the architects of the curriculum also created and sustained markets for critical editions, classical and contemporary commentaries, and translations into English and Urdu. In some cases, there appears to be a cause-and-effect relationship between the adoption of texts into the colonial curriculum and their appearance in print. The excavation, editing, and publication of the Persian writings of Ghiyās al-Dīn Rāmpūrī (d. 1852; lexicographer and Persian teacher) by the Naval Kishor Press in the 1880s and 1890s will be examined as a case in point.

The colonial universities were examining bodies and degree-conferring institutions, not brick-and-mortar teaching institutions. Beginning at their foundation in 1857, the universities administered examinations leading to bachelors' degrees and more advanced degrees in the arts and sciences. They prescribed curricular study to affiliated colleges, administered standardized exams to students, and awarded degrees to successful candidates. The terminology used to describe the examinations varied among universities and changed over time, but the influential system used by the University of Calcutta in its early years illustrates the typical progression of examinations. Students studying at an affiliated college in pursuit of a Bachelor of Arts degree were expected to pass an entrance examination (similar to achieving a secondary school diploma), then progress to a First Arts (FA) examination or a Bachelor of Arts (BA) examination. More advanced degrees, such as an MA, were added later. All students had to pass examinations in English. However, students also were required to sit for an examination in an elective language. The options varied among institutions and changed over time, but most universities required FA and BA examinees to pass an examination in a classical language. At the Calcutta and Bombay universities, students could choose among Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Persian.³ Comparison of the teaching faculties at most affiliated colleges suggests, perhaps not surprisingly, that teachers of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin were relatively scarce in India. Students in affiliated colleges were much more likely to have access to faculties of Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit.

The reasons a student might choose to study Persian ranged from utilitarian through cultural to aesthetic. By the 1890s, the relative ease of Persian had established it as a much more popular elective than the other languages.⁴ Persian having been a language of education and administration in India, the first generations of examinees, many of whom were the children of administrators, were exposed to the language from an early age and likely found

² See Kinra, *Writing Self*.

³ At the University of Calcutta, students sitting for the BA exam were allowed to select a vernacular language such as Urdu or Hindi until 1864, when the vernacular languages and Persian were removed starting with the FA exam; they were not reinstated until 1874, when Persian reappeared alongside other classical languages. They retained this position thereafter. Calcutta, *Calendar 1864-65*, 38, 40; Calcutta, *Calendar 1874-75*, 37, 40. Persian was not an option on the FA and BA exams at the University of Bombay in the 1860s, but was made an option by 1871. Bombay, *Calendar, 1865-66*, 64, 67; Bombay, *Calendar, 1871-72*, 47, 49. At Madras, students sitting for the FA and BA examinations could choose from a range of classical and vernacular languages, including Persian. Madras, *Calendar 1876-77*, 34, 39; Madras, *Calendar, 1892-93*, 49, 55.

⁴ For example, Gandhi in his autobiography famously describes a time in high school when he considered dropping Sanskrit and taking Persian instead because it was easier. He also writes that students generally considered Persian an easy language (Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 15). The general perception that Persian was an easier language also was the subject of debate at the university (Nu'māni, "Ispīch," 46-48).

the Persian curriculum to be a convenient means of advancement on the examinations. Persian also was more useful than Sanskrit or Arabic to students seeking to master Urdu—which was by the mid-nineteenth century the language of administration, education, and everyday life for Indians throughout British India and the princely states—since Persian idioms were and continue to be parts of everyday Urdu speech and culture, just as Persian maxims, quotations, and literary allusions were, and continue to be, part of everyday literary Urdu.⁵ The ubiquity of Persian quotations and passages in Urdu books at the time are evidence that Urdu writers expected their readers to know Persian. Many writers corresponded in the language. Urdu poets wrote original verse in Persian.⁶ Persian continued to be used in the princely states even after it was officially displaced by the British, and remained current even after the adoption of vernacular languages such as Urdu. One graduate of the University of Calcutta's BA examinations, Mas'ūd Ḥasan Maḥvī, who worked for the princely state of Hyderabad, published a collection of Persian odes in praise of the Niẓām of Hyderabad modeled on the poetry of Qa'ānī, whom he had studied in preparation for the examinations.⁷ Persian also was and remains an important language of popular lyrics in the postcolonial period. Of the most cherished *qavvālī* songs of praise, which are performed at Sufi shrines throughout South Asia, many are in Persian. Although the focus of the present article is on the curriculum of Persian studies in the colonial universities, it is important to keep in mind that this curriculum was part of a larger cultural world in which Persian persisted as a language that served a wide range of functions throughout the colonial period.

Students sitting for the university examinations chose to study Persian for a wide range of reasons, but the broader question is why students enrolled in affiliated colleges and prepared for the examinations at all. As David Lelyveld has shown, most Indians, even among the literate, did not take to English education in the early years of the colonial universities.⁸ Those who did study in the colonial system were mainly focused on careers in or related to the system of government offices and courts, which Lelyveld calls the "*kachahrī* [court; office] milieu." For example, by the end of the nineteenth century, a university education had become one means of qualifying for some legal jobs and a prerequisite for high-level practice.⁹ Although by no means a guarantee of official employment, as the colonial period wore on university education became increasingly important for securing coveted positions in government service. This partly explains the explosion in numbers of university graduates around the turn of the century. As we shall see, the institutionalization of Persian to meet the demands of examinees hoping to become government officials created and sustained an ecosystem for Persian studies in colonial India, especially in the overlapping areas of education and publication.

The calendars of the colonial universities are a rich yet largely untapped mine of information about the development of Persian studies in India under British rule. The university calendars contained the history, bylaws, and regulations of the universities as well as information about their administrations and examinations. They generally presented the curriculum for examinations as sketchy lists of classic texts, names, or modern anthologies for students. By identifying these texts and their authors, studying the exams themselves, and consulting the readers, we can trace changes in the Persian curriculum across regions. We learn the names of the examiners who designed the curricula, those of Persian teachers at affiliated colleges, the names of students who passed Persian examinations, and what kinds of fellowships were available to support the study of Persian. We also can access the Persian examinations themselves to gain insight into the kind of training and methods

⁵ For examples, see Rizvī, *Farhang-i Amsāl*.

⁶ The trend continued well into the twentieth century. For example, the popular poet Jigar Murādābādī (d. 1960), whose verse was criticized in his own lifetime for its lack of classicism, included a collection of Persian poems with his Urdu ones (Murādābādī and Sikandar, "Bādah-i Shīrāz"; Bruce, "Jigar Murādābādī").

⁷ Maḥvī, *Nazr-i 'Aqīdat*.

⁸ Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 88–105.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

in Persian studies that teachers of Persian in colonial colleges were required to impart to their students.

The calendars also remind us that throughout the colonial period Persian remained a language and literary tradition not exclusive to any religious community or geographical region in India. Indians with Hindu, Parsi, and Muslim names appear in positions as Persian teachers at colonial colleges and as university examiners, and the Persian faculty at a college likewise might comprise members from different religious communities.¹⁰ The makeup of graduate lists was similarly multicomunal, with Hindu and Parsi graduates in some cases outnumbering Muslim ones.¹¹

The demand for Persian among students meant that affiliated colleges throughout British India had to hire faculty members with expertise in Persian to train students to pass the examinations. In the early years of the university, Persian teachers came from a wide range of backgrounds. Some had been educated at colonial colleges, such as the Calcutta Madrasa or Delhi College, prior to the foundation of the universities. Others were products of the colonial university system.¹² Still others had studied Persian privately at the feet of tutors and masters.¹³ For example, Shiblī Nu‘mānī (1857–1914), was a professor of Arabic and Persian at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh (initially affiliated with the University of Calcutta and later with Allahabad).

All teachers of Persian at colonial colleges, regardless of their educational background, were charged with preparing students to answer the same kinds of questions on the colonial examinations. For a scholar like Shiblī, the philological focus of the examinations, which mainly asked students to translate and analyze the grammatical elements in texts, would have seemed much narrower than the aesthetic and ethical purposes that the same texts had played in his early education.¹⁴ Still, the demand for Persian instruction provided him and other Persianists with new forms of institutional patronage and the opportunity to teach Persian to students, many of whom eventually rose to positions of influence as politicians, communal leaders, writers, journalists, and educators.¹⁵ The positions in affiliated colleges also afforded some Indian Persianists to become involved in university administration and examination boards, and some eventually designed and implemented their own Persian curriculum in the form of selections and readers prescribed by the university senates, many of which are surveyed here.

The following sections survey major shifts and variations in the Persian curriculum across the Indian colonial universities from their founding in 1857 until independence and partition in 1947. It assumes that the question of who read what in Persian in colonial India is foundational to a broader reassessment of theories about the displacement and eventual disappearance of Persian in the period. Although the focus of the article is on Indian education, it seeks to contribute to comparative studies of reading practices across the Middle East and Central Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁶

¹⁰ Bombay, *Calendar, 1906–1907*, 364–442; 367.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 311–12.

¹² One example was the compiler of the first Persian curriculum for the University of Allahabad (‘Alī, *Intarmīdiyat-i Kōrs Fārsī*, front matter).

¹³ Nadvī, *Ḥayāt-i Shiblī*, 58–170.

¹⁴ Shiblī rarely wrote directly about the role that Persian played in his education, but his letters (some in Persian), Persian and Urdu poetry, books, and essays evince the centrality of his formal and informal education in Persian to his intellectual formation. Examples are too numerous to cite, but see his own Persian poetry in Nu‘mānī, *Kulliyāt-i Shiblī–Fārsī*; his quotations, allusions, and discussions of Persian poetry in letters to colleagues and students in Nu‘mānī, *Makātīb-i Shiblī*; his articles about Persian literature in Nu‘mānī, *Maqālāt-i Shiblī*; his formative study of Rumi’s life and poetry in Nu‘mānī, *Savānih-i Maulānā Rūm*; and his magisterial analyses of the history and aesthetics of Persian poetry in Nu‘mānī, *Shi‘r al-‘Ajām*.

¹⁵ For an overview of the intellectual lives and social and political influence of students educated at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, an affiliate of Calcutta and later Allahabad, where Persian was one of six options on the compulsory classical language examination, see Lelyveld, *Aligarh’s First Generation*.

¹⁶ For example, Strauss, “Who Read What.”

Calcutta University and the Making of a Curricular Canon for Persian

When the University of Calcutta was founded in January 1857, it administered examinations in Persian to students sitting for the entrance and Bachelor of Arts exams; an intermediary exam, First Arts, was added a few years later.¹⁷

The first three decades of the Persian curriculum at the University of Calcutta drew heavily on the canon of texts compiled and published by Orientalists and Indian Persianists decades earlier. Most of the texts in the curriculum had been compiled by the faculty at the British East India Company's Fort William College, which was founded in Calcutta in 1800 as a language school for company officers. For example, prominent texts of the curriculum, including *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, *Sikandarnāmah*, the letters of Abū-l-Faẓl, and *Akhlāq-i Jalālī*, had all been included in the college's six-volume anthology *Miscellaneous Works of Prose and Verse* (1809–11).¹⁸ The adoption of this corpus by the early university examiners was in part a response to the debates among British administrators and Indian scholars divided along ideological lines into Anglicists and Orientalists in the decades before the universities were founded.¹⁹

The Persian curriculum at the University of Calcutta was influential not only because it determined the curriculum at affiliated colleges, but also because some of these colleges later drew from it as they transformed into independent universities. The Oriental College in Lahore was an early affiliate until its administration founded the University of Panjab in 1882, to which colleges throughout the region and elsewhere (for example, the princely state of Hyderabad) later became affiliated. Likewise, Muir Central College in Allahabad had been an affiliate of Calcutta until its faculty, along with the faculty of several other affiliated colleges, incorporated the University of Allahabad in 1887. Later, the Persian curriculum at schools inherited the legacies of the University of Calcutta Persian studies canon. These included Aligarh Muslim University (founded 1920), which had, in its initial form as the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, been affiliated to the University of Calcutta and later to the University of Allahabad.

The university's initial Persian curriculum assigned a mere handful of texts, such as selections from the *Gulistān* and *Būstān* of Sa'dī; *Anvār-i Suhailī* by the Timurid writer Vā'iz Kāshifī; selections from the *Sikandarnāmah* of Niẓāmī; and the letters of Abū-l-Faẓl (courtier to the Mughal emperor Akbar).²⁰ By 1863, the works by Niẓāmī and Abū-l-Faẓl had become the textbooks for the FA, and readings from *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* by Davvānī and the *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ were adopted as textbooks for the BA.²¹ By 1869, the university consolidated its entrance examination into two publications: *Iqd-i Gul* (Roman-script title; comprising selections from the *Gulistān* and *Anvār-i Suhailī*) and *Iqd-i Manzum* (Roman-script title; comprising selections from the *Būstān*).²² First published in 1863, both texts were the products of a collaboration between the Orientalist William Nassau Lees, who was the university's first examiner in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu (1858–59; 1863–64), and Kabir al-Dīn Aḥmad, who was then a professor of Arabic and Persian at the Calcutta Madrasa (an affiliate of the University of Calcutta after 1868).²³ The *Iqd* readers remained perennial textbooks for Persian until 1884, when they were replaced by a new selection by Kabir al-Dīn Aḥmad.²⁴ Both continued, however, to be used as texts for students in the form of commentaries.²⁵

¹⁷ Calcutta, *Calendar 1858–59*, 17.

¹⁸ Das, *Sahibs and Munshis*, 161–63.

¹⁹ See the edited volume of primary sources that not only illuminate the subtleties of these arguments, but also remind us of the central role that colonized Indian scholars played in shaping them (Moir and Zastoupil, *Great Indian Education Debate*).

²⁰ Calcutta, *Calendar 1858–59*, 69, 71; Calcutta, *Calendar 1863–64*, 89.

²¹ Calcutta, *Calendar 1863–64*, 93–95, 97–99.

²² Calcutta, *Calendar 1867–68*, 88.

²³ Lees and Ahmad, *Iqd-i Gul*, front matter.

²⁴ Calcutta, *Calendar 1881–82*, 72–82, 90; Aḥmad, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*; al-Dīn, *Guldastah-yi Dānish*.

²⁵ For example, a full translation and commentary on *Iqd-i Gul* by Adālut Khān (his spelling) was in its third edition in 1894, and its companion volume, Adālut Khān's commentary on *'Iqd-i Manzum*, was in its fourth edition in 1895. Khān, *The Iqd-i Gul*, front matter; Khān, *The 'Iqd-i Manzūm*, front matter.

In 1867, Persian was removed from the list of elective classical languages for the FA and BA examinations, although it remained an optional language for the entrance examination.²⁶ The reasons for the removal are not given in the calendar, but this would not be the first time that Persian's place in the curriculum would prove precarious.²⁷ When Persian was eventually reinstated in the Calcutta FA and BA exams in 1874, the FA course had changed to include new texts such as *Sih Naṣr* by Nūr al-Dīn Ṣuhurī; *Ruq'āt* (letters) by 'Abd al-Qādir Bīdil; the qasida of 'Urfī Shīrāzī; and the *Sikandarnāmah*. The BA examination had been rewritten to comprise the *Vaqā'i'* of Ni'mat Khān 'Āli; *Durrah-yi Nādirah* (a history of Nādir Shāh) by Mirzā Mahdī Khān Astarābādī; the qasida of Khāqānī; and the qasida of Badr Chāchī.²⁸ This remained the course of studies for a decade.²⁹

By 1881, the Persian curriculum had grown to add an honors course for the 1882 and 1883 exams. Still mainly focused on classical texts, it added selections from the *Shāhnāmah*; *Tuḥfat al-'Irāqain* by Khāqānī; *Ḥadīqah* by Sinā'ī; the *Dīvān* of Anvarī; and the qasida of Qā'ānī—and, in prose, excerpts from the *Dasātīr*; selections from *Tārikh-i Vaṣṣāf* (a history of the Ilkhānids) by Faḥrullāh Shīrāzī; treatises by Mullā Tuḡhrā; and selections from the Mughal chronicle *Akbarnāmah* by Abū-l-Faḥl.³⁰ The curriculum continued to reflect the interests of the Orientalist examiners who designed it. For example, in addition to the aforementioned work, students also read Saifi's study of meter and Jāmi's treatise on rhyme. Both treatises had recently been studied and translated by Heinrich Blochmann, who had been the head examiner in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu at the University of Calcutta in 1865 and then again from 1868 to 1875.

The 1880s witnessed a rapid expansion of the Persian curriculum as Indian Persianists gained autonomy over the courses and examinations. Many of the Persianists who came to control the curriculum had been trained in the colonial universities. For example, by 1887, the Persian entrance and FA exams at Calcutta were overseen by an Indian, Abū-l-Khair, who was an MA graduate of the colonial education system.³¹ The university had by then (in 1886) also added an MA examination in Persian. By the 1890s, boards of studies had been established for the languages. The Persian board comprised a mixture of British Orientalists and Indian scholars. In 1894, the Arabic, Persian, and Urdu board comprised eleven Indian scholars and four British.³² Two decades later, in 1917, the board consisted exclusively of Indian scholars, most of whom held degrees from colonial universities.³³ Two English names appear on the 1920 list, but the president and all but one of the examiners were Indian Persianists.³⁴ Subsequent increases in Indian control over the curricula

²⁶ Calcutta, *Calendar 1867–68*, 38–40. Persian is only offered as an elective for entrance exams in the 1868–69, 1869–70, and 1870–71 calendars (the last-mentioned includes curriculum for exams through 1873).

²⁷ In the 1890s, it was proposed in the University of Allahabad senate that Persian be removed from the curriculum. Charges were that the language was too easy and thus drew students away from studying Arabic and Sanskrit, and that it did not have the capacity to train students' capacity for thought and imagination. In response, Shibli Nu'māni designed curriculum that he thought made Persian as challenging as the other languages. Then, in 1899, he defended the inclusion of Persian on aesthetic, historical, literary, and philological grounds in a speech to the Muhammadan Educational Conference (Nu'māni, "Ispīch," 46–52). Ultimately, the proposal to remove Persian from the curriculum at Allahabad was not adopted.

²⁸ Calcutta, *Calendar 1874–75*, 86–93.

²⁹ It was repeated in the calendars until 1884, when Kabīr al-Dīn's anthologies were adopted (described later).

³⁰ Calcutta, *Calendar 1881–82*, 82.

³¹ Calcutta, *Calendar, 1887*, xxxiv, lxxiii–lxxviii, 125.

³² Calcutta, *Calendar 1894*, 120–26.

³³ Calcutta, *Calendar 1917*, 18. This may be related to the educational reforms of the 1880s, which sought to integrate schools founded and run by Indian educators and to increase the involvement of classically trained Indian scholars (Paranjpe, *Source Book*, 169). This explanation is not entirely satisfactory, however, since the reforms were primarily aimed at high schools and middle schools and increasing access to trade schools, and the transfer of power over university curriculum to Indian Persianists does not obviously fall under the broader objectives of this program.

³⁴ Calcutta, *Calendar 1920 & 1921*, 37, 44.

were aided by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 and its proposed form of government, called a “dyarchy,” in which control over education was delegated to the provinces and gave greater control over curricular matters to Indian educators. By 1947, the board comprised all Indian scholars, most of whom held degrees from British universities such as Cambridge, London, Edinburgh, and Leeds.³⁵

The shift in control from British to Indian examiners was accompanied by the introduction of new texts and continued curricular expansion. In 1884, Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad, who coauthored *Iqd-i Gul* with Lees and was now a fellow of the academic senate of the University of Calcutta, produced a new course for the BA exam, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī* (Selections of Persian; Calcutta: Urdu Guide, 1884), comprising selections from the *Taʾriḫ-i Firūzshāhī*, *Vaqāʿiʿ* of Niʿmat Khān ʿĀlī, the *Shāhnāmāh*, and the qasida of Zāhir Fāryābī.³⁶ In 1885, the university also introduced a new entrance course designed by Muḥammad Moḥy al-Dīn, then professor of Arabic and Persian at the Government School in Allahabad. Titled *Guldastah-yi Dānish*, the course consisted of unattributed selections from *Rauzat al-Khuld* (also known as *Khāristān*, 1332–33, revised 1336–37; an early imitation of the *Gulistān*) by Majd Khvāfi; excerpts from the collected poems of Saʿdī and Ḥazīn; and selections from *Makhzan al-Asrār* by Niẓāmī.³⁷ The selections by Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad and Muḥammad Moḥy al-Dīn marked a new trend in curricular design at the university, whereby selections in the form of university-approved readers came to replace lists of texts in the university calendars, especially for the entrance and intermediate examinations. Nearly all of them were compiled by Indian Persianists.³⁸

For the next several decades, the core canon of texts outlined above remained the same at the University of Calcutta. New texts were added as new editions became available and as the university expanded its curriculum and added more advanced exams. Some texts, for example, the *Ruqʿāt* (letters) of Jāmī, earlier printed by Fort William and added in 1892–93, were not regular staples. Some, for example, the *Masnavī* of Rūmī (added in 1896), were surprisingly late additions. Others, for example, *tazkīrah*s by Daulatshāh Samarqandī and ʿAufī, both added in 1919, seem to reflect contemporary Orientalist scholarship (both had recently been compiled by E. G. Browne). By 1947, the curriculum had come to include classical and contemporary Persian works. On the entry-level matriculation examination alone, students were now expected to study selections from curricular classics as well recent additions and contemporary literature, such as the poems of Ibn Yamīn, the *rubāʿī* poems of ʿAṭṭār, and selections from the Iranian poet Īraj Mīrzā (1874–1926).

By 1947, the scope and form of the advanced examinations (BA and MA) in Persian at Calcutta also had changed and expanded considerably. The prescribed texts comprised a much longer list of classical and contemporary Persian literature covering a much wider range of topics. The nature of the exams themselves also had changed. Early exams had focused on translation and philological analysis. By the end of the colonial period, students were expected to demonstrate familiarity with historical context, secondary literary criticism and scholarship, and specialist disciplines.

In 1947, the MA exam set for 1948 required students to produce papers on the history of Persia, the history of Persian literature, Persian philology, modern Persian literature, and a fifth paper on an elective topic.³⁹ For the elective exam, students could choose to focus on Persian literature, the historical literature of Iran, the historical literature of India, philosophy and mysticism, or philology. Textbooks included not only Persian literature, but relevant secondary literature in Urdu and Persian by Indian Persianists. In Urdu, students read the five-volume study of Persian poetry *Shīʿr al- ʿAjām* by Shiblī Nuʿmānī and the two-volume

³⁵ Calcutta, *Calendar Supplement for 1947*, 33.

³⁶ Aḥmad, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*.

³⁷ Al-Dīn, *Guldastah-yi Dānish*.

³⁸ Calcutta, *Calendar 1917*, 382, 390, 399, 406, 412–13.

³⁹ Calcutta, *Calendar Supplement for 1947*, 362–66.

study of Persian philology *Sukhandān-i Fārs* by Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād. In Persian, they read secondary scholarship such as *Sukhanvarān-i Irān dar ‘Asr-i Ḥāzīr* (1933) by Muḥammad Ishāq (a Calcutta-based scholar). The exams also incorporated contemporary Persian literature from India and Iran, including *Payām-i Mashriq* by Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877–1938) and poems by the Iranian writers Muḥammad-Taqī Bahār (1886–1951) and Parvīn I’tīṣāmī (1907–41).

University of Bombay: Wisdom Literature, History, and More

The University of Calcutta was not the only university whose examinations exerted influence over Persian studies in India in the colonial period. Incorporated in July of 1857, the University of Bombay was in its early years a much smaller institution than its sibling in the northeast. By its fifteenth year, it listed only seven affiliated colleges, mostly in Bombay (but also in Poona), only four of which were affiliated in the arts, compared to the forty-four institutions affiliated to Calcutta just a year earlier.⁴⁰ By 1887, the university’s domain had grown in number to fifteen and expanded in geographical reach to include affiliated institutions in cities across western India stretching from Karachi in the north to Kolhapur south of Bombay, and Ahmadabad, Baroda (Vadodara), Bhavnagar, Bombay (Mumbai), and Poona in between.⁴¹

The early Persian programs at the University of Bombay were overseen by pairs comprising a European Orientalist and an Indian scholar. In the 1860s, these were Reverend John Wilson, who had founded Wilson College (later the Free General Assembly’s Institution) in Bombay in the 1830s, and one Mūsā Khān who is otherwise not mentioned in the calendar.⁴² In the 1870s, the examiners were the Hungarian-born Orientalist Edward Rehatsek (translator of several Persian historical and ethical texts into English, including the *Gulistān* and *Bahāristān*) and ‘Abd al-Faṭḥ Maulavī, who was professor of Arabic at Elphinstone College in Bombay.⁴³ By the 1880s, the examinations were overseen by pairs of Parsi and Muslim Indians.⁴⁴ In one case, both members of the pair graduated from the same college in Bombay.⁴⁵

The Persian curriculum at the University of Bombay included many of the same works of poetry and moral philosophy as the curriculum at Calcutta, but added to them a number of works on history and legend. The *Gulistān*, *Dīvān* of Ḥāfiẓ, *Anvār-i Suhailī*, *Bahār-i Dānish*, *Sikandarnāmah*, and *Akhlāq-i Jalālī* were all prescribed textbooks in the first decades of the university. To these were added in the 1860s and 1870s sections on the first Mughal Emperor Bābar from the history of India by Firishtah (d. 1620); the *Shāhnāmah*; and selections from the legends of Ḥātim Ṭā’ī.⁴⁶ Later, in the 1880s, the BA examinations added selections of *Rauzat al-Ṣafā* by Mīrkhvānd on Sassanid history or the early Mongols (Chingiz Khān), depending on the year; selections from *Ḥabīb al-Siyar* by Mīrkhvānd’s grandson, Khvāndmīr, on the Abbasids or Ilkhāns; and passages in the *Ātash-kadah* by Luṭf ‘Alī Āzar Bīgdīlī in addition to selections from the *Shāhnāmah*, Sa’dī’s *Ṭayyibāt* (odes), and Rumi’s *Masnāvī*.⁴⁷

The emphasis on the history of Persia and Persian wisdom literature continued into the twentieth century as contemporary works were added to the Persian classics. For example, excerpts from the Qajar-era history of Persia *Nāmah-yi Khusravān* by Jalāl al-Dīn Mirzā (1827–72) appeared alongside curricular classics. The intermediate examinations prescribed an eclectic mixture of Indo-Persian history, texts from the Calcutta canon, Sufi classics, and recent autobiographical literature such as Ḥazīn Lāhijī’s travelogue. The BA exams similarly drew from canonical historiographical texts and Sufi classics, as well as contemporary works, such as

⁴⁰ Bombay, *Calendar 1871–72*, 194–220; Calcutta, *Calendar, 1870–71*, 127–28.

⁴¹ Bombay, *Calendar 1887–88*, 353–424.

⁴² Bombay, *Calendar 1865–66*, 172.

⁴³ Bombay, *Calendar 1871–72*, 186.

⁴⁴ Bombay, *Calendar 1883–84*, iii, xlvi, lxxvii, ccxiii.

⁴⁵ Bombay, *Calendar 1887–88*, iii, xlvi, lxxv, ccviii.

⁴⁶ Bombay, *Calendar, 1865–66*, 38; Bombay, *Calendar 1871–72*, 24–25.

⁴⁷ Bombay, *Calendar 1883–84*, 24–26; Bombay, *Calendar 1887–88*, 25–28.

the letters (*Munsha'āt*) of the Qajar prince and governor Farhād Mirzā (1818–88). The MA exam likewise drew from a wide range of genres and included, in addition to textbooks that had been standard elsewhere, the *Maqāmāt-i Ḥamidī* by Qāzi Hamid al-Dīn and the Sufi allegorical poem *Gulshan-i Rāz* by Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. ca. 1339–40).⁴⁸

This corpus of texts remained largely unchanged in subsequent decades, although a handful of new texts were added. In 1924–25, for example, students read the same texts as they had in 1906, although the texts were rearranged and reassigned to different exams.⁴⁹ New texts included a Persian translation of *Kalīlah va Dimnah* by Naṣrullāh Munshī; *Mī'rāj al-Sa'ādat* (a work in ethics translated from Arabic) by Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (d. 1829); and the Persian translation of John Malcolm's *History of Persia* by Mirzā Ḥairat. Ḥairat was himself a part of the colonial university system, having taught Persian at Elphinstone College in Bombay in the 1870s and 1880s, been elected to the University of Bombay senate in 1876, and served as examiner in Persian at Bombay in 1879.

University of Madras: Classical and Contemporary Persian in South India

Of less influence than Calcutta and Bombay, perhaps, but nonetheless remarkable for the innovativeness of its Persian curriculum, was the University of Madras. Incorporated in September 1857, Madras administered examinations to colleges in the Deccan (South India) in cities such as Aurangabad, Bangalore, Madras, Mysore, and Hyderabad. Persian appears to have been a late addition to the curriculum. No examiner for the language was named until 1872, and one did not begin to appear regularly until 1875.⁵⁰ Unlike Calcutta and Bombay, Madras required students to pass an examination in an optional language, not a classical one, until the MA level. Persian was one of eleven options, including Tamil, Telugu, “Kanarese” (Kannada), Malayalam, Hindustani (Urdu), and Uriya, at the first examination and BA levels. It was only at the MA level that candidates had to pass an examination in Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian.⁵¹

The Persian texts studied by examinees at Madras-affiliated schools combined some of the standard texts used at Calcutta and Bombay with texts not studied elsewhere. For example, students studying for the matriculation exam in 1876 studied the *Gulistān* and *Būstān*, just like those studying for exams at Calcutta and Bombay.⁵² However, in the following year, they were required to read *Ḥikāyāt-i Dilpasand* by Muḥammad Mahdī Vāṣif, a collection of animal fables in Persian adapted from “European stories translated from Greek” by a local poet.⁵³ Also included were selections from the poetry of both the eighteenth-century Indian Sufi proselytizer Mirzā Maḥzar Jān-i Jānān and the seventeenth-century Sufi poet Ṭāhir Ghānī Kashmīrī (recently translated into English by Mufti Mudāsir Farooqī and Nusrat Bazaz), neither of whom appears to have been studied elsewhere. In 1879, they also studied poetry by Asīr Iṣfahānī.⁵⁴ Asīr's *Dīvān* had been published by Nawal Kishore that same year.

In the 1890s, the Madras curriculum continued to incorporate moral fables and contemporary Persian translations. The examinations for 1892 and 1893 involved standard textbooks such as the *Būstān* and *Anvār-i Suhailī*.⁵⁵ They also incorporated 'Ayār-i Dānīsh (a version of the Indian Panchatantra animal fables compiled by the Mughal vizier and chronicler Abū-l-Faẓl) and Persian translations of two Turkish plays by Mirzā Faṭḥ 'Alī Ākhūnzādah (Mirza Fatali Akhundov; 1812–78): *Vazīr-i Lankarān* and *Ḥikāyat-i Ḥakīm-i Nabātāt va Mosta'ālī*

⁴⁸ Bombay, *Calendar 1906–1907*, 719–21.

⁴⁹ Bombay, *Calendar 1923–24 and 1924–25*, 795–99.

