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A HISTORY OF
PERSIAN LITERATURE
X

General Editor – Ehsan Yarshater

PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Edited by
Charles Melville

I.B.TAURIS

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A History of Persian Literature
Volume X

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General Editor—Ehsan Yarshater

Volume X

Persian Historiography

Edited by
Charles Melville

Sponsored by
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Iraj Afshar
(1925–2011)

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on which was presented to the Cordoba symposium on colors in Islamic art, and will be published in the Proceedings); a reevaluation of the so-called "Gazelle Mosaic" at Khirbat al-Mafjar; and an exploration of writings on love in Persian literature.

Charles Melville is Professor of Persian History at the University of Cambridge. He has been a long-serving member of the Council of the British Institute of Persian Studies and has also served on the Board of the Societas Iranologica Europaea (1995–2003). Since 1999, he has been Director of the Shahnama Project, and since 2006 he has been President of The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA), both based in Cambridge. His main research interests are in the history and culture of Iran in the Mongol to Safavid periods and the illustration of Persian manuscripts. In addition to numerous articles on Il-Khanid history and Persian historiography, recent publications include edited volumes of *Safavid Persia* (1996); *Shahnama Studies* (2006); and "Millennium of the *Shahnama* of Firdausi" (*Iranian Studies*, 2010, with Firuza Abdullaeva); *The Persian Book of Kings. Ibrahim Sultan's Shahnama* (2008, also with Firuza Abdullaeva) and *Epic of the Kings. The Art of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh* (2010, with Barbara Brend).

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Sara Nur Yıldız wrote this chapter during her post-doctoral fellowship at the Orient-Institut Istanbul while on research leave from the history department of Istanbul Bilgi University. A historian of medieval and early Ottoman Anatolia, with interests in empire-building and frontier politics, political culture and historical writing, she received her Ph.D from the Department of Near Eastern Languages at the University of Chicago in 2006. She is completing a monograph based on her doctoral dissertation, *Mongol Rule in Seljuk Anatolia: The Politics of Conquest and History Writing, 1243–1282*, as well as working on a general study of Seljuk Anatolia, *The Seljuks of Anatolia: A Muslim Empire on the Frontier*.

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FOREWORD

In the 1990s, I gradually became convinced that the time had come for a new, comprehensive, and detailed history of Persian literature, given its stature and significance as the single most important accomplishment of the Iranian peoples. Hermann Ethé's pioneering survey of the subject, "Neupersische Litteratur" in *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie* II, was published in 1904, and E. G. Browne's far more extensive *A Literary History of Persia*, with ample discussion of the political and cultural background of each period, appeared in four successive volumes between 1902 and 1924. The English translation of Jan Rypka's *History of Iranian Literature*, written in collaboration with a number of other scholars, came out in 1968 under his own supervision.

Iranian scholars have also made a number of significant contributions throughout the 20th century to different aspects of Persian literary history. These include B. Foruzânfar's *Sokhan va sokhanvarân* (On Poetry and Poets, 1929–33); M.-T. Bahâr's *Sabk-shenâsi* (Varieties of Style in Prose) in three volumes (1942); and a number of monographs on individual poets and writers. The truly monumental achievement of the century in this context was Dh. Safâ's wide-ranging and meticulously researched *Târikh-e adabiyyât dar Irân* (History of Literature in Iran) in five volumes and eight parts (1953–79). It studies Persian poetry and prose in the context of their political, social, religious, and cultural background, from the rise of Islam to almost the middle of the 18th century.

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that Persian literature has received the attention it merits, bearing in mind that it has been the jewel in the crown of Persian culture in its widest sense and the standard bearer for aesthetic and cultural norms of the literature of the eastern regions of the Islamic world from about the 12th century; and that it has profoundly influenced the literatures of Ottoman

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Turkey, Muslim India and Turkic Central Asia—a literary corpus that could inspire Goethe, Emerson, Matthew Arnold, and Jorge Luis Borges among others, and was praised by William Jones, Tagore, E.M. Forster, and many others. Persian literature remained a model for the literatures of the above regions until the 19th century, when the European influence began effectively to challenge the Persian literary and cultural influence, and succeeded in replacing it. Whereas Persian art and architecture, and more recently Persian films, have been written about extensively and at different levels, for a varied audience, Persian literature has largely remained the exclusive domain of specialists. It is only in the past few years that the poems of Rumi have drawn to themselves the kind of popular attention enjoyed by Omar Khayyam in the 19th century.

A History of Persian Literature (HPL) was conceived as a comprehensive and richly documented work, with illustrative examples and a fresh critical approach, written by prominent scholars in the field. An Editorial Board was selected and a meeting of the Board arranged in September 1995 in Cambridge, UK, in conjunction with the gathering that year of the Societas Europaea Iranologica, where the broad outlines of the editorial policy were drawn up.

Fourteen volumes were initially envisaged to cover the subject, including two Companion Volumes. Later, two additional volumes devoted to Persian prose from outside Iran (the Indian subcontinent, Anatolia, Central Asia) and historiography, respectively, were added. The titles of the volumes are listed in the beginning of this volume. Of the Companion Volumes, the first deals with pre-Islamic Iranian literatures, and the second with the literature of Iranian languages other than Persian, as well as Persian and Tajik oral folk literature.

It is hoped that the multi-volume *HPL* will provide adequate space for the analysis and treatment of all aspects of Persian literature.

The inclusion of a volume on Persian historiography is justified by the fact that Persian histories, like the biographical accounts of mystics or poets, often exploit the same stylistic and literary features and the same kinds of figures of speech that one encounters in Persian poetry and belles-lettres, with skilful use of bal-

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anced cadences, rhyme, varieties of metaphor and hyperbole, and an abundance of embellishing devices. This was considered to impart a literary dimension to the prose, enhance its esthetic effect, and impress the reader with the literary prowess of the author. The study of Persian historiography should therefore be regarded as a component of any comprehensive study of Persian literary prose and the analysis of its changing styles and contours. Moreover, in pre-modern times, "literature" was defined more broadly than it is today and often included historiography.

As is evident from the title of the volumes, *A History of Persian Literature*'s approach is neither uniformly chronological nor entirely thematic. Developments occur in time and to understand a literary genre requires tracing its course chronologically. On the other hand, images, themes, and motifs have lives of their own, and need to be studied not only diachronically but also synchronically, regardless of the time element. A combination of the two methods has therefore been employed to achieve a better overall treatment.

Generous space has been given to modern poetry, fiction, and drama in order to place them in the wider context of Persian literary studies and criticism.

About the present volume

The two major literary histories of Persia written in the last century, in English by Edward G. Browne, and in Persian by Zabihollâh Safâ, are commendably comprehensive in their broad vision. Rather than focusing on a narrow definition of literature and devoting their pages solely to the biographies of poets and prose writers and an analysis of their work, they included chapters depicting different historical eras with wide brush-strokes, placing Persian literature firmly in the context of the turbulent history of Persian speaking lands. Their work can be summed up as cultural histories in which alternating chapters on writers and their time offer a narrative of the interplay between history and literature through centuries.

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However, as Julie Meisami and Charles Melville explain in detail in their respective chapters, the very concepts of literature and history have been the topic of much debate in the past decades. The study of the cross-fertilization of the two disciplines has opened up new approaches. Interdisciplinary studies on the notions of power, patronage and transmission of knowledge, as well as, closer to home, the publication of editions of many Persian historical manuscripts in recent years, necessitate a timely reevaluation of the available material, and a closer look at its literary underpinnings.

The evolving nature of the social classes and the formative education of historians and other writers is a case in point. Persian historians very often rose from scribal ranks. The profession required a solid training in Arabic and in Islamic humanities; and its members were well versed in the use of rhetorical devices, which at times they exploited to excess. Persian histories are seldom straight narrations of events; more often they are also an exercise in artistry of expression; frequently citing verses from the Qor'an and prophetic traditions (*Hadith*) to display their erudition and buttress their authority.

As in the West, where Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Buffon's writings on natural history have long been admired and commented upon as much for their style as for their substance, in Iran too, style and the manner in which the past is invoked have been equally important. Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi's deployment of dramatic techniques and frequent juxtaposition of exempla from the past with events he had himself witnessed, or Atâ-Malek Joveyni's *Târikh-e Jahângoshâ*, where the chaos and cruelty of the age appear, in a closer reading, even more brutal when retold in the restrained manner of an erudite historian steeped in an ancient and sophisticated culture, are masterly works of human imagination, and hence literature in its widest sense.

On behalf of Charles Melville, the Editor of the volume, and myself as the General Editor, I would like to express our profound gratitude to Mohsen Ashtiany for his valuable suggestions and comments on the earlier drafts of the volume.

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FOREWORD

This volume is dedicated to the memory of my old colleague and dear friend Iraj Afshar, a noted historian and biographer, and an outstanding bibliographer. I greatly benefited from his vast knowledge of Iranian Studies. He published a considerable number of historical texts, medieval and modern, some of them, such as the diary of E'temâd al-Saltane (*ruznâme-ye khâterât*) are of utmost importance. The frequency with which his name appears throughout this volume, in the text as well as in the footnotes, bears witness to his unique and wide-ranging contribution to Iranian culture and history.

He wrote a number of significant contributions for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* as well as two fine chapters for the first volume in these series, on "Printing and Publishing" and on "Libraries and Librarianship."

Ehsan Yarshater
General Editor

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INTRODUCTION

Charles Melville

> It would be a wearisome and unprofitable task to enumerate the many Persian historical works composed during the last four centuries. (E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, IV, p. 444)

> If an ignorant critic […] objects that the majority of chronicles are the inventions, [dubious] subjects and myths of the ancients, mixing truth with falsehood, emaciation with corpulence, and right with wrong […], his misgivings can be refuted by this, that the Imams of the past and the great men of later times erected the building of this science [history] on truth and veracity. It is impossible that such men took calumny and lying as their standard, and would dare to pass down forgeries and fictions. Everything continuously handed down by them will of course be preserved from defect and deficiency. […] And if (God forbid!)—we are resigned to fate—some stories of the chronicles are fictitious, their profitable contents can be taken into account, such as the stories of *Kalile va Demne* and others. Although they are fabrications, which neither the authors nor the listeners believe ever actually happened, they provide incalculable profits and advantages. (Mirkh^{w}ând, *Rowzat-al-safâ*, pp. 14–15)

> Obviously, few events in medieval society were as transparent as the chroniclers' narratives suggested. Indeed, the very simplicity of the chronicle's representation of contemporary reality alerts us to its ideological function. (Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, p. 222)

1. Some Preliminary Observations

The decision to include a volume on historiography in *A History of Persian Literature* might not seem entirely obvious. The writing of 'history' might be regarded as a 'science' and indeed has

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been approached as such in some of the discussion surrounding the nature of history, focusing on the ideal of an objective and dispassionate presentation of 'facts,' and even deriving from them basic 'laws.' History is usually designated by Muslim writers as *elm-e târikh*, the standard translation of which would be 'the science of history,' or at least 'the study of history,' implying an academic or scholarly pursuit, although the place of history among the Islamic sciences has been somewhat ambiguous.[1]

As a disinterested record of 'events,' it is true, the most basic form of chronicle, such as originated in the medieval West in the Easter Tables or calendars of saints' days—on which other occurrences might be noted—could hardly be classified as 'literature,' any more than notes in a family Bible of details of personal importance, such as the birth of children, or local disasters. A celebrated text such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (dating in its final form to ca. 1154) contains sequences of statements like:

> 607. In this year Ceowulf fought the South Saxons. 611. In this year Cynegils succeeded to the kingdom in Wessex and ruled 31 years. 614. In this year Cynegils and Cwichelm fought at Beandum, and slew 2,065 Welsh.

These chronicles surely have no pretension to being a 'literary' composition, though later periods receive a fuller coverage and certainly cannot be considered artless.[2]

In the Middle Eastern context, an equivalent of these rudimentary records were the Babylonian king-lists, noting various events that took place ordered according to the year of the reign.[3]

This aspect of recording events, both past and present, has had a long history, from the earliest examples of annalistic writing in

1 For starting points, e.g. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* 2nd ed. (London, 1987), ch. 3, 'History, science, and morality;' Hayden White, "The burden of history," in idem, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 27–50; and F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968), esp. pp. 30–53.

2 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tr. G. N. Garmonsway, 2nd ed. (London, 1972), p. 23 (from the Laud Chronicle).

3 Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (Atlanta, 2004), e.g. pp. 17, 37–8.

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Persian, such as passages by Ebn-Fondoq (d. 1169), to a work like Mohammad-Hasan Khan Sani'-al-Dowle's *Montazam-e Nâseri* (1883) which gave way—or marked the transition to—official publications of annual facts and figures, the *Sâlnâme*s or Yearbooks.[4] What historians would give now, to have such information available for any year or series of years in the medieval period! But would they include such documents in a literary history, and indeed, are government Yearbooks now discussed as examples of modern literature?

Yet in fact, there is rather little of this annalistic treatment of history in the Persian case, and even when a chronicle is structured wholly or in part on an annalistic basis, a strong narrative element usually predominates (one feature that distinguishes Persian historical writing from most Arabic works). In the case of European historiographical studies, this distinction is reflected in the substantial body of discussion about the difference between a chronicler and an historian, or a 'chronicle' and a 'history,' only partly depending on the title given to the works in question at the time of composition, and implicating also the somewhat unsatisfactory concept of a distinction between the mere recording of events (facts) and their interpretation: unsatisfactory, because the two are not so easily separated.[5] The variety and fluidity of the formal aspects of Persian historiography, from the outset, anyway makes it unnecessary to pursue such generic distinctions here.

Nevertheless, there is also a certain ambiguity in the term 'history' itself, denoting as it does both the past and the academic study of the past, as well as the recording of events. The same is so with the Arabic term employed also in Persian: *ta'rikh* > *târikh*, the basic meaning of which is 'date' or 'era.' The historian (*movarrekh*, *târikh-nevis*) can be both a student of history and a chronicler of contemporary life.[6] The two activities are different and require different skills, though both imply the need for access to sources of

4 See Chapter 7.

5 See also below.

6 Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, pp. 11–17, for a brief semantic history of *ta'rikh*. The commonly used term for historian and historiography, *târikh-negâr(i)*, is of recent origin.

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information, and neither is immune from subjectivity in the choice of what to record, or how to determine what is important and why. Modern English dictionary definitions of 'history' emphasize the past, yet what we value most in history writing is the record of the chronicler's own times, that is, as a primary (first hand) source of history. The value we attach to the contemporary record of events has little or nothing to do with some perceived notion of the literary quality of the work. The dichotomy becomes particularly apparent when we move from the historiography of the past (e.g., the corpus of medieval and early modern chronicles), to the examination of modern historical writing, as is the case in the present volume. It is clear that Persian historiography of the 20th century is approached from a different vantage point (modern, mainly 'Western' notions of academic standards of historical research), reflecting of course the impact of Europe on this as many other aspects of Persian culture from the 19th century onwards.[7] The 'literary' or rhetorical aspects of the work of modern Iranian or Afghan historians are not regarded as relevant to their quality. To some extent, this is merely a parallel to the distinction between the study of history 'proper' and current affairs, or politics, which is still 'history' in the making.