⁵⁰ Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 181, 187, 190.

⁵¹ Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 34, 39, 47.

⁵² This section is based on Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 96–108.

⁵³ Vāṣif, *Ḥikāyāt-i Dilpasand*, 2, 103.

⁵⁴ Madras, *Calendar 1876–77*, 108.

⁵⁵ The calendar also lists *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*, which is almost surely the anthology by Kabīr al-Dīn Aḥmad discussed earlier. Madras, 1892–93, 451–52, 453, 455, 457, 459, 461, 463, 465.

Shāh.⁵⁶ The same corpus continued to be prescribed by Madras for decades and appears not to have been substantially revised until the 1930s. The same set of texts appears in the 1902–3 curriculum with only minor changes.⁵⁷ By the 1920s, a mixture of canonical classics, Safavid- and Mughal-era poetry, and contemporary Persian by the Indian poet-philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl had been incorporated.⁵⁸ By 1939, the textbooks prescribed for the intermediate exam had shifted focus to contemporary Persian literature. The intermediate exams for 1939–41, for example, all assigned *Āʾīnah-yi ʿAjam* by Muḥammad Iqbāl; 1939 and 1941 required selections from the *Gulistān*, whereas the 1940 exam assigned a reader of selections in modern Persian and [*Dāgustarān yā*] *Intiqāmkhvāhān-i Mazdak* (1921; a historical novel about the Arab conquests and the fall of the Sassanid Empire) by ʿAbd al-Ḥusain Sanʿatizādah Kirmānī (1895–1973).⁵⁹

The Madras curriculum’s combination of curricular classics and contemporary Persian literature written in Central and South Asia continued to the end of the colonial period. In 1939, students preparing for the BA exam read canonical ethics works along with the aforementioned novel by Sanʿatizādah; Persian translations of Ākhūnzādah’s plays *Vukalāʾ-i Murāfaʿah* (one of the three plays in the translated anthologies of his plays mentioned above) and *Mard-i Khasis*; a Persian translation of James Justinian Morier’s *The Adventures of Haji Baba of Isfahan*, which had been translated into Persian and published by Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow in 1886; selections from the Indian poet Mirzā Ghālib (1797–1869); and the *Jāvidnāmah* by Muḥammad Iqbāl.⁶⁰ They read *Nal Daman* by the Mughal poet Faiẓī alongside selections from *Nasīm-i Shimāl* (probably excerpts from the journal by Ashraf Gīlānī, 1870–1934, which published satirical verse on contemporary events). Those preparing for the 1940 exam also read selections from the social reformist novel *Siyāhatnāmah-yi Ibrāhīm Beg* (1895) by the Turkish-born Iranian writer Zain al-ʿĀbidīn Marāghah-yī (1840–1910) and selections from the anthology *Poets of the Pahlavi Regime* (Bombay 1933) by the Parsi Persianist Dinshaw J. (Jijibhoy) Irani (1881–1938). Students sitting for the honors exam added to these texts *Taʾriḫ-i Adabiyāt-i Irān* (first published in Tabriz in 1929–30) by Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʾī.⁶¹

The gradual expansion of Persian studies at the three founding colonial universities of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras did not take place in isolation from institutional changes and curricular developments elsewhere. Some of the texts adopted by Bombay and Madras in the 1890s and afterward were initially adopted by the new universities founded in the 1880s, Panjab and Allahabad. The program at the University of Panjab followed Calcutta in offering examinations in Persian to fulfill the classical language requirement. It also introduced new Persian-medium examinations of its own and established degree programs focused exclusively on Persian. This led to the adoption of new textbooks, the expansion of the curriculum, and increasing specialization. Allahabad followed the basic structure of the Calcutta curricula. It also followed Calcutta’s practice of having Indian scholars design curriculum and produce anthologies as textbooks. It is to the curricular changes at those universities that we now turn.

Specialization at Panjab University

Incorporated in October 1882, the University of Panjab was unique among the colonial universities for its specialized degrees in Persian studies. Like Calcutta, it had a Faculty of Arts that conferred entrance, intermediate, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctor of

⁵⁶ Three of Ākhūnzādah’s plays, including *Ḥakīm-i Nabātāt*, had been translated into Persian by Mirza Djaʿfar and published without attribution as *Trois Comédies* (Persian title: *Kitāb-i Tamāshākhānah*; 1885). They were soon thereafter translated into English and published (likewise without attribution) in a bilingual Persian-English volume by A. Rogers as *Three Persian Plays* (1890).

⁵⁷ Madras, *Calendar 1902–1903*, 179–206.

⁵⁸ Madras, *Calendar 1924*, 501–12.

⁵⁹ Madras, *Calendar 1938–39*, 349, 358.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 466–67, 483.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 568.

Literature degrees. However, unlike the founding universities, Panjab also housed a Faculty of Oriental Learning that served its broader mission to encourage the study of “Eastern classical languages.”⁶² The existence of the Oriental faculty meant that Panjab not only followed Calcutta and others in requiring students to pass an examination in a classical language such as Persian as part of the otherwise English-medium curriculum, but also that it conferred Bachelor of Oriental Learning degrees requiring a classical language (Arabic or Sanskrit) and any two of a handful of elective subjects, including Persian.⁶³ The Oriental faculty also offered diplomas in “Oriental languages” (Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian) and conferred literary titles to successful candidates. Examinees who passed the proficiency exam in Persian were awarded the title “Munshī.” Those who passed the high proficiency exam were “Munshī ‘Ālim.” Those who passed the honors exam were given the title “Munshī Fāzil.”⁶⁴

By the 1890s, the University of Panjab Persian courses were already highly specialized, covering a wide range of genres in prose and poetry. The entrance exam used as its textbook an anthology reader, *Ganjīnah-yi Khirad*. Produced for students in secondary schools in the Panjab, the reader by its eleventh edition (1912) was fully vocalized and comprised selections from textbooks used elsewhere.⁶⁵ To prepare students to read *Ganjīnah-yi Khirad* and pass the entrance examination, students in middle class courses in secondary schools read the primer *Sarmāyah-yi Khirad*. Although not a university textbook per se, *Sarmāyah-yi Khirad* was unique among the university textbooks for its focus on conversation.⁶⁶ Of the book’s 232 pages, the first 43 comprised dialogues under the heading of “daily conversation” (*guftugū-yi yaumiyah*), covering various topics related to everyday life (e.g., illness, bathing, clothing); emotions (e.g., anger, surprise); and social interaction with Persian-speaking people (e.g., “the manners of social interaction of the people of Iran”). Students also read selections from the Persian letters of the nineteenth-century Indian Persian writers Mirzā Ghālib and Mirzā Qatīl in addition to canonical works of prose and poetry.⁶⁷

The anthology textbooks for the 1897 intermediate and Bachelor of Arts examinations at the University of Panjab illustrate the expansion of Persian studies as part of arts faculty exams in the decade following incorporation. Unlike the calendar lists divided simply into prose and poetry, the intermediate reader organized texts into a wide range of genres in prose and poetry and included a large number of classical and contemporary works.⁶⁸ The BA course for 1899 was even more expansive, adding works of poetry, history, and rhetorical theory, including the writings of the Qajar courtier and reformer Mirzā Abū-l-Qāsim Farāhānī Qā’im Maqām (1779–1835); the *Ā’in-i Akbarī*; *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*; a Persian translation of *Alf Lailā va Lailā*; and *Miftāḥ al-Adab* (an elementary work on Arabic grammar and morphology).⁶⁹

The University of Panjab’s honors programs in Persian administered by the Oriental faculty were highly specialized and accelerated counterparts to the arts faculty curriculum. In 1901–2, the Oriental entrance exam comprised selections from the arts faculty’s intermediate exam and added to it readings from *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī* and the study of Arabic grammar.⁷⁰ The intermediate exam comprised the Persian BA course plus supplementary readings in Persian literature and the study of Arabic grammar and literature.⁷¹ The Bachelor of

⁶² Panjab, *Calendar 1900–1901*, 22–34.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 52–85.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 71–74, 95–97.

⁶⁵ Punjab, *Ganjīnah-yi Khirad*, front matter, 1.

⁶⁶ Conversational Persian had been part of the training of British officers in the Fort William College, most famously with the use of Gladwin’s *The Persian Moonshee*. However, Gladwin’s book was never adopted for use in the curriculum of the universities, and, with the possible exception of Persian translations of contemporary dramas, the books that were incorporated into the university curriculum did not include conversations that could serve as models for speaking practice in everyday contexts.

⁶⁷ Punjab, *Sarmāyah-yi Khirad*.

⁶⁸ Punjab, *Intarmīdiyat Kors Fārsī*.

⁶⁹ Punjab, *Bī E Kors Fārsī*.

⁷⁰ Punjab, *Calendar 1900–1901*, 61.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

Oriental Learning exam for that year assumed these courses as background and required students to study a handful of other texts and the entire Arabic BA course.⁷² The Munshi (proficiency) exam in Persian comprised the regular Persian intermediate course and added to it works in poetry, ethics, history, and letters. It also required students to have analytical command of Persian and Arabic grammar and to translate from Persian into Urdu and Urdu into Persian. The Munshī ‘Ālim (high proficiency) course consisted of the Persian BA course; a Persian grammar *Makhzan al-Favā'id* by Fā'iq Lakhnavī (fl. 1810) in addition to other texts; and the entire intermediate course in Arabic. It also required Persian-Urdu and Urdu-Persian translation. The Munshī Fāzil (honors in Persian) exam included readings in rhetoric and prosody, history, an essay in Persian, Persian-Urdu and Urdu-Persian translation, and the entire BA course in Arabic.⁷³

Over the course of the following decades, the Persian curriculum at the University of Panjab proved to be more mercurial, specialized, and expansive than that of other universities. In 1927, the syllabus for the intermediate, First Arts, and Munshī examination comprised a mixture of standard and less-common texts.⁷⁴ By 1936, the Persian studies program had grown to comprise a massive corpus of no fewer than two hundred texts and ten different degree and diploma programs.⁷⁵ Students were assigned secondary readings by Orientalists and literary critics in English, Urdu, and Persian. Textbooks included classics of the colonial curriculum as well as Persian works in poetry and prose by contemporary Indian writers, such as *Ā'inah-yi 'Ajam* by Muḥammad Iqbāl and *Dabīr-i 'Ajam* (1928; a magisterial Persian-language study of poetics, rhetoric, and literary theory) by Aṣghar 'Alī Rūhī (professor of Oriental Languages at Islamiyah College, Lahore).⁷⁶ Other contemporary works included Persian translations of plays by Akhūndzādah and *Haji Baba of Isfahan* by Morier, and the aforementioned *Siyāhatnāmah-yi Ibrāhīm Beg*. Secondary readings included English-language histories of Persia and Persian literature by Browne, Levy, and Rogers, as well as the Urdu study *Shi'r al-'Ajam* by Shibli Nu'mānī.

By the end of the colonial period, the specialist examinations at the University of Panjab reflected the abiding influence of the early colonial curriculum, the legacy of the expansions of the 1880s and 1890s, the integration of contemporary Persian literature by Indian and Iranian writers, and the specialization of Persian studies as both a philological and historical-literary discipline.⁷⁷ In the early years, the curriculum was divided into prose and poetry and included a narrow range of genres. Later, the textbooks divided the readings, especially in poetry, into specified genres. By 1934, the curriculum was organized by discipline. For example, the course of studies in mysticism and moral philosophy for the Munshī Fāzil exam of that year combined treatises in ethics with Sufi literature, including *Akhilāq-i Jalālī*; *Kashf al-Mahjūb* (eleventh century, the earliest surviving treatise on Sufism in Persian, edited and published in Lahore in 1903) by al-Hujvīrī; and the mystical allegories in verse *Gulshan-i Rāz* and *Mantiq al-Ṭair*. Students also were expected to translate between Persian and Urdu and produce an original composition in Persian.

Standardization at Allahabad University

The expansion and specialization at the University of Panjab was paralleled by similar processes of expansion and regularization of the syllabus at the University of Allahabad, which further cemented the place of Persian studies in the Indian colleges. Founded in 1887 and incorporated in November 1889, Allahabad followed the examination structure of its parent

⁷² Ibid., 82.

⁷³ Ibid., 95–96.

⁷⁴ Bilgrāmī, *Sharḥ-i Intārmīdiyat Kors Fārsī*.

⁷⁵ Panjab, *Calendar 1936–1937*, 150–76, 879–80, 905, 940, 960–61, 986–87, 1090, 1093, 1095–96, 1109–13.

⁷⁶ Rūhī, *Dabīr-i 'Ajam*, 2–4.

⁷⁷ Panjab, *Calendar 1936–1937*, 1111–13.

institution, the University of Calcutta.⁷⁸ Students sitting for all examinations, from entrance to BA, had to pass exams in English, history and geography, mathematics, and a classical language (Sanskrit, Arabic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or Persian). As elsewhere, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were unlikely choices for students. Of the twenty-four colleges affiliated to the university in arts in 1894, only one, Women's College in Lucknow, listed a faculty member who taught Latin, and only one other, St. George's College in Mussoorie (managed by Catholics), taught "classics" (certainly Latin, perhaps Greek).⁷⁹ None listed Hebrew. By contrast, nearly all affiliated colleges listed faculty in Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit.

The relative ease and accessibility of Persian made it a popular choice with Allahabad university examinees.⁸⁰ By 1899, the general preference for Persian meant that few students opted for the more difficult courses and exams in Arabic and Sanskrit. Consequently, the status of Persian as a classical language was questioned by the British director of education in the region, and a proposal was made to remove Persian from the list of elective classical languages. In response, Shibli Nu'mānī, retired professor of Persian and Arabic and current examiner in Persian at Allahabad, produced a new curriculum designed to demonstrate that Persian was worthy as a classical language. In a speech before an educational conference, he argued that the treasury of historical literature, especially the history of Muslims, available in Persian was unique, and therefore Persian deserved continued institutional support. The resistance to the proposed exclusion of Persian worked. It remained an elective classical language.

The Persian faculties at affiliated colleges evince the role that the University of Allahabad, like the other universities, played in sustaining an ecosystem for Persian studies. Persian studies faculty bore titles such as Professor of Persian and Head Persian Teacher. Others bore broader titles, such as Professor of Oriental Literature (e.g., at Muir Central College in Allahabad). Such professors were accompanied by many other Persian instructors—bearing titles such as masters, maulvis, munshis, and teachers—employed by the schools. The calendars do not record the names and subjects of the latter, but many are identified as part of the Oriental (studies) faculties, and some of them, especially those bearing titles associated with Perso-Arabic studies such as maulvi and munshi, surely taught Persian. Of the twenty-four colleges affiliated to the university in arts in 1894–95, seventeen listed Persian teachers among their faculty, spread across a wide range of departments.⁸¹ Maharaja's College in Jaipur, for example, retained two Persian professors (one in the English department, the other in the Oriental department), a superintendent of Persian and Arabic in the Oriental department, three teachers of Persian in the English department, and a head instructor and nine teachers of Persian in the Persian department (separate from the Oriental department), for a total of sixteen Persian studies faculty members.⁸² Persian studies also were encouraged by prizes for academic excellence in the subject; for example, the Maulvi Hyder Husain prize at Muir Central College, Allahabad.

The faculty listings also remind us that Persian was neither exclusively the purview of the colonial system nor exclusively the purview of any particular religious community. The assistant professor of Persian at Canning College in Lucknow (later Lucknow University) was a Hindu named Munshi Ramkishan, without degree titles to suggest that he was the product of the colonial university system.⁸³ The multicomunal quality of Persian stands

⁷⁸ Allahabad, *Calendar 1894–95*, 37–52, 84–104.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 183, 202.

⁸⁰ Nu'mānī, "Ispīch," 46–52.

⁸¹ These were Muir Central College, Canning College, MAO College, Aligarh, Agra College, St. John's College in Agra, London Mission College in Benares, Maharaja's College in Jaipur, Christian College in Lucknow, Jabalpur College, Madhava College in Ujjain, Lashkar College in Gwalior, High School in Fyzabad, Ramsay College in Almorah, the Women's College in Lucknow, Christ Church in Kanpur, and Meerut College. Allahabad, *Calendar 1894–95*, 177–203.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 194.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 183.

in contrast to Sanskrit and Arabic, which were almost exclusively the purview of Indian scholars with names suggesting Hindu and Muslim backgrounds, respectively, or European Orientalists.⁸⁴

The first curriculum for examinations at the University of Allahabad consisted of a mixture of the classic colonial texts and new innovations. The first designer of Allahabad's curriculum, Amjad 'Alī, had been educated in the colonial system up to an MA degree and was professor of Persian at Muir Central College in Allahabad. His entrance examination for 1891 (the first year exams were held) included standard Calcutta texts such as the *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, and the *Divān* of Hāfiẓ. To these he added texts not widely assigned on Calcutta's exams, including the mystical-moral poetry by 'Umar Khayyām and Ibn Yamīn, Jāmī's *Bahāristān*. He also assigned selections from *Āsar al-Ṣanādīd* (a work on the architecture of Delhi by the contemporary Indian reformer and educationist Sayyid Aḥmad Khān [d. 1898]).⁸⁵ His intermediate course likewise drew from a mixture of classics and contemporary works, standard textbooks, and new additions. To Calcutta standards were added the *Bahāristān* of Jāmī; the *Safarnāmah* (1873) of the Qajar Shah Nāsir al-Dīn; the travelogue and autobiography of Ḥazīn Lāhijī (d. 1766); a work by the Indian scholar Imām Baksh Ṣahbā'i (d. 1857), who had taught Persian at Delhi College in the first half of the nineteenth century; and excerpts from Ghazālī's mystical *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat*.

Amjad 'Alī's BA course likewise drew from curricular standards, but also included recent works, such as selections from poetry by the Qajar poet Mirzā Raḥīm Yaghmā (d. 1859) and the Indian poet Mirzā Asadullāh Khān Ghālib (d. 1869). It also incorporated Indo-Persian literature, for example, the *Siḥ Naṣr* of Zuhūrī and *Naldaman* by the Mughal emperor Akbar's court poet Fayyāzi.⁸⁶ In 1895–96, the MA examination in Persian added texts that had not been staples of the Calcutta curriculum, such as *Tauqī'āt-i Kīsrā* (a work translated from Arabic for one of the sons of the Mughal emperor Shāh Jahān purporting to record the sayings of the Sassanid emperor Naushīrvān) and *Ijāz-i Khusravī* (a prose miscellany by the thirteenth-century poet from Delhi, Amīr Khusrau).⁸⁷

Amjad 'Alī's courses were replaced in 1897 by new entrance and intermediate courses designed by Shiblī Nu'mānī. Shiblī drew from the same textbooks as Amjad 'Alī in the entrance course, but added selections that had been introduced elsewhere, including *Nāmah-yi Khusravān* (a nationalist history and biographical dictionary of Persian kings) by the Qajar historian Jalāl al-Dīn Mirzā (1827–72).⁸⁸ To the intermediate course Shiblī added selections from the Persian translation of John Malcolm's *History of Persia* (1815) by Mirzā Ḥairat Irānī and the eighteenth-century *Ma'āṣir al-Umarā* (biographies of Mughal notables) by Samsam al-Daulah Shāh Navāz Khān.⁸⁹ The BA and MA examinations for 1899 repeated earlier curricula, adding only selections from Manuchihrī to the BA exam.⁹⁰ Shiblī's syllabi were eventually replaced by Amjad 'Alī's in 1906, which remained in use until 1914.⁹¹

The curriculum at Allahabad from 1914 to the 1930s witnessed relatively few new additions to the canon of texts established by the early examiners. The 1914 curriculum for the intermediate examination by Mirzā Muḥammad Ismā'il Khān (professor of Persian at Christian College, Allahabad) adds only the letters of Bīdil and *Akhlāq-i Nāsirī*, neither of which was new to the colonial curriculum.⁹² His 1918 BA curriculum retained most of the previous curricula, but added selections from Bīdil's prose; the odes of Sanā'i; selections

⁸⁴ One important exception to this rule was Sayyid 'Alī Bilgrāmī, who was examiner in Sanskrit at the University of Madras in the 1890s. Madras, *Calendar 1892–93*, ii. For his life and works, see Bruce, "Bilgrami Brothers."

⁸⁵ 'Alī, *Muntakhabāt-i Fārsī*.

⁸⁶ 'Alī, *Bī E Kors Fārsī*.

⁸⁷ Allahabad, *Calendar 1894–95*, 140–41.

⁸⁸ Nu'mānī, *Intrans Kors Fārsī*.

⁸⁹ Nu'mānī, *Intarmīdiyāt Kors Fārsī*.

⁹⁰ Allahabad, *Calendar 1898–99*, 171.

⁹¹ Allahabad, *Calendar 1904–1905*, 185, 192; Allahabad, *Calendar 1908*, 167, 171.

⁹² Khān, *Intarmīdiyāt Fārsī Kors*.

from Kamāl al-Dīn Ismāʿīl; and selections of odes by Fughānī (Fighānī), ʿAbd al-Vāsīʿ, and Rashīd al-Dīn Vaṭvāt.⁹³ The revised BA course for 1919 pared the new course down, but added nothing new.⁹⁴ A decade later, however, in 1928, the course had expanded in size to include multiple disciplines similar to those at the University of Panjab, but comprised largely the same texts that had been used previously. The intermediate exam added only *Tuḥfat al-Ālam* (a history of England in Persian) and *Āʿīnah-yi Iskandarī* by Amīr Khusrau. The BA excerpted a laundry list of by then standard textbooks, but added selections from the eighteenth-century Indian poets Sarkhush and ʿAndalīb (both excerpted in an anthology). Students also were advised to read *Ṣanādīd-i ʿAjam* by the Indian scholar M. H. Nāṣirī for their history of literature exams.⁹⁵ The MA exam used the same textbooks as before, but added several less common works, such as *Rasāʾil* by Yamīn al-Dīn Tuḡhrā Mashhadī, *Shabnam-i Shādāb* by the Safavid-era poet Ṣahīr al-Dīn Tafrīshī, Ākhūnzādah’s play *Sarguzasht-i Shāh-i Langarān*, and selections from the poems of the eighteenth-century Indian mystic and poet ʿAndalīb. It also assigned works of scholarship on Persian literature and language in English and Urdu as well as works on Persian grammar and poetics.⁹⁶

Legacy: The New Universities

Successor institutions to the colonial curriculum generally followed the structure and curricula set by the earlier institutions. Allahabad was the last colonial university to incorporate before the explosion of independent universities began in the second decade of the twentieth century. For six decades, three (and eventually five) universities had set the trajectory of Persian studies in colleges across British India and the princely states. Starting in 1916, British India witnessed the rapid rise of autonomous universities and the decentralization and diversification of control over Persian studies. Between 1916 and 1923, ten new universities were incorporated. Most emerged from an affiliated college, just as the University of Panjab had emerged from the Oriental College in Lahore and the University of Allahabad from Muir Central College in Allahabad—both of these previously affiliated to the University of Calcutta. Some universities would later emerge as leading centers of Persian studies. Osmania University in Hyderabad (incorporated August 1919) was an Urdu-medium university with an active community of Persian scholars that produced important translations from Persian literature. The universities of Lucknow (incorporated December 1920) and Delhi (incorporated May 1922) would be important centers of Persian studies in colonial and postcolonial India. Aligarh Muslim University (incorporated December 1920), formerly the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College affiliated to the Calcutta and Allahabad universities, likewise emerged as a major center of Persian studies and Mughal history, producing influential scholars such as Nazir Ahmed (1915–2008) and K. A. Nizami (1925–97).

An early curriculum for the intermediate examination at Osmania University comprised texts that had been standard for decades.⁹⁷ Likewise, the verse portion of the BA course in Persian at Aligarh Muslim University published in 1924 collected texts that had long been standard at Allahabad. The prose portion, however, added two texts not previously prevalent: the eleventh-century work of political wisdom *Qābūs-nāmah* by ʿUnṣur al-Maʿālī, which had been available in print since the mid-nineteenth century, and *Lubāb al-Albāb* (1221) by ʿAufī (the oldest-surviving Persian *tazkirah* of poets, edited and published by E. G. Browne in 1903–6).⁹⁸ This suggests that the practice of augmenting the colonial curriculum that began in the 1880s with Kabīr al-Dīn, Muḥy al-Dīn, and Amjad ʿAlī continued as

⁹³ Khān, *Bī E Fārsī Kors*.

⁹⁴ Allāhābādī, *Bī E Kors Fārsī barā-yi 1919*.

⁹⁵ Allahabad, *Calendar 1928*, 323–27.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 355–58.

⁹⁷ ʿUṣmānīyah, *Niṣāb-i Fārsī*.

⁹⁸ ʿAlīgarh, *Niṣāb-i Fārsī barā-yi Imtīḥān-i Bī E*.

Persian studies faculties at the new universities developed curriculum in response to subsequent scholarship.

The Colonial Curriculum and Persian Publishing

Throughout the colonial period, the expansion of the Persian curriculum in the universities created and sustained a marketplace for critical editions, commentaries, and translations produced for students preparing for examinations. Recent scholarship on the proliferation of print in colonial India has focused mainly on the rise of vernacular literature and the emergence of the vernacular public sphere.⁹⁹ Far less attention has been paid to the publication of literature in classical languages such as Persian in the same period.¹⁰⁰ Yet government publications lists and library catalogs testify to the prolific and sustained publication of Persian texts throughout the colonial period.¹⁰¹ The prescription of particular texts by the colonial universities created instant, widespread demand for new editions of Persian classics. The correlations between the inclusion of Persian texts in the curriculum and their compilation, editing, and publication by the British-backed Nawal Kishore Press is evidence of the role that the curriculum played in sustaining market demand. For example, the first edition of the *Qaṣāʾid* of Badr Chāchi, published by Nawal Kishore in 1873, corresponds with its inclusion in the syllabus of the Bachelor of Arts examination at the University of Calcutta in 1875 when Persian regained its place as a subject on BA exams. The first edition of the *Vaqāʾiʿ* of Niʿmat Khān ʿAlī, which also was included in the BA syllabus, appeared just a few years before, in 1870. Its continued publication by Nawal Kishore likewise corresponds with its continued inclusion on the exams at Calcutta and other universities in subsequent decades (I have found references to printings in 1873, 1884, 1886, 1894, 1896, and 1906).

The works of Ghiyās al-Dīn Rāmpūrī (b. ca. 1785; d. 1852) provide an illustrative example of the ways in which the colonial curriculum influenced the excavation, compilation, editing, and publication of Persian literature by Indian presses in the colonial period.¹⁰² Ghiyās al-Dīn taught Persian at the court of the Navvāb of Rampur in the first half of the nineteenth century, authored a handful of commentaries in Persian on classical Persian texts, penned a handful of medical texts in Persian, compiled an influential monolingual Persian dictionary, wrote Persian and Urdu poetry, and penned a long cycle of fantastic tales in Persian dedicated to the Navvāb's wife. The dictionary, *Ghiyās al-Lughāt* (1827), was probably first printed in 1848–49. All his other works remained in manuscript until the final decades of the nineteenth century, when some of them were edited by his son and published by Nawal Kishore.

Among the works by Ghiyās al-Dīn that were eventually published, most were relevant to the colonial university curricula. His commentary on the letters of Abū-l-Faẓl, *Sharḥ-i Abū-l-Faẓl: Do Daftar*, was published in 1890 and again in 1897. His commentary on Saʿdī's *Gulistān*, titled *Bahār-i Bārān*, and his commentary on Niẓāmī's *Sikandarnāmah*, titled *Sharḥ-i Sikandarnāmah*, were both published in 1891. By 1898, his commentary on the qasida of Badr-i Chāch, which he had written as a guide for his sons, was in its second printing.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ For discussions of the rise and dissemination of print in the colonial period, mainly focused on vernacular languages, see Dubrow, *Cosmopolitan Dreams*; Minault, *Secluded Scholars*; Orsini, *Print and Pleasure*; Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters*; Robb, *Print and the Urdu Public*; and Stark, *Empire of Books*.

¹⁰⁰ Two important preliminary discussions of Persian book production in India and nineteenth-century printing are Tavakoli-Targhi, "Early Persianate Modernity," and Shah, "Sustaining Authority."

¹⁰¹ The British government's quarterly lists of published works have recently been digitized and made freely available online. See "Digitised 'Quarterly Lists,'" British Library. For evidence of the proliferation of Persian publications despite the so-called decline in Persian readership at the time, one need only consult library and publications catalogs. A search in WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>) for Persian-language books published by Nawal Kishore between 1857 and 1947 yields around 1,200 titles, compared to approximately 2,400 for Urdu.

¹⁰² For his life and works, see Bruce, "Ġiāṭ-al-Dīn Rāmpūrī."

¹⁰³ Rāmpūrī, *Sharḥ-i Qasāʾid-i Badr-i Chāch*, 410.

By contrast, his works not related to the colonial exams were mostly left in manuscript.¹⁰⁴ His unpublished works include commentaries on other Persian works, including on the celebrated *Maṣnavī Nairang-i ʿIshq* by Ghanīmat Kunjāhī (d. 1675); treatises on Persian poetics, grammar, and style; original works on medicine; and long and short collections of fantastic tales. Genre alone cannot be thought to determine general interest, since demand for fantasy literature, at least in vernacular languages such as Urdu, was high at the time.¹⁰⁵ The only exception to the rule appears to be Ghiyās al-Dīn's letters, *Rayāḥīn-i ʿAzīm* (1890), which were never prescribed as a colonial textbook. However, as we have seen, Persian letters by Abū-l-Faẓl, Bīdil, Ghālib, Mirzā Qatīl, and other Indian Persian writers were part of the colonial curriculum, and it is not difficult to imagine that the letters in *Rayāḥīn-i ʿAzīm*, which closely resemble those of Abū-l-Faẓl in style, were published in hopes that they might be adopted.

Ghiyās al-Dīn was not the only Indian Persianist whose works were excavated and published in tandem with changes to the colonial curriculum. For example, in 1881, Nawal Kishore published a commentary by Imām Bakhsh Ṣahbāʿī (d. 1857) on the *Sih Naṣr* of Ṣuhūrī. *Sih Naṣr* had been introduced into the Calcutta curriculum in the mid-1870s, was later adapted by the universities of Panjab and Allahabad, and remained a textbook in Allahabad's curriculum throughout the colonial period. Ṣahbāʿī's commentary would have been useful as a guide to Ṣuhūrī's prose. Students on the MA exam at Allahabad in 1902 not only had to translate it into English, but also explain allusions in it, gloss vocabulary, and vocalize and analyze etymology, all these being primary concerns of commentaries on Persian texts.

The new commercial function of classical commentaries as guides for college students affected the way that the editions were marketed. The cover pages of Nawal Kishore editions often replaced the original, literary titles of commentaries with names that clearly identified the books as pedagogical tools and study aids. For example, the commentary by Mullā Quṭb al-Dīn Fārigh on the odes of ʿUrḫī bears the poetic and chronogrammatic title *Faiz-bār* (Bearing or Raining Bounty; 1682–83).¹⁰⁶ The Nawal Kishore edition replaces the original title with the more commercial *Sharḥ-i Qasāʾid-i ʿUrḫī* (Explication of the Odes of ʿUrḫī).

The Persian curriculum also created markets for new commentaries on Persian classics, including some in Urdu. Many of these texts were published not by the government-backed Nawal Kishore, but by independent presses that also published Persian and Urdu literature. The authors of these commentaries and translations were often, themselves, employed by the colonial colleges. For example, the author of *Sharḥ-i Ruqʿāt-i Bīdil* (Lucknow: Anvār-i Muḥammadi, n.d.), Ḥakīm Shaikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Daryābādī, was a professor of Arabic and Persian at Canning College in Lucknow.¹⁰⁷ Bīdil's *Ruqʿāt* or letters had been incorporated into the First Arts examination at the University of Calcutta in 1874, where they remained in use as a textbook for over a decade. The publishers of the commentary describe Bīdil's letters as an "illusory world of deception" (*ṭilism-i firīb*) and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's text as "intelligible by common people" (*ʿām-fahm*).¹⁰⁸ ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's text was thus self-consciously written and marketed as a college teacher's guide for perplexed students.

As the Persian courses grew to include a larger and wider-ranging corpus of texts, the demand for study aids grew from commentaries on particular texts to include explications of the curriculum itself. *Sharḥ-i Bī E Fārsi Kors* (Meerut: Qāsīmi Press, 1907) is a running glossary in Urdu on the BA course designed by Amjad ʿAlī for the Persian examination at the University of Allahabad in 1908. Coauthored by teachers of Arabic and Persian, the 335-page commentary contains Urdu definitions of key terms and Urdu translations and summaries of the Persian. It also includes the page numbers of Amjad ʿAlī's anthology

¹⁰⁴ Shikīb, *Rāmpūr kā Dabistān-i Shāʿirī*, 267–72.

¹⁰⁵ For discussions of the marketability of folk and fantasy literature, see Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters* and *Romance Tradition*; and Pasha M. Khan, *Broken Spell*.

¹⁰⁶ Fārigh, *Sharḥ-i Qasāʾid-i ʿUrḫī*, 162.

¹⁰⁷ Al-ʿAzīz, *Sharḥ-i Ruqʿāt-i Bīdil*, 64.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, front matter, 64.

textbook to facilitate cross-reference and study. Similarly, *Sharḥ-i Intarmīdiyat Kors Fārsī* (Lahore: Karimi Press, 1927) is a commentary on the FA Persian and Munshi examinations at the University of Panjab.¹⁰⁹ It likewise provided students with Urdu glosses of key terms, explanations and translations of difficult passages, and page numbers of the published course to facilitate reference and study.

The colonial curricula also created a marketplace for English translations, many of which were marketed specifically as study aids for students. In the 1890s, Thomas George, then head translator at the chief court in Panjab, translated the entire Persian intermediate curriculum at the University of Panjab into English as a textbook in four volumes for students.¹¹⁰ By 1906, the translation was in its third edition.¹¹¹

The translations of *Bahāristān* (1487) by ‘Abd or-Rahmān Jāmī (1414–92) into English by Indian scholars are a case in point.¹¹² Amjad ‘Alī was the first to adopt the text in his 1889 readers for the 1891 entrance and intermediate exams for the University of Allahabad.¹¹³ His courses were current for several years before being made current again in 1906. By then, Jāmī’s text also had been adopted for the exams at the University of Bombay, where it remained a regular part of the curriculum for decades.¹¹⁴ A complete translation of *Bahāristān* had been done by Edward Rehatsek and published in Britain anonymously and for subscribers only by Richard Francis Burton’s Kama Shastra Society in 1887.¹¹⁵ The *Bahāristān*’s sexually explicit and potentially offensive material meant that only certain chapters could be prescribed for examinations, and that some material from the remaining chapters was expurgated. The inclusion of the expurgated text on the colonial exams created a market for partial and expurgated English translations for students.

The first translation of *Bahāristān* for students was *The Behāristān-i-Jāmī or Abode of Spring* in two volumes (1899, 1900) by Sorabji Fardunji Mulla, a Parsi who had been educated in the colonial university system and taught at Elphinstone College in Bombay.¹¹⁶ His translation omits the sixth chapter (called *rauḏah* [garden]) of the text, which includes sexually explicit humor, and also omits some of the Arabic passages in the Persian. Mulla corrected Rehatsek without referring to him. He also included material for students: an introduction about Jāmī’s life and text as well as interlinear glosses and notes to facilitate study.

Mulla’s translation was followed by *Baharistan-i-Jami* (1914) by Chhotubhai B. Abuwala and Md. Hasibullah Qureishy.¹¹⁷ Abuwala had studied at the Gujarat College in Ahmedabad and Wilson College in Bombay, both affiliates of the University of Bombay, from which he had earned a BA in language and literature in 1914 with Persian as his classical language. Qureishy had passed the Persian-medium high proficiency in Persian examination from the University of Panjab. The Abuwala and Qureishy translation includes only Jāmī’s introduction and chapters 1–4 and 7–8, and, like Mulla’s, expurgates sexual and risqué material. In addition to providing students with a lengthy biographical and critical introduction, they also include copious notes on each chapter. They apparently intended their work to be read alongside the original Persian, since the notes comprise glosses of transliterated Persian words and phrases not found in the translation itself. Their translation also includes a concise five-page summary of each translated chapter, complete with an overview of the major themes addressed in the book’s many moral anecdotes.

The final edition for students was *Bahāristān-i Jāmī* (title in Persian; 1941) by Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, who held three colonial degrees, including a BA and a degree in translation

¹⁰⁹ Bilgrāmī, *Sharḥ-i Intarmīdiyat Kors Fārsī*.

¹¹⁰ George, *Translation and Explanation* (1897).

¹¹¹ George, *Translation and Explanation* (1906), front matter.

¹¹² For a detailed discussion of these translations, see Bruce, “Making Sense.”

¹¹³ ‘Alī, *Muntakhbat*, 31–47; ‘Alī, *Intarmīdiyat*, 54–7.

¹¹⁴ Bombay, *Calendar 1906–1907*, 719; Bombay, *Calendar 1923–24 and 1924–25*, 795.

¹¹⁵ [Rehatsek], *Behāristān*. On Rehatsek, see Bruce, “Edward Rehatsek.”

¹¹⁶ Mulla, *The Behāristān-i-Jāmī or Abode of Spring*.

¹¹⁷ Abuwala and Qureishy, *Baharistan-i-Jami*.

studies.¹¹⁸ Unlike the previous translations for students, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ra’uf’s book is explicitly advertised on the cover page as prescribed for the examinations at the University of Bombay. It is the least complete translation, comprising only the first, seventh, and eighth chapters, but it also contains an English glossary and his own edition of the Persian text.

Conclusion

The Persian curriculum in the colonial universities had a profound influence on intellectual and cultural life in India. The sheer number of graduates who passed through the system by the partition of 1947 is enough to illustrate the point. In the first few decades of the universities’ existence, the number of graduates was small enough for the editors of the university calendars to publish their names in cumulative lists. For example, we find in the University of Calcutta calendars of the 1880s and 1890s a cumulative list of graduates, from the earliest days to the present. The Calcutta calendar for 1881–82 records some 1,650 BA graduates and around 3,350 students who had passed FA and entrance exams.¹¹⁹ Of these, as outlined above, a substantial number would have completed the classical examination in Persian. By the 1900s, however, the number of graduates was too large to maintain the cumulative rosters, and calendars printed only those students who had successfully completed exams in the previous cycle (usually two years). The University of Panjab calendar for 1936–37, for example, records that around 2,500 students earned DLitt, MA, and BA degrees in 1935–36. Among the listed are those who earned MA degrees in Persian and BA degrees with honors in Persian. Of the approximately 300 students who earned specialist MA degrees in the Faculty of Oriental Learning that year, 228 earned the Munshi Fazil or honors Persian degree.¹²⁰

The colonial universities created unprecedented forms of standardization for Persian studies in British India. The prescription of textbooks for university examinations meant that students at affiliated colleges across British India read the same selections from the same corpus of texts in preparation for the same examinations.

The curriculum of the colonial universities also created and sustained a massive ecosystem for Persian studies in colonial India. With classical studies as a necessary part of the exams, the colonial universities guaranteed continued demand and support for Persian faculty at affiliated colleges. They likewise ensured a sustained market demand for editions of Persian literature, commentaries in English, Persian, and Urdu on Persian textbooks, and English and Urdu translations for students. Future studies, following the pioneering work of Gauri Vishwanathan on the politics of English-language instruction, might examine the politics of the changes wrought in the Persian canon, such as the inclusion of Persian translations of Orientalist histories (e.g., Malcolm) and contemporary literature (e.g., the plays of Ākhūnzādah), and their relationship to broader colonial and imperial projects.

The university calendars also show us that Persian remained a multicommunal language throughout the colonial period. Persian studies in colonial India counted Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Sikhs, as well as British Orientalists, among its students, teachers, examiners, translators, and scholars.

Far from a fixed corpus of classical texts focused on any one particular region, the Persian curricula in the colonial universities gradually expanded to include classical and contemporary works drawn from a wide range of fields and genres and written by authors from across the Persian and Persianate ecumene, from Azerbaijan through Iran to India. Classics such as *Gulistān*, *Akh̄lāq-i Jalālī*, *Anvār-i Suhailī*, and the *Sikandarnāmah* were studied alongside Mughal-era Indo-Persian poetry and prose, histories and poetry by Iranian writers from the Qajar and Pahlavi periods, and contemporary works by Indian writers of Persian such as Muḥammad Iqbāl and Aṣghar ‘Alī Rūḥī. The present article has noted the significance

¹¹⁸ Al-Ra’uf, *Bahāristān-i Jāmī*.

¹¹⁹ Calcutta, *Calendar, 1881–82*, 210–311.

¹²⁰ Panjab, *Calendar 1936–1937*, 778–814, 833–36.

of the changes made by Indian Persianists in the 1880s and 1890s without speculating about the relationship of these changes to educational reform. To what extent the Hunter Commission reforms of 1882–83 played a role in shifting control over the curriculum to Indian scholars is unclear, since the main focus of the reforms was on the promotion of elementary education and industrial or commercial training (as opposed to the literary curriculum of the universities).¹²¹ The Hunter Commission does not explain, at least not entirely, the autonomy afforded to Indian examiners and curricular designers, let alone the more important question of why the Indian scholars selected the texts that they did.

The next step for the study of Persian in the colonial period is to paint a fuller picture by studying the figures who received, produced, and transformed the curriculum by making connections between broader debates and decisions made about the selection of texts, and by comparing the selections themselves, to gain insights into shifting attitudes about inclusion and exclusion in curricular design. Research also must relate changes and developments in the curriculum to extracurricular literary trends. The persistent production of Persian literature, particularly poetry, by Indians in the colonial period attests to its ongoing cultural significance. The popularity of Persian *qavvālī* songs of praise; major Persian works by Muḥammad Iqbāl; the abiding presence of Persian verse in the collected works of Urdu poets in the colonial and postcolonial periods; and the scholarly attention paid to Persian letters by a wide range of thinkers—from the Islamic scholar Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī to the Marxist progressive Sajjād Zāhīr—all attest to the continuing significance of Persian letters throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods, despite the displacement of Persian as a language of governance in the early nineteenth century. What influence the curriculum of Persian studies in the colonial universities had on the development of Indo-Persian literature and Indo-Persianate thought in the colonial and postcolonial periods remains a central question for future research.

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¹²¹ Paranjpe, *Source Book*, 169–235.

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ARTICLE

Forlorn Arabs and Flying Americans: National Identity in the Early Childhood Curriculum of Postrevolutionary Iran, 1979–2009

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Abstract

Drawing upon three decades of postrevolutionary textbooks, this article traces the development of the Arab Muslim as a recurring character in the early elementary curriculum of the Islamic Republic, set against the historical context of Iranian modernization and state formation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Sympathy for the Arab by the postrevolutionary state included a rebuke and an affirmation: Look at what has happened to the Arabs who were not able to defend their homes and their homeland, and look at what has *not* happened to us. Set against the Palestinian Arab figure are the accomplishments of American scientists and inventors who feature prominently in the postrevolutionary curriculum as sources of emulation for young readers. Star turns from Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and Orville and Wilbur Wright invite a reconsideration of the role of the foreign Other in the construction of Iranian national identity, notably the expectation that the dispossessed constitute natural allies in Iran's ceaseless struggle against "the West." Islamization of the primary school curriculum since 1979 has not come at the expense of Iranian national identity but as its expression, elucidating the ways postrevolutionary educational materials can serve as a repository for tracing the continuities and permutations in depicting the Arab or Western Other as well as different civilizational ethos of the Islamic and Persianate world across time.

Keywords: Arabs; identity; Iran; nationalism; Persians; postrevolutionary education; textbooks

Khāled stood motionless as the soldiers surrounded him. All of his friends had run away but he stood alone, a rock still held in his hand. Only six years old, he showed no sign of fear. This only angered the soldiers more. They leveled their rifles at him. "Who taught you to throw stones at us?" one shouted. "If you don't tell us, we will kill you! There are no cameras here! No one will know that you're dead!" Khāled relented. "My brother, my brother Mohammad."

The soldiers rushed to Khāled's home, certain that they were about to arrest a major leader of the rebellion. Khāled's parents opened the door. The soldiers demanded to see Mohammad. "We will not return your other son until you bring him!" they shouted angrily. "Bring him now!" A smile passed over the father's face. He went inside and returned with a small child. "Here is Mohammad," he said. "He is three years old." The soldiers were stunned, unable to speak.

In the confusion, Khāled broke free from his captors. He ran to his brother and held him close. The story took a gruesome turn: “This time you come with us and strike them with rocks too. Don’t be scared! Alright?” Mohammad nodded his head and said: “I too will come so that I can hit them with rocks.” At that moment, the Israeli officer slammed the butt of his rifle into Mohammad’s head and warm blood spilled onto Khāled’s hands (Fig. 1).¹

“The Palestinian Teacher” appeared halfway through the third-grade primer, in a corner of an Islamic Republic primary school curriculum, carefully gauged to solicit outrage from its young audience. With its stark depiction of malice highlighted by the soldiers’ almost cartoonish cruelty, the lesson traced for its readers a world of manifest evil in which the injustices suffered by the dispossessed, even by children such as the irrepressible Khāled and Mohammad, went unredeemed. A call to arms, Mohammad’s martyrdom prefigured the courage expected of Iran’s “children of the revolution” even as it darkly warned them of the fate that awaited those who would lose their land.

Their task was to bear witness to crimes unseen or ignored by much of the rest of the world. Iran after 1979 had proclaimed itself advocate and agent for the rescue and revival of the oppressed of the world, above all the community of believers, or *ummat al-Islām*. As such, the boundaries of Iran’s imagined community extended in the post-1979 era beyond the borders of the traditional “Guarded Domains of Iran” to include its Arab and Muslim neighbors, now conceived as both participants and beneficiaries of the Islamic Revolution.²

This new internationalist aspiration was in reality the latest iteration of an older nationalist project of Irāniyat, fostered by the late Qajar and Pahlavi states primarily in the early twentieth century and rooted in the distant traumas of the nineteenth century.³ In the new reverie on what it meant to be “truly” Iranian, the plight of the forlorn Arab served as symbol and reminder of the indispensability of preserving Iran’s sovereignty against foreign encroachment; the dismemberment of Lebanon and Palestine in the twentieth century was less an inspiration for global struggle than it was a contemporary reminder of the catastrophes of Golestan (1813) and Turkmenchai (1828), two early nineteenth-century Perso-Russian treaties that resulted in significant territorial losses for Qajar Iran in the Caucasus.⁴

Drawing upon three decades of postrevolutionary textbooks, this article traces the development of the Arab Muslim as a recurring character in the early elementary curriculum of the Islamic Republic, set against the historical context of Iranian modernization and state

¹ “The Palestinian Teacher,” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 133–35. All primary evidence presented in this article is based on original research carried out during 2008–2009 and 2013 in the archives of the Iranian Ministry of Education’s Organization for Educational Research and Planning (OERP). The archives include the entire collection of Persian primers covering grades one through three published between 1979 and 2009, as well as selections from late Pahlavi-era primers, grades two through five.

² The phrase “Guarded Domains of Iran” (*Mamālek-e mahruseh*) was originally coined during the early sixteenth century to describe the territorial domains of the Safavid kings, who fostered an Iranian national unity centered around the Persian language and literary corpus, and the Twelver Shi’i religion. Under Agha Mohammad Shah Qajar and his successors, the term again was used to legitimize the Qajar dynasty and to foster a newly emerging sense of Iranian nationalism. Originally stretching from Dagestan in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, defeat in war to Russian and English armies during the nineteenth century called into question the legitimacy of the Qajar monarchy and its claim to be the true defender of the Guarded Domains. Amanat, “Russian Intrusion,” 38.

³ Kashani-Sabet (“Fragile Frontiers”) observes that the concept of Irāniyat (“Iranianness,” or more simply “being Iranian”) existed long before the rise of modern nationalism in the nineteenth century, making the task of “imagining” the Iranian community less challenging than in other places. She writes, “The impulse to set apart things Iranian—land and language, culture and civilization—had old roots and simply found a new application and context in nationalism.”

⁴ The wars with Russia (1804–1813 and 1826–1828) remain prominent in the collective psyche of Iranians, many of whom can still recite the names of the territories lost to the tsarist regime more than two centuries ago; Amanat, “Russian Intrusion.” Monica Ringer details how political and social responses to the trauma of defeat laid the foundation for modern education in Iran in *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform*.



Fig. 1 - Colour online, B/W in print

FIGURE 1. "The Palestinian Teacher," *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dābestān* (Third-grade Persian), Tehran: Ministry of Education, 1386/2007.

formation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵ Whereas the Pahlavi state had portrayed the Arab as an abject figure incapable of redemption other than by the grace and intervention of Iranian civilization and culture, he was rendered merely pitiful by the

⁵ A useful summary of modern state formation as "the dynamic, historically informed, often contingent process by which states emerge in relation to societies" can be found in OECD "Concepts and Dilemmas," 13–14. See also Vu, "Studying the State."

Islamic educational system.⁶ Sympathy for the Arab by the postrevolutionary state in its primary school materials included a rebuke and an affirmation: Look at what has happened to the Arabs who were not able to defend their homes and their homeland, and look at what has *not* happened to us.⁷

As he has throughout Iran's modern history, the imagined Arab remains an object in constant need of rescue, stripped of any meaningful agency or subjectivity. The Islamic Republic of Iran's innovation was to place him within a narrative of *national* failure. Iran's strident advocacy on behalf of the region's dispossessed reveals itself to be ultimately inseparable from the Arab's inability to protect himself, or from Iran's deep-seated desire to demonstrate its superiority over its neighbors, a compensation for its own weakness in the world.⁸

Set against Arab suffering and defeat in the Islamic Republic's elementary textbooks are the accomplishments of American scientists and inventors who feature prominently in the postrevolutionary curriculum as sources of emulation for young readers. Star turns from Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, and Orville and Wilbur Wright invite a reconsideration of the role of the foreign Other in the construction of Iranian national identity, notably the expectation that the dispossessed constitute natural allies in Iran's ceaseless struggle against "the West."⁹

More than just primers, the Persian textbooks presented in this article provide young students with their first exposure to the ideology of the revolution and the official values of the Islamic Republic. These textbooks matter to the field because they contain what Mandana E. Limbert refers to as official "wish images," idealized projections manufactured by elites of the perfect (and obedient) members of society against which daily life can be measured.¹⁰

Unique among media in Iran, textbooks come with a guaranteed readership, making them an important source for understanding the shaping of Iranian historical consciousness among an increasingly literate population.¹¹ Textbooks more broadly serve as markers of Iran's participation in a universal modernity, a participation that takes place within the framework of a distinctive Iranian culture. By reproducing the most advanced and modern knowledge in the standardized format of a national curriculum, textbooks act as an instrument of indigenization and mediation "between the parochialism of national identity and the universalism of modern knowledge."¹²

The organization of a coherent and consistent ideological message in textbooks after 1979 has been haphazard, at best.¹³ Immediately following the revolution, and acting on their own

⁶ Vejdani has shown that Pahlavi-era textbooks consistently emphasized the abjectness of Arab (as opposed to Muslim) culture and behavior, a distinction that the postrevolutionary school system continues to preserve; Vejdani, *Making History*, especially 74–91. Islam, particularly as practiced by Iranians, remained a positive historical force in the prerevolutionary curriculum during the final years of the monarchy, when state secularization was at its height. See *Fārsī-ye dovom-e dabestān*, 1355/1976; *Fārsī-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1355/1976; *Fārsī-ye chāhārom-e dabestān*, 1355/1976; and *Fārsī-ye panjom-e dabestān*, 1355/1976.

⁷ Malekzadeh, "Schooled to Obey." The dissertation traces continuities between the memory of Qajar territorial losses and the centrality of national self-preservation to the Pahlavi and IRI projects of modernization and schooling; see especially chapters 1 and 4.

⁸ For a full-throated discussion of the depths and durability of Iranian contempt toward Arabs, including by the current regime, see Zia-Ebrahimi, *Emergence of Iranian Nationalism*. The belief that Arabs were uncivilized and barbaric before the advent of Islam was axiomatic for Morteza Motahhari and Ali Shariati, whose writings were foundational to the curriculum of the IRI school system. By contrast, both authors exulted in the possibilities of Islamic practice under the Iranians. Motahhari, *Khadamāt-e moteqābel-e Irān va Eslām*; Shariati, *Bāzshenāsi-e hoviat-e Irāni-Islami*.

⁹ Golnar Mehran's widely cited 1989 article, "Socialization of Schoolchildren in the Islamic Republic of Iran," refers to the "New Islamic Person" as the ultimate goal of the postrevolutionary curriculum. According to Mehran, this individual "hates the prerevolutionary regime, rejects any form of dependence on the West, mistrusts the non-Muslim world and is highly critical of Western ways, and sympathizes with all oppressed peoples, especially Muslims." Mehran, "Socialization," 49.

¹⁰ Limbert, "Oman."

¹¹ Vejdani, "Place of Islam."

¹² Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 98.

¹³ Systematic study of the internal politics of Iran's Islamic school system remains almost nonexistent, despite the presence of an expansive literature and understanding of factionalism under IRI rule. See "Structure No System: The

initiative, several groups within the nascent regime began to till the pedagogical soil in which a new school system could be sown. Their self-assigned task was to produce the goals and philosophy suitable for an Islamic education. With the Ministry of Education in disarray, these early efforts were confined to the Office of Investigations housed in the Organization for Educational Research and Planning, or OERP. OERP has deputy ministerial status in the Ministry of Education and is responsible for preparing, producing, and distributing textbooks. Although the head of the department is a political appointee, OERP has a reputation for being one of the more technocratic-minded and professional elements of the educational structure in Iran.

Work in the Office of Investigations stopped altogether with the absorption of groups into the newly resurrected Supreme Council of Education (SCE). The SCE was restored in early 1980 under the auspices of the governing Revolutionary Council after a nearly three-year hiatus.¹⁴ As an agency, the SCE fuses both legislative and executive functions. Its mandate is to devise the goals and curriculum appropriate for an Islamic society, as well as to implement educational policy. Importantly, as the ultimate legislative authority over matters of education, the SCE has the final word on the annual goals of the curriculum, although since 1984 any new major policy initiatives mounted by the SCE must first be approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, or SCCR.

Although this article focuses primarily on the Arab Other in the context of contemporary Iran, it points to future research on depictions of the Persianate in national settings other than Iran. If the Arab has an outsized presence in the curriculum of a purportedly post-nationalist, post-Persianate Islamic Republic, then what becomes of him when his story is told by other Persian speakers—the Tajik, the Afghan, the Uzbek—whose voices are notably absent in the Iranian curriculum? How do these countries reckon with their own Persianate pasts and how do they come to terms with the Iranian, whose contemporary descendants lay exclusive claim to the Persianate world? The question of who gets to be the inheritor of Persianate legacies ultimately rests on a fallacy.¹⁵ As Fani argues elsewhere, students of Iranian and Persianate studies would do well to step back and view nationalist projects transregionally—not to adjudicate which one is more historically authentic, but to critique the epistemic circle within which they all stand, whether it be in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, or Uzbekistan.¹⁶

The Immemorial Iran

The embrace of Iranian chauvinism is hardly to be expected from a curriculum and revolution whose leaders routinely, and quite loudly, condemn nationalism as conspiracy, an instrument of imperial rule designed to sow division within the developing world. The purpose of Islamic schooling is neither patriotism nor the preservation of sovereign borders but preparation of the public for the defense of the *ummah*. The nation-state, at best, plays a subordinate role in what is understood to be an endless struggle against oppression and injustice.¹⁷ For

Foundations of the Politicization of the Postrevolutionary School System (1979–1989),” in Malekzadeh, *Ambiguous Outcomes*. For a Persian-language account of the institutional challenges and failures of the postrevolutionary Ministry of Education, see Mohammad Rezaei, *Tahlili az zendegi-ye Ruzmarreh-ye dānesh āmuzeshi*. Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar provides a compelling account of polarization in Iran in *Religious Statecraft: The Politics of Islam in Iran*, an important update to Mehdi Moslem’s seminal work, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*.

¹⁴ The Supreme Council of Education was originally established in 1966. The Council met from the 1968 through 1977, after which it ceased activities. In its original incarnation the responsibilities of the SCE were limited to producing the goals and standards of the Ministry of Education and did not include the executive and legislative powers granted to it in the postrevolutionary period.

¹⁵ There is an unusual urgency to the matter that poisons discussion in the public sphere. See the following discussion over who “owns” Nowruz for a recent example: @CCAForum, March 13, 2022, <https://twitter.com/CCAForum/status/1503026326990643204>.

¹⁶ Fani, “Two Nations Find a Poet.”

¹⁷ Observers of Iran typically characterize the postrevolutionary educational system as an unblinking apparatus of the state, “an educational model atypical at the international level” in which “purification and [ideological] commitment take precedence over knowledge and skills”; Paivandi, *Discrimination and Intolerance*, 9. Patricia J. Higgins

stalwarts like the following high school principal interviewed in Tehran in 2008 by the sociologist Mohammad Rezaei, the denial of nationalist projects constitutes a profession of loyalty as well as a commitment to professional duty:

We especially condemn nationalism. Imam Khomeini held nationalism to be a source of division. We must not propagandize nationalism in the school. This would be like teaching racism. . . . Are we teaching the Koran? Do we start the morning assembly with the name of God? Do we have prayer in the morning? . . . We must not do anything that would lead to the flag taking the place of the Koran. It's not important whether or not there is a flag but the Koran must be present, *velāyāt* (guardianship) must be present, the Imams and the holy sites must be present.¹⁸

In truth, the rejection or acceptance of nationalism has not been an issue in modern Iran, before or after 1979. Religious and secular camps have not been “at two opposite extremes along a spectrum, with secularists propagating nationalist ideals and religious leaders opposing those ideals.”¹⁹ Although some ideologues claim to reject nationalism, Aghaie notes that “their actual writings and speeches relied heavily upon nationalist concepts” shared by their rivals.²⁰ These include assumptions about Iran’s primordial and organic character as a 2,500-year-old nation with an uninterrupted history that “looms out of an immemorial past and glides into a limitless future.”²¹

Official denunciations of nationalism have had, in any case, almost no impact on textbook content. Indeed, gaps between official talk and textbooks, rhetoric, and pedagogical practice are hardly a new phenomenon in modern Iran, as Farzin Vajdani’s research on the early history curriculum shows. Despite conventional belief that Pahlavi nationalist historians considered the introduction of Islam to Iran to be the source of backwardness, history textbooks throughout the twentieth century “neither ignored Islamic history nor claimed that Islam was the cause of Iranian decline.”²² Closer to the present day, there is a growing if nascent literature dedicated to tracing the presence of Iranian nationalism in educational design after 1979. This research demonstrates that Islamization of the curriculum since 1979 has not come at the expense of Iranian national identity but as its expression.²³

and Pirouz Shoar-Ghaffari write that a rigid hierarchy of educational needs comprises the formal ends of the school system, beginning with “religious and spiritual ones first, followed by scientific and cultural, social, political, and finally economic goals”; Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari, “Women’s Education,” 20.

¹⁸ Interviewed in Rezaei, *Tahlili az zendegi-ye Ruzmarreh-ye dānesh āmuzeshi*, 160.

¹⁹ Aghaie, “Islam and Nationalist Historiography,” 25. At the time of the principal’s remarks the curriculum contained numerous examples of nation-building exercises, including an extended lesson for third graders on the importance of the Islamic Republic’s flag, simply titled “Flag” (*Parcham*).

²⁰ Aghaie, “Islam and Nationalist Historiography,” 25. Earlier Aghaie writes, “Hence, nationalism is not, strictly speaking, an ideology or a single belief. Rather, it is essentially a discourse surrounding the idea of ‘nation.’ Within this discourse, the nation is defined and redefined in a contest between diverse political and social groups” (21). For a powerful account of this process in the experiences of Iran’s major ethnic minorities, see Elling, *Minorities in Iran*.

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 11–12. “No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind,” writes Anderson. The Islamic Republic, for all its lofty goals of establishing the greater *ummah*, is no different.

²² Vajdani, “Place of Islam,” 206. Vajdani notes that the bulk of Iranian history taught in school takes place *after* the arrival of Islam, a direct consequence of a nationalist logic that emphasizes the continuities of Iranian history, its “nationalist narratives of resilience” (210).

²³ The nationalism of the Islamic Republic as it is taught in the classroom remains woefully understudied. Little has changed since Amir Hossein Mirfakhraie observed in 2008 that “there has been no systematic research on how both Islamic ideology and non-Islamic discourses inform the construction of the ideal citizen in the school textbooks”; Mirfakhraie, “Curriculum Reform and Identity Politics,” 14. Notably, even scholars who center the nation–state emphasize its initial abandonment by the IRI. The revolution’s embrace and promotion of an Islamic-Iranian identity is typically described as a concession, made under duress. See Ansari, *Politics of Nationalism*, 1.

Textbooks as primary sources therefore present a powerful corrective to conventional thinking about education in postrevolutionary Iran. Far from being static, impermeable instruments of dogma and ideology, textbooks have been highly unstable, subject to the same forces of disruption that plague other social, cultural, and political realms in Iran.²⁴ Tracing curricular content over time as historical artifact reveals the massive gaps that exist between official rhetoric and formal practice, allowing researchers and analysts to better assess schooling's purpose and effects, as well as to elucidate how expressions of Iran's place in the world and engagements with its perceived Others may shift over time.