Such questions are as much about the nature of literature as the nature of history. The concept of 'literature' could equally be viewed as rather ambiguous. On the one hand, we can speak comfortably enough about the 'scientific literature' on a given subject, or having got up to date with 'the literature'—referring to the available documentation about the topic in question. On the other hand, the term implies writings that have artistic value or merit; one wouldn't expect the Nobel Prize for Literature to go to the author of a Yearbook. The dictionary definitions exemplify these shades of meaning of the term literature, yet even if we eliminate the secondary senses of documentation, we are still left with the difficulty of questioning who decides on the artistic value or merit of a 'literary' work, and according to which criteria? As in the case of history, it takes a long-term perspective to identify what is last-

7 Iraj Afshar, "L'historiographie persane," *Luqmān* 10/2 (1994), pp. 57–72.

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ing, or significant, in the greater scheme of things. Furthermore, as noted in the introductory volume of this series, there is in fact no term in Persian for 'literature,' the word *adabiyyât* ('polite letters') being a modern invention originating in Turkey.[8]

It is not the purpose of this Introductory chapter to embark on a lengthy debate on the nature of history or historical writing, which has attracted so much attention elsewhere (though considerably less with respect to historical writing in Persian).[9] Such a debate will perhaps not lead us very far, in the present context, and with so few secondary studies of individual historians to draw upon. No more will we attempt to explore the definitions of literature itself. Any work such as this, however, devoted to the body of historical texts in the context of Persian literature, cannot avoid acknowledging that neither the concept of 'history' and 'literature,' nor the relationship between them, is as straightforward as a passive acceptance of the terms might imply. This is particularly so in view of the application of literary critical theories to historical texts, which has provoked such a debate in Western scholarly work in recent decades. The 'deconstruction' of historical writing, though aimed primarily at the modern discipline of history, necessarily implicates past authors also, although they had less trouble than contemporary historians in establishing

> the value of the study of the past, not as an end in itself, but as a way of providing perspectives on the present that contribute to the solution of problems peculiar to [their] own time.[10]

The result is at least recognition that we need to regard the writing of history as more than the simple recording of 'facts,' and to read the historical texts as more than mere sources of information about past events.[11] Indeed, the concept of the medieval chronicle as a

8 J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *HPL* I, pp. 2–3.

9 Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative* (Columbus, Ohio, 1980), esp. pp. 6–19, gives some useful reflections on the topic.

10 Hayden White, "The burden of history," p. 41.

11 J.S. Meisami, "History as literature," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), esp. pp. 15–18; see also below, Chapter 1.

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literary artefact can be embraced wholeheartedly in the current endeavour, especially in the context of exploring the *writing* of history, rather than the study of history itself.[12]

For our purposes, then, the question of definition has been approached sufficiently in the first volume of this series in the chapter on 'The History of Literature.' Hanaway observes that

> Literary works were produced in an elevated register of language that was quite distinct from the language of everyday speech and popular literature. [...] it follows that literature included almost everything written that strove to make an aesthetic impression and was not of a narrowly scientific or technical nature.[13]

Although this formulation begs a few questions, it emphasises the crucial point that literary works are written products in a largely illiterate milieu, and draws attention to the use of 'literary' language. Although neither Hanaway nor de Bruijn are specifically concerned with historical literature, both refer to the fact that "literature responded to, and upheld, traditional social and religious values," (Hanaway) and that "writers and poets who participate in a [literary] tradition of this kind create their works, either consciously or unconsciously, according to a set of artistic norms" (de Bruijn).[14] It is in this spirit, of regarding historical writing as part of the literary tradition of Persian culture, that historiography finds its rightful place in a volume in this series, echoing the fact that it is a chronicle, Bal'ami's translation of Tabari's History, that is almost the earliest surviving "monument of Persian prose."[15]

12 Hayden White, "The historical text as literary artifact," in *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 81–100.

13 W. Hanaway, in *HPL* I, pp. 72–73.

14 Hanaway, p. 73; de Bruijn, p. 1.

15 G. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* (Paris, 1963), pp. 38–41. Cf. Zabihollâh Safâ, *Ganjine-ye sokhan* (5 vols., Tehran, 1974), for the same assumptions; Waldman, *Toward a Theory*, p. 16.

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2. The Writing of Persian History

The history of Iran is rather a well-cultivated field, though some patches lie fallow for long periods. If the recent past is currently ploughed over the most often, previous formative eras, such as the rule of the Mongols, Safavids, or Qajars, continue to be nurtured by individual scholars, and progress is steady, if slow, across the wide plains and jagged peaks of Persian history. Nevertheless, there is much still to accomplish if we are to do justice to the whole range of topics that arise from the detailed study of Iran's rich and ancient past.

One such topic is to consider what we know and how we know it. The 'facts' of Persian history have been recorded, or some of them at least, in 'sources' written close to the time of the events concerned (though this is not always an advantage). Few nowadays would imagine this to be a neutral process. Even supposing an absolute impartiality and desire to record 'everything' without discrimination, we might wonder how the historians of the past acquired their own knowledge of what was happening around them or had happened elsewhere. How would an author writing in 10th-century Khorasan be informed of events in Shiraz, or an historian in 14th-century Tabriz know what had happened in Yazd two hundred years earlier? Indeed, how might a writer in 18th-century Mashhad know what was happening in Mashhad itself, let alone elsewhere in Khorasan? Even more so, therefore, how can *we* 'know what happened,' let alone 'why'? It is clear that what we know and what we don't know is the product of choices made much earlier, not necessarily impartially, and is shaped entirely by the way it is recorded. To borrow Joachim Knape's lucid turn of phrase, "Whenever we interpret [the memorialized traces of the past] today, we interpret traces which have already been interpreted culturally."[16]

Modern historians of Iran, still justifiably struggling to determine the shape and order the events of the past from the sources available, have seldom paused to question seriously the basis of the

16 "Historiography as rhetoric," in Erik Kooper, ed., *The Medieval Chronicle II* (Amsterdam and New York, 2002), pp. 117–18.

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evidence they provide. As it happens, despite a voluminous production of historical literature, the nature of this evidence is rather restricted. As in medieval Europe, the main narrative sources of history are *chronicles*. This is a term that in its strictest application refers to simple telegraphic lists of events in chronological order, generally arranged in annals (and in practice admitting the possibility that no events are recorded for certain years, when we must conclude that 'nothing happened'), but came also to cover more general *histories*—that is, works of connected argument or explanation of a completed period of time. The significance of the terms 'chronicle,' 'annal,' and 'history' (and other words used as titles for historical works), has generated a long discussion in European studies.[17] This debate, however interesting, is fortunately of limited relevance to Persian historical writing, and not least because the single term *târikh* (Ar. *ta'rikh*)—like its equivalent in English—embraces the meaning both of 'date' or 'chronology' and the writing or study of history, and is reflected as such in the title of historical works.

More importantly, in contrast with medieval Europe, not only did the production of chronicles continue, in a generally very conservative manner, for much longer, but until the 15th century or so, they are also almost the only historical sources at our disposal. Missing are the archives, official documents, and records of the royal household, the church and the landed estates that contribute so much additional information on government and society in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, from an early date. Apart from the varied evidence of coins, archaeology and inscriptions, there is little to supplement the information provided by the chroniclers, particularly for Iran (it is less true of Central Asia and India). This

17 Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), esp. pp 203–7; idem, "Histoire et chronique: nouvelles reflexions sur les genres historiques au Moyen Âge," in D. Poirion, ed., *La chronique et l'histoire au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1986), pp. 3–12. John Ward, "Memorializing dispute resolution in the twelfth century: Annal, history and chronicle at Vézelay," in E. Kooper, ed., *The Medieval Chronicle* (Amsterdam and Atlanta GA, 1999), pp. 269–84; David Dumville, "What is a chronicle?," in Kooper, ed., *Medieval Chronicle II*, pp. 1–27.

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applies more or less equally to administrative, economic and social history. Thus the narrative sources occupy an even more central place in our knowledge of Iran's past than their counterparts in the West—and for much longer. After around 1500, the chronicles can be supplemented by the accounts of foreign travellers and increasingly for later periods, records of benefactions to shrines (*vaqfiyye*s) and collections of decrees (*enshâ'*).

Persian chronicles enjoyed a long heyday, from Abu-Ali Bal'ami's *Târikh-nâme* and, one could argue, Abu'l-Qâsem Ferdowsi's *Shahname* in the 10th century, right down to annalistic compilations such as the *Eyn-al-vaqâye'* of Mohammad Yusof Riyâzi (d. 1916). Although these works took a number of forms, and were often of very mixed contents, they demonstrate a remarkable continuity of outlook and emphasis. This is very largely due to the fact that the constitution of Persian government and society (that is, the context in which they were written) remained along traditional lines, despite major political upheavals, till the full impact of the West was felt in the course of the 19th century. This society, it is hardly necessary to recall, was predominantly rural, pastoral and illiterate, with widely scattered urban centers of cultural and economic activity, dominated by princely courts and their bureaucratic personnel. Provincial and imperial courts alike were controlled by autocratic rulers and their military forces. It was on such patrons that the historians chiefly depended, and with their activities that they chiefly occupied themselves.

This volume on Persian historiography is thus concerned with the writing of history in Persian, by authors whose aim was to record and narrate the events of the past and of their own times. As we shall see, the 'events' are understood to be the public affairs of state, as part of the history of the Islamic community in general, or of a particular dynasty, ruler, city or province. The volume covers the lifetime of the 'chronicle,' that is until this traditional genre of historical literature gave way to more 'scientific' forms, closer to the models of Western scholarship, around the start the 20th century. The final chapters chart the rise and progress of this modern historical writing, thus allowing a more complete and up-to-date survey of Persian historiography and highlighting contrasts and continuities between older and more recent methods.

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Although historical information can, of course, be retrieved from a number of different types of work, this volume is not intended primarily as a survey of the *sources available* for the study of Persian history. The main area of writing omitted here is biography, unless (as is often the case) biographical sections are included in more general historical works.[18] Hagiography, whether the life of an individual saint or of a whole class of holy figures, is only mentioned in passing, as the main impulse for writing such works was evidently different from that of the chroniclers, though this relationship deserves closer scrutiny, as it has recently received elsewhere.[19] Nor do we include geography books in this volume, but several historians also wrote geographies, and geographical awareness is an important dimension of historical writing (see especially Chapters 4 and 7). As biography and geography are both close to the particular form of local history writing, an important part of the Persian corpus of historiography, they are not lost entirely from view. However, neither has it been possible to give systematic attention to other forms of historically useful texts, such as travelogues, partly on the grounds of space but also because travel literature is a distinct literary genre, together with the diary and autobiography, which share some obvious features. Among other works that purvey historical information (or purport to do so), we may mention 'Mirrors for Princes,' a type of writing particularly associated with Persian wisdom (*andarz*) literature and the role of which was essentially taken over by the chroniclers themselves after the Saljuq period.

Finally, the volume seeks to address the writing of history in Persian, not just within Iran and its larger historical borders, but in neighbouring territories too. Once established as the official language of the bureaucracy and the vehicle *par excellence* for the creation and transmission of high culture, Persian was written by choice in the courts of Central Asia, India and the Ottoman Empire and Persian works of history and other literature were emulated there.

18 A.K.S. Lambton, "Persian biographical literature," in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), pp. 143–48.

19 Dominque Barthélemy, *Chevaliers et miracles. La violence et le sacré dans la société féodale* (Paris, 2004). For Iran, see Jürgen Paul, *EIr*, s.v. Hagiographic literature.

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3. Previous Work

This volume was conceived several years ago, at a time when very little had been written about Persian historiography other than in the way of descriptive surveys.[20] There was (and still is) hardly a monograph devoted to the work of a single Persian historian, in contrast, for instance, with several fine studies of the major chroniclers of European history, such as Matthew Paris, Ranulf Higden, William of Tyre or Jean Froissart. Even the general surveys offer nothing to approach the magisterial work of Antonia Gransden, whose *Historical Writing in England* sets out a solid base for the further investigation of the different chronicles and the writers who produced them, from the 6th to the 16th century, and could not have been achieved without a very substantial body of earlier research, not to mention critical editions of most of the texts.[21]

By comparison, this volume was built on shallow but progressively deepening foundations, as its contributing authors have in many ways been obliged to stake out the ground for their chapters for themselves. Thus in the course of the long preparation of this volume, important books have appeared by Julie Meisami, Sholeh Quinn and Andrew Peacock.[22] This is not to say, of course, that nothing had been done before, as a glance at the bibliography at the end of this book will show. Nevertheless, the treatment of 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' historical writing has tended to focus on Arabic works, and to be informed by a more or less dismissive attitude to Persian writing, perhaps consciously reflecting Biruni's contemptuous view of the 'night-time stories and fables' of the Persians.[23]

20 See for example, Felix Tauer, "Persian learned literature from its beginnings up to the end of the 18th century," in Karl Jahn, ed., Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht, 1968), pp. 438–54.

21 Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* (2 vols., London, 1974, 1982).

22 Julie S. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999); Sholeh A. Quinn, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah 'Abbas* (Salt Lake City, 2000); A.C.S. Peacock, *Medieval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy. Bal'amī's Tārīkhnāma* (London, 2007).

23 See J.S. Meisami, "Why write history in Persian? Historical writing in the Samanid period," in Carole Hillenbrand, ed., *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth* (2 vols., Leiden, 2000), p. 356.

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Thus both H.A.R. Gibb and Franz Rosenthal, who wrote important studies of historical literature in the Muslim world, largely ignored or downplayed the Persian contribution. Even much more recently, Chase Robinson's attractive book, *Islamic Historiography*, quickly identifies itself, somewhat apologetically it is true, as concerned exclusively with Arabic historians, despite the illustration from a Persian chronicle used for the cover.[24] That there is an undeniable connection between Arabic and Persian writing, that the latter started only after the former had already achieved some maturity and was able to provide a working model, and that both are ultimately addressing the same task in chronicling the development of the Muslim community (*omma*), is not in doubt. It is also well known that much early Islamic historiography in Arabic was written by Iranians.[25] Nevertheless, the Persian literature quickly became quite distinct and deserves a more thorough (not to say sympathetic) treatment than it had received before the appearance of Julie Meisami's book. The only historians of any note to have consistently commanded attention are Rashid-al-Din (d. 1318), whose life and work was commemorated in various volumes in the 1970s, and Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi (d. ca. 1077), the subject of a pioneering study by Marilyn Waldman that took into account more sophisticated approaches to historical literature that had long animated the discussion of European historians.[26] Ironically, both these authors are, in different ways, exceptional, and reveal the need for detailed studies of more run-of-the-mill historians.

Many of the main Persian chronicles were introduced by E.G. Browne in his monumental *A History of Persian Literature*, and Browne also has the credit for publishing and supporting the publication of editions and translations of several key texts in the

24 H.A.R. Gibb, *EI*[1], s.v. Ta'rikh; Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968); Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. xx–xxii.

25 C. Edmund Bosworth, "The Persian contribution to Islamic historiography in the pre-Mongol period," in Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabbah, eds., *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 223–30.

26 *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative* (Columbus, 1980), pp. 3–25.

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E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series (such as Mostowfi's *Târikh-e gozide* and Ebn-Esfandiyâr's *Târikh-e Tabarestân*). Felix Tauer, who wrote so much invaluable textual criticism on the works of Hâfez-e Abru, contributed a brief and bald survey of historical writing in Jan Rypka's *History of Iranian Literature*.[27] These works served their purpose well at the time, but times have moved on, and with them concepts of the nature of investigation appropriate for studying historical writing.