Modernity's Dilemma: Setting the Arab Apart

The 1979 Revolution did little to disrupt the belief that Iranians were a people assigned a unique destiny, if not by God, then by History. Nationalism remained "the determining ideology of modern Iran," the essential reference point "to which all competing ideologies have ultimately had to adhere, and within which most have been subsumed."²⁵ If there were a utopia to be found (or recovered) by the new Islamic order, it would be achieved by the formation of the Iranian nation, promoted through, not despite, religious precepts and values.²⁶ Salvation's path once again ran through Europe and North America, also the source of torments.²⁷ The trauma of military defeat and the subsequent loss of sovereignty over large swaths of territory in the early nineteenth century convinced Iranian reformers that the country could only be saved by adopting western technology and modes of government, a judgment largely shared by the leadership of the Islamic Republic.²⁸ Constituting a "dilemma of modernization," generations of nationalizing elites faced the difficult challenge of bringing development to Iran by importing foreign knowledge without sacrificing Iran's cultural identity.²⁹

Efforts by early Pahlavi reformers to localize modernity while remaining true to an "authentic" self corresponded with a concomitant desire to fix blame for Iran's degradation on the Arab invasion and conquest of Persia in the seventh century. Modern Iran would be defined by the concepts and knowledge imported from the West, but its national

²⁴ Malekzadeh, "Children without Childhood." For a comprehensive study of the internal dynamics of Iran's complex and dissonant political system, see Brumberg and Farhi, *Power and Change in Iran*.

²⁵ Ansari, *Politics of Nationalism*. He writes, "the notion that Iranians were somehow chosen had been reinforced not diminished by the Islamist narrative" (222).

²⁶ Islam was an expression of sovereign authenticity, of the "real" Iran, fulfilling a project already more than a century old at the time of the revolution. Sami Zubaïda disagrees, arguing that the Khomeinist project is unthinkable outside of the modern, western paradigm of the nation-state, but he allows only a superficial role for religion, describing it as an epiphenomenon, "sprayed on" the architecture of the state as a salve to the masses. Zubaïda, "Ideological Preconditions." For a more sympathetic reading of the compatibility of Islam with modernity, see Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse*.

²⁷ Inspired by similar reforms then underway in Egypt and Turkey, the Qajars under the direction of crown prince Abbas Mirza launched a series of military reforms known as the *Nezām-e jadid* (1803–1833).

²⁸ The current Leader has been quite consistent on this matter over the years. From 1985:

We are not against the process of getting raw materials from them. It should not be assumed that we reject the products of western culture and its scientific advance that are sometimes miraculous. Such dogmatism is not in line with Islamic views at all and we never follow this trend. We should design the building and it is not important where the raw, needed materials are procured. *However, these materials should fit the design.*

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, "Speech Made by His Excellency," emphasis added. See also Khamenei, "Tā che tasviram konand," in which he says, "*Shāgerdī bas ast!*" (Enough with being a student!).

²⁹ "Europe thus served as an important initial catalyst in considering the need to reform, a model of modernization, and at the same time, the specter of loss of territory and political autonomy that failure to reform would enable." From Ringer, "Negotiating Modernity," 41. Much of the intellectual labor that went into reconciling foreign knowledge with Iranian culture originally took place outside of Iran. For an account of the highly influential scene in Berlin, see Matin-Asgari, "Berlin Circle."

identity would be formed *against* the Arab, who represented negation, the absence of Iran itself.³⁰ The impulse to blame the Arab for Iran's decline quickly ran headlong into the imperative of historical continuity.³¹ The logic of modern nationalism dictated that there be an Iran that "has always been there," an unbroken presence from time immemorial. This was incompatible with the claim that the victory of the Muslim armies over the Sassanid empire represented a rupture in that historical timeline, marked by "silence" and loss.³²

Interwar educational planners found their way out of this intellectual thicket in part by reimagining Islam in civilizational terms, a phenomenon with origins outside of Iran but belonging to all of humanity. "Islam," Vejdani writes, "[has been] a positive historical force, one that highlighted the equality of believers, rather than the ethnic hierarchy that elevated Arabs over Iranians."³³ With the playing field leveled, the Iranian flourished, no longer deemed a victim of conquest but as the Islamic world's most vital and creative component.³⁴

The revolutionaries who took control of the Ministry of Education in the late winter of 1979 embraced their predecessors' approach. Islam was again separated from its origins as an "Arab" religion, done so in a way that would enable the ascendance of Iran while maintaining official commitments to pan-Islamism.³⁵ In postrevolutionary textbooks, patriotic stories appear alongside lessons in the content and practice of religious faith, as components—not rivals—of a shared national identity. Emerging from the pages is an authentic Iran, triumphant, that could rightfully claim its status as the first among equals.

First among Equals (But Iran Makes Everything Better)

The Iranian would first need to be made into the Arab's equal. This task falls to the third-grade lesson "What Is the Basis of Superiority?" (*Bartari be chist?*) Released with the initial wave of curricular revisions following the revolution, the lesson opens inside a mosque. There, the Prophet Mohammad and his companions are engaged in conversation. Suddenly, the Prophet's close friend and follower Salmān al-Fārsī arrives for worship. Mohammad smiles, pleased by this unexpected encounter. He beckons al-Fārsī, a Persian and one of the earliest non-Arab converts to Islam, to come sit next to him. The gesture is not well received by the others. One of Mohammad's companions loudly voices his objection. For him, al-Fārsī is beneath contempt: "Salmān is a Persian speaker and we are Arabs! He should not be included in our group nor should he sit alongside us. He should sit at a level below!"³⁶

The Prophet swiftly reprimands the individual, condemning his outburst with an impromptu sermon on the true nature of Islam: "Being a Persian (*fārs*) or an Arab," he exclaims, "is not a reason for thinking better or worse of a person. Neither our color nor ethnicity makes us wiser. Nothing save piety and faith makes us better."³⁷ Mohammad reminds those gathered there in the mosque that Islam is an experience without boundaries or limitations, available to all comers. "We Muslims know each other as equals and as

³⁰ Zia-Ebrahimi in *Emergence of Iranian Nationalism* coined the phrase "dislocative nationalism" to describe this phenomenon.

³¹ Vejdani, "Place of Islam."

³² Zarrinkub, *Do qarn-e sokut*; Ram, "Immemorial Iranian Nation."

³³ Vejdani, "Place of Islam," 211.

³⁴ In turn, Islam made Iran better, a point repeatedly emphasized by Motahhari and Shariati in their prerevolutionary writings. See Aghaie, "Islam and Nationalist Historiography."

³⁵ The overt ideological indoctrination at the heart of Iranian schooling, that is, the "Islamization" of school and society by the postrevolutionary government, generally follows patterns determined by the "rules of the game" associated with modern nationalism and state formation. Specifically, state leaders in Iran since the late nineteenth century have sought to inculcate through schooling an imagined, "authentic" national culture capable of binding state and society together. For an excellent discussion of the relationship between formal education and state efforts in Iran to create the nation, that "abstract social category or framework tying together state, society, and culture" see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 10.

³⁶ "What Is the Basis of Superiority?" in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1359/1980, 83.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

brothers. Accent and language do not separate us from one another. Where we live, our ethnicity, or our color must not separate us from one another.”³⁸

It would not have been lost on the students reading the story that Mohammad makes his oration on behalf of the only other named character in the story, and its only Iranian. As Persian speakers, as *Iranians*, these same pupils learn that they must never accept second-grade status within the *ummah*.³⁹ It is a pointed message, delivered with uncommon passion by the founder of the Islamic faith himself. The final paragraph steps outside of the story to address students directly through the narrative fourth wall:

As you can see from this important guidance, we Muslims know each other as equals, neither our accents nor our languages can separate us from one another. Where we live, our race and our color will not divide us. We do not count anything other than piety and faith (*taqvā va imān*) as sources of superiority.⁴⁰

From the story’s title to its pallid insistence that Persians be treated as equals, the story “What Is the Basis of Superiority?” reveals the insecurity of a revolution in its earliest days. Extraordinary even by the heightened passions of the postrevolutionary curriculum, it conveys an unmistakable message of defiance and dignity, staged behind an official line of Islamic solidarity and struggle. It is a line that invariably fails to hold, typically at the expense of Arab characters who soon tumble into ruin and loss.

Losing Their Religion

Loss, above all, of the land. Postrevolutionary textbooks from their first editions draw clear connections among worship, faith, and the possession of *mihan*, or homeland.⁴¹ These earthly bonds are affirmed by the story “Oh Iran, Oh My Homeland” (*Ey Irān, ey mihan-e man*), which

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The politics of language choice and identity is a source of considerable anxiety for the founders of the Islamic Republic. Khomeini delivered the following comments not long after the ratification of the Iranian Constitution in April of 1979:

Sometimes the word minorities is used to refer to people such as the Kurds, Lurs, Turks, Persian, Baluchis, and such. These people should not be called minorities, because this term assumes that there is a difference between these brothers. In Islam, such a difference has no place at all. There is no difference between Muslims who speak different languages, for instance, the Arabs, or Persians. It is very probable that such problems have been created by those who do not wish the Muslim countries to be united. . . . They create the issues of nationalism, of pan-Iranism, pan-Turkism, and such isms, which are contrary to Islamic doctrines. Their plan is to destroy Islam and the Islamic philosophy.

Cited in Atabaki, “Contesting Marginality,” 224. Atabaki reminds us that Iran’s 1979 Constitution binds the nation through Islam as well as Persian, the latter designated as the lingua franca of the country.

⁴⁰ “What Is the Basis of Superiority?” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1359/1980, 83. Indeed, faith in Islam has long been the gateway for Iranian superiority. The nationalist historian Abbas Iqbal, one of the most prominent intellectuals of the constitutional era and a founder of what became Iran’s modern educational system, attributed the cultural and political accomplishments during the Abbasid period to the prominence of Iranians, proclaiming that “the majority of the learned figures among the clerics, philosophers, and poets who wrote in Arabic during this period of Islamic civilization were Iranians”; Iqbal, *Dowreh-ye tārikh-e ‘omumi*, 125. Iqbal’s centering of Iranian excellence would be echoed a few decades later by (the ostensibly anti-nationalist and “chief ideologue” of the Islamic Revolution) Morteza Motahhari, who argued that Iranians contributed more to Islam than any other Muslim nation, including the Arabs; Motahhari, *Khadamāt-e motaqābel-e Irān va Eslām*, 79–84.

⁴¹ Kashani-Sabet argues that the shift from an unbounded Persian identity based on language to an Iranian identity defined by territoriality and firm borders was the direct consequence of the calamitous military defeats of the early nineteenth century. As she puts it, “Fear of disappearance from the world map led to a desire to protect and promote the guarded domains”; Kashani-Sabet, “Fragile Frontiers,” 227.

first appeared in 1979. The third-grade lesson delivers a full-throated defense of Iranian territory and soil as the source of national identity, one that is unambiguously Islamic:

Oh Iran, oh my glorious home. Your tall mountains are the symbol of the glory and dignity of your children. Your wide fields are symbols of your freedom and liberty. The rush of your rivers is a reminder of the shouts of freemen yelling “*Allahu akbar!*” Oh Iran, oh my glorious home! Oh land of the pure and brave, oh land of free Muslims. Oh, land of Islam and faith. I pledge allegiance to you.⁴²

This is a corporeal love, tied to the permanence of geography, consecrated by the blood of martyrs:

Oh Iran, oh my homeland! Oh Iran, my glorious home. I love you, the laughter of your children. The shouts of your youth, the clamor of your people, I love them all. Oh, glorious home, its pure soil colored by the blood of martyrs. I respect you. Each morning and night I kiss the red tulips that grow in your cemeteries.⁴³

There is the land, only the land, to be defended in ceaseless devotion against all enemies, foreign or domestic:

Oh Iran, oh my glorious home! Oh, land of the pure and brave, oh land of free Muslims. Oh, land of Islam and faith. I pledge allegiance to you, I strive with love for your development. I love the true faith of your free people and stand ready to assist them. With anger and hate I destroy your enemies.⁴⁴

The pervasive concern that Iranians might fail to defend their homeland animates the narrator’s loud defiance. To lose one’s country is to lose everything. The burden of statelessness ultimately falls not to the Iranian, but to the Palestinian Arab, whose torments are described in vivid detail in a series of tragic stories across the elementary school curriculum. “An Adolescent from Palestine” appears immediately after “Oh Iran, Oh My Homeland” in the third-grade primer. A rather pitiful scene opens the story. A young Palestinian boy, distraught, stands alone in a refugee camp. The story’s narrator, an Iranian of a similar age, attempts to initiate conversation and discover what is troubling the young Arab:

I went closer and sat next to him, but he didn’t notice, his heart seemed to be somewhere else. I greeted him and he replied in kind, but then returned back to his thoughts. “Brother! I see that you are upset . . . your sadness has made me upset also.” “Brother! I wish for you to tell me your troubles so that I can perhaps help you to lighten your load” (Fig. 2).⁴⁵

The Palestinian replies with a series of rhetorical questions that reveal the reasons for his silence:

He lifted his view from the ground and calmly looked at me and said: “Have you ever heard of someone being run out of their own home, taken by force by another and when the owner complains, his complaints are answered by bullets . . . ? Have you ever been in a classroom that has its roof cave in because of a cluster bomb? Have you ever heard of a hospital destroyed with the infirm still inside? Have you ever heard of dolls that bring death to children?”⁴⁶

⁴² “Oh Iran, Oh My Homeland,” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1359/1980, 91.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 91–92.

⁴⁵ “An Adolescent from Palestine,” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1359/1980, 97.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 97–98.



Fig. 2 - Colour online, B/W in print

FIGURE 2. “An Adolescent from Palestine,” *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān* (Third-grade Persian), Tehran: Ministry of Education, 1359/1980.

The details of the occupation are graphic and unsparing. There are no safe places or activities available to the narrator: the classroom, hospital, and even children’s toys are potential sources of death and devastation. The Palestinian’s only hope lies with those willing to come to the aid and rescue of his people. Bearing witness, the young Iranian proclaims his determination to participate in the struggle:

Brother! These are the sufferings that weigh on our hearts and on the hearts of all free people everywhere and I will help my triumphant and Muslim people save the house and homeland of my comrades.⁴⁷

The narrator addresses his audience directly in the final sentence, breaking the fourth wall between the lesson and the reader to issue a final challenge: “And you brother! How will you remember us while we are on this path?”⁴⁸

“An Adolescent from Palestine” (*Nowjavāni az felestin*) received a dramatic makeover in the late 1980s. No longer a passive victim, the story’s authors transformed the boy into a warrior by replacing the image of a humble refugee languishing in a desert camp with one of an armed militant prepared for battle. Now instead of casting his eyes to the ground, the young man looks directly in the direction of his enemy with a rising sun in the background, presumably signifying a day that will bring him and his people closer to victory. Despite his young age, the young Palestinian has already seen and experienced more than his share of the violence. Written in a dispassionate third-person narrative, and with his Kalashnikov at his side, he details all the horrors that occurred after the Israelis drove his family out of its home:

⁴⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 98.

He remembered incredibly bitter days. Days in which the Israeli executioners had forced them to leave their homes, forced out by bullets and fiery bombs. Anyone who dared to complain was answered with a hail of bullets. . . . Days in which the enemy's bombers had reduced the camps to dirt and blood, the tents shot full of holes. Refugee camps whose population was filled mostly with brave, innocent Muslims, who ended up as martyrs. . . . He remembered these bitter days along with hundreds of other bitter days and held his rifle even tighter.⁴⁹

Denied a proper childhood, the Palestinian's only joys in life have been "the sweet days of resistance and struggle," the memories of which drew "a beautiful smile across his face."⁵⁰ Inspiring audiences to bear witness is no longer enough. The last version of the lesson before its removal in the 1990s ends with the Palestinian leaving for the front, taking up arms and dispensing with asking for aid from his Iranian readers. Its message to the reader is clear: Muslims must take action to defend themselves.

Yet, it is weakness that has put the Palestinian in this position, his people's future put at risk by their loss of a homeland. The purpose remains *national* emancipation. After all, the goal is not to eliminate Israel so that the Palestinians can become part of the community of Muslims—they already are a part of the *ummah*. The aim is to push the Israelis out to restore the Palestinian homeland. A variation on the theme of dispossession is found in the second-grade primer, where Israel's occupation again provides the crucible for transformation. Presented in the first-person singular, "Letter from a Displaced Child" (*Nāmeḥ'i az yek kudak-e āvāreh*) is written from the perspective of a young Palestinian refugee, marooned in a refugee camp in southern Lebanon.

"Do you know who we are?" he asks the reader. "You and I are brothers. I am a Palestinian, we are Palestinian-Muslim children."⁵¹ Bound together in brotherhood by their religion and a shared enemy, "the enemy of all free peoples everywhere," the unnamed narrator goes on to draw out the critical difference between himself and his Iranian counterpart, noting:

The name of our country is Palestine and the name of your country is Iran. You live in your own country and in your own home. But we are displaced in the deserts. The enemy has destroyed our home and homeland.⁵²

The young orphan explains that since "your revolution became victorious," Israel has become frightened. Unable or too afraid to bring the fight to Iran, Israel has responded by tormenting the much weaker Palestinian people. That Iran is both the remedy and source of the orphan's troubles is left unacknowledged. Only through struggle can there be hope of ever being free again, but emancipation cannot be achieved alone. Once again, the text calls upon its readers, the children of Iran, to consider how they might participate and engage with such a struggle. In doing so, "Letter from a Displaced Child" appears to present a powerful alternative to nationalism, a call to stand in solidarity and purpose as Muslims against a terrifying enemy.

Iranians nonetheless receive a dispensation from the fight. In the postrevolutionary reimagining of what it means to be Islamic-Iranian, it is always the vanquished Arab, never the defeated Persian, who is portrayed in the pages of the textbooks. The Arab is not an ally. He is a warning: *The Palestinian has no home because he has no country*. Accordingly, the pretense that "Letter from a Displaced Child" is about the *ummah* disappears in the 1982 edition of the primer. A ward of the Iranian struggle, the Palestinian orphan attributes his people's uprising to "the victory of *your* Islamic Revolution with the leadership of Imam Khomeini," in effect inverting the message of universalism found in the

⁴⁹ "An Adolescent from Palestine," in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1366/1987, 137.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁵¹ "Letter from a Displaced Child," in *Fārsi-ye dovom-e dabestān*, 1358/1979, 48.

⁵² *Ibid.*

earlier lesson, “What Is the Basis of Superiority?”⁵³ The experience of shared suffering forms the nation, according to Motahhari, but in the textbooks it is almost always the Arab and his children who must struggle.⁵⁴ The Iranian only bears witness.

And then they were gone. By the late 1990s nearly all of the lessons on militant resistance that had defined so much of the early-childhood curriculum had been removed, replaced by an array of child-centered stories more concerned with replicating good habits and hygiene than with the destruction of Israel.⁵⁵ Along with them went the Arab, forlorn or otherwise.⁵⁶ The removal of the dispossessed Arab from the curriculum can be understood as evidence of a revolution increasingly confident of its ability to protect and preserve itself, even as it reflected the preferences of an Iranian population that had moved on without much fanfare from the dual-cultures debates of the past.⁵⁷ With the successful defense of Iranian territory during eight brutal years of war with Iraq, Iran’s leadership could reasonably claim to be the first regime in two hundred years to “not lose an inch of Iranian soil.”⁵⁸

Vigilance against enemies, real or imagined, had lost its urgency in a context where the immediate priority of most students was to find a job.⁵⁹ As merit and the credentialing provided by secondary and postsecondary education became increasingly tied to professional success in the postwar period, Iranian families turned to schooling to get their children into college, not the afterlife.⁶⁰ All roads led to the university and the possession of credentials, understood to be indispensable to success in the job and marriage markets. A school system once vaunted as an ideological apparatus in the service of the state had by the end of the twentieth century become a private resource for the social and economic advancement of ordinary families and their children.⁶¹

The variability of textbook portrayals of the Arab Other punctures the persistent myth that the Islamic Republic of Iran deploys curricular materials solely as extensions of an ideological state apparatus. The movement away from militant self-defense and toward a greater emphasis on meritocratic achievement anticipates the rise of the technocratic turn in Iranian politics after the death of Khomeini in 1989, a transition from an outer to inner jihad, so to speak, in which revolutionary morality combined with the pursuit of knowledge and expertise. Interestingly, changes in curricular tone and content have historically been out of sync with political developments outside of the classroom, suggesting that they were produced in response to the demands and expectations of parents, teachers, and students.⁶²

⁵³ Ibid., 16, emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Motahhari, *Khadamāt-e moteqābel-e Irān va Eslām*, 24.

⁵⁵ The first-grade primer was the earliest to change. The 1989 edition, for example, devotes its back cover to a message about hygiene. Bubbles rise from an oversized bar of soap, transforming into flowers as they move out of the frame. We see a child’s hands washing with soap under water coming out of a faucet. The accompanying message reads, “Children: If you want to become sick less often, use more soap when washing.”

⁵⁶ Arnon Groiss highlights “The Palestinian Teacher” in his overheated 2007 survey of Iranian textbooks, arguing that the postrevolutionary curriculum successfully bred intolerance toward minorities and women and instilled “in the souls of school students, especially in the higher grades, feelings of hatred” toward non-Muslims in anticipation of an eschatological struggle between “the forces of Good and Evil which is to culminate in the reappearance of the . . . Hidden Imam”; Groiss, “Iranian Textbooks.”

⁵⁷ Marashi’s *Nationalizing Iran* describes an unresolved “dual-cultures problem” (i.e., the pre-Islamic versus Islamic identities of Iran).

⁵⁸ “In times before the Islamic Republic, including the Ghajar [sic] and Pahlavi eras, some parts of Iranian soil were separated off. After the Islamic Revolution, Iranian youth didn’t allow even an inch of Iranian soil to be separated from Iran. #StrongIRAN.” @khamenei_ir, Twitter, February 10, 2020, 10:45 a.m., https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1226940353531478017?lang=en.

⁵⁹ Salehi-Isfahani, “Iran’s Third Development Plan.”

⁶⁰ With university admission rates historically at 10 percent or lower well into the 2000s, it is debatable which of the two was more difficult to obtain; Malekzadeh, “New Business.”

⁶¹ Rezaei, *Tahlili az zendegi-ye ruzmarreh-ye dānesh āmuzeshi*.

⁶² Although portrayals of forlorn Arabs fell from the pages of the curriculum, they did so just before the rise and consolidation of technocratic politics during Rafsanjani’s first term in office as president. Conversely, textbook content was its most strident not in the early years after the revolution, as might be expected, but toward the end of the

Learning to Fly: Western Sources of Emulation

Tales of scientific discovery and accomplishment provide the counterfactual to Arab lives of misery, as the possibilities denied to the Palestinian are made manifest by the achievements of American inventors and scientists. If the tragedy of the Palestinian boy Khāled and his family referenced at the outset of this article is to be avoided at all costs, then the adventures of American aviators, scientists, and inventors are lives to be pursued, available for the taking. Western achievement in science and technology belongs to all of humanity as proof of God's favor and presence. Science becomes not only a civilizational gift, but a righteous endeavor, the expression of virtue available to all regardless of national origin or religious belief.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the series of lessons dedicated to tracing the origins of human flight. The saga begins in the second-grade primer. "Feather and Wing" (*Par va bāl*) opens with the wonderment of Āzādeh, who expresses to her companion 'Ali her longing to join in flight the birds she sees every day in her yard. "Oh how I wish that God had given me wings and feathers so that I might fly in the sky!" she cries out.⁶³ 'Ali assures Āzādeh that she can, that there is nothing stopping her from doing so. The seemingly miraculous is within her reach. "How?" asks an incredulous Āzādeh. "God has given us feathers and wings," replies 'Ali. "Our ideas are our feathers and wings. Others, who like you desired to fly, used their ideas to invent the airplane."⁶⁴ All humans possess reason, granted (*āfarid*) by God. The capacity for flight is the birthright of all humans, a provision of God's grace. Flight has a heavenly source, but it is unrelenting human effort that brings it into being, capacities well within the reach of all individuals.

Subsequent stories make no effort to conceal the origins of the first manned flights, described in detail across a two-part lesson in the third-grade primer. One of the few holdovers from the Pahlavi-era curriculum, "The Story of Flight" (*Dāstān-e parvāz*), begins with ambition, born of the native curiosity of humans. "Since ancient times humans have desired to fly," the story reads. "They wanted to fly in the beautiful blue sky, to climb higher than the eagles and to soar through the clouds." Though many "have made great efforts and sacrifices in order to reach this ambition," it would be a German who would get there first:

One hundred years ago, in a corner of the country of Germany, a young man dreamed of flying. His name was "Otto." Otto paid very close attention to the broad wings of birds. Otto said to himself: "If I can build a large and powerful wing, I can fly just like the birds." He went to work, experimenting and building wings but couldn't fly with any of them. Otto didn't give up hope nor did he stop trying.⁶⁵

Otto persisted until he prevailed, finally achieving his dream of flight using a homemade glider. He went on to make multiple trips, until he tragically died in an accident. Years later Otto's story caught the imagination of two brothers and bike mechanics from Ohio:

Wilbur Wright was a bright and studious young man. One day, while playing, he fell and broke his bones and so was forced to stay home for several years. He read many books during this time of idleness. By chance he came across the story of Otto and his experiments. After reading these stories Wilbur Wright decided to follow in his path. With the help of his brother, Orville, he built wings with which he could safely land from a great height. Not long after this these two American brothers began to think about building a machine for flying (Fig. 3).⁶⁶

1980s, when lessons suddenly took on a harsher tone of Islamization. See "Reading *Baba Ab Dad* in Tehran: The Development of Religion, Politics, and Citizenship in Postrevolutionary Iranian Primers, 1979–2008," in Malekzadeh, *Ambiguous Outcomes*.

⁶³ "Feather and Wing," in *Fārsi-ye dovom-e dabestān*, 1358/1979, 101.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 101–2.

⁶⁵ "The Story of Flight: The Human Bird," in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1359/1980, 73–74.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 79–80.



Fig. 3 - Colour online, B/W in print

FIGURE 3. “The Story of Flight Part Two: The First Airplane,” *Farsi-ye sevom-e dabestān* (Third-grade Persian), Tehran: Ministry of Education, 1359/1980.

Three years of experimentation and effort lead to the grassy bluffs of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and the first manned flight. The brothers invited their loved ones to bear witness to this incredible historical event:

The flying machine turned on. Inside the two brothers sat with happiness and excitement. Suddenly the plane took off from the ground and began to fly. The flight lasted 38 minutes. They returned to their happy friends, and after landing the plane safely, Wilbur stepped out with pride.⁶⁷

Wilbur and Orville went on to establish the first airplane factory, laying the foundation for commercial flight, and beyond. “Scientists, after great effort,” the lesson concludes, “built machines that could carry humans to the moon and land there. Scientists are once again seeking ways to send humans further into space and to other planets.”⁶⁸ As with the Prophet’s admonitions in “What Is the Basis of Superiority?” the Wright brothers’ place of birth is recognized in “The Story of Flight” but ultimately set aside as unimportant. The invention of the airplane is not bound by origin or geography, but was made common to humanity, a gift to be shared without prejudice or limitation.

A Revolution in Values

Education makes the achievement of such civilizational gifts possible by delivering knowledge “that was both practical (scientific) and ethical—the improvement of manners in

⁶⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

order to attain a civilized state.”⁶⁹ The western scientist, valued for the utility of his contributions to humanity, is invariably cast as a model of righteous behavior. Already a motif in the 1980s, this became a more prominent and routinized feature by the late 1990s, when a revamp of the textbook design introduced a more expansive morality to the curriculum.⁷⁰

Thus, in the third-grade lesson “Hello, Mr. Bell” (*Salām, āqā-ye Bel*) a teacher explains to her students that the inventor of the telephone Alexander Graham Bell began his career as a teacher of deaf children. The telephone was created almost by accident, a by-product of Bell’s desire to devise an instrument to test his students’ hearing. As they did with their chronicle of aviation and flight, the authors take care to place the special genius of Bell within reach of its readers.⁷¹ The story of the telephone is one of improvement. From the original rudimentary device to mobile phones, each advance builds on the last, a linear path of progress that any person, or nation, can join.⁷²

Whereas “Hello, Mr. Bell” appears in the “Science and Scientist” section of the revised third-grade primer, righteous action earns a young Thomas Edison a spot under the “Individual and Social Morality” section. A companion to the lesson “The Sacrificers” (*Fadākārān*), “An Enlightened Thought” (*Fekr-e rowshan*) introduces us to an eight-year-old Thomas Edison, whose accomplishments are still far in the future, testing and measuring an array of instruments and devices in his mother’s basement.⁷³ Young Edison exhibits the persistence and diligence that would make him famous later in life, working well into the afternoon on his experiments. Only when night falls and the room is too dark to see does he abandon his work. On one of those nights Edison calls up to his mother but receives no reply. Worried, he looks through their darkened home, distraught. Eventually he locates her in a far bedroom, stretched out on a bed in immense pain (Fig. 4).

Edison runs to fetch a doctor, who delivers grave news. His mother requires an operation immediately. Any delay will put her life at risk. With tears in his eyes, Edison beseeches the doctor to begin the procedure right away. “Then why are you waiting? Hurry up!”⁷⁴ The doctor replies that it is too dark. “The light in this home is not enough. I can’t operate with one or two candles. We need more light.”⁷⁵ Desperate to help his mother survive the night, and at his lowest point, Edison finds inspiration:

Thomas’s tears were falling. He didn’t know how he could help his mother. Sadness had gripped the entire house, little by little the pain gripped his mother until she was close to passing out. Thomas thought and suddenly shouted: “I got it! I found a way!”

He ran quickly to the basement. He grabbed every candle there was. He also looked in all of the rooms of the house and wherever he saw a candle, he grabbed it. Then he went to fetch the big mirror of their home. Slowly, slowly he brought the mirror next to his

⁶⁹ Ansari, “Taqizadeh and European Civilisation,” 48.

⁷⁰ Part of a renewed effort in the late 1990s to bring “fundamental change” to what had been an ad hoc textbook regime, the standardization of textbook design brought a more deliberate approach to classroom instruction. Lessons were now divided into one of eight sections, presented in the following order: “Institutions” (*Nahād-ha*), “Hygiene” (*Behdāsh*), “Individual and Social Morality” (*Akhilāq-e fardī va ejtemā’ī*), “Science and Scientists” (*Dānesh va dāneshmandān*), “Religion” (*Din*), “Nation and Homeland” (*Melli va mihani*), “Nature” (*Tabi’at*), and “Art and Literature” (*Honar va adab*).

⁷¹ “Hello, Mr. Bell,” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 88–89.

⁷² Kids, as always, are a bit more practical in their admiration of Bell’s invention. “Mr. Bell, if you hadn’t invented the telephone,” says one student, “we would have wasted a lot of our time”; *Ibid.*, 89–90.

⁷³ A story of national heroes who risked their lives in service to others, “The Sacrificers” includes the well-known story of Mohammad Hoseyn Fahmideh who, as a ten-year-old volunteer in the war with Iraq, sacrificed his life by throwing himself under an enemy tank; literally, Edison is an “enlightened thinker.” The title of the lesson, *Fekr-e rowshan*, plays on Edison’s fame as the inventor of the light bulb, *rowshan* being the Persian word for “illuminated” as well as the root of the word *rowshanfekr* or “intellectual,” literally “enlightened” or “illuminated thinker” in English.