An earlier initiative should be mentioned, by Denise Aigle of the CNRS in Paris, in 1993, to form a research group to investigate 'Comment les Iraniens écrivent l'histoire.' The most concrete outcome of this was a special issue of *Iranian Studies* (volume 33/1–2, 2002) devoted to local histories. Most of the contributors to the present volume have collaborated in various combinations on panels at four successive meetings of the Society for Iranian Studies in Bethesda, from 1998 to 2004, at the Societas Iranologica Europaea conferences in Paris in 1999, and Ravenna in 2003, and at three 'Medieval Chronicle' conferences at Utrecht in 1999 and 2002, and Reading in 2005. The latter, in particular, were with a view to gaining valuable insights into the much more developed state of research on European historiography, observing parallels and contrasts with Persian historical writing and identifying fruitful lines of enquiry. At the same time, the various sections on 'Historiography' were being commissioned and produced for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, which gave several of the contributors to this volume the opportunity to survey the sources for their respective assignments. In both the *Encyclopaedia* and the *History of Persian Literature*, therefore, Professor Yarshater's initiatives have provided not only a stimulus to research on Persian historical writing, but also the outlet for its publication, to the advantage of this somewhat neglected field.[28]

27 See above, n. 5.
28 *EIr*, s.v. Historiography.

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4. The Scope of the Volume

Apart from the chronological and geographical scope of the volume, noted above, the authors have had a free hand in how they approach their chapters, which are conceived partly as a survey of the period, but equally as discrete essays on aspects of the historical writing of different times, with a focus on the most important works. We have not attempted to conform to a standard formula requiring the same topics to be addressed in each case—not least because this would quickly lead to a very monotonous and repetitive work, since the continuities between periods (as defined largely by political developments, such as dynastic change) are generally much more marked than the differences. All authors have been encouraged not simply to produce a catalogue of books in the 'literary history' style, but to address various issues and themes as appropriate. Among these might be questions of genre, style and language; the context of the work, patronage, and audience; the authors' theory of history, aim of writing, and use of sources; the organization and contents of the works; and their scope and their influence on later historians. In short, historical literature opens a window onto various aspects of Iranian intellectual life: not just a factual record of events, it provides an insight into mentalities, expectations, the transmission of knowledge and the political and social role of history in Persian culture.

Constraints of space preclude a very developed exploration of most of these issues. Furthermore, such investigations remain a relatively straightforward approach to Persian historiography, which has been almost entirely unaffected by the deconstructionist and postmodernist debate that has so wracked and traumatised literary studies in Europe. Few of the contributing authors have taken a very theoretical position with regard to the texts they discuss, yet none has also been untouched by the critical perspectives opened up by these debates, even if only at a subconscious level. The perception that an historical text is both a record and a product of the past, shaped by the very social realities that it attempts to portray, is hardly a novel one. It has become impossible to discuss historio-

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graphy without taking account of the historians' use of the past and their complex relationship with the present. Gabrielle Spiegel, who has weathered the postmodernist storm better than many, remarks that

> the historian of texts is a 'writer' in his or her function of composing the historical narrative, but a 'reader' of the already materially extant text. The task facing one is broadly constructive, the other broadly deconstructive, and it is not hard to understand why few literary critics or historians of texts have given equal attention to both undertakings.[29]

In recognizing the medieval chronicle as a literary artefact, within a volume dedicated to the history of Persian literature, the contributors are in the fortunate position of not having to attempt to reconstruct the history of the past from the texts they are dissecting (although they may have done so elsewhere). Nevertheless, the obvious conceptual dilemma remains, in relating the literary text to its historical context, when what we know of the latter is what the former tells us.

It would be unreasonable to expect this volume to resolve the problem of an adequate epistemology for history, the "semiotic challenge" that Spiegel herself regards as "simply unsolvable."[30] That would require a far closer engagement with individual texts than has been undertaken previously, and a wholly new approach to the subject, which is not our task here. More realistically, it offers an account of the way Persian authors of the past set about recording their own history. These works are not chiefly considered as sources of information, though as noted, their relationship to the events they record cannot be overlooked. It covers only a fraction of the output of Persian historical literature—the full extent of which can more clearly be appreciated in the bibliographical handbooks of Charles Storey, Yuri Bregel and Ahmad Monzavi,

29 *Romancing the Past. The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1993), p. 9; idem, "Theory into practice: Reading medieval chronicles," in Kooper, ed., *The Medieval Chronicle*, p. 9.

30 "Theory into practice," p. 10.

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to name the most important. The present work should not in any sense be thought to replace these as a reference tool. The bibliography of primary sources should, however, help to identify new texts and editions that are being produced with admirable frequency especially in Iran. Moreover, the general list of references offers a rather comprehensive review of the secondary literature already available for the exploration of this field.

Synopsis

The first two chapters address the literary aspects of Persian historical writing and may provide a limited response to some of the questions raised in a recent review of volume 1 in this series.[31] Chapter 1 reviews the previous work in the field of literary criticism and identifies the key issues of fact and fiction in Persian writing, and the use of simple and complex styles. A survey of the rise of Persian historiography from this perspective is followed by the analysis of a number of different accounts of political murders and the rhetorical devices by which the historians convey their intentions in recording these paradigmatic episodes. The focus of this chapter is on the period to around 1200. Chapter 2 addresses some of these issues from a different and longer-term perspective, identifying the majority of historians as not only courtiers or bureaucrats but also as *littérateurs*, steeped in the rhetorical conventions of the chancery and official correspondence (*enshâ'*), and also frequently poets and authors of other works apart from history. Their awareness of the sources of emulation in historical writing, and its didactic benefits, suggests that their purpose was as much 'literary' as to produce a dispassionate account of the present or record of the past. The chapter concludes, like Chapter 1, by examining the narratives of particular events, such as the fall of viziers or the descriptions of battle, comparing both different treatments of the same event, and

31 M.C. Hillmann, "Review essay," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 3 (2010), pp. 128–41, esp. 137–38.

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the treatment of similar episodes at different periods, with a focus on the period after 1200.

There follows a series of chapters that discuss historical writing in Iran from the rise of New Persian literature in the 10th century (Chapter 3), through the Mongol and Timurid period (Chapter 4), the Safavids, Afshars and Zands (Chapters 5 and 6), and the Qajars (Chapter 7) to the development of modern 'academic' history in the Pahlavi period (Chapter 8). Each chapter, broadly speaking, surveys the main works of historiography, the context in which they were produced or commissioned, and their particular characteristics, such as the biases or emphases that reflect their authors' personal responses to the circumstances and intellectual climate in which they wrote, or the imperatives of their patrons and audiences. These chapters underline the continuities in the form, structure and language of historical literature over several centuries, with a tendency (but no more than a tendency) for the language of narrative prose to become more elaborate as the subjects of history became more mundane and departed ever further from the ideals espoused by the historians-cum-bureaucrats (regarding strong centralised rule, a just monarchy, and the upholding of Islamic and Iranian values). In the 19th and 20th centuries, we see a more conscious use of an imagined glorious past to contrast with the present realities, and a confrontation with European scholarly traditions, which provoked a more analytical and reflective view of the purposes and methods of historical research, the concern for recovering the reality of events as they actually happened, and the writing of history in the service of various ideologies (nationalism, secularism) bound up with the revolutionary turbulence of Iran's 20th-century political upheavals. In other respects, change was less obvious, as historical writing continued to focus on individuals and on the activities of the political élite. It becomes a moot point whether, with the advent of 'modern' historiography, there is any longer a meaningful connection with the concept of 'literature' as the term is currently understood.

Chapters 9 through 12 cover Persian historical writing in neighbouring regions that could be defined as belonging to the 'Persian cultural zone' at various times in the past. The transition from

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traditional to modern historical writing discussed in Chapter 8 is also the theme of Chapter 11, which focuses on three representative authors of the early 20th century in Afghanistan. All three were Imami Shi'is, which colored their work to varying extents, as did their relationships with Iran and with the Afghan court and their attitudes towards royal patronage. As in the case of Iran, nationalist and anti-colonial sympathies helped to define the arena for historical writing, combined with an awakened awareness of the region's ancient history and civilization. Chapter 10 on Central Asia (Transoxania) similarly examines the work of three authors writing in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in the main cultural centers of Bukhara, Samarqand and Balkh. All three authors were more than mere chroniclers, and their works are as much concerned with biography and geography as the simple recording of events; furthermore, they were writing in the post-Timurid era that witnessed the gradual erosion of Chengisid traditions at the expense of Islamic culture. The chapter also brings out the importance of India in the experience of Central Asian writers and their awareness of a shared Timurid-Mughal heritage of history and poetry. Indeed, the subcontinent of India (Hendustân) was the home of a rich and prolific Indo-Persian culture that produced a vast quantity of works in Persian in all fields of scholarship, and notably historiography. Much of this remains to be published and analyzed in any detail, but Chapter 12 provides a survey of the main historical texts from the earliest period of the Delhi Sultanate to the eclipse of Persian as the language of scholarship and literature by both English and Urdu in the course of the 19th century. On the other hand, Chapter 9 considers the impact of Persian literary culture on the Ottoman Empire, focused on a much shorter period of concentrated emulation of Persian historical works between the mid-15th century and the end of the 16th century. It emerges that historical writing in Persian developed alongside writing in Turkish from the outset. The Persian works were written by Iranian émigrés to the Ottoman court, expressing Iranian motifs of kingship and legitimacy—derived to a great extent from the epic *Shahname* of Ferdowsi and expressed through the verse chronicles of Ottoman rule and heroic warfare commissioned from the official *shâhnâmeguy*—but ultimately the

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same motifs were taken over into works in Turkish and the literary arena became the exclusive domain of the chancellery bureaucrats whose preferred medium was prose and who sought to surpass the Persian models that previously held sway.

In short, the present volume is offered as a statement of current work on Persian historiography, partly a survey of the main authors and partly a guide to how to read them. There is a certain amount of overlap between some chapters, as authors consider particular works or topics from different perspectives. It does not provide the consistent treatment or overall vision of a single-author work, but there are obvious advantages to having historians of different periods discussing the sources with which they are most familiar. If we have achieved some unity in this variety, so much the better, but a varied approach to the topic is in any case more stimulating, and whether we fuel a desire for further research, or provoke critical debate, the volume will have served its purpose.

5. Themes in Persian Historiography

Although conceived as a work of joint authorship and collaboration, in practice the chronological and geographical sections remain self-contained. Several of the topics noted earlier are touched on directly in more than one chapter, others hardly at all. In concluding this introduction, it may be helpful to try to address a couple of key themes that are common to the whole period under review. It is more convenient to consider these together than piecemeal, but each topic (and many others like them) deserve a fuller treatment than can be given here.

Mastery of Time

Most Persian histories are organized chronologically in that they attempt to narrate events in the sequence in which they occurred. By the time the first chronicles were written in Persian, this was

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the long-accepted pattern and there is little discussion of the merits of this or other approaches. There seems also to be little or no argument about the need for precise dating as an essential tool of the historian to order events correctly and identify the relationships between them. Such considerations are recognised elsewhere in Muslim scholarship devoted to the verification the prophetic traditions (*hadith*). The struggle to impose an absolute and relative chronology on the mass of undated oral reports of the early years of Islam had already been undertaken.[32]

The periodization of the past also presented few conceptual difficulties, the chief division being located at the coming of Islam and the start of the Muslim era. The latter was conveniently defined by the *hejri* calendar, starting in A.D. 622, which thus provided a ready made system for organizing the record of events into annals. Nevertheless, Persian historians were faced with various choices and a number of dating systems, some surviving from the pre-Islamic period, and it is clear that there might also be a difference between the form in which information was received and the form in which it was organized by the chroniclers, involving at least a familiarity with different calendrical traditions. Some authors inevitably paid considerably more attention to such details than others.

From the outset, Persian historians typically ignored the annalistic recording of events. Another way of putting this is that the use of the term *târikh* as a title for Persian histories seldom implies a chronological emphasis. Bal'ami organized the history of the pre-Islamic era according to the history of the Hebrew prophets and the Persian kings, following his model, the chronicle of Tabari, in an attempt to integrate Mesopotamian, Iranian and Abrahamic legends into a unified narrative (with no absolute chronology). Bal'ami however departs from Tabari in subsuming his annalistic treatment of Islamic history into an arrangement according to the reigning caliph, and focusing on the narrative elements. This re-

32 Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 230–54; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 69–103; Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, pp. 46–50, 74–79.

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flects the preeminently Persian perception of history as surrounding the deeds of the king, as exemplified also in the *Shahname* of Ferdowsi (ca. 1010). The latter is organized around the shahs who ruled ancient Iran. The only chronological information provided is the length of reign of the rulers in the 'historical' period, from Alexander to the Sasanids. While it might be argued that Ferdowsi was writing poetry not history, this is not necessarily how he or his compatriots regarded the matter, and he is regularly included among the sources for any work that covers pre-Islamic Iran.

Bal'ami and Ferdowsi were extremely influential in their different ways.[33] Of the earliest works of historiography covered by Elton Daniel (Chapter 3), only the chronicle of Beyhaqi can be found to be arranged in annals, although these are so long that the subdivisions by episodes in practice becomes the dominant way in which the text is structured. True annals are perhaps found only in discrete sections of the *Târikh-e Beyhaq* of Ebn-Fondoq and the *Târikh-e Sistân*, recording notable events that had occurred in the region. The *Mojmal-al-tavârikh* contains hejri annals only for the earliest years of Islam. As the title suggests ('A Summary of Histories'), this incorporates many different 'systems'—the same observation applies to later uses of titles such as *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, *Majma'-al-tavârikh*, *Majmu'e-al-tavârikh*, and so on, in which different systems are used for the different periods of history covered in the book. The Persian and other pre-Islamic kings are placed in time with reference to the years elapsed since the Creation (a question discussed at length by Tabari, and as noted by Elton Daniel, rather differently by Bal'ami). Mostowfi also opens his *Târikh-e gozide* with a discussion of the duration of the world, which merely highlights the disagreements among scholars; he goes on to provide the duration of all the individual dynasties (following here, seemingly, the model of Beyzâvi).[34] Thus, beyond the pre-Islamic–Islamic divide, the chief way to periodize the past was in terms of ruling dynasties.

33 See J.S. Meisami, "The past in the service of the present: Two views of history in medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14 (1993), pp. 247–75.

34 Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi, *Târikh-e gozide*, pp. 8–13; Charles Melville, "From Adam to Abaqa. Qadi Baidawi's rearrangement of history," *Studia Iranica* 30 (2000), p. 73.

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This structuring of the passage of time merely with respect to the person of the ruler often implies that 'absolute' dates for individual events lose their importance; nevertheless, the Islamic calendar was used for dating, as a matter of course. Traces do, however, remain of other systems, notably the Jalâli (Yazdegerd) era (reformed under Sultan Malekshâh in 1079), for instance for days and months in Ebn-Esfandiyâr's *Târikh-e Tabarestân*, and it clearly remained in current use: Mostowfi mentions the year he started his *Târikh-e gozida* as 698 Yazdegerdi (A.D. 1330).[35] In both the Caspian region and the Mongol period, attachment to pre-Islamic Iran remained tangible.[36] The Mongols also introduced a different system, namely the Turkish (Uighur)-Chinese animal calendar, by which dates in their early recorded history were given. (Though the conquests of Chengis Khan and Hulegu were recognized as starting new eras, neither seems actually to have been used for dating by historians or bureaucrats). Reference to the animal year is found throughout the *Secret History of the Mongols* and the early Mongol sections of Rashid-al-Din's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*: he gives a year-by-year summary of the life of Chengis Khan according to the animal cycle, but with quite precise correlations with the Islamic calendar.[37] It is clear that the Mongol dates were later tied in with their hejri equivalents, not always accurately, even when the two systems were operating side by side in the Ilkhanid state: in Qâshâni's chronicle of the reign of Oljeitu, an unusually detailed annalistic treatment of events (in the manner of an official court record) according to the Islamic calendar is mingled with the Chinese animal year (starting in late January or early February), almost invariably incorrectly. One being lunar and the other luni-solar, it is hard to keep them in tandem, a problem exacerbated in later historiography when some writers attempted to equate lunar hejri years with solar years starting at

35 Ebn-Esfandiyâr, I, pp. 178, 245, 262, 265, II, p. 105; Mostowfi, p. 8.

36 Mar'ashi, *Târikh-e Gilân va Deylamestân*, ed. M. Sotudeh (Tehran, 1985), e.g. pp. 328, 331, 434, 443, 444, 446 etc. for use of the old calendar.