⁷⁴ “An Enlightened Thought,” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 66.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*



Fig. 4 - Colour online, B/W in print

FIGURE 4. “An Enlightened Thought,” *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān* (Third-grade Persian), Tehran: Ministry of Education, 1386/2007.

mother’s room. He asked the doctor to help him put the mirror on the table. Together they put all the candles on the table in front of the mirror and lit them. The room became drenched, bathed in light. The doctor smiled and said, “Excellent my son, you are very clever.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ibid., 66–67.

Edison then enters into prayer: “While the doctor was busy with the operation, Edison sat in the corner and lifted his tiny hands towards the sky and asked almighty God to save his mother from pain and sickness.”⁷⁷ Edison’s wit and quick thinking anticipates the future inventor, but it is his grace and humility that carries the day, his mother’s rescue an affirmation of his faith and its reward. The curriculum once again privileges the ethical dimensions of creativity and discovery over technical ability and accomplishment. Knowledge can be lost or misused by nations, but the goodness of an eight-year-old boy who sacrifices his own safety for others, or of a teacher committed to serving deaf children, is forever.

“Let [the Westerners] go to Mars or anywhere they wish,” Khomeini famously proclaimed in Najaf in 1970, “they are still backward in the sphere of securing happiness to man, backward in spreading moral virtues, and backward in creating a psychological and spiritual progress similar to the material progress.”⁷⁸ The many stories of foreign achievement found in the curriculum undermine this conceit, the convention that although Westerners are adept at technology they continue to be hopelessly incapable of possessing the virtue needed to use their knowledge in a worthy fashion.⁷⁹ We see once more the revelatory power of textbooks as primary sources. Rather than mechanically reproducing an official line of unwavering hostility to the West, the curriculum shows the revolutionary state’s message to be much more nuanced than the heated rhetoric of its leaders might lead us to expect. Characters like Bell and the young Edison, by modeling righteous behavior, in fact serve as stand-ins for the ideal Islamic-Iranian citizen.⁸⁰

That the two inventors are neither Islamic nor Iranian makes no difference. In the same way that the textbooks dispensed with the Arab origins of Islam, the framing of Western science and technology as free-floating civilizational phenomena, unattached to ethnic or national origins, enables state planners to reconcile the urgent need for outside knowledge, which Iranian leaders have historically pursued with great ambivalence, with the imperative to preserve the country’s “authentic” culture.⁸¹ Nothing is lost by the inclusion of the outsider’s expertise, so long as it is rendered God-given, and where possible, Iranian in origin.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁷⁸ Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, 262.

⁷⁹ According to Khamanei, Americans are not only lacking in virtue, in their jealousy they will do whatever it takes to prevent Iranians from putting an end to their monopoly on science:

Today, the Islamic Republic has raised the flag of justice and is determined to confront oppression and defend noble human values. Now if this system with such lofty ideals leads its nation to the peak of scientific progress, certainly the interests of the world’s expansionist and domineering powers will be threatened. . . . Considering this reality, we should make every effort to achieve scientific progress. But it should be noted that scientific progress will not be attained through imitation. It will be accomplished through initiative, innovation, originality, and the opening of new frontiers in science.

Khamanei, “Leader’s Address.”

⁸⁰ In a follow-up exercise to the lesson on Edison, students are asked, “If you were in Thomas Edison’s place, what would you have done?” “An Enlightened Thought,” in *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 68.

⁸¹ Skepticism of the benefits of Western influence is hardly limited to the postrevolutionary period in modern Iran. Menashri relates the following lament from Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1930:

It would be much better to educate [our students] here in the country where they are going to live, and with whose progress they must inevitably be concerned. But we do not yet have the necessary machinery . . . I don’t want to turn the Persian into a bad copy of a European. That is not necessary, for he has [a] mighty tradition behind him.

Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*, 106.

⁸² It is not by accident that the story of the Iranian philosopher and scientist, Abu Ali Sinna, one of the most important figures from the Islamic Golden Age, appears in both the prerevolutionary and postrevolutionary third-grade primers, with little change. The lesson credits his eleventh-century medical treatises as foundational to

Conclusion: Eternal Iran Valorized; the Persianate Subdued

The continuity of Irānīyat has always been premised on the fiction that it is the outsider who needs changing and reform. The seduction of the foreign invader continues to be one of Iran's most enduring tropes, used over the centuries by regimes and reformers alike to elide the memory of loss. Iranians take solace in their national permanence, in the enduring belief that no matter the calamity or the circumstances, their culture will eventually subdue and transform the invading foreigner.⁸³ The ancient Greeks, the conquering Mongols and Turkmen tribes, and the modern British, each in turn became better because they became Iranian.⁸⁴ All except the Arab, who finds no transformation in his encounter with Iran, a country now serving as his advocate and protector. The Arab remains abject, an object apart, a permanent warning against loss. For the Arab there is no salvation, no rescue.

But what of the Persianate? With an event like the 1979 Revolution often described and understood as a complete break with the past, what space is there for the Persianate in post-revolutionary Iran? If we assume that the modern period is not necessarily post-Persianate, as many of the contributors to this volume and others insist, what remains of the Persianate in Iran's postrevolutionary context?⁸⁵ After all, the Islamic Republic's official adherence to a set of universal values, shared in a common idiom by diverse populations spread across vast distances and decoupled from the logic of "one land, one nation, one language," arguably places contemporary Iran closer to the accounts of the Persianate in the twentieth century outlined in this volume than to the high modernism of the Pahlavi state or even the late-imperial model of rule so haphazardly adopted by the Qajar dynasty in its final years.⁸⁶

Despite revolutionary change, echoes of the Persianate frame remain, transposed to the present and made—like Islam and the wonders of science—Iranian. The Persianate, that sprawling, interconnected ecumene where a Persian speaker with the proper training and manners could live and travel from Sarajevo to western China, was never entirely removed from the postrevolutionary curriculum but reduced and reorganized to fit within the sovereign boundaries of a modern, Islamic Iran. No better example may be seen than in the treatment of the poet Ferdowsi in the early curriculum. Despite the fact that Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeḥ* was circulated and emulated across the Persianate world and in multiple languages, the poet is restricted to being an icon and savior of the Persian language in postrevolutionary textbooks for second graders in the Islamic Republic.

Their school year culminates with a visit to the mausoleum of Ferdowsi, experienced through the primer lesson "Ferdowsi." The story is presented as a family's memory of visiting the poet's tomb and memorial, albeit as an afterthought to the more important pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Reza.⁸⁷ "Last year I went with my father, mother, and sister on a pilgrimage to Imam Reza in Mashhad. My father said: "Near Mashhad there is the ancient city of Tus and the tomb of Ferdowsi, the great poet of Iran" (Fig. 5).⁸⁸

modern medicine, and so important that medical schools around the world continue to use them to this day; "Abu Ali Sinnā," in *Fārsī-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1355/1976; "Abu Ali Sinnā, Dāneshmand-e Bozorg-e Irān," in *Fārsī-ye sevom-e dabestān*, 1365/1986.

⁸³ Schirazi, *Irānīyat, mellīyat, qowmīyat*.

⁸⁴ Ram, "Immemorial Iranian Nation."

⁸⁵ Kia and Marashi, "After the Persianate." The potency of the Persianate turn, and indeed of much recent historical writing on modern Iran, has been in their transgressions, against not only conventions of periodization but also the material, spatial, and political boundaries separating the "premodern" from the "modern" and Iran from the rest of the Persian-speaking world.

⁸⁶ For discussion of the late-imperial model, see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*. "High modernism" is discussed in Scott, *Seeing Like a State*. Soleimani and Mohammadpour discuss the imposition of Persian language policy under Pahlavi rule in "Can Non-Persians Speak?"

⁸⁷ The eighth Shī'ī Imam and the only one to be buried within the borders of Iran.

⁸⁸ Well into the nineteenth century, nearly a thousand years after the publication of the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, no account of Ferdowsi associated the poet or his work with Iran. He was, Fani writes, "merely a poet from Tus"; Fani, "Two Nations Find a Poet."



FIGURE 5. "Ferdowsi," *Fārsi-ye sevom-e dabestān* (Third-grade Persian), Tehran: Ministry of Education, 1386/2007.

Inspired by the convenience of proximity, the father suggests that the family make the trip. "It would be good to go and visit there as well," he advises the family.⁸⁹

With everything in its right place and in the right sequence, the family finishes their pilgrimage (*ziyārat*) at the golden-domed mausoleum, venturing out to Tus after several days. When they finally arrive at the site, they encounter large crowds already gathered around Ferdowsi's tomb, pilgrims of another sort.⁹⁰ The family joins the gathering. A tour guide leads them around the complex, offering up familiar tropes and measures of Ferdowsi's greatness and importance, including that "Ferdowsi labored for thirty years before finishing his book, the *Shāhnāmeḥ*."⁹¹

The story's narrator—"Ferdowsi" is one of the very few lessons where it is unclear whether a boy or girl is telling the story—asks the father, "What kind of book was the *Shāhnāmeḥ*?" The father replies, "The *Shāhnāmeḥ* is a great book in whose stories we can read and learn about the great heroes (*pahlavān*) of Iran." The father continues, replicating in a more intimate form the lessons that the fatherland (*mihan*) gives to its citizens: "All of the stories of the *Shāhnāmeḥ* are written in verse. Just as you heard [from the tour guide], Ferdowsi worked for thirty years to collect these stories and to put them into verse so that the Persian language, the same language that we speak today, might survive."⁹² Ferdowsi's importance is in the language and the people he preserved. Without Persian, there would be no Iran.⁹³

⁸⁹ "Ferdowsi," in *Fārsi-ye dovom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 158.

⁹⁰ As Grigor has shown, this practice of pilgrimage was an invention of early Pahlavi nationalism that shaped the building of Ferdowsi's mausoleum as a site of national memory and cultural heritage; Grigor, *Building Iran*.

⁹¹ "Ferdowsi," in *Fārsi-ye dovom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 159.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 160.

⁹³ Left unsaid is the conceit that Ferdowsi "saved" Persian, and by extension Iran, from the hegemony of the Arabic language. Ferdowsi's reputation as the "savior" of Iranian culture and identity extends to coverage in

The remainder of the lesson consists of poetry and a father's promise. Mashhad and the pilgrimage to Imam Reza's shrine already a fading memory, the two agree to continue learning together about the *Shāhnāme* and its many heroes and legends and tragedies. What began as a one-off visit has become a lifetime endeavor. "Today I know the stories [from the *Shāhnāme*] and I derive great pleasure hearing them repeated over and over again."⁹⁴ The curriculum had come full circle, the lessons of "What Is the Basis of Superiority?" undone. The same Persian language that had been dismissed by the Prophet as a threat to Islamic unity in his defense of Salmān al-Fārsī was now proof of belonging.⁹⁵ If the figure of al-Fārsī—a Persian speaker among early Arabic-speaking Muslims—was meant to convey Iran's unsettled belonging in the Islamic world of the post-1979 order, then Ferdowsi is an embodiment of the assuredness of Persian cultural and linguistic superiority thirty years later.

The Persianate does not seem to persist in the Islamic Republic period as a dominating framework, at least not in primary school textbooks, and certainly not in the ways that nationalism does. But understanding what civilizational ethos replaced it, under what conditions and when, remains an important endeavor to which educational materials may help provide some clarity, whether those understandings come from the Pahlavi era or from corners and spaces of the Islamic Republic left unexplored here. If the stories of Khāled, Edison, and al-Fārsī teach us anything, it is that educational materials are able to narrate a nation's insecurities and triumphs as they change over time. Tracking down that ethos, finding its narrative threads, and tying them together into a coherent story of pedagogy may reveal that the Persianate finds expression elsewhere and in unexpected ways.

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English-language and non-Iranian media. See, for example, Inskip, "Abolqasem Ferdowsi"; and Bekhrad, "The Book of Kings." For a critical analysis of the *Shāhnāme* as a purely Iranian (as opposed to a transnational) text, see Shams, Zarkar, and Baghoolizadeh, "Ferdowsi's Legacy."

⁹⁴ "Ferdowsi," in *Fārsī-ye dovom-e dabestān*, 1386/2007, 160.

⁹⁵ Ferdowsi embodied the spirit (*ruh*) of the Iranian people even as he transcended Iran. Ferdowsi may be "physically bound to connections with Iranianness (Irānīyat)," Mohammad 'Ali Foroughi observed in a speech delivered at the millennium celebrations of the great poet's birth, held at Tehran's *Dār al-Fanun* in 1934, but he is "spiritually a child of humanity or if I may say, a father of humanity"; Fani, "Two Nations Find a Poet." See also Sādiq, *Ketāb-e hezāre-ye Ferdowsi*.

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ARTICLE

Marche Triomphale: A Forgotten Musical Tract in Qajar-European Encounters

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Abstract

This article introduces Julius Heise's *Marche Triomphale* which reveals a history that was eliminated during the nineteenth century race theory publications. Beginning with an account of Iranians' encounters with European military music, this article provides a brief history of Iranian military bands in European style, or the bands of *muzikānchiān*. It then addresses racial motivations behind a short account on Iranian music in 1885 by Victor Advielle, a French administrator. Arthur de Gobineau's race theories were fashionable in nineteenth century Europe, and Victor Advielle used his fellow Artesian, Alfred Lemaire, to prove their racial superiority. Through Advielle's account, Lemaire became the main figure of European music in Iran in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The article proceeds with biographical information on two European musicians, Marco Brambilla (d.1867 in Tehran) and Julius Heise (d.1870 in Tehran), and uncovers the earliest known piece published for the bands of *muzikānchiān*: *Marche Triomphale, À Sa Majesté Impériale Nassir-Ed-Din Shah Kadjar de Perse*.

Keywords: Marco Brambilla; Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau; Julius Heise; Iranian music; Alfred Lemaire; military music; race theory; Nāsereddin Shah Qajar; Johann Strauss

The history of Iranian military bands following European style, or the bands of *muzikānchiān*, is centered around a French musician, Alfred Jean Baptiste Lemaire (1842–1907). The performances of these bands, as well as a whole repertoire of European-Iranian musical encounters, have remained unknown to us not only because of the lack of sources, but because certain sources have been misconstrued and misremembered. One written source in particular, *La musique chez les Persans en 1885*, has caused much confusion. Published in 1885 in Paris by Alfred Lemaire's fellow Artesian from Pas-de-Calais, Victor-Hyacinthe Advielle (1833–1903), the short book has remained the sole document on the history and establishment of European-style Iranian military music, and its narrative has survived unchallenged. In addition, Alfred Lemaire was the musician who initially arranged recordings for the Gramophone Company when the first commercial recordings of music were made in Tehran in 1906. The recording sessions included many performances by Lemaire's bands of *muzikānchiān*.

In this article, I present an archival discovery that seriously challenges this established narrative. The source, which is the first published piece from the repertoire of the *muzikānchiān*, is titled *Marche Triomphale, À Sa Majesté Impériale Nassir-Ed-Din Shah Kadjar de Perse*. It is a march composed by Julius Heise (d. 1870) for the Iranian marching bands in

1864, twenty-one years before Victor Advielle published his book.¹ *Marche Triomphale* stands out as a unique archival document that has recently surfaced after 150 years. By considering this specific case, the present article demonstrates the need for critical studies of the history of Iranian music using archival sources that have long been hidden and require careful consideration. Although military music may represent a small subset among other genres of Iranian music, such sources reveal the history of Iran's encounters with European music, which was instrumental in the formation of the current "classical" music of Iran. The use of archival sources is paramount to dislodging a history of Iranian music that has been based on European writings from the colonial era. Furthermore, recovery of this forgotten musical source reveals a possible connection between the *Persian March* by Johann Strauss II and Heise's work, as will be discussed.

Beginning with an account of Iranians' encounters with European military music, both in Europe and in Iran, this article provides a brief history of European-style Iranian military bands (*muzikānchiān*). It then briefly addresses how and why Victor Advielle, a French administrator, published his short account of the music in Iran, an account that eventually became the sole document on the subject and shaped modern studies of Iranian music. This article then presents what I have learned about the composer of the *Marche Triomphale*, Julius Heise (d.1870).

European Music in Nineteenth-Century Iran

Years before the Qajar rulers and members of the elite could view actual European musical instruments, they read about them in newly compiled Persian-language books that described aspects of European culture. In 1801, 'Abd-ol-Latif Shushtari (1759–1805) wrote in his *Tohfāt-ol-Ālam* what he had heard about European music.² In the same year, Mirza Abutāleb Khan was visiting London, encountered various genres of European music, and heard the band of the Duke of York.³ A few years later, Abol-Hasan Ilchi (1776–1845) was sent to Britain as the Iranian envoy and reported his encounters with European music to the shah and other notables.⁴ Ilchi was later sent to Russia, and his reports included more information on European military music.⁵

The largest comprehensive Persian encyclopedic dictionary, *Loġhat-Nāmeḥ-ye Dehkhoda*, claims that the French term *musique* is the root for the Persian term *muzikān*.⁶ However, early Persian reports clarify that *muzikān* was borrowed from the Russian term *muzikant/musicant*, which was in turn borrowed from Germanic languages. Iranian encounters with European music emerged coincidentally after a tragic political incident. In 1829, when the Russian envoy, Aleksandr Sergejevich Griboyedov (1795–1829), was murdered by mobs in Tehran, Prince Khosrow-Mirza Qājār was sent to the Russian court in an act of reconciliation. He was welcomed by bands of military music on several occasions,⁷ and the secretary of the delegation wrote down a new Persian term for the first time: *muzekān*.⁸ This term was subsequently established as the Persian term for European military music. In another report

¹ I discovered *Marche Triomphale* using secondary publications, and I introduced it in 2016 in Mohammadi, "Chef de Musique or Chef de Macaroni: The Twisted History of the European Military Music in Persia." However, I was unable to locate a surviving copy. In 2020, Ershad Vaeztehrani unveiled the surviving copy of the publication, which is kept at the Austrian National Library; see Vaeztehrani, "Alfred Jean-Baptiste Lemaire (1842–1907), Chef de la Musique de Sa Majesté le Shah de Perse." I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ershad Vaeztehrani for informing me about this copy which is yet the only known surviving copy of *Marche Triomphale*.

² Shushtari, *Tohfāt-ol-Ālam va Zeyl-e Tohfāt*, 388–89.

³ Eshahāni, *Masir-e Tālebi yā Safar-Nāmeḥ-ye Mirza Abu-Tāleb Khān*, 207–8.

⁴ Shirazi, *Heyrat Nāmeḥ*, 261–62.

⁵ Shirazi, *Dalil-os-Sofarā*, 169–70.

⁶ Deh-khoda, "Muzikān," 21873.

⁷ Afshar, *Safarnāmeḥ-ye Khosrow Mirza*, 166, 207–11, 219, 222–23, 238.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 198, 177.

from a Russian trip in 1855, *muzekand/muzikand* was used for bands and *muzekandchi/muzikandchi* was used for musicians.⁹

The first band of *muzikān* in Iran was part of the Iranian regiments commanded by British Officer Charles Christie (d. 1812) of the Bombay regiment, who entered Iranian service at the request of Sir Harford Jones-Brydges (1764–1847), the British envoy to Iran from 1807 to 1811. The band was seen at the court of Crown Prince Abbas-Mirza (1789–1833) in Tabriz in 1812, four months before Christie was killed during the Russo-Persian War of 1804–1813. The band welcomed the British envoy to Iran by playing English tunes, including the British national anthem, “God Save the King.”¹⁰ Five years later, the Russian envoy to Iran was received in Yerevan, and an Iranian band also welcomed him with the British national anthem, perhaps the same band from Tabriz in 1812.¹¹ The Russian delegation had their own music band comprising thirty musicians directed by a *capellmeister* (conductor).¹² The secretary of the delegation mentioned band performances on several occasions; the band must have played almost every day during the long travel and stay of the Russian envoy.¹³ Thus, professional European military music was performed in public places in several cities in northwest Iran. Fath-Ali Shah (r. 1797–1834), however, did not pay special attention to the military band of the Russian delegation, as is suggested by the reception of their delegation at the shah’s encampment in Soltanieh, where they were placed close to a group of court musicians and rope dancers who were the least respected court attendees.¹⁴

However, Crown Prince Abbās-Mirzā asked the delegation to send their military music band for a close study. He requested that they play all the pieces they knew and then had every instrument presented to him separately. He had every individual play something and then asked them to march to music, admiring the harmony between different sounds.¹⁵ When Abbas-Mirza died in 1833, Fath-Ali Shah appointed his son Mohammad-Mirza the crown prince. Mohammad Shah (1834–1848) was raised under the supervision of his father Abbas-Mirza, and he continued his father’s efforts to modernize the Iranian army. In 1836, two years after Mohammad Shah came to the throne, Sir Henry Bethune (1792–1851) received 400 pounds sterling from the Iranian court to purchase musical instruments.¹⁶ A year later, the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* reported publication of the first Persian newspaper in Tehran and reproduced a transcript of the first issue. The report included a description of a banquet at the British Embassy in Tehran on April 25, 1837, in celebration of the British monarch’s birthday. As the newspaper reported, the “band” of music from the Bahādorān regiment played *gharibeh* (strange) instruments.¹⁷ This regiment, which was formed of Russian deserters from Caucasus and their sons,¹⁸ was seen a year later returning from a battle in Khorasan and was described as the only regiment of the Iranian army that had a band.¹⁹

Three years after Henry Bethune was given a budget to purchase musical instruments, two years after the band of the regiment of Bahādorān was reported to play in Tehran, and one year after the same band was seen returning from an expedition, a European

⁹ Qazvini, *Safar-Nāmeḥ-ye Seyf-ol-Molk beh Rusieh*, 57, 62, 65, 67, 71, 76, 79, 83, 89, 133, 135, 148–49, 151–52, 154–55, 158, 160–64, 166, 168–69, 171.

¹⁰ Ouseley, *Travels in Various Countries of the East*, 1: 399.

¹¹ Kotzebue, *Reise nach Persien mit der russisch kais*, 67.

¹² *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 65, 71, 77, 93, 105, 107, 119, 135, 140, 149, 159, 169, 179–80, 192.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 179–80.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁶ Stuart, *Journal of a Residence*, 312.

¹⁷ *Gharibeh* (غریبه) also could be a misread form of *gharbieh*, meaning Western. But in the nineteenth-century Persian vocabulary, the common term for European was *farangi*, not *gharbiyeh*, and those Western instruments and bands were indeed strange phenomena in traditional Iranian society. “Persian Newspaper and Translation,” 359.

¹⁸ Stuart, *Journal of a Residence*, 187.

¹⁹ Macdonald, *Personal Narrative*, 162.

musician was spotted in Iran. It is unclear whether the Iranian court recruited the first European musician or the European musician came of his own accord, perhaps following a fantasy about living in the exotic land of Persia. On December 12, 1839, Lieutenant Jules Pichon from a French diplomatic and military delegation reported his first days in Tabriz as follows:

During the first days of our stay in Tauris, Doctor Berthoni, whom I have already spoken of, presented us to Mr. Marca, an Italian by origin who was employed by the troops of the Shah of Persia as “chef de musique”; we had, in many circumstances, to praise him for his kindness. Later Mr. Marca introduced us to Mr. Colombari, an Italian like him, tied with Prince Karaman Mirza as painter.²⁰

Marca’s proper name was Marco Brambilla, and his name was mentioned in several subsequent reports by European officers, such as Xavier Hommaire de Hell (1812–1848) in 1848 and Giuseppe Anaclerio between 1862 and 1866; the latter stated that Marco Brambilla had left Turkey to attend the court of Iran.²¹ It may be that Marco Brambilla had a connection with another Italian musician who served at the Ottoman court to establish military music bands in the European style in the 1820s, Giuseppe Donizetti (1788–1856), the older brother of the famous Italian opera composer, Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848). Bosquet (also mentioned as Bousquet and Boschetti) and Royon (also mentioned as Rouyon and Rouillon) are the other two European musicians who organized marching bands in Tehran in the 1850s and 1860s.²²

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Iranian court expanded the army, and new regiments were created. Several European musicians were hired to advance European military bands in Iran. Julius Gebauer (1846–1895), born in the Czech city of Šternberk, arrived in Tehran in 1879 as one of the Austrian officers who were hired to form the new Austrian-style regiment of or in the Iranian Army (Fig. 1a).²³ He was mentioned in the Iranian Almanac (*Sāl-nāmeḥ-ye dowlāt-e ‘aliyyeh-ye Iran*) of 1879, 1880, and 1881 along with the Austrian officers.²⁴ Julius Gebauer would perform at various gatherings of the European community in Tehran, and he received the Iranian Order of Science.²⁵ He was last reported at a military review in Tehran on February 21, 1895, about five months before his demise in Tehran on July 9, 1895.²⁶ An Italian drummer, Monsieur Angelo, also was mentioned as the director of drummers, *Tabbāl-bāshi*, of the Iranian army from 1877 to 1883.²⁷ Alexandre Duval, a French violinist from Lyon, was another European musician who lived in Iran during the last years of Nāsereddin Shah’s era (d. 1896).²⁸ Finally, the Iranian Cossack Brigade, a cavalry unit founded in 1879, had their own music band, which started with thirty-five musicians of European style (Fig. 1b).²⁹ The band was mentioned in the Iranian Almanac from 1881 to 1884, and also was reported as playing at social gatherings.³⁰

²⁰ Pichon, *Journal d’une mission militaire en Perse, 1839–1840*, 4.

²¹ Hell, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*, 2: 119, 131–32, 146; Anaclerio, *La Persia descritta*, 98, 139.

²² Brugsch, *Reise der K. Preussischen Gesandtschaft nach Persien*, 307; Anaclerio, *La Persia descritta*, 80; Lycklama à Nijeholt, *Voyage*, 356.

²³ Morel, “Les missions militaires en Perse,” 1–2.

²⁴ Etemād-os-Saltaneh, “Sāl-Nāmeḥ-ye Dowlāt-e Aliyyeh-ye Iran,” 1879, 40; 1880, 43; 1881, 25.

²⁵ Sheykh-Rezaei and Azari, *Gozāresh-hā-ye Nazmiyeh az Mahallāt-e Tehran*, 1998, 1: 348; 2: 410, 431, 439, 458; Morel, “Décorations,” 1–2.

²⁶ Eyn-os-Saltaneh, *Ruznāmeḥ-ye Khāterāt-e Eyn-os-Saltaneh*, 1: 700.

²⁷ Etemād-os-Saltaneh, “Sāl-Nāmeḥ-ye Dowlāt-e Aliyyeh-ye Iran,” 1877, 9; 1878, 9; 1879, 23; 1880, 26; 1881, 8; 1882, 8; 1883, 10.

²⁸ Gouget, *Histoire musicale de la main*, 357.

²⁹ Shah, *Ruznāmeḥ-ye Khāterāt-e Nāsereddin Shah dar Safar-e Sevom-e Farangestān*, 2: 365.

³⁰ Etemād-os-Saltaneh, “Sāl-Nāmeḥ-ye Dowlāt-e Aliyyeh-ye Iran,” 1881, 16; 1882, 18; 1883, 21; 1884, 36; Sheykh-Rezaei and Azari, *Gozāresh-hā-ye Nazmiyeh az Mahallāt-e Tehran*, 1: 21.



FIGURE 1. Two bands of *muzikānchi* in Tehran c. 1910: (a; left) Band of the regiment of Austrian style, founded by Julius Gebauer, directed by Gholam-Reza Salār Moʻazzaz; (b; right) Band of the Iranian Cossack Brigade.

La musique chez les Persans en 1885 and the Fabrication of a Legend

Although *La musique chez les Persans en 1885* has been used widely as the unique text on the history of Iranian music in the nineteenth century, as I demonstrate, it was a patriotic and self-promoting collaboration between Alfred Lemaire and Victor Advielle, two compatriots from Pas-de-Calais in France.³¹ Lemaire provided a story, and Advielle added patriotic and heroic elaborations. In that short account, the history of thirty years of European military bands in Iran was reduced to three simple figures: Bousquet, his sous-chef Rouillon, who had started marching bands but abandoned them, and Marco, an Italian sailor who was accused of ruining their efforts. Bousquet and Rouillon were not criticized, most probably because they were Lemaire's French compatriots. Marco, however, was ridiculed as being excellent at making a macaroni that could compensate for his detestable music.³² It is unclear whether this humiliation was articulated by Lemaire or Advielle; however, it was a negative stereotype of Italians. Today, we know that Marco Brambilla was more significant than Lemaire and Advielle made him out to be. Brambilla was instrumental in the formation of European marching bands in Iran. He was well known among Iranians. Twenty years after his death, a book was composed on the achievements of Nāsereddin Shah's era, and his name appeared along with that of Alfred Lemaire, as the two directors of military music (*muzikānchi-bāshi*) of the Iranian army.³³ Marco Brambilla was not the only European musician whose efforts were eradicated from the history of Iranian music by Alfred Lemaire, as narrated in *La musique chez les Persans*. The work also completely ignored a German musician who was active in Iran's music scene before Lemaire arrived in Tehran. This German musician was trained at a major conservatory and published the first piece from the repertoire of

³¹ This section is a revised summary of my work on the subject; see Mohammadi, "Chef de Musique or Chef de Macaroni," 51–59.

³² Advielle, *La musique chez les Persans en 1885*, 6.

³³ Etemād-os-Saltaneh, *Al-Ma'āser val-Āsār*, 26.

Iranian marching bands. Nonetheless, in his published account, Alfred Lemaire succeeded in eliminating him from the history of music in Iran.

Alfred Lemaire was born in Aire-sur-la-Lys, a town in the Artois region of northern France, but studied music in Paris. In 1881, he contacted the Association d'Appui Mutuel des Enfants du Pas-de-Calais Résidant à Paris, an association for Artesian people living in Paris, and requested to be registered as an associate member, although he had been living in Tehran for thirteen years.³⁴ That correspondence inspired a series of actions that was meant to flatter the Artesian race of the members of the association and ultimately resulted in the writing of a *La musique chez les Persans*. A year after Lemaire's correspondence, an unidentified member of the Association d'Appui Mutuel des Enfants du Pas-de-Calais Résidant à Paris submitted a manuscript to the Académie des Sciences, Lettres et Arts d'Arras, or Académie d'Arras, an academy founded in 1737 in Arras, the central town of the Artois region.³⁵ The entire manuscript was about the Artesian Alfred Lemaire and his extraordinary efforts in teaching music and organizing music bands in Iran. The submission was aimed at winning the Concours des beaux-arts, the association's award in fine arts, which had not been awarded to anyone for a long time.

Although the identity of the petitioner for the concours prize could not be revealed, there is enough reason to believe that it was Victor Advielle, another Artesian who was born in Arras. It was Victor Advielle who first wrote a short account on Alfred Lemaire in *L'Artesian*, the journal of the Association d'Appui Mutuel des Enfants du Pas-de-Calais Résidant à Paris, in which he also reported Lemaire's correspondence with the association. Finally, Victor Advielle produced a concise book on music among Iranians: *La musique chez les Persans en 1885*. This notably short and self-published account became the sole "firsthand" account on European music in Iran and Iranian music in the nineteenth century. As a token of gratitude, Lemaire persuaded the Iranian court to decorate Victor Advielle as an Officer of the Order of Science even before the book was printed. Advielle proudly mentioned his Iranian decoration on the cover of the book.