37 Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, ed. M. Rowshan and M. Musavi (4 vols., Tehran, 1994), pp. 561–80.

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Nowruz (the spring equinox): notoriously Eskandar Beg Monshi Turkomân, and following him, Fazli Beg Khuzâni-Esfahâni.[38]

At an administrative level, this difficulty of reconciling a lunar 'civil' (in fact, 'religious' or ideological) calendar with the rhythms of real life and the link between the tax year and the seasons led Ghazan Khan to reform the calendar and institute a new era, the *khâni,* on New Year's Day (Nowruz) 1302. This continued in use for the remainder of the Ilkhanate and beyond, as is exemplified in the parallel reference to the animal and khâni eras in the latter sections of Hasan b. Shehâb's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh-e Hasani* (down to the end of 1453), sometimes together with the hejri one, which continued in use for individual dates; Hâfez-e Abru states that it was still in use for transactions in the Divan in Iraq and Azarbaijan (in ca. 1420).[39]

The arrival of the Mongols in Iran brought other less formal ways of perceiving and measuring time—according to the alternation between summer and winter pastures (*yeylâq—qeshlâq*). This nomadic, transhumant concept of time provides no absolute chronology at all, beyond the 'year' of the ruler or chief's reign, unless movements are anchored at various points to a more sophisticated sedentary (urban) system. Chroniclers such as Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi and Ali Yazdi, in attempting to impose order on the early career of Timur, operating in an entirely tribal context, assign hejri equivalents to the animal cycle dates for his actions from ca. 1370.[40]

38 R.D. McChesney, "A note on Iskandar Beg's chronology," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39 (1980), pp. 53–63; Ch. Melville, "The Chinese Uighur animal calendar in Persian historiography of the Mongol period," *Iran* 32 (1994), pp. 91–93; idem, "New light on the reign of Shah 'Abbas," in Andrew J. Newman, ed., *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 78–79.

39 Hasan b. Shehâb, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh-e Hasani*, ed. H. Modarresi Tabâtabâ'i and Iraj Afshar (Karachi, 1987), pp. 45–48, 57–58, 61; Hâfez-e Abru, *Joghrâfiyâ*, ed. Sâdeq Sajjâdi, vol. I (Tehran, 1997), p. 73.

40 E.g. Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi, *Zafar-nâme*, ed. F. Tauer (Prague, 1937), p. 64, Ali Yazdi, *Zafar-nâme,* ed. M. Abbâsi (Tehran, 1957), p. 169 (differing). The new edition by Mir Mohammad Sâdeq and A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 2008), arranges the text in hejri annals from 746 A.H., thus imposing an alien system

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Annalistic presentation of history remains the exception (as in the work of Qâshâni, noted above, or the *Dheyl-e târikh-e gozide* by Zeyn-al-Din Qazvini) rather than the rule, until well into the Timurid period. Hâfez-e Abru (d. 1430) adopted an annalistic approach to the contemporary portions of his works (covering the reign of Shâhrokh), and this presentation was extended to the whole post-Ilkhanid period by Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi (ca. 1469), using hejri annals. It is possible that some revival of the idea of 'Islamic' rule was implied by this, and a distancing both from the 'steppe' tradition of dating and the Persian focus on the person of the ruler. Nevertheless, the towering figures of late Timurid historiography, Mirkh^{w}ând and Kh^{w}ândamir, eschewed annals and reverted to a more narrative approach, structured around the sequence of dynasties, in their general or 'universal' chronicles.

This brief review suggests that, naturally, the historians' choice of chronological presentation depended at least in part on the nature of the material available to them (undated, or with reference to the animal calendar, or the year of rule). Evidently, the final scheme adopted depended also on the historians' willingness to attempt to combine disparate elements into a uniform absolute chronology, as well as on the most appropriate scheme for the circumstances in which they were writing, and the rationale for their presentation. This is only partly a matter of 'genre'—a 'universal' history might either be written in annals, when it covers a single 'universe,' such as the unified Islamic caliphate, or the early Mongol empire, or according to dynastic divisions, which might overlap in time and have their own independent history within the greater overall purview of the Muslim world. 'Local' histories might have more parochial calendrical traditions, or seek to relate local events to a wider community. In general, the plurality of elements in a work of Persian historiography (it is difficult to speak even of a 'typical' work) is reflected, unsurprisingly, in the plurality of ways in which

onto the narrative and giving a misleading impression of the author's organization of his material. See also Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 181, n. 76; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, p. 130.

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time—the dimension in which history most specifically operates—is structured and manipulated.

It will be clear that calendars have a political and ideological resonance as well as a practical function. This makes the developments of the Safavid period all the more distinctive (as in other fields). In the first place, the great majority of Safavid historians present their work in annals, starting in the reign of Shah Tahmâsp—in Ghaffâri's *Jahân-ârâ* (1568), Abdi Beg's *Takmelat-al-akhbâr* (1570), and Hasan-e Rumlu's *Ahsan-al-tavârikh* (1577)—all within a few years of each other. This is perhaps because they are mainly dealing with a history of the dynasty and its individual rulers in the sort of detail that depends on the existence of contemporary records of events (not always available for the history of the past). In this the Safavid histories tend to be similar to the work of Qâshâni for the reign of Oljeitu, and Hâfez-e Abru for Shâhrokh, as noted earlier. Reflecting this, the annals are frequently given in terms of the year of rule (*jolus*), especially—and significantly—from the reign of Shah Abbâs, the great transitional phase of Safavid history. Furthermore, the annals of the reign are defined in terms of two or three overlapping but not directly equivalent chronologies: the year of the reign, the Muslim hejri year and the 'Turkish' animal calendar. Each system, of course, carries its own ideological message—Shah Abbâs, particularly, strove to be all things to all men; but each year started on a different date. In the hands of a careful historian, such as Abdi Beg Shirâzi or Qâzi Ahmad Qomi, the disparate elements were kept under control, though the difficulties were implied in such chronological divisions as: "In the Year of the Cock, some of which [was] 968 and some 969 [hejri]," or "The 49th year of the Sultanate of that Heavenly-high Supreme Majesty, [beginning] on Nowruz of the Year of the Monkey, Tuesday 25th Shavvâl of the year 979 [hejri]".[41] The astronomer royal, Mollâ Monajjem Yazdi, also gave a threefold definition of the year in his annals of the reign of Shah Abbâs, combining two calendars with the astrological year. Thus 1 Moharram 1012 was equivalent to 23 Khordâd of the Year

41 Abdi Beg, *Takmelat-al-akhbâr*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 1990), p. 117; Qâzi Ahmad, *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*, ed. E. Eshrâqi (2 vols., Tehran, 1984), p. 570.

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of the Hare (thus apparently using the Ilkhâni calendar), with the sun 20 degrees through Gemini (all equivalent to 11 June 1603).[42] The potential for uncertainty is exacerbated by inaccurate authors such as Eskandar Beg, however, who combines systematic with unsystematic errors in his correlations of dates. In practice, it is the Turkish animal calendar that defines the year, with the spring equinox marking its start, and the ruler's winter quarters defining its close. Surprisingly, it is Eskandar Beg who is exceptionally alert to the importance of chronology and draws attention to this choice of dating scheme for the reign of Abbâs, being the one in common use at the time and the most comprehensible to "the people of Iran," i.e. the court.[43]

Thereafter, and through the Afshars, Zands and into the Qajar period, historians alternate between an annalistic format defined by the animal and hejri calendars (as in Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi's *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi* or Mohammad Sâru'i's *Târikh-e Mohammadi*), or a purely narrative, episodic approach (as in Mohammad Kâzem's *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, or Golestâne's *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*). As emphasised by Ernest Tucker (see Chapter 6), the structuring of the year around the feast of Nowruz became the dominant characteristic of several 18th-century chronicles, spilling over into the contents of the work as well as simply their format. The chief later variation is the substitution of the hejri-shamsi calendar for the Turkish animal system, officially initiated in March 1925. From the ideological standpoint, this shift mirrors a turning away from the 'Turkish' towards the 'Iranian' model, an emphasis strengthened by the continuing use of the ancient names of the months, starting with Farvardin.

The different ways of defining an annal, combined with the persistent tendency to avoid giving individual events very precise dates, means that it is often not clear when things actually happened, despite the apparently strong chronological framework in which these histories are presented. When greater precision is

42 Monajjem Yazdi, *Târikh-e Abbâsi*, ed. S. Vahidniyâ (Tehran, 1987), p. 240.
43 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (2 vols., Tehran, 1956), pp. 379–80.

needed, or thought to be important, the shorter divisions of time into months, days, and times of day are usually given according to the Islamic hejri calendar—the time of day generally with reference to the nearest time of prayer, reflecting the dominant rhythms of society, but also meal times, or natural phases of daylight.

In conclusion, paying attention to chronology in Persian historical writing is important not simply because of its practical role in dating events and establishing their relationship in time, but because the way events are narrated says something about the associations attached to them, and about their origin. Analysis of such temporal phrases as 'at the same time,' 'at about this time,' or 'a few days later,' might reveal the authors' narrative techniques and how causation can be introduced into the sequence of events. Did 'factual' information reach the historians as oral reports, dated simply in relation to other 'events' or to the period in power of the king or local governor, or in written or oral form complete with precise dates? Either way, the various pieces of information needed to be fitted together and placed into a context that was largely the construction of the author himself. Did he have a detailed chronology at his disposal, but choose to dispense with much of it, or did he have to seek out or deduce dates himself, to clarify his narrative? The provision of precise dates does tend to give an air of authority to a narrative. But what are we to make of the (frequent) conflict of dates found in our sources, quite apart from the sheer incompatibility of the information provided on occasions? We need to bear these matters in mind when appraising historical literature, and it is clear that the chroniclers themselves were aware of such problems.

The Historian and the Truth

Many chroniclers start their work with some sort of rhetorical disclaimer—either a formulaic disparagement of their own abilities or competence, or recourse to asserting that they are only recording what has reached them, for which they accept limited or no responsibility. The anonymous translator of Khorandezi-Nasâvi's Arabic

history of the Khʷârazmshâh Jalâl-al-Din (d. 1231), provides a succinct statement of the problem:

> It is understood that every historian's aim is no more than to repeat what previous writers have said with little change, and when they get to their own times, they should provide a faithful account of events with a clear explanation, recognise the need for satisfaction and contentment …

He warns, however, that (verse): "It's a long time since what men of the world have spoken about, and there's a great difference between what is said and what is heard." He himself "will only mention the deeds [of Jalâl-al-Din] that he has seen himself, or heard from someone who saw them."[44]

Such statements reveal the disquiet of the historians about the nature of the information they provide, and their concern for 'the truth.' The author of the *Mojmal-al-tavârikh* (1126), for instance, draws attention to the divergent information found in the sources he used (which are listed, as is also the case with Ebn-Fondoq's *Târikh-e Beyhaq*, forty years later), and by implication at least the uncertainty of their subject matter; but he has written everything as he found it, and so any errors must be imputed to the fault of his predecessors.[45] A similar attitude is displayed by Juzjâni (ca. 1260), who found a book in the Divan with a history of the genealogies of the different dynasties, starting with the ancients (prophets and caliphs) whose lives could provide a model for later rulers. He excuses himself for any errors that have been found in the works of earlier reliable authors and (simply) transcribed by him.[46]

Whereas perhaps not much could be done about ancient history, except to follow established authorities, many chroniclers felt able to be considerably more critical of the recorded history of periods they knew something about. Bal'ami's attitude to Tabari's work has

44 Khorandezi-Nasavi, *Sirat Jalâl-al-Din Mingbirni*, ed. M. Minovi (2nd printing, Tehran, 1986), pp. 3, 5.

45 Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 189–90; *Mojmal-al-tavârikh va'l-qesas*, ed. Malek-al-sho'arâ Bahâr (Tehran, 1939), pp. 2, 8; cf. facs. text, ed. Iraj Afshar and Mahmoud Omidsalar (Tehran, 2001), ff. 2a-b, 4a.

46 Juzjâni, *Tabaqât-e Nâseri*, ed. A. Habibi (2 vols., Kabul, 1963), pp. 7–8.

been noted by Julie Meisami (Chapter 1) and Elton Daniel (Chapter 3). Ahmad b. Hoseyn was dismissive of his predecessor's local history of Yazd (written only shortly before), and the title of his book, *Târikh-e jadid*—'The New History' (1458)—immediately signals his intention to improve on it. The author brought together whatever was verified from all the histories that he lists, along with what reliable narrators and truthful old men had said.[47]

Mirzâ Mohammad Khalil Mar'ashi Safavi also complains about the defective work of earlier chroniclers, who did not adequately deal with the events surrounding the rise of the Ghilzây and Abdâli Afghans (in 1708) up to the present time (1792); "even Mirzâ Mahdi Khan in his *Târikh-e Nâderi* only mentioned such aspects of this as was prudent and according to the ideas of the time," in a work that Mar'ashi calls "slight, uneven, abbreviated and untrue." He himself, despite not being present at the unfolding of events and failing to find a complete account, nevertheless acquired knowledge from various documents belonging to his father, who lived the last part of his life in Bengal, and according to notes (or memoranda) written down by his father while still alive. He put together this work

> from various other scattered documents, and verified some events that had been written down, by enquiring from the reliable reports of those who had seen them with their own eyes. Despite his shortcomings, he had done his best to verify and explain clearly what had happened.[48]

Mohammad Kâzem, author of the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, himself mentions that anything about which he did not have any information, he gathered from the words of reliable narrators, and seeks excuses, asking critics not to notice the differences of reports.[49]

As is clear, the most reliable evidence was considered to come from oral sources, and particularly the authors' own experience. In the case of Mahmud Kotobi, since

47 Ahmad b. Hoseyn, *Târikh-e jadid-e Yazd*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1979), p. 5.
48 *Majma'-al-tavârikh*, ed. A. Eqbâl (Tehran, 1983), pp. 1–2.
49 Mohammad Kâzem Marvi, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, ed. Mohammad Amin Riyâhi (3 vols., Tehran, 1985), pp. 3–4.

> for generations he was one of the Mozaffarids' servants, and from the age of discernment until now (1420), he had witnessed, seen, and heard from truthful and important men stories (*hekâyât*) and reports (*akhbâr*) of them, their circumstances (*hâlât*) and traces (*âthâr*), he obeyed his instinct to write.[50]

Joveyni based himself primarily on his own observations and what he had reliably heard and "reduced to writing all that was confirmed and verified."[51] Such examples could easily be multiplied.

Specific statements about the nature of oral evidence are rarer. Zahir-al-Din Mar'ashi exclaims,

> I have seen, spoken and listened to many people [who insist on the truth of what they know], especially concerning stories of events that occurred months or years past, which they may have heard from the mouths and on the tongues of men who disagree with each other. How can they possibly all be telling the truth?![52]

What is the truth? As the quotation taken from the work of the historian Mirkh^{w}ând at the start of this Introduction suggests, it is a commitment to the idea of truthfulness, to the desire not to deceive, and an integrity of purpose, given that the aim of history is to benefit and instruct its audience. Mirkh^{w}ând's justifications of history rest on the somewhat circular argument that the truth of what has survived about the past is guaranteed by its very survival, as lies and falsehoods would be weeded out and rejected. 'Reliable' witnesses, both written and oral, can and have been identified—by criteria (or 'proofs') that we have to leave to the authors' good judgement.[53] History is thus a communally sanctioned version of the past, the expression of an acceptable memory of events, which continues to be meaningful to the present. This remains as true

50 Mahmud Kotobi, *Târikh-e Âl-e Mozaffar*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 1985), pp. 28–29.

51 Joveyni, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*, ed. M. Qazvini, vol. 1 (London, 1912), p. 7, tr. Boyle, p. 10.

52 Mar'ashi, *Târikh-e Tabarestân*, p. 395, cited in full in Charles Melville, "The Caspian provinces: A world apart. Three local histories of Mazandaran," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), p. 73.

53 For a discussion of the question of proof, see Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover and London, 1999), esp. pp. 38–53.

of modern historiography, which can be brought to the service of national 'awakening' and the expression of cultural identity and political aspirations.

Some of the elements of the resulting narrative may or may not be 'facts'—we are not necessarily referring here to the role of the supernatural, of dreams, portents or miracles, which undoubtedly formed part of the pre-modern historian's world-view—although these might be seen as part of the way 'real' events could be reported and understood. The distinction to be made in assessing our Persian historians, echoing Hayden White, is "between 'truth' and 'error', rather than between fact and fancy," it being understood that "many kinds of truth, even in history, could be presented to the reader only by fictional techniques of representation" (such as rhetorical devices, tropes, figures and 'schemata of words'). 'Truth' is not to be equated with 'fact,' nor 'error' with 'fiction.'[54] We have few means available to detect the errors of the historians, who have already gone some way to attempting to rid their traditions of the erroneous and to acquire genuine knowledge of history. There is, however, further scope for exploring their 'fictional techniques,' the subject to be addressed in the next chapter.

Bibliographical Note

The works cited in this and each following chapter are listed in the bibliography at the end of this volume. Valuable insights into the discussion of historiography in the medieval European context can be found in several texts, such as Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Historiography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1990); J.-P. Genet, ed., *L'historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris, 1991); Ernest Breisach, *Historiography. Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (Chicago and London, 1994) and the more recent book by Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles. The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London and New York, 2004). See also

54 Hayden White, "The fictions of factual representation," in idem, *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore and London, 1978), p. 123.

Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), and Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), both volumes addressing many issues pertinent also to the Iranian world, as does the series of *The Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Erik Kooper, vols. 3 (Amsterdam, 2004), 4 (2006), 5 (2008) and 6 (2009). A useful introduction to the postmodernist position is by Keith Jenkins, *On What is History? From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London, 1995).

In Iran, apart from the publication of well-produced and critically edited texts, especially by the Miras-e Maktoob (Âyene-ye Mirâs Co.), with its own journals of the same name, *Âyene-ye Mirâs*, and *Gozâresh-e Mirâs*, devoted to manuscripts, codicology and texts, the two-monthy *Ketâb-e Mâh: Târikh va Joghrâfiyâ* contains a wealth of articles and book reviews about historical texts; see for instance, vol. 4/8–9, issues 44–45 (June–July 2001) and 4/10–11, issues 46–47 (August–September 2001), on local histories, and vol. 10, issues 114–115 (November–December 2007), devoted to historiography. Useful anthologies of historical writing have been prepared by Badi'-Allâh Dabiri-Nezhâd, *Sabk-e nathr. Âthâr-e târikhi-ye dowre-ye Moghul* (Isfahan, 1971), and Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i, *Motun-e târikhi be-zabân-e fârsi* (Tehran, 1997), who has edited a prodigious number of the texts himself.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY AS LITERATURE

Julie S. Meisami

1. Introduction

A work of history, like any other composition (written or oral) is, first and foremost, a construct of language. The events recorded, the actors in those events, the circumstances and locations in which the events took place, and the cultural, societal, or political or religious details which surrounded them, are filtered not only through the writer's sensibility, bias, or agenda, but, most importantly, through the medium of language. Thus historical works are not merely records of the past, but literary texts that may be approached through literary analysis.

The historian's implicit contract with his audience is that he is providing a true record of events. Writers of history routinely stress their truthfulness, their use of reliable sources, their rejection of unreliable, unverifiable, or fantastic materials. Such affirmations are part of that implicit contract, as well as part of the historian's persona. But despite these avowals of truthfulness, history was not, either for those who wrote it or for their audiences, a mere record of facts, but an act of interpretation. For facts were bearers of meaning (and most particularly of moral meaning); and history was, in the main, conceived of as exemplary. Its intent, in large part, was ethical, and its means rhetorical.

In the pre-modern Islamic world there were no professional historians as such. Those who wrote history came from many different walks of life. Some were religious scholars; others were attached to a court; still others wrote independently of patronage.

Many also wrote on a wide variety of other subjects.[1] But in all cases they were highly educated, and well schooled in the devices and techniques of literary discourse that characterized their respective disciplines. Thus historical writing took various forms. Although the word *târikh* (Arabic *ta'rikh*) originally connoted chronology, this was never the main objective of most historical writing, although it did lead to an important form of history, that is, annalistic history, which is well represented in Arabic by such writers as Tabari (d. 923), Ebn-al-Jowzi (d. 1201), and Ebn-al-Athir (d. 1233), but which never achieved popularity in Persian historiography.

Despite the ubiquity of historical writing, history, as a discipline with a specific object and a distinctive methodology, held no established place in classifications of the sciences;[2] nor was it part of the curriculum of public education in the mosque or, later, the madrasa.[3] It did, however, play a major part in private education, and was considered essential to the education of princes, officials and secretaries, military leaders, and royal boon-companions,[4] all of whom were meant to benefit from its knowledge when advising rulers as to which examples from the past to emulate and which to avoid.

The literary analysis of historical texts has long held a place in scholarship on pre-modern Western historiography. Literary analysis of Islamic historical texts, however, began not as an effort towards understanding such texts in their literary context, but rather as an attempt to separate 'fact' from 'fiction' for the benefit of scholars seeking to reconstruct an accurate view of early Arabic history. A pioneer in this field was Albrecht Noth, who in his seminal *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung* (1973) concluded that the presence of recurrent topoi, themes, motifs, and so on was

1 See also Chapter 2.

2 See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 30–53.

3 Ibid., pp. 42–43; see also M. Hilmy M. Ahmad, "Some notes on Arabic historiography during the Zengid and Ayyubid periods," in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), esp. pp. 80–82.

4 Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, pp. 45–53.

indicative of the "fictivity" of historical accounts, and maintained "that the presence of literary devices … indicated an account's [historical] unreliability (or at least its unusability)."[5] Thus literary analysis was put to the service of ulterior motives: the disentanglement of 'fact' from 'fiction.'

Stefan Leder, who has devoted many studies to the literary analysis of early Arabic historiography, has written: "When literary criticism is applied to historical narrative, it may seem to erode, even destroy, the foundations of historiography."[6] Leder does not make clear what the "foundations of historiography" might be; but his "may seem to" supplies an important caveat, and his following remarks clarify his position. He asserts,

> [T]he hermeneutical effort fosters a better understanding of literary communication and may help to elucidate the wider context of signification. There still seems to be a taboo which prohibits literary criticism of the historical narrative, especially where Islamic tradition is concerned. Any approach to textual analysis, which disregards the meaning of a text as it was defined and maintained by tradition tends … to become the target of traditionalist polemic. On the other hand, philological study which is clinging to the letter of the text can not counterbalance the dominating attitude of denying that fiction and narrative art exist in this literature. Consequently, we find the vast territory of classical Arabic narrative texts, especially in the field of historical narration, abandoned to the petrified vision of Islamic tradition.[7]

Addressing the issue of the "fictivity" of historical accounts, Leder writes elsewhere:

5 Julie S. Meisami, "Masʿūdī and the reign of al-Amīn: Narrative and meaning in medieval Muslim historiography," in Philip F. Kennedy, ed., *On Fiction and* Adab *in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden, 2005), p. 149; see Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historiographical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad. Tr. Michael Bonner (2nd ed., Princeton, 1994).

6 Stephan Leder, "Al-Madā'inī's version of *Qiṣṣat al-Shūrā*: The paradigmatic nature of historical narration," in Angelika Neuwirth *et al*., eds., *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach* (Beirut, 1999), p. 379.

7 Ibid.

> [N]arration which contains fiction in an envelope of not only realistic, but factual disguise dominates in narrative literature. The disentangling of fiction, i.e., the feigned reality represented in the narrative, from the concept of factuality can be a toilsome task. As long as the fictional character of narratives is not assigned by convention, the reader is generally inclined to receive it as a factual report … The use of this kind of narration as a historical documentation thus prevails, whereas the reading of these texts as modes of literary creation is neglected.[8]

Leder's arguments are relevant to the study of Persian historiography insofar as they provide a warning against the simple mining of historical texts for 'facts' and summon us to consider such texts in the context of the literary conventions of the tradition in which they were produced. If medieval writers of history had recourse to what modern literary criticism considers to be 'literary' or 'novelistic' devices, such as narrative plotting, the use of direct speech, the dramatic and/or moralistic depiction of characters, this need not imply that historical accounts take leave of factuality and approach the realm of fiction; but it does emphasize the importance of analyzing historical texts as literature. Leder further calls attention to the importance of storytelling as being at the heart of historical writing, whether in the form of the isolated transmitted account (*khabar*)—the compilation of which accounts forms the basis of much of early Arabic historiography—or in that of the continuous narrative which characterizes some later Arabic historiography (e.g. Balâdhori [d. 892], Ya'qubi [d. 897], Dinavari [d. 902], and others), and most of Persian historiography.[9]

The literary analysis of Persian historiography is still in its infancy. M. T. Bahâr, in his *Sabk-shenâsi* (1932), discussed early Per-

8 Stefan Leder, "Conventions of fictional narration in learned literature," in idem, ed., *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1998), pp. 45–46.

9 Stephan Leder, "The literary form of the *Khabar*: A basic form of historical writing," in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds., *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, 1, *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 277–315; idem, "The use of composite form in the making of the Islamic historical tradition," in Kennedy, ed., *On Fiction and* Adab, pp. 125–48.

sian prose, including chronicles, from the point of view of "the lexical, morphological, and syntactic peculiarities of the language," and identified two styles (*nathr-e sâde* and *nathr-e fanni*), but neglected, for example, to analyze the use of figures of speech, divorced "the form of the narrative from its contents and ideas," and "ignored the traditions that influenced the development" of Persian prose style.[10] In 1980, Marilyn Waldman published a study devoted to Beyhaqi's History, in which she stressed the importance of literary context and literary analysis. She stated:

> However suggestive previous studies of the rhetoric of formal historical writing may have been, they have not forced today's historians to view or to use historical narratives from the past in new and different ways … In the field of Islamicate history, where scholars have tended to use historical narratives almost exclusively as unstructured, uninterpretive mines of factual information, the handling of sources has been particularly problematical.[11]

E. A. Poliakova, building on studies by both Russian and western scholars, has advanced the idea of a "literary canon" in regard to medieval Persian historiography. She observes,

> The first step in the literary criticism of medieval chronicles is to distinguish the elements that make up a naturalistic reflection of reality from those that represent literary etiquette.[12]

K. Allin Luther devoted a number of studies to analyzing the style of both early and, especially, later Persian historiography, in which he underlined the necessity of studying literary style in terms both of its rhetorical content and of its literary and socio-political context.[13] Stephen Humphreys, writing on Islamic historiography in

10 See E.K. Poliakova, "The development of a literary canon in medieval Persian chronicles: The triumph of etiquette," *Iranian Studies* 17 (1984), pp. 237–38, and the references cited.

11 Marilyn R. Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate historiography* (Columbus, Ohio, 1980), p. 3.

12 Poliakova, "Development of a literary canon," pp. 240–41.

13 K. Allin Luther, "A new source for the history of the Iraq Seljuqs: The *Tārīkh al-Vuzarā*'," *Der Islam* 45 (1969), pp. 117–28; Idem, "Bayhaqi and the later Seljuq historians: Some comparative remarks," in *Yādnāme-ye Abū'l-Faḍl Bayhaqī* (Mashhad, 1971), pp. 14–33; idem, "Chancery writing

the "middle periods" (that is, before 1500, and perhaps even later), reminds us that historical texts "are not neutral repositories of information but consciously shaped literary structures."[14] Julia Rubanovich has argued for the existence of a "literary canon" favoring the "artificial" *enshâ'* style but also valuing stylistic variety in prose works.[15] The present author has discussed the literary aspects of historiography in several publications.[16] With these studies in mind, we will now turn to a discussion of Persian historical texts, with an emphasis on literary/stylistic analysis, and basically ignoring issues of 'factuality' versus 'fictivity.'

2. The Rise of Persian Historiography

The reasons for, and the motives behind, the rise of historical writing in Persian in the 10th century have been widely discussed;[17] there is no need to rehearse these discussions here, as they have little bearing on the literary analysis of historical texts. It has been

as a source of constraints on history writing in the sixth and seventh centuries of the Hijra," unpublished paper (University of Michigan, 1977); idem, "Islamic rhetoric and the Persian historians, 1000–1300 A.D.," in James A. Bellamy, ed., *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History in Memory of Ernest T. Abdel-Massih* (Ann Arbor, 1990), pp. 90–98.

14 R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (rev. ed., Princeton, 1991), pp. 128–29.

15 Julia Rubanovich, "Literary canon and patterns of evaluation in Persian prose on the eve of the Mongol invasion," *Studia Iranica* 32 (2003), pp. 47–76.

16 Julie S. Meisami, "Rāvandī's *Raḥāt al-ṣudūr*: History or Hybrid?", *Edebiyât* n.s. 5, (1994), pp. 183–215; idem. *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 189–298; idem, "The historian and the poet: Rāvandī, Nizami, and the rhetoric of History," in Kamran Talattof and Jerome W. Clinton, eds., *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric* (New York, 2000), pp. 97–128; idem, "History as Literature," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 15–30.

17 See Elton Daniel, "Manuscripts and editions of Balʿamī's *Tarjamah-i Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī*," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1990), pp. 282–321; Julie S. Meisami, "Why write history in Persian? Historical writing in the Samanid period," in Carole Hillenbrand, ed., *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Volume II* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 348–74; see also Chapter 3.

argued that political patronage (both by, and opposed to, the reigning Samanid dynasty), as well as 'nationalistic' impulses to revive the Persian language, led to what has been called the 'Persian literary renaissance,' as well as to the rise of historical writing in Persian.[18] While it is true that the 10th century seems to have seen a significant increase in writing in Persian, this impression may be due to accidents of survival and preservation; and impulses to 'revive' Persian were probably more 'separatist' than 'nationalist,' as local rulers sought independence from the Abbasid caliphate, to which, however, they remained allied, even if in name only. Moreover, the so-called 'Persian renaissance' was by no means a revival of a dead or dormant language, but the continuation of a language the literary expression of which is only preserved in fragments, but which was clearly still vibrant.[19] Testimony to this fact is the astonishing level of sophistication in the two major works which survive from this period: Ferdowsi's verse *Shahname* and Abu-Ali Bal'ami's prose 'translation' of Tabari's History, both of which, in their different ways, show a mastery of literary style.