Alfred Lemaire was a master at maintaining a network of power. He was the founder and the first grand master of Lodge Bidāri Iranian, the Iranian branch of the major Masonic organization of the Grand Orient de France.³⁶ He was hired by the Iranian court in 1873, with a hefty annual salary of 1,300 tomans—which was the equivalent of 13,000 francs—plus an extra 300 tomans (3,000 francs) in travel expenses, and another 300 tomans to teach advanced courses to a group of ten music students.³⁷ His salary would be raised regularly, as it was reported to be a few thousand tomans by 1895.³⁸ Despite his generous salary from the court for his services as a musician, he was not completely focused on music education. He was engaged in all manners of business, including importing European goods to Iran. In 1888, his imported European goods, which could have been worth a million francs, caused a scandal in Tehran when the Russians discovered he had falsely declared them as ordered by the shah to avoid paying Russian taxes.³⁹ He also was engaged in exporting tobacco from Iran.⁴⁰ In 1890, he was granted a contract to build a road from the northwestern borders to Tehran. The contract included generous monopolies and exclusive rights for shipping in Lake Urmia, building resting areas, and rehabilitating state lands all along the road.⁴¹ Alfred Lemaire had no experience in construction and had no intention to manage that ambitious project, but he probably acquired the contract by paying higher bribes to

³⁴ Advielle, "M. Lemaire (Alfred-Jean-Baptiste)," 161n1.

³⁵ Guérard, "Rapport sur le Concours des Beaux-Arts (Histoire)."

³⁶ Sabatiennes, "Pour Une Histoire de La Première Loge Maçonnique En Iran," 421–22.

³⁷ Hashemian, *Tahavolāt-e Farhangī-ye Iran dar Dowreh-ye Qājārieh va Madreseh-ye Dārolfonun*, 217–19. I am grateful to Nader Motallebi-Kashani for referring me to the reproduction of Lemaire's contract in this book.

³⁸ Etemād-os-Saltaneh, *Ruznāmeḥ-ye Khāterāt-e Etemād-os-Saltaneh*, 1184.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 624.

⁴⁰ Nategh, *Bāzargānān dar Dād va Setad bā Bānk-e Shāhi va Rezhi-ye Tanbāku*, 107, 117.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 43–46.

the Iranian officials so that he could sell it to subcontractors. The project was never carried out.

As historical data show, but contrary to the narrative account published by Advielle/Lemaire, Marco Brambilla was the main figure in the formation of European military bands in Iran. He was seen there from 1839 to 1866. It was only after Brambilla's death that the Iranian court hired Alfred Jean-Baptist Lemaire. It was Alfred Lemaire, however, who remained known in the history of music in Iran and became a hero. Lemaire's presence in Tehran was longer than Brambilla's; moreover, his reputation benefited from European media, such as the printing press, photography, and recorded music, all of which became part of the elite culture in Iran in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Alfred Lemaire and his fellow Artesian French community portrayed him as the hero of European music in Iran.

In the nineteenth century, racial determinism and other racial interpretations emerged among European scientists and intellectuals. Those racial discourses shaped the writing of a history of music for Iranians in Advielle's short book. The main goal of the book was to promote the Artesian race, not Iranian music. Notably, Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), whose theory of racial determinism had an enormous influence upon the subsequent development of race theories and practices in Western Europe, spent a few years in Iran and produced influential works on the Aryan race, a racial pride that motivated changing the international name of Persia to Iran, the land of Aryans.⁴² When Victor Advielle provided a short account for his Artesian fellows, to make them proud of their race and to make himself proud of producing an elegant piece, he never imagined his work would shape the history of European music in Iran. Iranians discovered Advielle's piece outside of its race-promoting context, and to date there has been no reference to the writer's motivations or how they could have shaped his account.

Rediscovering a German Pianist in Tehran: Julius Heise (c. 1825–1870)

Thanks to a single mention of a European pianist serving the Iranian court, we are able to confirm the name of the German musician that Lemaire selectively failed to mention in his account of Iranian music: Julius Heise. A Dutch traveler and collector, Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt (1837–1900), who was in Iran in September 1866, mentioned meeting a European pianist named Heise. According to Lycklama à Nijeholt, Heise was the shah's pianist and beloved by the monarch.⁴³ This mention, which is the only known mention of Heise in a European travelogue, was instrumental in discovering the existence and the identity of a European musician who served the Iranian court and died in Tehran in 1870. Nāsereddin Shah mentioned a pianist in his diary in 1866 and 1870. However, since his diary manuscript registered a transliterated version of Heise's name that is illegible in Persian, the name could not be deciphered by the diary's editors: one assumed it was *Monazzah* and the other suggested *Hanireh*.⁴⁴ On Sunday, February 11, 1866, Nāsereddin Shah wrote the following about Heise (Fig. 2): "Then Monsieur Heise, the Russian [sic.] musician arrived. They had brought the piano that was his own, and he played. He played extremely well."⁴⁵ Four years later, on Thursday October 27, 1870, the shah was on the road to the Holy Shrine in Karbala when news was telegraphed from Tehran that "the gardener of the square's garden and Monsieur Heise pianozan [the pianist] both have died."⁴⁶

Nāsereddin Shah mentioned Heise as a Russian musician, even though he was Germanic. However, the reference to a Russian reflected a common practice among Iranians who would

⁴² Yarshater, "Communications," 62.

⁴³ Lycklama à Nijeholt, *Voyage*, 355.

⁴⁴ Shah, *Ruznāmeḥ-ye Khāterāt-e Nāsereddin Shah, Rabiōssāni 1282 tā Rabiōlavval 1283*, 90; Shah, *Shahriār-e Jādeh-hā*, 52.

⁴⁵ Shah, "Ruznāmeḥ-ye Khāterāt-e Nāsereddin Shah," 1866, 198.

⁴⁶ Shah, "Ruznāmeḥ-ye Khāterāt-e Nāsereddin Shah," 1870, 295.

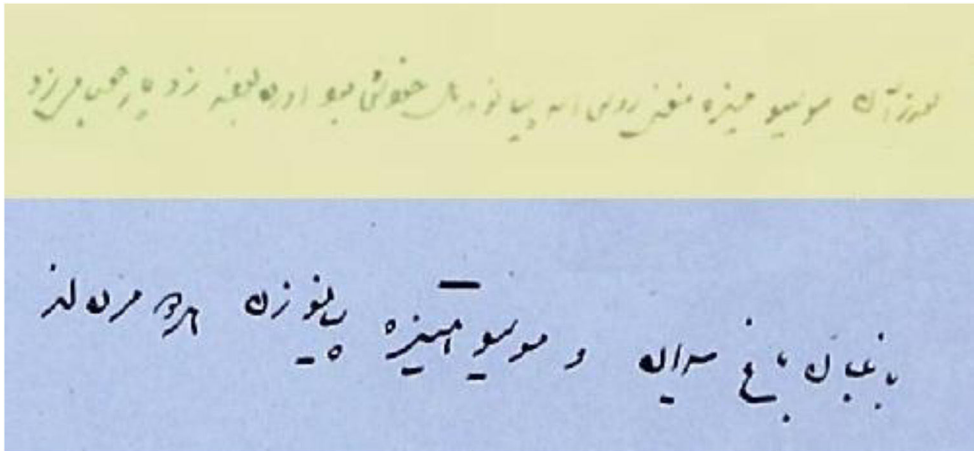


FIGURE 2. Heise in Nāsereddin Shah's diary. From the National Archives and Library of Iran, courtesy of Majid Abde Amin.

associate any person from Europe with their typical European term. That is how *farangi* (Frankish) became the common Persian term for all Europeans.

A catalog of the musical works published in Austria in 1864 revealed a rare piece for the piano: "Heise, Jules, Marche triomphale. (Ueberpersische Melodien.) Wien, Wessely & Büsing. 45 kr."⁴⁷ Two years later, in 1868, *Handbuch der musikalischen Literatur* provided a list of musical publications from 1860 to 1867, and included "Heise, Jul., Marche triomphale. A sa M. Nassir-Ed-Tin, Shah kadjar de Perse. Wien, Wessely 8 Ngr."⁴⁸ In the same year of 1868 and on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Conservatorium der Musik in Leipzig, a book was published on the history of the conservatorium titled *Das Conservatorium der Musik in Leipzig*.⁴⁹ It provided rare information, including the names of teachers and a list of students who had been admitted at the school each year. Among those students who were admitted on April 2, 1843, which was the first year of conservatorium's operation, was "Julius Heise aus Grossenhain."⁵⁰ The small town of Grossenhain is located around sixty miles to the east of Leipzig in Germany.

Das Conservatorium der Musik in Leipzig revealed Heise's German given name, Julius, which was turned into its French version, Jules, when the book was published with a French title. The book also revealed that the Conservatorium der Musik was founded by the famous German composer and pianist Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), and that it was the first school of music in Germany. The famous German composer Robert Schumann (1810–1856), one of the major figures of German Romanticism, also was a piano teacher at the conservatorium.⁵¹ We do not know Julius Heise's year of birth; however, it is likely that the Conservatorium der Musik would accept students at a young age, which means that Julius Heise would have had a robust music education under the supervision of Felix Mendelssohn. Music lessons were taught by notable musicians (such as Schumann).

The only known copy of *Marche Triomphale* is at the Austrian National Library. The Landesbibliothek Coburg library in Germany holds a rare music sheet titled *Les belles de Bucharest: contredanse composée pour piano*. Published in Vienna by H. F. Müller Veuve, it registers Jules Heise as the composer on the cover page. Landesbibliothek Coburg librarians

⁴⁷ Büsing, *Oesterreichischer Catalog*, 6: 14.

⁴⁸ Hofmeister, *Handbuch der musikalischen Literatur*, 324.

⁴⁹ Kneschke, *Das Conservatorium der Musik in Leipzig*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

March-Fantasy (Op. 353, 1872), *Russian March* (Op. 426, 1886), and *Spanish March* (Op. 433, 1888).

Heise must have spent some time in Iran before publishing his *Marche Triomphale* in 1864, perhaps having arrived in Tehran in 1863 or earlier. This suggests he lived in Iran for at least seven years, from 1863 to his death in 1870. Alfred Lemaire arrived in Tehran in early 1868, and the two musicians were the only European musicians working in Iran from 1868 until Heise's death in Tehran in 1870. Nevertheless, Lemaire completely ignored Heise in his report to Advielle, even though Heise had published the first piece of music for Iranian marching bands' repertoire. In all likelihood, Lemaire attempted to replace Heise's version of this piece with one he wrote. Alfred Lemaire published a few pieces for the piano in Paris in 1873, when Nāsereddin Shah traveled to Europe for the first time. Those pieces included *Kadjars Marsch (Marche Triomphale Persane)*, which appeared in *Le Monde Illustré* on Saturday, July 12.⁵⁴ Five years later when the shah was in Europe for the second time, Lemaire published *Kadjars Marsch* as a piano piece and added to the cover page that the march was "accepté Par sa Majesté Impériale Le Schah de Perse."⁵⁵

Conclusion

In oral traditions, historical information is usually passed on orally and transformed to mythology. Ethnography is the sole method of studying those traditions. In semi-oral traditions, as found in Iran, scattered information on music has been documented randomly and sporadically. Those documents are the only sources available; they remain unchallenged. It is essential to be critical of these sole pieces of information and not accept them at face value. It may seem obvious that source criticism and the search for new sources are essential to historical studies, but, at least in the case of Iranian music, historical research is based mainly on a few available written sources that are usually taken at face value. This article has unveiled a new source that seriously challenges the dominant narratives about the history of European music in Iran. It has provided a short history of European music in Iran and explained the role of a sole document shaping that history, *La musique chez les Persans en 1885*. The source's role in the erasure of two significant players in the history of European music in Iran, Marco Brambilla and Julius Heise, was briefly described. I have attempted to recover Iranian music history with the discovery of hitherto hidden sources and by introducing the German pianist Julius Heise, who was active in Tehran in the 1860s. This recent discovery is now supported by the finding of *Marche Triomphale*, the first published composition from the repertoire of European military bands in Tehran. Exploration of the history of European music in Iran and the musical analysis of Julius Heise's *Marche Triomphale* reveals that a self-proclaimed hero, Alfred Lemaire, eliminated the role his predecessor Julius Heise had in shaping European music in Iran through the selective account and influential narrative of *La musique chez les Persans en 1885*. Not only did Lemaire selectively remove Heise from this narrative, he also further concealed the influence of Heise by composing his own march titled *Kadjars March: Marche Triomphale Persane*⁵⁶ without acknowledging him in the historic record.

This article highlights the need for a critical study of Alfred Lemaire's influence on the history of music in Iran, considering both traditional music and the growth of European music in Iran. Lemaire lived in Iran for four decades as the most powerful person related to music. His legacy and publications, which form the body of written sources on Iranian music prior to World War I, have been generally accepted without critical inquiry. This article is only the first step in that inquiry, which should cover all aspects of musical life in Iran. Further studies may reveal Lemaire's influence on various aspects of music, such as the

⁵⁴ Lemaire, "Kadjars March."

⁵⁵ Lemaire, *Kadjars*.

⁵⁶ Lemaire, "Kadjars March (Marche Triomphale Persane)."

theory of music and the notion of music and the musician in society. When conducting this research, it will be important to consider the social circumstances of music in Lemaire's time. He represented European music, a musical culture that seemed far superior to the traditional music of Iran, and that supposedly superior music also was presented in military uniform. Understanding Lemaire's actions is essential to understanding the music of Iran. The discovery of a forgotten work by a musician who had been eliminated from history provides one example of Lemaire's influence on the history of music in Iran.

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ARCHIVAL REPORT

Not By Archives Alone: The “Revolution” in Soviet Central Asian Literary Studies

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In contemporary Central Asia, Soviet-era authors are national heroes. Writers’ natal homes have become lovingly curated home-museums; statues of poets bedeck city squares; and schoolchildren write dictations from twentieth-century novels. Less often discussed in public, such writers also once belonged to the Soviet Writers’ Union, many of these poets called themselves “proletarian,” and their novels purported to imagine “revolution.” Poems about tractors rarely appear in today’s anthologies, and new editions of 1930s novels excise the once-obligatory references to Stalin. In reaction to their Soviet-era canonization, some writers have been knocked from their pedestals, as recently happened to Hamza in Uzbekistan.¹ Due to the political sensitivity of many Soviet writers in Uzbekistan, most serious scholarly attention has turned, since 1990, toward transitional Jadid writers of the early revolutionary years who were ultimately devoured by the official regime, such as Cho’lpon and Fitrat.

If the official narrative within Central Asia has emphasized national genius to the exclusion of political context, Western scholars have tended toward a more pessimistic account, stressing the political pressures that limited the scope within which Central Asian writers could work. Beginning at the height of the Cold War, some scholars sought evidence of “Aesopian” languages of resistance, through which authors encase their social critiques in officially acceptable framings.² Too often, however, those eager to read *between* the lines neglect reading the lines on the page. While scholars of Russian literature have studied Gorky and Sholokhov, Platonov and Pil’niak as literature, despite the political strictures in which they wrote, few scholars in the Western academy have granted Central Asian literatures the dignity of careful, theoretically informed and properly historicized literary scholarship.³

Different as the two approaches may seem, they are both responses to the same problem. There is a deep pathos and profound ethical dilemma inherent in the study of Central Asian literature in the context of Soviet (neo-/ post-) coloniality. It can be wrenching to acknowledge how much Central Asian writers depended on material support from the Party, and

¹ Kamp, “Symbol of Ideology: Hamza’s martyrdom, erased.”

² Edward Allworth’s field-defining work took such an approach; see Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics* and *idem., Evading Reality: The Devices of ‘Abdalrauf Fitrat, Modern Central Asian Reformist.*

³ There are several important exceptions from emerging scholars, including Kudaibergenova, *Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh Literature: Elites and Narratives*; Caffee, “How Tatiana’s Voice Rang across the Steppe: Russian Literature in the Life and Legend of Abai”; Hodgkin, “Romance, Passion Play, Optimistic Tragedy: Soviet National Theater and the Reforging of Farhad”; and Sharipova, “The Decolonization of the Environment in Kazakhstan: The Novel Final Respects by Abdi-Jamil Nurpeisov.”

how imbricated they were in its discourses even in times of terror. But Central Asian writers should not be reduced to mouthpieces for the Moscow Party line, when, in fact, they were instrumental in re-interpreting, reshaping, and resisting it. Without understanding official discourses and institutional structures, it is impossible to fully appreciate Central Asians' appropriations of them. Nor can we understand or appreciate the Central Asian contributions to Soviet literature, and indeed, to an emergent world literature, without engaging with the actual texts they produced.⁴ Studying Central Asian literature, then, requires attention to both political context and aesthetic form, drawing on the full variety of sources available in post-Soviet archives and libraries. While not exhaustive, this article offers a guide to several key archives and libraries in the former Soviet Union, contending that while archives greatly enrich the study of Soviet cultures, library collections of Soviet-era books and periodicals will be at least as crucial to the ongoing reevaluation of modern Central Asian cultures and literatures. I focus primarily on literature produced in Uzbekistan. Because of the parallel institutional structures in most Central Asian republics, however, these notes will be applicable also to scholars of other Central Asian literature and culture.

The National State Archive of Uzbekistan

Researchers on Soviet Central Asian literature before 1932 face a conspicuous gap in the archival record. After the 1917 Revolution and for much of the 1920s, Central Asian literature operated under the auspices of informal social networks, many of which had roots in the pre-revolutionary progressive intelligentsia, or Jadids. Often local and ephemeral, these groups represented diverse intellectual trends and reflect the cultural decentralization of the early Soviet years.⁵ For example, under the direction of Abdurrauf Fitrat, the Chagatay Conversation (Chig'atoy Gurungi) promoted research and discussion on the Turkic cultural heritage of Central Asia; it also promoted early discussions of script reform in Central Asia.⁶ By the late 1920s, the Party and its activists had condemned most indigenous cultural groups. Under influence from Moscow, in 1928 local Party activists founded an Uzbekistan and all-Central Asia chapter of the Association for Proletarian Writers.⁷ At the same time, a group of non-European activists organized a chapter of Red Pen (Qizil Qalam), a literary group whose name conveys the outspoken political commitment of its members.⁸

Red Pen and the Association for Proletarian Writers reflected a new, Party-oriented tendency in Central Asian literature, distinct from the earlier, Jadid-inflected groups. However, all these early organizations have the same status in the archival record. All were condemned as counter-revolutionary in the 1930s, and their archives, such as they

⁴ Recent scholarship has shown the Soviet contribution to a 20th-century discourse of world literature; see Hodgkin, "Persian Poetry in the Second-World Translation System"; Khotimsky, "World Literature, Soviet Style: A Forgotten Episode in the History of an Idea"; Gould, "World Literature as a Communal Apartment: Semyon Lipkin's Ethics of Translational Difference"; and Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and Third Worlds*. On debates surrounding "world literature" as a Eurocentric category rooted in assumptions about translatability, see Mufti, *Forget English!* and Apter, *Against World Literature*.

⁵ The definitive study of the pre-1932 period is Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷ A Tashkent Association of Proletarian Writers was formed in 1923, but it appears to have been dominated exclusively by Russian-speakers, with a largely defunct Uzbek section; see Karimov, *XX asr adabiyoti manzaralari*, 250.

⁸ A chapter of Red Pen existed also in Azerbaijan, founded under the direction of the Council of Propaganda that was organized at the Congress for the Peoples of the East in 1920. It is possible the Central Asian chapter of Red Pen also formed under Party direction, but I have found no documentary evidence for this. The Central Asian chapter of Red Pen was dissolved in 1930, while the Association of Proletarian Writers persisted until 1932. For a useful overview of literary organizations in early Soviet Uzbekistan, see Baldauf, "Educating the Poets and Fostering Uzbek Poetry of the 1910s to Early 1930s." On the Azerbaijani chapter of Red Pen, see Feldman, *On the Threshold of Eurasia: Revolutionary Poetics in the Caucasus*, 176–207.

were, were largely destroyed. Today, those who research their work must scavenge for traces of their activity in early Soviet publications, in scattered archival files of the Party-state and personal files. Some materials relevant to early literary groups can be unearthed in the state archives of Uzbekistan, and while post-Soviet scholars from the region have done essential work in recovering these legacies, much remains to be done.⁹

In April 1932, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party issued a decree dissolving all literary organizations and restructuring them under a single umbrella, the Writers' Union.¹⁰ Soon, the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 promulgated Socialist Realism as the sole mode for cultural production under the auspices of the Writers' Union. Ostensibly, the Union was to eliminate the supposed problem of factionalism in organizations such as the "left opportunistic" Association for Proletarian Writers. The Writers' Union was to adopt a "big tent" approach, accommodating both Party and nonparty participants in an effort to produce a Socialist Realist literature that would draw in the wider masses. The actual effect, of course, was to subject Central Asian literature to an unprecedented level of centralized hierarchy. A once-polycentric literary scene, with sedentary hubs in Samarkand, Bukhara, Ferghana, and to a lesser degree, Tashkent, became centered around Tashkent, whose chapter of the Writers' Union reported directly to Moscow. Parallel chapters of the Writers' Union were formed in the other Soviet national republics as well: for example, many Tajik-speaking writers from Bukhara and Samarkand made an exodus to Stalinobod (modern-day Dushanbe), and smaller Writers' Union chapters were formed also in Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan.¹¹ However, because Uzbekistan inherited the major cultural hubs of sedentary Central Asia, it remained a center of officially sponsored cultural activity in the region throughout the Soviet period, becoming an international fulcrum for Soviet cultural exchange with the Third World during the Cold War.¹²

The archival record reflects this new degree of centralization. In Uzbekistan, the primary archival collection (*fond*, f. 2356) for the study of the literatures of Uzbekistan, which collects the documents of the Writers' Union of Uzbekistan, is located in the Uzbekistan State Archive in Tashkent.¹³ The inventories (*opisi*) for this archive are not currently available online, so even to consult them requires researchers to travel to Tashkent on a research visa and obtain permission for archival access, usually through affiliation with the Academy of Sciences, or, less frequently, other institutions, such as the National University of Uzbekistan.

Despite evident hierarchicalism in the Soviet Writers' Union, the archives reveal the center's inability to control cultural production on a granular level, especially in languages other than Russian. The archives brim with unfulfilled plans, unfunded initiatives, and reports of "counter-revolutionary" works that somehow managed to be published. The documents contained in the Tashkent archive comprise the official records of the Writers' Union: meeting protocols, plans for upcoming initiatives, correspondence with Moscow and the Union's regional chapters, and, occasionally, stenographic reports from Writers' Union meetings and interrogations. Meeting protocols, usually quite laconic, convey what was discussed at regular meetings. They are particularly useful insofar as they report who actually participated in the organizational work of the Union, rather than those who

⁹ See, for example, Nabiev, *Narzulloi Bektosh va ilmu adabi tojiki solhoi 20-30 sadai XX*; Alimova and Rashidova, *Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy va uning tarixiy tafakkuri*; and Karimov, *XX asr adabiyoti manzaralari*.

¹⁰ See "O perestroike literaturno-khudozhestvennykh organizatsii," 128.

¹¹ On the exodus to Stalinobod, see Roberts, "City on Paper: Writing Tajik in Stalinobod (1930-38)." On the early formation of chapters of the Writers' Union in national republics, see Schild, "Between Moscow and Baku: National Literatures at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers." Useful starting points for research on Kazakh and Turkmen literature include, respectively, Kudaibergenova, *Rewriting the Nation in Modern Kazakh Literature: Elites and Narratives*, and Clement, *Learning to Become Turkmen: Literacy, Language, and Power, 1914-2014*.

¹² See Kirasirova, "Building Anti-Colonial Utopia: The Politics of Space in Soviet Tashkent in the 'long 1960s'"; and Djalalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds*.

¹³ Soviet archives were usually organized according to *fond*, or repository, most of which correspond to Party or state institutions. Each *fond* is divided into several *opisi*, or inventories, which in turn organize *dela*, or archival files.

belonged to the Union in name only. The correspondence still available at the archive is spotty in its coverage, but reveals interesting conflicts in many cases. Perhaps most promisingly to scholars of literature, the archive has also retained some written critiques of Uzbek literature, as well as the stenographic reports of meetings discussing specific works. Importantly, the documents in the archive reflect that the Uzbekistan Writers' Union was not exclusively an institution for members of the Uzbek nation, and the archive has much to offer scholars of literature in languages other than Uzbek, including Russian, Tajik, and Uyghur. Most documents in the National Archive of Uzbekistan are in Russian, although some particularly revealing stenographic reports and written critiques are in Uzbek, including some in Arabic script.

Since well before 1917, literature in Central Asia has been closely linked to pedagogical aims. The Jadids, or Islamic modernist reformers of Central Asia, placed "enlightenment" at the forefront of their agenda, and most literary careers in early Soviet Central Asia meandered through teaching and education policy in addition to the arts, particularly since full-time employment as a writer was rare in the early Soviet decades. Consequently, the literature of the early post-revolutionary years—including theater, prose literature, and poetry—placed an uncommon emphasis on moral and political education. After the promulgation of Socialist Realism, with its emphasis on accessibility to the "people" (*narodnost'*), Central Asian literatures retained their pedagogical focus. The inextricable connection between literature and pedagogy in Central Asia is reflected in f. 94, which contains the archive of the People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros/Ministerstvo Prosveshcheniia USSR). The records of the Narkompros reveal literature to be an integral part of the Party's agenda for the cultural "enlightenment" of Central Asia's masses, and show the Writers' Union to be part of a complex of Party-sponsored initiatives for cultural construction, including libraries, Red Teahouses, literary circles, and other institutions for circulating and promoting Party-sponsored literatures.¹⁴

The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art

Moscow's archives are essential to students of Soviet Central Asian cultures for two main reasons. First, because Soviet culture was organized hierarchically, with all roads leading to Moscow, many key documents can be found only there. Local Central Asian institutions consistently reported to their higher-ups in Moscow, and these reports often supply a bird's-eye view that is difficult to discern in the day-to-day records held in Tashkent and other Central Asian cities. Second, since the political vicissitudes of the Soviet- and post-Soviet periods hit close to home, some of the most sensitive archival materials have been classified or disposed of in the region. Founded in 1941 to unify a variety of Party, state, and personal archives, Moscow's Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) is an essential, and vastly underutilized, repository on Central Asian literatures. The archive contains reports from Moscow brigades sent to supervise and report on Central Asian literatures; it also includes correspondence and reports sent to the central Writers' Union from regional Union leaders. Certainly for the early Soviet period, more documents pertaining to the Uzbekistan Writers' Union are accessible at RGALI than at the State Archive of Uzbekistan (O'zMDA) itself. For example, while O'zMDA contains only scattered meeting protocols, RGALI includes a more exhaustive record as well as a number of detailed stenographic reports from Uzbekistan Writers' Union meetings in both Uzbek and Russian. The sources in RGALI are particularly revealing when it comes to the dark years of 1936–38, as some

¹⁴ On Red Teahouses as cultural institutions, see Roosien, "Not Just Tea Drinking": The Red Teahouse and the Soviet State Public in Interwar Uzbekistan." On state-sponsored cultural institutions in Kyrgyzstan, see İğmen, *Speaking Soviet with an Accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan*; and on Kazakhstan, see Ramsay, "Nomadic Hearths of Soviet Culture: 'Women's Red Yurt' Campaigns in Kazakhstan, 1925–1935."

relevant files remain classified in Tashkent, and much of the Terror played out under the direction of brigades of Moscow-based writers.

The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History

The Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) also has much to offer with respect to Soviet literature. The files of the Central Asian Bureau (f. 62) include materials relevant to Turkestan and the Soviet Central Asian republics through the mid-1930s. Of particular interest are documents pertaining to the institution known at various times as the Division of Agitprop (APO), Division of Agitprop and the Press (APPO), and the Division of Culture and Propaganda (Kul'tprop). These files are particularly useful for researchers interested in the press, as the archive contains a wealth of statistics on the names, languages, editorial composition, and relative importance of a variety of early Soviet newspapers and journals. Other documents register complaints from agitprop administrators about the "failings" of cultural institutions and critiques of the press's "explanations" for controversial policies such as collectivization. This collection is particularly useful for the Party perspective on the sparsely documented cultural organizations of the 1920s.

Most of the archival materials in RGASPI are in Russian and reflect the views of Russian-speaking administrators who both wielded great power and misinterpreted local realities. They must be read with caution. For example, one notorious Secret Police document from the Central Asian Bureau files describes a pan-Turkic conspiracy in 1920s Kokand, which supposedly involved several well-known writers. No other evidence exists to support the existence of such a group, which was most likely the fabrication of paranoid officials.¹⁵ Likewise, agitprop administrators' assessment of the local press, especially press in local languages, is often quite superficial, as their understanding of non-Russian press was usually dependent on translated digests.

Also worth mentioning is Moscow's Komsomol (Communist Youth League) archive, once independent, but now a division of RGASPI housed in a separate building across town. Communist Youth League members were a driving force in Soviet cultural production, and they organized cultural festivals, literary competitions, and "outreach" drives to the countryside. The collections of the Komsomol archive include stenographic reports of activist conferences and extensive files on major Komsomol events. There are also many reports on initiatives to expand access to radio, film, and periodical press, often providing unique insight into the local reception of Soviet mass media and cultural production. The Komsomol archive's inventories are organized according to republic, enabling researchers to quickly identify relevant materials along national lines.

The Alisher Navoiy Literary Museum

While state archives offer some irreplaceable documents, when it comes to manuscripts, researchers will need to look elsewhere. The former Soviet Union is dotted with the home-museums of venerated cultural producers, and Central Asia is no exception. Tashkent, for example, hosts the home-museums of luminaries such as writers Oybek and Abdulla Qahhor, the famed musician Yunus Rajabiy, and renowned dancer Tamara Xonim, among many others. The museums are worth visiting just for their public exhibitions alone, but many also hold some or all of the personal archives of each author.

The most significant museum archive for the study of Soviet Central Asian literature in Uzbekistan is the Alisher Navoiy Literary Museum in Tashkent, which was founded in 1939 as part of the preparations to celebrate the quincentennial of medieval Persianate poet 'Ali Shir Nava'i. In the 1960s, the museum established an archive organized mostly

¹⁵ The file is located in RGASPI, op. 2, d. 2199. For more discussion of this conspiracy theory, see Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 374.

by author names. The museum's administration has recently been in transition and, like cultural institutions everywhere, appears woefully underfunded. However, researchers who are able and willing to wade through shelves of disorganized files will find a trove of documentation from some of the most prominent writers of Soviet Uzbekistan, from still-renowned authors like G'ofur G'ulom, whose name still bedecks a major subway station in Tashkent, to once-major but now-forgotten writers like Oydin and Husayn Shams. The files include personal documents and correspondence from some authors. Most significantly, the archive holds manuscripts and unpublished proofs, as well as significant manuscript collections of medieval and early modern Central Asian literature. Copies can be quite expensive and researchers are expected to submit and adhere to a list of authors they wish to study before gaining access to the library.