The language of Persian historiography (as of Persian prose in general) has customarily been divided into two predominant styles—one simple and straightforward, the other artificial and embellished—a division which seems to have begun with Bahâr's division of Persian

18 See Daniel, "Manuscripts and editions;" idem, "The Samanid 'Translations' of Ṭabarī," in Hugh Kennedy, ed., *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and his Work* (Princeton, N.J., 2008), pp. 263–97; Lutz Richter-Bernburg, "Linguistic Shuʿūbīya and Early Neo-Persian Prose," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974), pp. 55–64; Bertold Spuler, "The evolution of Persian historiography," in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), pp. 126–32; C.E. Bosworth, "The Persian contribution to Islamic historiography in the pre-Mongol period," in R.G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh, eds., *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 218–36.

19 See Gilbert Lazard, *La langue des plus ancients monuments de la prose persane* (Paris, 1963); Idem, "Pahlavi, Pârsi, Dari: Les langues de l'Iran d'après Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ," in C.E. Bosworth, ed., *Iran and Islam; In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky* (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 361–91; idem, "The rise of the New Persian language," in Richard N. Frye, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. IV (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 595–632; idem, *The Origins of Literary Persian* (Bethesda, MD, 1993).

prose style into *nathr-e sâde* and *nathr-e fanni* (see above).[20] The 'simple' style is considered typical of early Persian prose, while the 'artificial' is linked with the rise of the *enshâ'* style used by secretaries and court officials, which, among other things, utilizes *saj'* (rhyming prose) and embellishes the text with quotations from the *Qor'an*, hadith, proverbs, and poetry. The distinction between styles, and their periodization, seems arbitrary; as Bahâr himself noted, many authors employed both styles, and both co-existed during the same periods. We will have more to say about the *enshâ'* style later; suffice to say here that the authors we shall discuss, whether early or late, were well aware of this style, and utilized its resources as they saw fit. The reasons for differences in style are related less to specific periods than to the intended audience for a particular work. This intended (or 'ideal') audience changed over time; this issue will be discussed in what follows. Here I shall not deal with all histories written in Persian, but only with those that are of particular stylistic interest; and, with the exception of Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, my discussion will be limited to histories in prose.[21]

Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, although conceived as a historical work, is closer in mode to epic poetry; it will be dealt with briefly below. Abu-Ali Bal'ami's 'translation' of the Arabic historian Tabari's (d. 923) *Ta'rikh al-rosol wa'l-moluk* was commissioned by the Samanid ruler Mansur ebn Nuh (961–76) in 963, as was the 'translation' of Tabari's commentary (*tafsir*) on the *Qor'an*, accomplished by a group of learned scholars, of which Bal'ami was apparently in charge.[22] Some years before, Abu Mansur Tusi (d. 962), a significant player in the politics of the time, had commissioned his minister (*dastur*), Abu-Mansur Ma'mari, to compile a prose *Shahname*, of which only the preface survives.[23] The translations com-

20 See Poliakova, "Development," pp. 237–238, and the references cited; Rubanovich, "Literary canon," esp. pp. 50–55.

21 For general surveys of pre-Mongol historiography see Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, and Chapter 3.

22 Bal'ami, *Tarjoma-ye Tafsir-e Tabari*, ed. Habib Yaghmâ'i (Tehran, 1988), pp. 5–6.

23 See V. Minorsky, "The older Preface to the *Shāh-nāma*," in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1956), pp. 159–79.

missioned by Mansur ebn Nuh followed a period of political turmoil; Elton Daniel has argued that these commissions formed part of a program "to propagate a state-sanctioned, 'official' ideology and dogma,"[24] and that Bal'ami was, in fact, the primary instigator of the translation project.[25] Be that as it may, the commissions produced two extraordinary works of Persian prose. The *Tafsir* is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, one statement, attributed to the scholars who translated it, is worth our attention: they wrote justifying the translation on the grounds that "Here, in this region, the language is Persian, and the kings of this realm are Persian kings."[26]

Ferdowsi's *Shahname* seems to be the sole survivor of what appears to have been a growth industry during the latter half of the 10th century, when a number of works, including Abu-Mansur Ma'mari's prose *Shahname*, were composed in both prose and verse.[27] One later effort was the poet Daqiqi's *Shahname*, commissioned by the Samanid Nuh II ebn Mansur (976–97), and left unfinished when the poet was murdered in 977. Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, probably begun shortly after Daqiqi's death and completed around 1010, is reflective of the earlier period of Samanid rule, and incorporates a passage by Daqiqi relating to the rise of Zoroastrianism—a convenient way of distancing Ferdowsi himself from this not altogether popular subject. Although Ferdowsi ultimately dedicated his poem to Mahmud of Ghazna (999–1030)—to whom he also dedicated a number of panegyric passages, but who, it is said, received the poem coolly[28]—his original dedicatee (and patron) may

24 Daniel, "Manuscripts and editions," p. 286.

25 Daniel, "The Samanid Translations," pp. 7–8.

26 Bal'ami, *Tafsir*, pp. 5–6. Compare Maysari's introduction to his *Dâneshnâme*, composed between 978 and 980: "Our land is Iran, most of whose people know Persian." Quoted in Richter-Bernburg, "Linguistic Shu'ūbīya," p. 57.

27 See William L. Hanaway, "The Iranian epics," in Felix J. Oinas, ed., *Heroic Epic and Saga* (Bloomington and London, 1978), pp. 76–98, esp. pp. 76–78.

28 See Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht, 1968), pp. 155–57, and the references cited; on the panegyrics see Julie S. Meisami, "The past in service of the present: Two views of history in medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14 (1993), pp. 257–61.

have been Abu-Mansur Tusi. Although it has been argued that the poem employs the devices of oral poetry,[29] its register is highly sophisticated, and bears comparison with Homeric language, particularly in the use of what has been called the "Homeric simile." As an example, we may cite the introductory passage to the story of Rostam and Sohrâb, in which the Sistanian hero Rostam mistakenly kills his son, Sohrâb, not knowing that hero's true identity.[30]

> A vagrant wind springs up quite suddenly,
> And casts a green unripened fruit to earth.
> Shall we call this a tyrant's act, or just?
> Shall we consider it as right, or wrong?

At around the same time that Ferdowsi began his poem, Abu-Ali Bal'ami began his 'translation' of Tabari's history. But this work is no translation. Bal'ami ignores Tabari's use of *esnâd*s (chains of transmission, beginning with an authority who was an eyewitness or who heard the statements recorded, down through other authorities) in favor of a continuous narrative, which extends from creation to the later years of the Abbasid caliphate—although, interestingly, he has nothing to say about the rise of the Samanids. His history is based on the most reliable and esteemed of sources: Tabari's history; although Bal'ami often states that he has corrected, emended, or added to Tabari's scattered accounts.[31] But Bal'ami's history has both a plot and a narratorial stance, as well as a rich panoply of characters. His account of Islamic history is presented from a Persian (largely Khorasanian) perspective, and leads directly, if only implicitly, to the Samanids, whom Tabari treated briefly as mere governors of Transoxania.[32]

Bal'ami's treatment of the rise of the Abbasids focuses primarily on their campaign (*da'wa*) in the east, stresses the fact that their

29 See Olga M. Davidson, *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Ithaca, 1994).

30 Abu'l-Qasem Ferdowsi, *The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám,* tr. by Jerome W. Clinton (Seattle, 1987), p. 3.

31 See for example Abu-Ali Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme-ye Tabari*, ed. Mohammad Rowshan (3 vols., Tehran, 1994), II, p. 1006, and other examples in Chapter 3.

32 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 29–30.

success was due to Persian support, and maligns the Abbasids and, specifically, the Bani Hâshem (Hashemites), who "became greedy for the caliphate,"[33] and betrayed both their Khorasanian supporters and the Alids, in whose name they had campaigned. The Abbasids' early betrayal of their Persian supporters is treated to effect in Bal'ami's account of the murder of Abu-Moslem, the Khorasanian leader who was primarily responsible for their accession to power.[34] The first caliph, Abu'l-Abbâs Saffâh, refused the demand of his brother Abu-Ja'far's (the future caliph Mansur) to have Abu-Moslem killed, saying that the empire still had need of him to put down possible uprisings in the east, and that the entire world would blame him for such an act. When Mansur acceded to the caliphate, his old enmity towards Abu-Moslem resurfaced, and he plotted to kill him.[35] The account of Abu-Moslem's murder (discussed in more detail below) is vivid and dramatic; it forms a set piece for many Persian historians, and reflects their anti-Abbasid stance.[36]

The Abbasid caliphate, once secured, was maintained by its Persian officials, although the Abbasids' distrust and mistreatment of these was continual. This distrust culminated in the murder, instigated by the caliph Hârun-al-Rashid (786–809), of the Barmakid vizier Ja'far, and the destruction of the entire Barmakid family, who came from Khorasanian Buddhist origins and who held many important positions under the caliphate; this passage too will be discussed further below. After disposing of these capable administrators, Hârun was unable to control his domains; this lack of control foreshadows the eventual decline of the Abbasid caliphate.[37]

Bal'ami's style varies from the so-called 'simple and straightforward' prose used in the narration of events, to a more dramatic and rhetorical style employed at high points in the narrative, such

33 Bal'ami *Târikh-nâme* II, p. 1023.

34 On these events see Elton L. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under Abbasid Rule, 747–820* (Minneapolis, 1979), esp. pp. 113–17.

35 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* I, p. 1081.

36 Ibid., pp. 1087–1092; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 30–31.

37 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, pp. 1193–1200. Compare Mas'udi's account, discussed in Julie Scott Meisami, "Masʿūdī on love and the fall of the Barmakids," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1989), pp. 252–77; Bal'ami evidently concurred with Mas'udi on the moral effect of these events.

as the account of the murder of Abu-Moslem and of Ja'far the Barmakid. We can attribute these variations to two major factors: first, the need to address a broad audience, ranging from Turkish *mamluk*s who were not well versed in the subtleties of Persian, through the more sophisticated upper echelons of the court; and second, the author's desire to engage the attention and interest of the various segments of his audience, and provide stories both instructive and entertaining which would capture them at the outset and stimulate them to desire to hear more of his narrative. Even though the events treated were well known, either from historical sources or from their retelling as stories, the manner of presentation even of familiar materials played a substantial part in the reception of the history.

Continuous narrative became, with a few exceptions, the standard form of Persian historical writing. Most Persian historiography is arranged by reigns of kings, beginning with pre-Islamic rulers and early prophets and proceeding through the life of the Prophet Mohammad and the caliphs to the current reigning dynasty. Thus for example the *Târikh-e Sistân*, the first part of which breaks off around 1062, focuses primarily on the Saffarid rulers of Sistân, and treats only briefly of earlier events.[38] Similarly, Abd-al-Hayy Gardizi's *Zeyn al-akhbâr*, a general history written in the early 1050s, leads ultimately to the Ghaznavids, at whose court Gardizi may have served.[39] Gardizi's probable dedicatee was the young Ghaznavid ruler Abd-al-Rashid (r. 1049?–1052?), the last surviving son of Mahmud of Ghazna; he states, presenting his credentials, that although he has heard accounts of Mahmud's reign, or read of them in books, his own "are chiefly (of) those (events) that we witnessed with our own eyes."[40] His work breaks off before he could record the events of Abd-al-Rashid's reign; he may have been a victim of the coup staged by the *mamluk* general Toghrel

38 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 108–38.

39 See C.E. Bosworth, *EIr*, s.v. Gardīzī, Abū Sa'īd 'Abd-al-Ḥayy; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 66–79.

40 Abd-al-Hayy Gardizi, *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, ed. Abd-al-Hayy Habibi (Tehran, 1968), pp. 173–74.

which toppled Abd-al-Rashid.[41] Gardizi's style is, for the most part, straightforward and devoid of embellishment; his account of the murder of Abu-Moslem will be discussed further below, and compared with that of Bal'ami.

Much more important is Gardizi's older contemporary, Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi (d. 1077), who served as a secretary (*dabir*) in the Ghaznavid chancery (*divân-e resâlat*) for most of his professional life, first under the supervision of its head, his master and teacher Abu-Nasr Moshkân, and later as head of the chancery for a brief period during the reign of Abd-al-Rashid, at which time he seems to have fallen out of favor.[42] He began writing his history of the Ghaznavids after his retirement, although he had been collecting materials for some time beforehand. Only a portion of his work survives: his incomplete account of the reign of Mas'ud I (1030–41).

Although Beyhaqi's history is arranged in annalistic order, by the years of Mas'ud's reign, it takes the form of a continuous narrative, along with many 'interpolations,' which include flashbacks to earlier events or present parallels with current events and situations drawn from earlier Islamic history.[43] In many ways the work reads like a novel; it vividly depicts the characters involved in the events of Mas'ud's reign and in the unfolding drama that leads ultimately to Mas'ud's murder by his own troops. Beyhaqi's history breaks off before these last events; but the details can be filled in by reference to Gardizi.[44]

Although this portion of the history is incomplete, it has, in itself, a plot. What might be called the 'sub-plot' informing the first part of the history concerns the disputed claim to succession between Mas'ud, Mahmud of Ghazna's first designated heir-apparent, and his half-brother Mohammad, designated heir-apparent by Mahmud shortly before the latter's death. The history begins

41 See C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids: Splendour and Decay; The Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India 1040–1186* (New York, 1977), pp. 41–47.

42 G.-Ḥ. Yūsofī, *EIr*, s.v. Bayhaqī, Abu'l-Fażl; Said Naficy, *EI²*, s.v. Bayhaḳī, Abu'l-Faḍl; Waldman, *Toward a Theory*, pp. 27–50.

43 See Waldman, *Toward a Theory,* pp. 53–54.

44 Gardizi, *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, pp. 204–5.

with a letter to Mas'ud, who was campaigning in Esfahan, from members of the court informing him that, after Mahmud's death, Mohammad had been placed on the throne but had been deposed by Mas'ud's supporters, who urged him to return and claim the throne.[45] (Stories about disputed claims to succession are a favorite topic for historians, not least because they point to the threat of civil strife). It ends with Mas'ud's defeat by the Saljuqs at the battle of Dandânqân in 1040 and his subsequent preparations to withdraw to the Ghaznavid domains in India.

In his telling of this ultimately tragic story, Beyhaqi describes both major and minor events and, in particular, the intrigues of the court. In so doing, he employs direct discourse between the various participants in the events (including himself), inserts a variety of documents and letters (copies of which he had kept in his own archives), incorporates some poetry either as documentary material or as moralistic tags, and adjusts his style to serve the occasion. Beyhaqi's narratorial voice is quite prominent; as an eyewitness to many of the events recorded, he does not hesitate to pass judgment on the actors in those events. However, in a discursus (*khotbe*) on history, he proclaims both his own reliability and that of his sources. He states:

> The history of the past is of two sorts, without a third: one must either hear it from someone, or read it in a book. The reporter of history must be reliable and truthful, and reason must also testify that his account is correct … Most of the common people … prefer false and impossible things, such as stories of demons, peris, ghouls of the desert, mountains and seas, which some fool invents, and others like him gather round, and he says, "In such-and-such a sea I saw an island; five hundred of us landed there and cooked bread and set up our pots. When the fire was hot and the heat reached the ground it moved; we looked and (saw) that it was a great fish …" and similar fantastic tales which bring sleep to the ignorant when they are told to them at night. But those who desire true discourse which may be believed are considered wise, and their number is very few.[46]

45 Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi, *Târikh-e Beyhaqi*, ed. Ali-Akbar Fayyâz (Mashhad, 1995), pp. 1–4.