Library Collections

Since the "archival revolution" opened Soviet archives to Western researchers, scholarship on the region has heavily emphasized intensive archival research. While this work has greatly enriched the scholarly understanding of Soviet social and political history, an excessively archive-focused approach has limitations for the study of Soviet culture.¹⁶ At various historical turning points, archives—particularly those located in Central Asia—have classified or otherwise disposed of key documentary evidence of local literatures. Personal archives, albeit valuable, have been lost or rendered inaccessible.

Meanwhile, published materials from the Soviet and post-Soviet periods must be handled with great caution. As political priorities changed, Soviet republications scrubbed out-of-date language. The names of purged cultural figures were routinely eliminated from texts and, in some cases, literally defaced in physical copies of books. Consequently, serious scholars of literature and culture must undertake significant searches just to identify the original texts of major works, and to parse how they have been revised. While the "authentic" first editions are invaluable, their revision histories often reveal much about the ongoing process of interpretation and revision that took place with input from authors, their editors, their censors, and later, the scholars who study them. For example, Abdulla Qahhor's major novel *The Mirage (Sarob)* was published first in the official journal of Uzbekistan's Writers' Union, then issued in book form in the late 1930s, and subsequently republished in heavily redacted editions over the course of the twentieth century, including the post-Soviet period.¹⁷ Other works were published once and completely forgotten after their writers were purged; such is the case of the prolific writer Husayn Shams, a leading figure in the cultural life of the 1930s, but largely forgotten after his fall from grace during the Great Terror.

In Uzbekistan, the major library collections are held at the Alisher Navoiy National Library (Alisher Navoiy Milliy Kutubxonasi). However, the collections of books are difficult to access, often requiring days to retrieve, and the catalogs are incomplete. Scanning and copying is expensive and heavily restricted; many early Soviet books are held in the rare book and manuscript collections, where access policies are more restrictive still.

Many university libraries in the United States hold useful, albeit spotty collections of Central Asian periodicals and books.¹⁸ Also worth mentioning are the collections of Central Asian publications bequeathed to the New York Public Library (NYPL) by Edward Allworth. While some items are represented in the digital catalog, the most exhaustive

¹⁶ On the impact of the "archival revolution" in Soviet social history, see Fitzpatrick, "Impact of the Opening of Soviet Archives on Western Scholarship on Soviet Social History."

¹⁷ It is now available in a very reliable scholarly edition; this is not the case for many other Soviet-era works. See Qahhor, *Tanlangan Asarlar*.

¹⁸ Particularly useful collections are housed at the University of Chicago, Harvard University, University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

...Inqilabdan surun, harqandaj bir shaharda millij spektakl qo'li-tisi favquladda hadisalaridan sanalar edi. Hazr shaharda ozbek dram teatri akademija teatri solis uldi. U ittifaqimizning asha shaharlarida ham muvaffaqiyat bilan gostollar beradi va ozining tajjartligi bilan aldingi teatroga tenlasa aladi...

... Dram teatrimiz inqilabiy-oad'ij ozbek pjessalarini qo'lis bilan bir qatarda jani shora, proletar jazuvchilarining asarlarini tarjima qilish qo'lisga kockan bolsa ham qalqan teatrimizning hammasi jahi bir azi xalturacilik qiladir, jahi eski pjessalar bilan qala beradir. Repertuar jaratis teatro sahasidagi en muhum vazifalarning eittasidir. Bunin ucun repertaur ustida islas, jani repertaur jaratis, jazuvchilarga uni toqdurishda jardam berish va eski repertuardan fjdalanish ustida chiddij is alis bari kerak.

...Teatr repertuarlaridan xalturani qat'ij soratda suris ciqarishimiz kerak.

Undan kejin teatromizning kamciliklari qatariga kiraturgan jana bir narsa pjessalarni taslay berishdir. Bu adat, bilmajman qaj jerdan kelis kirgan, lekin b. tunlay na toqri bir adatdir. Masalan, jazuvci pjessa jazadi, rizissor uni sahnga qojadi. Sunin bilan bu pjessa sahnadan tusadi. Ikkinzi rizissor keladi, bu pjessani eskirgan koradi, uni tuzatishni istamajdi, shundaj qilis pjessa repertuardan ciqariladi.

Bizda „Halima“, „Farhad-Sirin“ larni tuzatishga jol qojilmasliqi toqrusida gaplarni kop esitishka toqri keldi. Shundaj sozlarni qat'ij hukum qilish kerak. „Halima“ning orniga hec bir narsa bermasdan, repertuardan alish jaramajdi. Toppa-toqri ajtis kerakki, „Halima“ ozbek teatroning taraqqijatida favquladda rol oynadi. „Halima“ni man' qilish, repertua-



dan alish kerak emas, balki jani repertuar tuzish, unga qarshi qo'lis kerak. Jani, cinakam inqilabi asarlar jaratis kerak. Bizga sotsializm qurulishining ovjuk jutuqlarini karsataturgan narsalar kerak. Sani kop solmagan drammatorg kadrlarimiz ucun shundaj sharajit toqdurishimiz kirakki, ular ozlarining madani va sijasij daraqalarini dajim kotaris, zavodlarqo, farriklarga, sovxozlarga, kolxozlarga bari, unda oz repertuarlari ucun material alaturgan solsinlar.

(Ortaq [redacted] oz kompartija M.Q. VI nci plenumida qilingan daqladidan)

A. Укромов.

3

Figure 1. A speech by Akmal Ikromov, published in 1934 and defaced by a reader at the Russian State Library, presumably after he was purged in 1937–38. *O'zbek Sovet Adabiyoti*, no. 6 (June 1934): 3.

catalog is Allworth's own, also held by NYPL off-site.¹⁹ The collection primarily comprises publications from the 1920s in Central Asian languages; as it is stored off-site, it usually

¹⁹ Eren, *Preliminary List of Publications from the Former Soviet East, by Language Group in the Slavic and Baltic Division*.

takes several days to retrieve items from the collection. Many of these rare publications have unfortunately been lost, but the collection remains an essential starting point for any US-based student of Central Asian literature. I would also be remiss not to mention the significant digital collections of Central Asian (mostly Uzbek) literature located at ziyouz.com and kh-davron.uz.

Perhaps the most useful collection of Soviet-era Central Asian literatures is located in Moscow at the Russian State Library (Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka), which collected and still retains most publications from the entire Soviet Union. The card catalogs for books and periodicals in Central Asian languages are held at the Oriental Division (Vostochnyi otdel) of the RSL, across the street from the main building in downtown Moscow. The catalogs are organized by subject and language. Most catalog records for texts in languages other than Russian remain undigitized, and photographing catalog cards is strictly prohibited. After transcribing full call numbers and bibliographic information for books, researchers will need to proceed to the Periodicals Reading Room in Khimki, a suburb of Moscow, where most books in Central Asian languages are held. The Khimki reading room also holds the invaluable Soviet-era press chronicles (*letopisi*) with full bibliographic information about Soviet-era publications, including the often rapidly changing titles of newspapers and journals. Particularly valuable items include the official publications of the republican Writers' Unions, as well as arts and culture journals such as Uzbekistan's *Guliston*. Most newspapers and journals regularly published literary features, so almost no publication can escape the purview of serious scholars of Central Asian literature. Despite the logistical challenges in obtaining call numbers, most materials are in excellent condition. Photography is permitted free of charge and almost without restriction, and the reading room staff is generally able to bring up requested items within the hour. The RSL also permits remote requests for scans, although payment usually requires assistance from someone on the ground in the Russian Federation.

Conclusion

While the “archival revolution” began decades ago in Soviet history, it has yet to fully reshape the scholarly understanding of Central Asian literatures. Today, the field of Central Asian culture is poised for its own “revolution,” drawing not only on the official archives of Party-run organizations, but also the full spectrum of published books, periodicals, and ephemera. This type of research requires a careful triangulation between archival records, publication histories, and textual analysis—a kind of historical-critical textual work that is paralleled only in the study of sacred texts. By accounting for the full variety of sources—including published materials in the entire array of languages and scripts, personal archives, and Party-state institutions—scholars can produce a new story about Soviet Central Asian literature; one that takes account of its political overdetermination, formal innovation, and aesthetic originality, even under conditions of duress.


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AFTERWORD

Afterword to Persianate Pasts, National Presents: Persian Literary and Cultural Production in the Twentieth Century

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What is the relevance of the Persianate as a category of analysis in a world wherein even world literature continues to be framed as the literary history of discrete nations? First coined by historian Marshall Hodgson in 1974, Persianate initially referred to cultures such as Georgian, Armenian, Chaghatay, Urdu, and Ottoman, which were heavily influenced lexically and culturally by Persian without themselves being related to Persian linguistically.¹ Gradually, an additional meaning was grafted onto “Persianate,” which referenced cultures such as Judeo-Persian that were linguistically Persian but culturally diverse, bearing multiple alphabets, religions, and identities. These two meanings—the first grounded in cultural affinity and the second in linguistic origins—complement each other and ensure that the concept of the Persianate is reducible neither to language nor to identity.

Yet for those who have not been swept up in the Persianate turn, including many outside the Euro-American academy, the word “Persianate” still lacks a clear referent.² Iranians, Afghans, Tajiks, and South Asians transliterate into English the same words differently, transposing the same signifieds into divergent signs. In deference to these regional differences, sympathetic—or sometimes simply bewildered—outsiders often reframe the Persian language more locally and colloquially as Dari, Tajik, and Farsi. Such reframing under the aegis of national boundaries promotes the perception that these literatures and cultures, which rely on the same cultural referents, could be studied in isolation from each other.

The articles in this special issue refute the tendency to homogenize the literatures of Western and Central Asia as Persian, on the one hand, and to fragment them as a hodgepodge of discrete national formations, on the other. In vastly different yet interconnected ways, they reveal the relevance of the category of the Persianate after nationalism has ineluctably shaped the meaning and value of the term. In exploring the trajectory of the Persianate over the course of the long twentieth century, these articles compel us to think differently about utility of vernacular modes of expression that are inflected by, yet not wholly contained within, nation-based rubrics. While Hodgkin, Massoumi, and Loy examine the creation of transregional idioms through various institutions of Persianate culture—such as the anthology, the radio, and the periodical—Fani and Jabbari examine how intellectuals from the Persianate periphery shaped a dominant Persianate culture. In

¹ Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 293–94.

² Kaveh Hemmat is among those who have recently tracked this turn in “Completing the Persianate Turn.”

his examination of nineteenth-century university calendars and courses, Bruce shows how colonial universities in India helped to establish Persian studies as a discipline. Malekzadeh shows us how postrevolutionary Iran's educational curriculum tracks "continuities and permutations" in depictions of foreign others, whether Arab Muslims or Europeans and Americans.

Collectively, these authors show us how the concept of the Persianate encompassed the heterogenous registers of Farsi, Dari, and Tajik well into modernity, even after the demise of a premodern Persianate ethos that encompassed literary culture from Bosnia to Bangladesh.

While Persianate literatures follow a centrifugal trajectory in modernity, Turkic and Arabic literatures have tended to move in a centripetal direction, in the direction of greater consolidation and centralization. In their movement toward homogenization and standardization, Turkic and Arabic literary histories are regularly presented as unified wholes, even when they are internally diverse. The same might be said for English, under the aegis of the "global Anglophone," a label that erases differences in the pursuit of globalization. Meanwhile, Persianate culture has been increasingly fragmented in modernity, notwithstanding the great degree of linguistic continuity among Persianate registers. While Farsi and Dari are allocated to separate literary geographies, they are mutually comprehensible. For all intents and purposes, the Tajik spoken in Tajikistan, the Dari spoken in Afghanistan, and the Farsi spoken in Iran are regional variations on the same Persianate idiom.

Although we lament the loss of the cosmopolitan ethos that seemed to be embedded within Persianate pasts, in fact the concept of the Persianate was invented to serve modern needs, after the partial demise of the worlds it referenced. Even the word "Persian," from which "Persianate" derives, is not easily captured by a single word in the language to which it refers, which is instead divided up into the regional categories of *farsi*, *dari*, and *tajiki*. To call the Persianate a product of the modern imagination is not, however, to equate it with falsehood. Often, things are first named only once their absence becomes palpable.

Whereas previously continuity among the various registers of the Persianate world could simply be assumed, the reconfiguration of heterogeneous Persianate tongues in modernity required a single word to encompass them all. Claiming this concept as modern means recognizing how the cosmopolitan ethos intrinsic in the idea of the Persianate serves uniquely modern needs. It also means underscoring why the values the Persianate embeds may be worth reviving again. One modern need to which the Persianate corresponds is our longing for a community that is not subject to the exclusionary boundary-making of the nation-state. Another contribution made by the Persianate in modernity is in creating spaces for those who occupy the peripheries of empires, who do not fit into the linguistic, cultural, or political mainstream.

The articles in this special issue return us to another dimension of the Persianate, which is rooted in the original linguistic meaning of *ʿajam*, the premodern Arabic word for Persians and other non-Arabs. The term *ʿajam* has been appropriated by many indigenous peoples on the margins of the Muslim world, not only in Persianate domains, but also in the Arabophone Caucasus and Africa, to describe their languages as recorded in the Arabic script.³ We need not look far to understand the appeal of the concept of *ʿajam*—originally meanings mute and deaf and later signifying outsider and foreigner—in a world of xenophobic confrontation. Analogously the word for "barbarian" in many languages of antiquity was also associated with the foreign and exotic.⁴ Being a barbarian, argues Indian philosopher Sudipta Kaviraj—occupying the position of the one who is called *ʿajami*—confers certain epistemic advantages on the observer.⁵

The reconfiguration of this etymology across time and space was a process led by the authors, editors, and scholars whose lives and work are documented in this special issue. It is a transformation that reveals the contributions that non-Iranian Persians of the

³ The world of African *ʿajam* is discussed in Ngom, *Muslims beyond the Arab World*. *ʿajam* in the Caucasus is discussed in Gammer, ed., *Written Culture in Daghestan*, 17–40.

⁴ See Boletsi, *Barbarism and Its Discontents*.

⁵ Kaviraj, "On the Advantages of Being a Barbarian."

Persianate world made—and continue to make—to Persian culture and to world literature. The contributors to this special issue take the peripheral consciousness inscribed into the concept of *‘ajam* one step further in time and space, and situate it in a world of nations, dominated not just by Iran but by Russia and the Soviet Union (Hodgkin and Loy), Afghanistan (Fani and Massoumi), the Arab world (Malekzadeh), and South Asia and Iran (Jabbari and Bruce).

The hegemony of nations contributes to numerous anomalous configurations within modern scholarship, including the ongoing marginality of modern Afghan writers within the Persian literary canon, and the relative absence of Tajik, modern Dari, and other non-Iranian Persianate literatures within Persian studies. Sometimes posited as a panacea to nationalisms past and present, the concept of the Persianate can widen the field of Iranian studies and reveal the numerous intersections of Persian literature with Soviet, Central, and South Asian studies. The takes on Persian literary culture from the Persianate peripheries offered by Jabbari, Hodgkin, Loy, Fani, Massoumi, Bruce, and Malekzadeh bring into relief the ongoing value of Persianate cosmopolitanism to our post-colonial and post-national presents. Cultural and ethnic outsiders are most at home along the peripheries of Persianate literary culture: in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and throughout the Caucasus. By virtue of being detached from sharply delineated national borders, the Persianate ethos complicates and even calls into question modern geopolitics.

In their introduction, Schwartz and Fani rightly caution us against “reifying or centralizing the Persianate.” It is imperative that we not replace the totalizations of Eurocentric nationalism with an equally totalizing Persianate rubric which ignores layers of Turkic, Pashto, Urdu, and other South Asian literary cultures that have always shaped the literary landscapes of West, Central, and South Asia. At the same time, far from surrendering to modernity’s monolingualism, we can read texts from Iran, Afghanistan, Central and South Asia, and the Caucasus in light of the Persianate contexts and cultures within which they have long been embedded.

Where Persian is singular, the Persianate is plural. Reading the contemporary moment through the lens of Persianate culture—taking plurality as a norm rather than a special case or an anomaly—means reenvisioning geographic constellations that we all too often take for granted. By recognizing the coherence, the cogency, and the contingency of Persianate cultures across Eurasia well into the twenty-first century, we decenter the nationalisms in our own midst. At its best, engaging with the concept of the Persianate in an era riven by conflicting nationalisms and perpetual imbalances of power can help us respond to Walter Benjamin’s mandate: if we want to write in the tradition of the oppressed, we must learn to brush history against the grain.⁶

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⁶ Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” 392.

REVIEWS

The Emperor Who Never Was: Dara Shukoh in Mughal India. Supriya Gandhi (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020). Pp. 338. \$32.00 hardcover. ISBN 9780674987296

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The Mughal prince Dara Shukoh (1615–1659) has a hotly contested legacy in South Asia. Whereas many champion him as a tragic hero who represented hope for future Hindu–Muslim unity, others dismiss him as being too intellectually minded to have made a fitting ruler. Supriya Gandhi’s recent book, *The Emperor Who Never Was: Dara Shukoh in Mughal India*, offers the most comprehensive, insightful, and eloquent analysis to date of Dara’s life and times. First, Gandhi argues that Dara was a natural product of the Mughal world he inhabited rather than an embodiment of modern ideas like secularism and liberalism. In her words, “Dara Shukoh was never a liberal, nor did he promote interfaith harmony in the modern senses of these terms. Yet he oversaw an extraordinary exercise in cross-cultural understanding.” (p. 7). A second stereotype portrays Dara as the wronged prince whose legitimate right to the Mughal throne, as the chosen heir of Shah Jahan, was usurped by his jealous, power-hungry, bigoted younger brother Aurangzeb. Gandhi convincingly breaks down the dichotomy between the two brothers, describing how they grew up in the same milieu and imbibed similar ideas from their ancestors and contemporaries, even as their thoughts and actions reflected their divergent personalities. She therefore urges us to resist the teleological narrative that Dara’s rule could have changed the course of South Asian history.

The book is chronologically divided into nine chapters. The first three chapters capture the complexities of the Mughal royal family in which Dara Shukoh was born and raised. As the peripatetic imperial camp settled in Ajmer from 1613 to 1618, contemporary English travelogues convey their impressions of religious tolerance, economic prosperity, and political factionalism in South Asian society. Until 1622, Dara’s early childhood was shaped by his family’s interactions with Hindu ascetics and Sufi saints, along with a close bond with his older sister Jahanara. When Khurram (now Shah Jahan) rebelled against Jahangir and Nur Jahan, Dara and Aurangzeb were taken hostage by their grandparents in Lahore in 1626. As Gandhi astutely observes, his father’s bloody rise to power against other contenders to the throne foreshadowed Dara’s own tussle with his brothers three decades later. Shah Jahan’s coronation also marked Dara and Aurangzeb’s reunion with their mother and father. But Mumtaz Mahal’s death during childbirth in 1631 left Jahanara and Dara in charge of the household. Dara’s wedding to Nadira Bano Begum took place in 1633 amid an ostentatious display of wealth.

In chapters 4 and 5, we learn that in his youth, Dara became the most important Mughal prince, his father’s favorite and next in the royal reckoning, although he was often overshadowed by Aurangzeb’s military prowess. While Dara was given nominal governorships of Punjab, Kabul, and Allahabad, Aurangzeb gained more experience in war and statecraft through governorships of the Deccan and Gujarat. In this capacity, Aurangzeb stormed the temple of the Jain merchant Shantidas in Gujarat in 1645. Gandhi opines that this attack “served to assert his authority in a new territory . . . by desecrating Shantidas’s temple, Aurangzeb also struck a blow at his father and eldest brother” (p. 127). While it may be

true that Aurangzeb's motives included politically undermining Shah Jahan and Dara Shukoh, we cannot completely negate the religious element in this act. Not all rhetoric against *kāfirs* (infidels) can be explained as political legitimacy or expediency. How do we understand acts of violence committed in the name of Islamic belief on their own terms, without invoking the logic of political strategy to defend against Hindutva-led allegations of Muslim cruelty and barbarism?

Gandhi's writing seamlessly twins court intrigues with Dara's theosophical ruminations. Together with his sister Jahanara, Dara became profoundly immersed in Sufi esotericism under the guidance of the Qadiri saint Mulla Shah Badakhshi. Aside from writing Sufi treatises, they made several trips to Kashmir, generously patronized architecture in Srinagar, and invited Mulla Shah to visit the Mughal court. Dara's early Persian works, the *Safīnat-ul-Auliyā'* (1640), *Sakīnat-ul-Auliyā'* (1643), and *Risāla-yi Haqqnumā* (1646), reveal his changing outlook on the Sufi path to divine gnosis, as he became more interested in Hindu mysticism and tried juxtaposing his knowledge of yogic chakras with *sultān-ul-azkār* (heightened divine remembrance).

Chapters 6 to 8 focus on the final productive and eventful years of Dara's life. After the failure of his Qandahar campaign in 1653, he wrote the *Hasanāt-ul-Ārifīn* (1654) on Sufi ecstatic expressions, *Majma'ul-Bahrain* (1655) on the search for Indian monotheists (*muwahhidān-i hind*), and *Sirr-i Akbar* (1657) on translating the Upanishads. Dara also commissioned a new Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Yogavashishta* and was deeply interested in occult sciences like demonology, geomancy, and astrology. These later works hint at Dara's resistance to the dogmatic practices of the Muslim clergy (*ulamā*). But more significantly, they emerged from his interactions with various non-Muslim figures, including Kavindracharya Saraswati, Baba Lal, Jagannatha, Banwalidas, Chandar Bhan Brahman, pundits in Benaras, Sarmad Kashani, and Father Roth. And yet, Gandhi emphasizes that interfaith knowledge production was not unique to Dara, since royals like Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Jahanara, and his brothers Shuja and Murad similarly patronized religious and literary projects. As previous scholarship has also noted,¹ Dara was casting himself in the mold of a well-rounded Mughal philosopher-prince by displaying cultural refinement and closely engaging with Islamic and Indic spiritual traditions.

Parallel political developments exacerbated the rift between Dara and Aurangzeb, culminating in the bloody War of Succession (1657–1659) that ended Dara's life, which is the subject of chapter 9. Our only sources for the succession struggle are chronicles dedicated to Aurangzeb, Murad and Shuja (p. 215), but Gandhi reorients the reader to Dara's perspective. Despite having the emperor's support, he was thwarted by the reluctance of nobles like Jai Singh and the lack of help from Rajput rulers, as well as his brother's rebellions. Gandhi challenges the notion of Dara's weak political and military skills, since Aurangzeb's victory was not apparent until the very end. Finally, Gandhi debunks Aurangzeb's religious motives in accusing Dara of apostasy and heresy, arguing that it was merely a ploy to sway the *ulamā* and incite public protest in order to execute Dara. Aurangzeb made sure Dara died in ignominy, burying him in an unmarked grave in the Humayun's Tomb complex in Delhi.

Throughout the book, Gandhi stresses the crucial role that women played in Mughal high society. Nadira Begum is a constant presence, whose pivotal interventions, political counsel, and relationships in the harem were deeply intertwined with the lives of Dara and their children. But the most prominent female figure of authority in the book is Jahanara. Jahanara features on her own terms: as a disciple of Mulla Shah who wrote Sufi treatises, as a patron of architecture, literature, and trading investments, as a peacemaker who was equally


¹ See Rajeev Kinra, "Infantilizing Bābā Dārā: The Cultural Memory of Dārā Shukoh and the Mughal Public Sphere," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2, no. 2 (2009): 165–93; Munis D. Faruqui, "Dara Shukoh, Vedanta, and Imperial Succession in Mughal India," in *Religious Interactions in Mughal India*, ed. Munis D. Faruqui and Vasudha Dalmia, 30–64 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); Muzaffar Alam, "In Search of a Sacred King: Dārā Shukoh and the Yogavāsiṣṭhas of Mughal India," *History of Religions* 55, no. 4 (2016): 429–59.

revered by her contrary brothers, and as a close political adviser and confidante of her father. In this sense, Gandhi's book also contributes to recent studies on Jahanara.² One wonders, however, why Dara's other sisters, Roshanara and Gauharara, do not feature significantly in his story. Roshanara supported Aurangzeb in the War of Succession, but no clear reason is given for her animosity toward Dara.

These minor quibbles aside, *The Emperor Who Never Was* is a superbly crafted, engrossingly written, compellingly argued book that is a landmark contribution to the histories of Mughal India, Sufism, and Persian literature. Academics and lay readers alike will delight in its lucid prose, attention to detail, and careful, sensitive examination of several underused archival sources, including Dara's first *muraqqa* or album (1633), his *Samudrasamgama* (1655), and Tawakkul Beg's *Nuskha-yi Ahwāl-i Shāhī* (1666). In weaving a complex tapestry of South Asia in the seventeenth century, Gandhi accomplishes much more than a mere biography of Dara Shukoh: her anecdotal style brings to life court intrigues, battle scenes, epistolary exchanges, meditations on Indic and Islamic philosophy, nuances of the Sufi *pīr-murīd* (master-disciple) relationship, public perceptions of sovereignty, and skillfully interpreted poetry and paintings. Dara Shukoh's story has had many afterlives in South Asia, but this monograph is testament to the power of timely, persuasive scholarship in reshaping popular imagination.

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Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism. Mana Kia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020). Pp. 336. \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9781503611955

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Books begin with their titles. My first task is always to translate the title of a book into Persian. Here I asked myself, "How would 'we' render *Persianate Selves*?" The term Persianate resists a clear-cut translation, primarily because it delineates a more expansive meaning than the term "Persian." *Fārsī-zabān*¹ (Persian-speaking), which is considered the closest equivalent to "Persianate," restricts its conceptual framework to the spoken language. Marshall Hodgson, who coined the term "Persianate," reminds us that not all the people in the "Persianate zone" spoke Persian. Other translations such as *Qalamrow-i zabān-i fārsī* for "Persianate world"² also duplicate the words or cannot be applied to other adjective phrases like Persianate languages/culture or Persianate studies³.

² See Nausheen Jaffery, *Jahan Ara Begum: A Biographical Study (1614-1681)* (New Delhi: Idāra-yi Adabiyāt-i Dehlī, 2011); Afshan Bokhari, *Imperial Women in Mughal India: The Piety and Patronage of Jahanara Begum* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2015); Muzaffar Alam, *The Mughals and the Sufis: Islam and Political Imagination in India, 1500-1750* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2021), 259-330.

¹ The Association for the Study of Persianate Societies has rendered its Persian name as *Anjuman-i muṭālī'āt-i jawāmi'ī-fārsī zabān*. See www.persianatesocieties.org/about/.

² For more suggested translations, see Amanat, "Remembering the Persianate".

³ See Amir Arjomand, "From the Editor: Defining Persianate Studies".

The lack of a satisfying and self-evident translation is instructive here. Hodgson first developed the conceptual category of “the Persianate” in order to highlight the social and cultural dynamics of a premodern world that have been poorly understood today. The pronoun “we,” as in “we Persians” formulated in my earlier question, comes from the fact that I was born to Persian parents in Iran and grew up speaking Persian. According to the logic of modern nationalism tied to ethnicity, territory, and mother tongue, I call myself a Persian. However, Mana Kia’s argument serves to show that this was not the case before modern nationalism. Over the course of seven chapters, Kia argues that Persian ethnicity was not only based on blood and lineage, nor were “native” Persian speakers the only people considered to be Persian. A Persian could be anyone in the vast cultural cosmopolis stretching from the Balkans to Bengal who was associated with a set of embedded forms, acquired and circulated transregionally, in which Persian operated as a shared language. She tells us that premodern authors did not use a single term in reference to writers and speakers of Persian (e.g., Tājīk, ‘Ajām, Qizilbāsh) and that these terms were not free-standing, but were bound to specific contexts.

Kia reconceptualizes the meaning of origin and place in the context of Persian by focusing on people who lived in Iran and Hindustan in the eighteenth century. The book’s temporal focus spans between two critical events: the fall of the Safavids in 1722 and the production of Macaulay’s famous 1835 memorandum, “Minute upon Indian Education.” The former is critical because it defined the shared meaning of place and origin and brought about the construction of our modern idea of Iran, while the latter is significant since it formally began the process of displacing Persian as the language of power in the subcontinent and thus transformed shared meanings based on origin, place, and lineage (p. 20).

Kia has thoughtfully drawn on a constellation of primary sources by three interconnected generations of authors. These works, which she collectively calls “commemorative texts,” include a wide range of histories, *tazkirahs* (often translated as biographical dictionaries), travelogues, and autobiographies. To access the memoirs of Safavid times, Kia focuses on authors such as Muhammad ‘Alī Hazīn Lāhījī (d. 1766/1180) and Vālih Dāghistānī (d. 1756/1169). For the accounts of the next generation, particularly about Nadir Shah’s era, she has mostly focused on the works of Luṭf ‘Alī Āzar Baygdilī (d. 1780/1195) and ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī (d. 1784/1198). To examine memoirs of the third generation who fled the Iranian domain after the fall of the Safavids, she selected scholars such as Abū Ṭālib Khān Iṣfahānī (d. 1806/1220) and ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Shushtarī (d. 1806/1220). According to Kia, these *adibs* (bearers of *adab*), as the representative figures of different geographical places and lineages, are all Persians. She argues that their place of birth constituted only one element of their lineage alongside other types of places, such as ancestral homeland, and site of study or profession, which assumed more significance than their birthplace (p. 104). Kia sees these diversities as not categorical but more “aporetic” (as formulated by Derrida): meaning, based on porous limits and permeable distinction.

Adab is a key concept for Kia. It is through Persianate *adab* that lineage, place, origin, and language gained meaning for people as a basis of identification as Persians. She understands *adab* as the aesthetic and ethical form of thinking, acting, and speaking, the epistemological ground on which Persians identified themselves. In other words, perceiving, desiring, and experiencing *adab* provided the coherent logic of being Persian. Through *adab*, space turned into place, and place obtained a moral meaning (p. 96). It was through the logic of *adab* that relations between selves and collectives became intelligible (p. 100), lineage was understood (p. 102), and language was deployed. *Adab* regulated an understanding of kinship distinct from blood and situated Persians ontologically in a world of relationships (p. 200).

The centrality of the term *adab* in the main argument of the book begs a deeper and broader historical examination of the term, especially the differences that Persianate *adab*—as portrayed in Pahlavi sources, *Shāhnāma*, and *andarz* literature—may have had with the modalities of *adab* in the broader Islamicate world. Kia does not directly speak about the limitations and boundaries of *adab*. Therefore, greater clarity on the interplay of

aesthetics and ethics within the discourse of *adab* would have further strengthened her argument. Specifically, how did different manifestations of *adab* function in the process of being transregionally Persian? Also, the reader may wonder what could be considered as the counter-*adab*. That is to say, upon what basis did Persianate *adab* mark certain people as *bī-adab* (who lacks *adab*) and certain attributions and behaviors as *bī-adabāna* (lacking *adab*)?

Besides the term *adab*, throughout the book, Kia revisits many emic terms such as Turan, Hindustan, and Timurids, which, despite being approximate and contextual-based, resurrect the broader interpretations of place and origin before nationalism. In addition to the multifarious arguments in favor of the Persianate hermeneutic of *adab*, Kia also offers a novel approach to reading Persianate biographical literature (*tazkirah*). She highlights a conventional method and structure of remembering the past between the authors of commemorative texts. Apart from commenting on the lives of notable figures, Kia shows us how these texts served as means by which authors identified themselves and claimed their affiliations. Biographers represented certain pasts and certain individuals in a specific way within which their lineages and social relationships were nested, and they did so based on the epistemology of Persianate *adab*.

Kia has managed to develop and justify her argument and recover premodern configurations of identity and sociability that have been displaced by modern nationalism. *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism* is a strong addition to the burgeoning field of Persianate studies and a product of excellent primary source research, particularly beneficial for scholars of Persian literature, Middle Eastern and South Asian studies, Islam, and transnationalism. Overall, Kia's novel insights and approaches locate *Persianate Selves* among the books that will generate lasting conversations in the field, as suggested by the name of its author, *mānā* (perpetual).

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Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900. Kevin L. Schwartz (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). Pp. 233. \$100.00 hardcover. ISBN 9781474450843

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Kevin L. Schwartz's *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900* takes a fresh approach to discussing the "literary return" (*bāzgasht-e adabi*) school of poetry that reached its zenith at the Qajar court of Fath 'Alī Shāh (1772–1834). Schwartz frees the discussion of this era from the framework of stylistics and nationalism and considers the concept of literary return as an extra-national phenomenon, focusing on "literary communities debating and engaging an open-ended canon according to their own social and political contexts" in Iran, Afghanistan, and India (23). In doing so, he upends the conventional scholarly narrative, shedding new light on historical details and providing a model for further research.

The book is divided into an introduction and four chapters, the first examining the place of literary return within the historiographical discourse and the other three offering case studies from Iran, Afghanistan, and India. The introduction stresses the importance of biographical dictionaries (*tazkireh*) as a means of “exploring the social bonds among communities of poets” (23) as well as revealing how poets related to the larger community. Schwartz mines certain biographical dictionaries to create graphical aids he calls “network maps.”

The first chapter explores the tendency among Persian poets in Iran, Afghanistan, and India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to refer to past masters of the canon. It opens with a review of Muhammad Taqī Bahār’s conceptualization of the literary return school and the so-called Indian style (*sabk-e Hindī*). Schwartz recognizes that Bahār “leveraged” the *tazkireh* genre to “shape a narrative of Persian literature’s development” and notes that Bahār shifted the focus from an international body of Persian literature “into a narrative of Iranian literary history” (37, emphasis in the original). Contrasted with this new Iranian literature was the Indian style. Schwartz characterizes Bahār’s view of the Indian style as “Persian poetry gone astray and in decline” (38). He argues that Bahār’s portrayal of literary development as a cultural conflict divided by national borders interrupted our understanding of how poets responded to the events of their day and interacted with the canonical body of Persian literature. Although Schwartz relies on Bahār’s *Sabkshenāsi* for his argument, that work was explicitly intended as a history of Persian prose. Although the text supports Schwartz’s argument, he makes fewer references to Bahār’s writings addressing poetic stylistics.

Schwartz then examines evidence for the existence of a literary return school of poets in Iran. Looking at literary biographies and anthologies by authors such as Lotf ‘Alī “‘Azar” Baygdelī (d. 1781) and Rezā Qolī Khān Hedāyat (d. 1871), Schwartz traces the roots of the historiographical process that reduced the complex “social and historical circumstances of post-Safavid Isfahan” to a simplistic narrative that served as “a crucial linchpin in the story of Iranian literary salvation” (48). He addresses the paradox of the depiction of literary return as both revival and mimicry by Hedāyat and later critics. Of course, portraying the poetry of the era as such allowed poets of the early twentieth century (like Bahār) to break with tradition while also positioning themselves as the true guardians of Iran’s literary heritage.

In Afghanistan and India, the concept of literary return is detached from Iranian nationalism. Modern scholars of Afghan poetry debate the existence of a coherent movement, although that debate has largely been shaped by the model for discussing literary return in Iran: poets imitating older styles “at the expense of other styles across state and society.” This model, Schwartz argues, ignores the social environment in which the Iranian school was nurtured and assumes a “coherent assembly of poets” (57). Removing the idea of literary return from the conception of a literary school in geographical proximity, perhaps with the patronage of a court, and considering it as a trend in a larger arena “allows for assessing engagement with the masters in the nineteenth century as a feature and function of textual production and circulation” (57). Schwartz takes as his point of reference the genre of Afghan “war-ballads” (*jangnāmeḥ*) that described the events of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842) in the style of Ferdawsī’s *Shāhnāmeḥ*.

In the case of South Asia, discussions of literary return have been subsumed into a narrative of the decline of the Persian language in the face of British policies promoting English, as well as “the growing usage of Urdu as a means of literary expression” (59). British involvement with the Mughal successor states gave rise to an English-speaking class of administrative secretaries (*monshi*), replacing Persian as the administrative language. Schwartz describes this phenomenon within a broader trend in which the “prevalence and practice of Persian administrative norms were slowly being phased out.” As for the rise of Urdu literature, Schwartz traces the complex path, “occurring in fits and starts in both the Subcontinent’s north and south over several hundred years” (63), toward becoming a literary language in the nineteenth century. Still, as he notes, Persian poetry retained an important place within literary culture and argues it should be considered as having “refashioned” itself when confronted by social and linguistic change, rather than being overwhelmed.

Reference to the past masters of Persian literature was one way in which this refashioning was articulated.

The second chapter focuses on the development of the literary return movement in Isfahan during the eighteenth century. Schwartz argues that these developmental stages demonstrate how the urge to refer to the earlier epochs of Persian poetry were driven both by social and political change as well as the links between poets that formed a distinct community. It is an overdue historicization of the movement's roots, digging into the effect of patronage and politics and providing evidence for the poets' views directly from their poems. Schwartz provides a visual network map to show how poets interacted with or related to each other. I found these illustrative aids a provocative means for exploring avenues of research, although one regrets that they were not printed in color and given a larger space, particularly as they grow more complex.

Chapter 3 studies the war-ballads of Afghanistan based on Ferdawsī's *Shāhnāmeḥ*, as mentioned. Schwartz's approach to these texts differs significantly from that in chapters 2 and 4 because it is the genre itself that manifests the idea of literary return:

Their [the war-ballads'] very existence may point to an alternative model of what is meant by 'literary return,' based not entirely on collective action and output by a group of poets, but on processes of textual production, circulation and reception as well. (129)

He also acknowledges that imitations of the *Shāhnāmeḥ* are found throughout South Asia as well as Afghanistan and Iran. The strongest connection to the other two cases is how poets in the nineteenth century referred to one of the foundational works of Persian poetry to comment on contemporary events. The example goes a long way toward refuting the claim of later historians that literary return only produced pale imitations of the masters with no connection to the author's social environment. It could be argued however, that Schwartz himself is drawing geographical borders around a literary phenomenon, that is, *Shāhnāmeḥ*-like poems, that transcended them. He does anticipate this criticism to a certain extent by discussing British involvement in the production of these texts, but it does leave the reader to wonder why this section of the book required a geographical designation at all.


The fourth chapter discusses literary return at the court of the last Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ghaws Khān Bahadur. It offers a fascinating look at a community of poets debating the relevance of classical Persian poetry while the Persian language itself was disappearing from "cosmopolitan" use. The existence of this literary activity complicates, if not contradicts, the narrative of Persian poetry's decline in South Asia. He describes literary debates about the relationship between classical poetry and later styles that echoed the concerns of poets in Iran and elsewhere. He supports his argument again with a set of complex network maps, which can be difficult to decipher although they do give a good impression of these intricate sets of relationships. The chapter provides an interesting perspective not just on the debate about literary return but on the development of Persian poetry as poets coped with a shifting political, social, and literary landscape.

Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900 is the first serious attempt to pick apart one of the foundational assumptions of Persian literary historiography and achieves its goal admirably. Schwartz adds a great deal to our understanding of the historical facts surrounding this era and demonstrates that the relationship between poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with their predecessors was born of social conditions and used by those later authors to understand and reflect on their times. He takes this idea into the Persianate world, uncovering communities of poets grappling with the same issues. Even when the application is a little uneven, it is still an intriguing and useful tool for provoking further scholarship. Finally, the book is notable for transcending the criticism of scholars who dismiss the poetry of this era on qualitative terms and claim that the best that can be said is that some poets produced worthy imitations of their betters. Poetry is born of people communicating their ideas about the

world around them, where they have come from, and where they are going, and Schwartz's work asks us to listen more closely to these conversations.

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The City and the Wilderness: Indo-Persian Encounters in Southeast Asia. Arash Khazeni (Oakland, CA: California University Press, 2020). Pp. 264. \$85.00 (Hardcover), \$29.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 9780520289680.

Reviewed by Kevin L. Schwartz , Research Fellow, Czech Academy of Sciences

The frontier is a space of natural contradiction. It is as much defined by expansion and fluidity as contraction and demarcation. But amidst this messiness, it is also a place of encounter and contact. It is this last facet of the frontier that frames *The City and the Wilderness: Indo-Persian Encounters in Southeast Asia* by Arash Khazeni, a Professor of History at Pomona College. The book is a series of micro-histories tracing the ways in which British and Indo-Persian officials, secretaries, travelers, botanists, and artists understood, mapped, and defined the Southeastern frontier of the Mughal Empire by employing a hybrid epistemological framework that “merged Indo-Persian knowledge and its perceptions of the wondrous edge of the Indian Ocean with the Orientalist pursuits of the East India Company and its scientific wing” (p. 2).

The book is divided into two parts. Part One, “Indian Ocean Wonders,” explores how the Southeast Asian world, or “lands below the winds,” was depicted by Indo-Persian travelers through an Islamicate frame of wonders (*‘aja’ib*) tinged with a new appreciation for European scientific knowledge. As eighteenth-century “Indo-Persian travelers came to serve the East India Company as intermediaries, interpreters, and translators of environments, kingdoms, and cultures on the edges of Mughal India” (p. 49), traces of the colonial sciences—such as archaeology, geography, and botany—began to rub-off in their works. The result of this amalgamation was the creation of “hybrid” texts that captured the period of transregional contact taking shape during the waning days of the Mughals and rise of the British Raj. While cultural intermediaries in the opening chapters, like Mirza Abu Talib Khan Isfahani and Mir ‘Abd al-Latif Khan Shushtari, are not unknown to scholars for their treatment of the European or Indian “other,” their observations of the Southeast Asian frontier are freshly presented here.

The second part of the book, “Mughal Meridian,” consists of three chapters. Each chapter focuses on a different figure’s engagement with the imperial and cultural worlds of Mrauk U (1430-1784) or the Konbaung dynasty (1752-1885). One is Michael Symes, who served as the envoy of the 1795 East India Company (EIC) embassy to the Konbaung dynasty and was “among those company agent-explorers embedded, skilled, and immersed in the cultural terrain of Persian” (p. 74). Symes and his mission were responsible for both making diplomatic contact with the Burmese Kingdom and providing the company with scientific knowledge of its physical and cultural landscape. The result was Symes’s Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava (1800), which was heavily based on information gleaned and mediated by Indo-Persian intermediaries and middle-men either accompanying the mission or residing in the Burmese Kingdom itself. Through a close accounting of the mission and Symes’s work, Khazeni demonstrates that the hybridity of colonial and Indo-Persian epistemologies can cut both ways in defining the texts they inhabit and thoughts they shape: if Abu Talib Khan and Mir ‘Abd al-Latif Khan wrote Indo-Persian travelogues with a colonial frame, then Symes wrote an English *safar-nāmāh* (travelogue). The textual frontiers of the

eighteenth and nineteenth-century Indo-Persian world, connecting genres and operating across languages, appear just as messy as the physical ones, and the exploration of their contours equally as enriching. Khazeni's attention to the genre-bending nature of the texts analyzed in *The City and the Wilderness* is a welcome contribution to more recent scholarship, such as that of Walter Hakala, Alexander Jabbari, and James Pickett, who have made similar observations elsewhere in the Persianate world.

The focus of Chapter Four is Singey Bey, who accompanied the 1795 EIC mission and was tasked with providing botanical and landscape drawings during the journey. These drawings would later appear as lithographs in Symes's printed account. Bey's drawings "were essential to the mission's venture to collect and classify the rare botanical specimens and flora of the Burmese Kingdom and its vast monsoon forests" (p. 119), Khazeni writes, and highlight the importance of the forest and fauna as a site of cultural encounter, in particular for the mission's contact with the sacred signs of Buddhism. Bey was among a cadre of native artists trained by the EIC in the 1790s and, for Khazeni, represents how colonial botany was indebted to people like him. It is yet another example of how the Indo-Persian "moonshee" (*munshi*) helped shape British colonial understandings of the surrounding world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, complementing the work of earlier scholars like Kumkum Chatterjee and Simon Digby.

The focus of the final chapter is another Indo-Persian *munshi*, Shah 'Azizallah Bukhari Qalandar, who along with others in the service of the EIC—through the employ of the Scottish officer and Orientalist John Murray MacGregor (d. 1822)—helped "decipher the syncretic Theravada Buddhist beliefs and rituals of Mrauk U through the translation of Pali literature into Persian" (p. 134). Shah 'Azizallah and others' translations from Pali-into-Persian reveal the syncretic world of Mrauk U, from the extent to which the kingdom relied on an Indo-Persian cultural lexicon for imperial self-fashioning to how its Muslim denizens could recognize and accept Buddhist holy men as akin to Sufi mystics and ascetics.

Here, it seems, on the frontier between the Mughal and Arakan Empires, between Islam and Buddhism, cultural and religious sensibilities were intertwined, enmeshed, and made mutually legible, a feat made possible by Indo-Persian peoples and vocabularies. There is perhaps no greater testament to the relevance of employing a Persianate frame to trace the transregional connections across South and Southeast Asia, nor to its overall methodological and scholastic viability elsewhere. The many (often valid) critiques levelled against the Persianate frame notwithstanding, most notably advanced by the late Shahab Ahmed, Khazeni convincingly argues that it was the world of Indo-Persian that brought together travelers, Sufis, Buddhists, Armenian merchants, Orientalists, secretaries, artists, and botanists. Remarkably, and crucially, there is nary a significant mention of Iran anywhere in the book. The Persianate frame, at times misapplied as a short-hand to explore *Iran's* contact with the outside world, demonstrates its fullest potential when Iran is historicized and de-centered from the narrative, or even absent altogether.

Khazeni's book also reveals the immense value of utilizing an "East-East" paradigm rather than one of "the West and the Rest" when it comes to exploring cross-cultural and cross-regional encounters in Eurasia. As Khazeni puts it: "It now seems worthwhile to delve more deeply into the archive of vernacular representations of spaces and environments, not within the context of the European encounter but rather within the missing terrain of inter-Asian contacts and exchanges (p. 13)." Khazeni has offered an admirable contribution to this growing body of literature that seeks to explore the construction and development of the transregional Persianate world in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries by looking outside of Europe. Further likeminded possibilities in the study of South and Southeast Asia, as elsewhere across the Persianate world, remain an open frontier.

Polymaths of Islam: Power and Networks of Knowledge in Central Asia. James Pickett (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020). Pp. 301. \$54.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9781501750243

Reviewed by Jürgen Paul, Center for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, Hamburg University, Hamburg, Germany (juergen.paul@uni-hamburg.de)

This book is a much revised version of a PhD dissertation. The author tackles the task of describing and analyzing the social and intellectual world of Central Asia, in particular Bukhara, during the long nineteenth century. This long century is practically coterminous with the rule of the Manghit dynasty (1753–1920); it lasts from the reestablishment of autochthonous rule following the Iranian intermezzo (Nadir Shah’s conquest of Transoxiana and Khwarazm in the 1740s) to the end of autocratic rule after the October Revolution and the subsequent establishment of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic.

The polymaths quoted in the title are Islamic scholars: ulema, graduates, alumni, and teachers of the famous Bukharan madrassas. Pickett not only considers them scholars, legal experts, qadis, or muftis, but also mystics, poets, healers, experts in occult sciences, astronomers, and astrologers, hence the term “polymath” in the book’s title. The world of these polymaths was undoubtedly the Persianate (Sunni) sphere, covering—in the nineteenth century—still much of the eastern Islamic world, in particular Central Asia and what is today Afghanistan, parts of the Indian subcontinent, and reaching out into the Turkic-speaking world, the steppes of Eurasia, Tatarstan, southern Siberia, and Xinjiang. These regions formed the catchment area of the Bukharan educational system, with Bukhara and wider Transoxiana at the center, followed by the mountainous regions that today belong to Tajikistan and the northern rim of the Hindu Kush. All other regions had a more marginal position in this world. Pickett shows that these areas were indeed home for the majority of students of the Bukharan madrassas. Students from Shi‘i Iran were not on the archival record examined in this study.

Polymaths of Islam meticulously analyzes prosopographical sources and biographical dictionaries that record the lives and deeds of scholars (mostly jurists), poets, and others. Together with narrative and archival sources (e.g., foundation deeds), these materials provide us with a much more detailed picture of the Bukharan madrassas than what has previously emerged. In light of Pickett’s historicization of Bukhara, the image we have today of the city as an ancient center of Islamic learning, going back perhaps even to the earliest centuries of Islam, has to be revised: Bukhara the Noble, or *Bukhara-yi sharif*, owes its fame as an educational center to the vast and continuous building and founding activities under the Manghits, and we can even suppose that there was a good deal of active promotion going on. Bukhara competed not with neighboring centers (such as Samarqand and Herat), but with the great capitals of the Persianate world. Bukhara faded only where Lahore and Delhi made their influence felt. On the other hand, Bukhara did not radiate into Shi‘i Iran even if the religious boundary was not as tight as is frequently assumed. In any case, at the end of the nineteenth century there were as many madrassas in Bukhara as in Istanbul, and they were rather busy.

Pickett does not analyze his polymaths of Islam in a social vacuum. They are one of several groups of notables, the other important group being the Turkic emirs who held political and military power, and monopolized a majority of influential positions in the Manghit state. Whereas scions of Turkic noble families could and sometimes did attend madrassas to a degree that made them part of the scholarly elite, this was impossible the other way round: no amount of teaching could allow a man not born into a relevant family access to certain offices and positions. Descent, and not learning, was the decisive factor here. Both groups of notables—the Islamic scholars and the Turkic emirs—depended on each other, however, to a degree that came close to symbiosis. Other important social groups, such as merchants and nobles engaged in long-distance trade, simply do not show up because there are no sources

about them. No one ever had the idea to compile a biographical dictionary of the great traders of Bukhara. This also is true for many other parts and periods of the Muslim world: landowners, traders, and others appear in the prosopographical literature only insofar as they won recognition as scholars, poets, or doctors.

The historical sources also allow a glimpse into the inner workings of the Bukharan madrassas, their curricula and syllabi. Pickett distinguishes a core curriculum comprised of Arabic—most of the works studied are in that language—logic, rhetoric, speculative theology, and philosophy. The rest, in particular substantive law, was taught in the selective courses, much of it in later years of education. The result is surprising, perhaps even for the author: “The curriculum aimed at cultivating intellectuals who were capable of grasping the underlying principles of their subject matter” (p. 111). This is very much in contrast to what previously was assumed: learning in late madrassas was learning by rote, deadly for the spirit, narrow in outlook, killing initiative and inspiration, and certainly not a path to using one’s own critical thinking. Moreover, it was hardly efficient on top of all that, with ignoramus graduates in large numbers. Bukharan madrassas, until now, were judged along the lines established by the modernizers in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Central Asia, the so-called *Jadids* (the “New or Young Ones,” the name is derived from the new methods in learning they set out to establish), in particular perhaps Sadriiddin ‘Ayni, the famous Tajik litterateur (1878–1954). Their judgment of Bukharan madrassas was pungent, and they frequently covered their former colleagues with acrimonious scorn and mockery. This view of the Bukharan madrassas and their graduates and teachers survived into the Soviet period: no wonder, then, that the Bukharan madrassas were depicted as supposed dens of superstition, made to instill ignorance and prevent the intellectual awakening of the toiling masses.

Research on Central Asian intellectual and educational history has concentrated very much on the *Jadids*, with much less space allotted to the “old” ones, or the *Qadims*: if there is something new, by necessity there must be something old, and if there is a *Jadid* movement, it follows that all the others were partisans of the old system. These people of course were the vast majority of Bukharan madrassa graduates until 1920. Serious attempts to deal with their intellectual production were made only after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Pickett’s work is not the first, but one of the best documented books on them, and he shows a richness and complexity of intellectual activities that were a revelation to this reviewer. Pickett achieves this in particular because of his broad scope of sources. In addition to the prosopographical literature, chronicles, and archival material (in Uzbek, Persian, and Russian), he has used a hitherto practically unknown type of manuscript source, the so-called *jung*. *Jung* books are notebooks, mostly kept by men working in the judiciary for their own use. There are quite a lot of these notebooks; in Tashkent (in the holdings of the Beruni Institute for Oriental Studies) there are about fifty of them, and smaller collections are kept in Dushanbe and Saint Petersburg. To the best of my knowledge, Pickett is the first researcher to have made use of this type of source material for studies of social history.

Overall, the *jung* notebooks reflect the multifarious activities of their writers: they have a lot of legal material, in particular copies and drafts for legal statements (*fatwas*), but also other legal documents, together with, for some manuscripts, a large number of original papers with their seals. Besides this scholastic and legal material, they include poetry, mystical treatises, correspondence, texts on occult sciences, recipes for medicine, and guides to drawing up talismans and other magical agents. They also contain some economical information: lists of how much a *qadi* would earn in a given place, notes on debts, the lending of books and money, and so forth. Thus, they reflect exactly what Pickett has set out to show: that the *qadis* and *muftis* in late nineteenth-century Bukhara were more than just legal scholars; they were indeed polymaths. The merit of this book lies primarily in the profound reevaluation of the Bukharan madrassas and their graduates.

Exile and the Nation: The Parsi Community of India and the Making of Modern Iran. Afshin Marashi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020). Pp. 328. \$55.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781477320792

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In the olden days it was the custom that the Zoroastrians of India would go to Iran to consult with the wise sages of Zoroastrianism in order to learn the faith. Today a different situation prevails in which the Iranian Zoroastrians have become ignorant of their religion and beliefs and it is the Parsis who have achieved knowledge of the faith and produced great scholars.¹

As the Indian Zoroastrian scholar, public figure, and philanthropist Dinshah Irani wrote in his popular Persian-language introduction to Zoroastrianism, the 1927 *Peyk-e Mazdāyasnan* quoted above, for centuries the Indian community, known as Parsis, looked to Iran for religious guidance and instruction. Among other sources, this dependence is evidenced in the *revāyāt* texts, epistles containing doctrinal and other questions sent from the Indian community to their Iranian coreligionists. These letters aimed to bring Indian religious practice in line with Iranian Zoroastrian orthodoxy.²

Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though, a radical realignment took place in the relationship between the Zoroastrian communities of India and Iran. Precipitated by technological advances in communications, travel, and industry, as well as the rise of new political formations and new ideologies, the supremacy of the center over the diaspora was reversed.

In part, Afshin Marashi's *Exile and the Nation: The Parsi Community of India and the Making of Modern Iran* is a new history of this historic realignment. The book's innovation, and one of its main contributions to the field, is how it puts different disciplines and traditions of Iranian studies in mutually illuminating conversation. In particular, Marashi juxtaposes the study of Zoroastrianism as a religious and intellectual tradition, and especially the Parsi stream thereof, with research on colonial and postcolonial Iranian modernities.

Marashi begins his study in the mid-nineteenth century, by which point "the bulk of the Parsi community's prosperous industrial and merchant class had settled in Bombay, and the city came to serve as the nodal point for a Parsi global trading network" (p. 11). With their newfound political clout and prosperity, the Indian community sought to improve the conditions of Iranian Zoroastrians; Parsis established schools and charitable foundations in Iran, sent permanent representatives, and appealed to the ruling powers on behalf of the Iranian community.

The first chapter of *Exile and the Nation* deals most directly with this inter-Zoroastrian issue. The chapter's focus is the figure of Arbab Kaykhosrow Shahrokh (1874–1940). Born into rural poverty in Kerman, Shahrokh was an Iranian Zoroastrian who came to serve as the community's representative in the Iranian parliament for three decades beginning in 1909, among many other public roles. The critical turning point in Shahrokh's career was the patronage and education he received from the Parsi community. Shahrokh was sent to study in a Bombay school whose mission was, as Marashi writes, "to produce a new Parsi intelligentsia committed to fostering a liberal, reformed, and modernist understanding of the faith" (p. 31). This steeping in liberal ideals of tolerance and equality, Marashi argues, inspired Shahrokh to challenge the discriminatory social restrictions imposed on Zoroastrians

¹ Irani, *Peyk-e Mazdāyasnan*, 8–9, quoted in Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 83.

² Sheffield, "Primary Sources," 533–34.

by the Muslim-majority society and to give birth to an Iranian nation more modern and enlightened during the Constitutional Revolution and thereafter.

Marashi opens the first chapter with Shahrokh's death in 1940, describing the paradoxically minor coverage in the Iranian press of the passing of such an influential figure. The explanation, we learn, may well lie in the fact that Shahrokh's son, Shah-Bahram, served in Nazi Germany's Ministry of Propaganda as the principal spokesman for the Persian-language broadcasts of Radio Berlin. Under the shadow of Reza Shah's increasingly dictatorial reign, many believed that Shahrokh was assassinated as punishment for his son's unwelcome politics.

The narrative framing of this chapter as a murder plot deserves our attention for a number of reasons. First of all, it encapsulates an overarching theme: The father suffers the sins of the son—a reversal of the biblical injunction unto the seventh generation. This ethical dictum, here expressed most starkly and violently, is, in a sense, Marashi's guiding principle throughout the book. Each of the book's five chapters takes a different perspective on the porous boundary between liberalism and illiberalism. The Parsi attempt to ground the creation of a more tolerant, open, and modern Iranian nation in the shared ethnic and cultural heritage of Zoroastrians and Muslims alike necessarily also produced its opposite. Marashi embraces and welcomes this paradox, reveling in the "myriads of conflicted, ambivalent, and often contradictory responses stemming from the same experience of newfound transoceanic contact" between Parsis and Iranians (p. 11). *Exile and the Nation* incorporates the best insights of deconstructionism and postcolonialism without being beholden to their jargon and style.

Questions of style are just as central to *Exile and the Nation* as questions of argument. Marashi has chosen a biographical approach to his subject, and each chapter refracts the Parsi-Iranian encounter through the prism of a single, exemplary life. Following the discussion of Shahrokh are chapters devoted to the Parsi intellectual, philanthropist, and community leader Dinshah Irani (1881–1938; chapter 2); the Bengali poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), whose official visit to Iran in 1932 came about through Parsi intervention (chapter 3); Ebrahim Pourdavoud (1886–1968), the Iranian Muslim scholar and translator of classical Zoroastrian literature into Persian (chapter 4); and Saif Azad (1884–1971), the Third-Worldist, revolutionary, and agitator against British colonialism (chapter 5). In Marashi's skillful and novelistic retellings, these biographies reveal the extent to which Parsis influenced the development of Iranian nationalism and the Iranian nation as interlocutors, teachers, impresarios, and financial backers. At the same time, we learn how that influence intersected (again, contradictorily) with Romanticism and racism, colonialism and revolution, liberalism and authoritarianism. One of the most important lessons of *Exile and the Nation* is that the Parsi moment in modern Iranian history was anything but marginal or parochial.

My own field is Zoroastrian literature in Middle Persian: the Pahlavi "ninth-century books," in Harold Bailey's famous coinage, written or redacted in the first centuries after the Islamic conquest of Iran in 650. There is much in Marashi's book that was particularly instructive for me and helped to bridge the gap between "classical" Zoroastrianism and the Parsi religion of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My own limited (and, it must be said, very naive) experience living and learning from the Parsi community in Bombay left me primarily perplexed. Indian Zoroastrianism seemed almost unrelated to the religion described in the *Bundahišn*, the *Denkard*, and other Middle Persian works. This was, of course, unfair and no more sensible than judging a twenty-first-century Manhattan Jew by the standards of the Mishnah—though my impression is that I was not alone in having this particular prejudice. In any case, Marashi's discussion of Irani's Zoroastrian writings was especially illuminating. Irani's Persian-language books, aimed at the popular audience of Muslim Iranians, reimaged the religion of Zoroaster as an ethical and mystical doctrine in terminology borrowed from classical Persian Sufism and other sources.

I would have wished for *Exile and the Nation* to devote more space to literary questions. How did reading Pahlavi literature impact these or other thinkers' later ideas and writings? Did the content and theology of the Zoroastrian canon, which was in fact still taking shape in the writings of Parsis and Orientalists alike during the period, make a difference, or were the law-

bound and theological Pahlavi books precisely what Marashi's heroes paradoxically rejected? Nonetheless, the work succeeds in reconceptualizing Iranian modernity, and Iranian nationalism especially, in light of the Parsi-Iranian encounter. Through the stories of the book's five protagonists, *Exile and the Nation* shows how Parsis played pivotal roles in the development of the ideologies that defined twentieth-century Iran. At the same time, Marashi's book expertly weaves together disparate subfields within Iranian studies—namely, classical Zoroastrianism, colonialism, and Sufism—that are rarely in conversation. As such, scholars in the field will doubtlessly find *Exile and the Nation* enlightening and instructive.

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SHORT REVIEWS

Meysam Safarchi, *Tejārisāzi va masrafgarāyi: tahavvol-e fazā va farhang-e shahri dar Tehran* [Commercialization and Consumerism: Transformation of Urban Space and Culture in Tehran] (Tehran, Iran, Ney Publishing, 2021)

Reviewed by Nooh Monavvary , University of Tehran
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Commercialization and Consumerism is a critical reading of what the city of Tehran has been going through during the recent decades. By a dual focus on the fields of urban sociology and political economy, Safarchi has led an extensive qualitative inquiry to show how Neoliberalism has gradually captured urban spaces while public bodies of authority and governance have remained apparently inactive in the face of financialization, corruption, and privatization of public spaces that have deprived social and communal owners of the city of almost all of the newly created spaces. Regardless of arguments on either irrelevance or inadequacy of the concept of Neoliberalism in the case of Iranian political economy, Safarchi's contribution is particularly significant for two main reasons. First, he consciously refuses to follow the well-established approach of merging a critical cultural study of the city with augmenting an aesthetic resistance by consumers. This cultural approach results in an equivocal analysis that might not even see the most obvious cases of neoliberalization in Tehran's urban spaces. What's more, he is audacious enough to talk about the variegated roles of Islamism in providing ideological content for the comprehensive project of commercializing public spaces. Suffice it to say, Safarchi's book is definitely a reliable source for reflecting on the consequences of exposing Tehran to emergent patterns of Neoliberalism. Finally, I would like to express my sincere respect to Meysam, who left us way too soon and lived as a true believer in the emancipatory role of critical social sciences.

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