46 Ibid., p. 905.

Thus Beyhaqi establishes his credentials: he will avoid the fantastic, and convey only the truth. But this truth is filtered through his own sensibility; and throughout his work, his narratorial persona dominates. Moreover, despite the apparent simplicity of his style, there is more to it than immediately meets the eye.

Beyhaqi has been the subject of more study than has any other pre-Mongol historian. Marilyn Waldman termed his history "a blend of a number of elements, all held together by his own presence, vision, and interests."[47] He was clearly well versed in both Arabic and Persian and, although he is not generally considered as a practitioner of *enshâ'*, he is said to have composed a (now lost) manual on the secretarial art, the *Zinat-al-kottâb*.[48] Beyhaqi only rarely employs the *enshâ'* style, except for a few passages which will be discussed below.

Beyhaqi's target audience was presumably both older and newer members of the Ghaznavid court, those who had known Mas'ud and those who were serving under Abd-al-Rashid and his successors; and he seems also to have been writing for posterity.[49] He was not writing 'official' or 'encomiastic' history; and he was writing in the language best understood by members of the Ghaznavid court. The official language of that court was Persian, and most of its correspondence was conducted in that language, although correspondence with the caliphal court was composed in Arabic. The early Ghaznavid rulers closely supervised, and often themselves composed, their correspondence.[50] But whether written in Arabic or in Persian, most of these documents are free of the 'florid' *enshâ'* style.

The most prominent use of this style by Beyhaqi occurs approximately midway through the surviving portion of his work, where he records the death of Sultan Farrokhzâd and the accession of Sultan Ebrâhim in 1059. It bears the rubric *Fasl dar ma'nâ-ye dunyâ* ("Section on the meaning of this world"); it begins:

47 Waldman, *Toward a Theory*, p. 51.
48 See *EIr*, s.v. Bayhaqī, p. 891; *EI²*, s.v. Bayhakī, p. 1131. Waldman, *Toward a Theory*, p. 44.
49 Cf. Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 129–30.
50 See Luther, "A new source."

> I shall compose a section on this deceitful world, which with one hand sprinkles sugar [*bâ-yek dast shakar pâshande*] and with the other lethal poison [*zahr-e koshande*]. It has tested [*âzmude*] one group with trials [*mehnat*] and garbed [*pushânide*] another in the robes of comfort [*ne'mat*], so that wise men may know that it is absurd to place one's heart on the blessings of this world.[51]

A verse by the Arabic poet Motanabbi (d. 965) on the vicissitudes and deceits of this world follows. Then Beyhaqi continues: "I had brought this volume up to this point in history [1059] when King Farrokhzâd gave up his sweet and precious soul to the Taker of Souls." He was washed and buried, and "from those many fresh gardens, buildings and palaces (belonging to) his grandfather, father and brothers was delivered into four or five cubits of earth, and soil was heaped upon him." There follow appropriate verses, in both Persian and Arabic, on the *ubi sunt* theme and on the treachery of this world.[52]

These somewhat gloomy poems lead to a passage lamenting the death of Farrokhzâd which might be called semi-*saj'*.[53]

> And for Amir Farrokhzâd—may God have mercy upon him—the Designator of Lifetimes, the Creator of night and day, the Mighty, the King of kings (*moqadder al-a'mâr wa-khâleq al-leyl wa'l-nahâr al-aziz al-jabbâr Malek al-moluk*) … had decreed the days of his [Farrokhzâd's] life and the period of his kingship. He was greatly mourned, and his good deeds remembered; but God, in His wisdom, appointed Ebrâhim as his successor.

Ebrâhim is presented as the reviver of the period of Mahmud and Mas'ud and of their works. Encomiastic verses follow, along with praise of the new sultan, who has restored everything (and everyone) to its proper place, has given proper mourning to his brother Farrokhzâd, and has become "a shepherd to his people."[54] Next

51 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 480.

52 Ibid., pp. 480–83. On poetic citations in Beyhaqi, see C. E. Bosworth, "The poetical citations in Baihaqī's *Ta'rīkh-i Masʿūdī*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Supplement IV: XX* (Wiesbaden, 1980), pp. 41–56.

53 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 483.

54 Ibid., p. 484.

comes a seeming digression, which; however, fits with the overall moralizing tone of this section, and with the legitimization of Ebrâhim. It deals primarily with the need for a strong ruler, and incorporates several Prophetic sayings. Overall, this passage illustrates Beyhaqi's command of the *enshâ'* style, the use of which would seem to be a question of occasion (the death of one ruler and the succession of another) and of genre (the eulogy of the deceased and praise of the newly enthroned ruler).

As noted above, Beyhaqi's history has received much attention from scholars, both by historians seeking to tease out its 'facts,' and by others concerned with Beyhaqi's method and style. Several 'set pieces' in the history have attracted special interest. One is the account of the execution of Mahmud's former vizier Hasanak (Abu'l-Hasan ebn Mohammad Mikâli),[55] which will be discussed in more detail below. Two passages, however, concern us here. One concerns Mas'ud's 'pleasure palace,' built when he was governor of Herat.[56] Beyhaqi states that, while writing his history, he had long wished for information about Mas'ud's youth, but was disappointed until, finally, one Abu-Sa'd Abd-al-Ghaffâr ebn Fâkhir ebn Sharif, a longtime and still important servant of the Ghaznavid court, honored him with an account of Mas'ud's youth and his early achievements, and wrote it down in his own hand.[57] Although these accounts are attributed to Abd-al-Ghaffâr, the style is definitely Beyhaqi's; but we must remember that it is, ostensibly, not Beyhaqi who is speaking, but Abd-al-Ghaffâr.

The gist of the story is this: when Mas'ud was governor of Herat, he had built for himself a pleasure house in the palace grounds, which was adorned inside and out with erotic paintings and accompanying texts; there he would take his siestas, accompanied by singers and musicians, who were brought to him secretly. The account is introduced (in the words of Abd-al-Ghaffâr) as an example of Mas'ud's "vigilance, resolve, and circumspection" (*bidâri o hazm o ehtiyât*), all desirable qualities in a prince. It recounts

55 See C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994–1040* (2nd ed., Beirut, 1973), pp. 182–83.

56 Ibid., p. 227.

57 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 130–31.

the building of the pleasure house, Mahmud's displeasure at hearing reports of his son's self-indulgence from his spies at Mas'ud's court, and his dispatching of a military official to investigate the matter. Mas'ud, forewarned by one of his own spies at his father's court, had the building whitewashed and its furnishings removed, so that there remained no evidence of it. The account concludes with Mahmud stating, "They tell many lies about this son of mine," and ceasing his investigations.[58]

This segment is neatly framed by the introductory praise of Mas'ud's qualities and by Mahmud's final statement, all of which are attributed to Abd-al-Ghaffâr. Waldman saw this story both as an account of a youthful pecadillo ("boys will be boys"),[59] and as a critique of the "spy system" at the Ghaznavid court.[60] Soheila Amirsoleimani sees this episode as an example of Beyhaqi's use of irony, based on multiple "lies": the presence of spies in both Mahmud's and Mas'ud's court, the "lies" (I would prefer the term "deceptions") engaged in by both parties.[61] But the real irony is elsewhere, in Beyhaqi's style and in his language. Although he distances himself from this account by attributing it to Abd-al-Ghaffâr; he calls attention to Mas'ud's so-called princely qualities, employed here to cover up his youthly indulgences, but which were notably not employed during his reign in dealing with affairs of state. The apparent praise thus serves to prefigure the disasters that occurred throughout Mas'ud's reign.

The second segment that concerns us here is a brief one, which occurs in the build-up to the execution of Hasanak. When Hasanak was brought before the tribunal of judges and notables appointed to assess and to confiscate his possessions (Beyhaqi was present at this event), he finally appeared, "unchained, wearing a *jobba* (surtout) of an inky color verging on black, threadbare, an extremely clean dun-colored cuirass [*durrâ'a*], a worn Nishâpuri turban, and new

58 Ibid., pp. 145–49.

59 Cf. ibid., p. 145: *va-javânân-râ shart ast keh chonin va-mânand-e in bokonand.*

60 Waldman, *Toward a Theory*, p. 90.

61 See Soheila Amirsoleimani, "Truths and lies: Irony and intrigue in the *Tārīkh-i Beyhaqī*," *Iranian Studies* 32 (1999), pp. 249–50.

Mikâ'ili boots; his hair was slicked down and concealed beneath his turban, with only a bit showing."[62] Poliakova calls this a "naturalistic" description: "The historiographer has set out what he saw with his own eyes, without introducing into his description any hidden meaning."[63] To Beyhaqi's audience, the meaning would, indeed, not have been "hidden": they would have been well aware of Hasanak's achievements, his high status, and his fall from grace under the vindictive Sultan Mas'ud. His appearance before the tribunal in worn clothing signifies both his fall and, to some extent, his arrogance (new and fancy boots); Beyhaqi shows both what he was, and what he has come to. One question remains: did Hasanak deliberately appear in this manner in order to impress the tribunal with his reduced circumstances, and to remind them of his former state? Historically speaking, this question cannot be answered; stylistically speaking, this is the impression given by Beyhaqi in his "naturalistic" description. Hasanak is a victim, although not a passive one.

Beyhaqi's work is unique, and his style was not followed by his successors, though its origins may perhaps be seen in Bal'ami. The extent to which he influenced subsequent historians is unclear but seems to have been negligible. It is to these later historians, of the 12th and 13th centuries, that we shall now turn.

3. The Triumph of *Enshâ'*

The Ghaznavids were overcome by the Saljuqs following Mas'ud I's defeat at Dandânqân in 1040. Subsequently the major centers of literary production moved both east, to India, where the later Ghaznavid rulers had their capital in Lahore, and west, to the domains conquered by the Saljuqs, although there remained an important center in Khorasan, where the Saljuq Sultan Sanjar (1097–1157) had his court in Marv. The historical works to be discussed here (with one major exception) were produced in western Iran, and most notably in or around Hamadan, the western Saljuq capital during the 12th century.

62 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 229.
63 Poliakova, "Development," p. 241.

During the early 12th century the 'simple' and 'artificial' styles coexisted, and are often seen in the same work. The determination of which style was used depended upon both patronage and intended audience. Many of the Saljuq rulers were illiterate (meaning that they could not read nor write in any language), although 'illiteracy' does not count for much in a predominantly oral culture. Nevertheless, they were obliged to issue commands and to engage in correspondence, usually in several languages; for this, they relied on their literate, Arabic- and Persian-speaking officials. Increasingly, the actual intended audience for historical works, as well as for other compositions in both prose and poetry, was such officials.

The earliest surviving historical work from this period is probably Ebn-al-Balkhi's *Fârs-nâme*, commissioned by the Saljuq Sultan Mohammad (Tapar) ebn Malekshâh (1104–17), written in the 'simple' style, and most probably intended for the edification of the Sultan's atabek and governor of Fars, Châvli (d. 1116). It includes not only a history of the province of Fars but an account of its monuments, climate, natural resources, tribal groups, and so on.[64] The anonymous *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*, a general history compiled around 1126 and also employing the 'simple' style, was written at the behest of an acquaintance (or patron?) of the author, with whom the latter became acquainted from salons (*majâles*) held in his home town of Asadâbâd, near Hamadan. It contains a lengthy list of the author's sources (which include the *Shahname* and its various offshoots), and incorporates materials ranging from ancient Arabian and Persian history; the life of the Prophet Mohammad; the early caliphate and the decline of the Abbasids following the murder of Abu-Moslem; the rise of the Buyids and, later, of the Saljuqs. The focus is generally on events occurring near and about, or affecting, Hamadan.[65] Similarly Ebn-Fondoq's (d. 1169) local history of the region of Beyhaq (1167), which includes biographies of its notables, employs the 'simple' style.[66]

64 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 162–88, and the references cited; C.E. Bosworth, *EIr*, s.v. Ebn al-Balk̲ī.

65 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 188–209, and the references cited.

66 Ibid., pp. 209–29; H. Halm, *EIr*, s.v. Bayhaqī, Ẓahīr-al-Dīn.

So far, the works mentioned were composed in the 'simple' prose style, although they do feature interpolations, especially of poetry. But in the last quarter of the 12th century the full-blown *enshâ'* style came to dominate the writing of history. Many scholars consider the basis of this style to be rhymed prose (*saj'*), which was used by secretaries in both public and private correspondence, but which rapidly spread to other prose genres. This style might also be termed the 'poeticization of prose,' as it incorporated many 'poetic' features, such as parallelism of members (often with internal rhyme), and the use of figures of speech, especially metaphor and tropes. It was also characterized by the interpolation of quotations (sometimes brief, sometimes lengthy, but which are often not mere 'embellishment' but are closely related to the subject matter) from a variety of sources: the *Qor'an*, hadith, proverbs, and poetry, both early and contemporary. *Saj'* is only one element of this style. The manuals of *enshâ'* that proliferated during this period also address more practical issues, such as decorum (proper styles of address to superiors and inferiors, proper titulature, and so on, as well as ways of expressing difficult or controversial subjects, which involve a certain amount of circumlocution, not to mention obfuscation, and which require the educated reader/audience to 'read between the lines' in order to decipher the true meaning of the text.[67]

Four major works concern us here: Zahir-al-Din Nishâpuri's (d. 1187) *Saljuq-nâme* (1176); Afzal-al-Din Kermâni's *Eqd-al-ulâ* (1189); Mohammad Ali Râvandi's *Râhat-al-sodur* (completed around 1204); and Abu'l-Sharaf Jorbâdhqâni's translation of Abu-Nasr Otbi's history of the Ghaznavids, the *Ta'rikh-al-Yamini* (1206–7).

I shall defer discussion of Nishâpuri's *Saljuq-nâme* until I come to deal with Râvandi's *Râhat-al-sodur*, as the two works are closely related. Afzal-al-Din Kermâni's *Ketâb eqd-al-ulâ l'il-mowqef-al-a'lâ* was dedicated to the Ghozz conqueror of Kerman, Malek Dinâr (1186–91). Kermâni was a boon-companion of the Saljuq rulers of Kerman, Malek Toghrel Shah (d. 1162?) and his son Malek

67 Fatḥ-Allāh Mojtabā'ī, *EIr*, s.v. Correspondence. ii; Jürgen Paul, *EIr*, s.v. Enšā'; Luther, "Bayhaqi;" idem, "Chancery writing;" idem, "Islamic rhetoric;" Poliakova, "Development;" Rubanovich, "Literary canon."

Arslân Shâh (d. 1176), and a *monshi* (secretary/scribe) for the Atabek Mohammad Bozkosh (d. 1196). Forced by events to leave Kerman in the early 1180s, he eventually returned, and became secretary to various officials and religious scholars, one of whom encouraged him to write his work.[68] He died around 1218. His book begins with an enumeration of the benefits of history and the reasons for the book's composition: (1) to urge emulation of the noble virtues exemplified in its stories and accounts; (2) to furnish object lessons to the wise; (3) to express gratitude for Malek Dinâr's having brought an end to Kerman's period of trials; (4) to record the achievements of the ruler who transformed once-ruined Kerman into a Paradise; and (5) as a gift to Malek Dinâr upon entering his service. Kermâni states in this section, in a passage using elegant rhyming prose:

> When I wished to have the good fortune of service to Malek Dinâr, and to kiss the most noble carpet (of his court), as is the rule for servants who wait upon the courts of kings, I did not possess suitable gifts and agreeable rarities (*tohaf-e lâyeq o toraf-e movâfeq*), because the affliction of exile (*korbat-e ghorbat*) and separation from my homeland, with (the exigencies of) a large family, and the changes in (my) circumstances (*kesrat-e ayâl o taqallob-e ahvâl*), had left nothing remaining to me. So I followed the custom of Motanabbi—
>
> > You have no horses to give, and no money:
> > Then let speech aid you, if your circumstances do not—
>
> and thought:
>
> The gift of (religious) scholars is prayer, and that of poets is praise. No service to this *dowlat* is greater than that of composing a history of its royal sovereign's battles and his successive conquests, and to provide a record thereof so that the fame of this *dowlat* will survive the passage of time and its name be immortalised on the pages of Time's book; for the survival of (one's) name is a second life, and an elegant narrative is a life recommenced.[69]

We need not go into the details of Malek Dinâr's rule of Kerman, nor the author's hyperbolic praise of him. Kermâni's use of the fig-

68 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 234–35, and the references cited.

69 Afzal-al-Din Kermâni, *Ketâb Eqd-al-ulâ l'il-mowqef-al-a'lâ*, ed. Ali-Mohammad Âmeri Nâ'ini (Tehran, 1932), pp. 3–5 (repr. 1977, pp. 61–62).

ured chancery style, with frequent interpolations (including panegyrics on Malek Dinâr written by Kermâni himself) anticipates the styles of both Râvandi and Jorbâdhqâni. His use of descriptive passages written in this style is, however, not typical of either of his successors. A brief example will suffice.

> When the intense cold of *zamharir* (*havâ-ye zamharir-afsân*), the season that makes the poor man fear (*fasl-e darvish-tarsân*), had passed, and the season of pleasant temperateness (*mowsem-e e'tedâl-e delghoshâ*), and spring, the world's ornament (*bahâr-e jahân-ârây*), arrived, spreading brocades of green (*sondos-e khazrâ*) on the dust-covered scene (*bar basât-e ghabrâ*), and making verdant the earth's youthful cheeks, news reached the sublime court … of a fort between Bam and Bardsir, called Dez Âshul. In that fort had gathered a group of thieves and ruffians, murderers and worthless ones (*moshti dozd o ubâsh o khuni o qallâsh*), [who were engaged in brigandry and the molestation of travellers].[70]

Such figured descriptive passages will scarcely be seen again until nearly a century later, with Jovayni (d. 1283; see Chapter 2). The effect is to deflect attention away from Malek Dinâr's exploits (here, his apparent putting down of a group of bandits and his taking of their fortress; actually, they left for other parts) to the language employed.

Mohammad ebn Ali Râvandi's *Râhat-al-sodur va âyat-al-sorur* has often been criticized for its 'artificial' or 'ornamental' style. As an account of Saljuq history, it has been judged as both derivative and unreliable; stylistically, it has been considered excessively rhetorical and encumbered with irrelevant interpolations.[71] Esmâ'il Afshâr viewed Râvandi as a semi-literate, plagiarising hack who wrote his work to flatter a minor Saljuq sultan, Ghiyâth-al-Din Keykhosrow, the ruler of Konya.[72] Allin Luther suggested that

70 Kermâni, *Eqd*, p. 45 (2nd printing, 1977, p. 102).

71 See Meisami, "History or hybrid?" and the references cited.

72 See Zahir-al-Din Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, ed. Esmâ'il Afshâr (Tehran, 1953), p. 6 [the redaction by Qâshâni]; tr. Kenneth Allin Luther as *The History of the Seljuq Turks, from the Jamiʿ al-Tawārīkh, an Ilkhanid Adaptation of the Saljūq-nāma of Ẓahīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Richmond, Surrey, 2001), p. 6 [the Rashid-al-Din redaction].

Râvandi wrote his book in order to display his rhetorical skills and obtain a post at the court of Konya.[73] In view of Râvandi's account of his life, and of how he came to write his book, these opinions are both problematic and inaccurate.

Orphaned in early life, Râvandi was brought up by an uncle, Tâj-al-Din Ahmad, a religious scholar. Between 1174 and 1184 he visited the major cities of Iraq, and acquired the skills of calligraphy, gilding and bookbinding, as well as studying other sciences. Thus (as his work, moreover, shows), he was far from being "semi-literate." In 1181 Râvandi was introduced into the court of the Saljuq Sultan Toghrel III (r. 1176–94) at Hamadan by another uncle, Zeyn-al-Din Mahmud Kâshi, who was Toghrel's tutor of calligraphy; he was employed to assist in Toghrel's project to produce a copy of the *Qor'an* in his own hand.[74] In 1184, Zeyn-al-Din Mahmud compiled for Toghrel a collection of poetry, illustrated with portraits of each poet. This inspired Râvandi to make his own compilation, which was originally intended for Toghrel;[75] but due to unstable cirumstances, both personal and political, Ravandi had to abandon his project temporarily. In about 1204, he was finally able to complete his book; but since the great Saljuqs had been defeated (and Toghrel had been killed) in a major battle near Rayy in 1194, he was obliged to search for a new patron, and finally dedicated his work to Keykhosrow ebn Qilij Arslân.[76]

The *Râhat-al-sodur* was originally intended as an edifying compilation and not, primarily, as a history. The chapters on Saljuq history prior to Toghrel III are based largely on the *Saljuq-nâme* of Râvandi's predecessor and kinsman, Zahir-al-Din Nishâpuri, who is often quoted more or less verbatim.[77] Râvandi's elaborate

73 Luther, "Islamic rhetoric," p. 95.

74 Mohammed ebn Ali Râvandi, *Râhat-al-sodur*, ed. Muhammad Iqbal (London, 1921), pp. 39–44.

75 Ibid., p. 58.

76 On the circumstances surrounding the re-dedication of the work see ibid., pp. 457–67.

77 Ibid., pp. 64–65; Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, tr. Luther, p. 6; ed. A.H. Morton, *The Saljūqnāma of Ẓahīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī* (Warminster, 2004), Introduction, pp. 9–20, for a more detailed evaluation of the *Saljuq-nâme* and Râvandi's use of it.

style signals a difference in purpose between his work and that of Nishâpuri. While the latter's work, dedicated to the newly acceded young sultan Toghrel,[78] is not without its purple passages, especially in its exordium,[79] Râvandi wrote his work during Toghrel's reign, and its later sections incorporate eyewitness acounts of conditions following the fall of the great Saljuqs.

Râvandi's particular agendas do not concern us here. What does concern us is his style. His lengthy exordium begins, unusually, with a doxology in verse, goes on to praise the Prophet Mohammad, his followers and successors, and other leaders of the faith, and, finally, extols the Saljuqs for their piety and support of the true faith, incorporating into this generally encomiastic passage specific praise of Sultan Keykhosrow, "the fruit of the tree of Saljuq," and concluding with the causes of the Saljuqs' decline and the evils of the present time.[80]

Râvandi's chapter on Alp Arslân's reign (1063–72) establishes a structural pattern that he will follow, and expand upon, in his accounts of later rulers. He begins with a capsule account of the ruler's accession, gives his date of birth, names his vizier and chamberlains (*hojjâb*), provides a brief encomiastic passage and includes a physical description. The passage is worth quoting for its combination of 'ornamental' and 'simple' prose.[81]

> Soltân Alp Arslân was a ruler [*pâdeshâhi*] (possessing both) awesomeness and rulership [*bâ heybat o siyâsat*], aggressive, fortunate, and vigilant [*tâzande o kâmgâr o bidâr*], defeater of foes, feller of enemies [*doshman shekan khasm afkan*], a peerless world-conqueror [*bi nazir jahângir*], adornment of the throne, conqueror of the world [*takht-ârây giti-goshây*]. He was very tall, with long mustaches [*mahâsen*], so that when he went to shoot [with his bow] he would knot them up. His arrow never missed (its mark). He had a tall turban [*kolâh*]; and on days of audience, on his throne, he was

78 See Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, ed. Afshâr, pp. 83–84; tr. Luther, p. 6; ed. Morton, p. 3.

79 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 230; Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, ed. Afshâr, pp. 9–10; tr. Luther, pp. 25–27.

80 For more details see Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 239–41.

81 Râvandi, *Râhat-al-sodur*, p. 117.

> extremely formidable and grand. They say that from the tip of his mustaches to the top of his turban was two ells [*gaz*]; and he terrified every envoy who came before his throne. He had a peaceful reign [*molk-e âsude dâsht*]. Proverb (in Arabic): "For the man of good endeavor, his pastures will be pleasant ever." Verse [translation of the proverb into Persian]: "The man whose life and deeds in good abound: his fields will furnish a good hunting ground."

This short passage, although partly taken almost verbatim from Nishâpuri,[82] provides a good example of Râvandi's style. He begins with ornamental prose, using *saj'*, parallelism of members, and internal rhyme, to describe Alp Arslân's qualities; he then moves to a relatively simple and straightforward style; and concludes with a proverb in Arabic and its translation into Persian verse. The passage is not merely encomiastic but also ironic: the statement that the sultan's arrow "never missed its mark" is shown to be false at the end of the account: Alp Arslân is slain precisely because his arrow, directed at his assassin, missed its mark.[83]

The rhetorical high point of the chapter on Alp Arslân, and the first event recorded, is the account of the murder of the vizier Abu-Nasr Kondori, which will be discussed further below. Here we may note that Râvandi omits Nishâpuri's comment that it was because of the vizier's "good judgement, sagacity, intelligence and perception" that Malekshâh's (r. 1072–92) vizier Nezâm-al-Molk became Kondori's mortal enemy, and because of his own fear of Kondori's "competence, knowledge, foresight and acuteness" instigated the former vizier's murder.[84]

Râvandi seems to have been on familiar terms with Sultan Toghrel, to whom he had intended to dedicate his work.[85] He had evidently been working on this compilation before his ill-fated trip

82 See Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, ed. Afshâr, p. 47; cf. the briefer text in ed. Morton, p. 21.

83 Râvandi, *Râhat*, p. 120; Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, ed. Afshâr, p. 54; ed. Morton, p. 23.

84 Râvandi, *Râhat*, pp. 117–18; Nishâpuri, *Saljuq-nâme*, ed. Afshâr, p. 23; tr. Luther, pp. 47–48; but not in the earlier text, ed. Morton, p. 21, which merely says Nezâm-al-Molk had always been wary of him (*andishnâk*).

85 See Râvandi, *Râhat*, p. 344.

to Mazandaran in 1189,[86] and returned to it after Toghrel's death in battle in 1194, or perhaps even earlier. It seems safe to assume that the early sections were more or less in place, and that the account of Toghrel's reign was already in progress, when that reign itself was so rudely interrupted. The section on the subsequent devastation of Iraq has an immediacy to it that suggests it was written at the time (much of it is in the present tense, and includes eyewitness accounts of various events); it breaks off around 1199. The exordium and the *khâteme,* as well as the panegyrics to Keykhosrow, were undoubtedly written last. Thus, since the bulk of the work would have been intended for Toghrel, suggestions that it was written solely, or even primarily, to gain Râvandi a position at Keykhosrow's court at Konya, cannot be accepted.

One more aspect of Râvandi's style must be mentioned here, and that is his use of interpolations.[87] These have often been considered superfluous, extraneous to the subject matter, or as marring the flow of the narrative.[88] They include Qor'anic verses, hadith, proverbs (usually in Arabic, and most often translated into Persian), and an abundance of poetic quotations: verses by the author (usually in praise of Sultan Keykhosrow), panegyrics to various Saljuq rulers by other poets, gnomic or homiletic verses, quotations from Ferdowsi's *Shahname* (mainly of a homiletic or meditative nature, taken out of context and often rearranged to suit the author's program), and verses from the romances of Râvandi's contemporary, Nezâmi Ganjavi (d. 1206), chiefly from that poet's *Leyli o Majnun* and *Khosrow o Shirin*, which are often interwoven into the narrative text.

A couple of examples will suffice here. Praising Sultan Keykhosrow as "the fruit of the tree of Saljuq," which flourished so long as this dynasty propagated the true faith, honored men of religious

86 Ibid., pp. 357–61.

87 For a list of types of interpolations see Meisami, "History or hybrid?" pp. 186–88.

88 See Eqbâl's comments in Râvandi, *Râhat*, pp. xxi-xxii; and Afshâr in Nishâpuri, p. 6.

learning, and performed many charitable deeds, he recombines verses from the *Shahname* to compose a poem of his own:[89]

> A tree in greenest Paradise I've sown,
> its like not planted e'en by Faridun.
> In autumn when the cypress sends forth shoots,
> those branches green will reach palatial height.
> A tree rejoices in its lofty height,
> observed by men of fortune and clear sight.
> 'Tis best that such men in three things believe,
> for what more can there be beyond these three?
> They're virtue, noble nature, and proud line:
> three things each with the other intertwined …
> When you have gained all three, you must as well
> have wisdom, and good deeds from evil tell.
> When those four things one body gathers in,
> it will be free from sorrow, grief and pain.
> The man whom God has chosen to be king
> will be the honored boast of pious men.

Here, as in many other passages, Râvandi creates his own poem out of verses taken from different sections of the *Shahname*. In so doing, he demonstrates his literary talents, using Ferdowsi's materials for his own purposes.

A second way in which Râvandi shows his literary creativity is in his interweaving of poetic quotations with his own eyewitness narrative of events following the fall of the Great Saljuqs. In this case, the quotations are taken from Nezâmi's verse romance, *Khosrow o Shirin*. The episode concerns the depredations of a former *mamluk* turned brigand-cum-warlord, Nur-al-Din Kokje, who at one point seized control of Hamadan.[90] Threatened by his enemies, he came to Hamadan.

89 Râvandi, *Râhat*, p. 29; cf. J.S. Meisami, "The *Šâh-nâme* as Mirror for Princes," in C. Balaÿ, C. Kappler and Z. Vesel, eds., *Pand-o Sokhan* (Tehran, 1995), pp. 268–69.

90 Ibid., p. 392; on Kokje, see further Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 249, 253; and for a contrasting account by Ebn-al-Athir, who sees Kokje in a positive light, see Julie S. Meisami, "The collapse of the Great Saljuqs," in Chase F. Robinson, ed., *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 287–95.

He bade a crier proclaim throughout the land,
"Woe unto those who'd raise a violent hand
'Gainst others. Should a horse invade a field,
Or someone fruit from a fruit-grower steal,
Or look upon the face of one forbidden,
Install a Turkish slave for acts of sin,
I will mete out that punishment that's fit."
He swore a mighty oath to this effect.

By this ruse, says Râvandi, Kokje deceived the people, and acquired much wealth.[91] Nezâmi's verses are from a speech by Khosrow's father, King Hormoz, announcing that he will punish the young prince for his youthful sins.[92] The irony here is palpable, as Râvandi puts this speech, proclaiming justice, in the mouth of a brigand who fools the people of Hamadan in order to exploit them for his own greedy ends.

Much more could be said about Râvandi, whose style is far more complex, and far more sophisticated, than has generally been admitted. We shall discuss his treatment of the murder of the vizier Kondori further below. In the meanwhile, we turn to the last writer to be discussed here, Abu'l-Sharaf Jorbâdhqâni, and his 'translation' of Abu-Nasr Otbi's Arabic history of the Ghaznavids.

Abu'l-Sharaf Nâseh ebn Zafar Monshi Jorbâdhqâni (an Arabised form of his *nesbe*, Golpâyegâni, meaning someone from Golpâyegân in the province of Kashan) completed his translation of Otbi's history in 1206–7. Otbi's history, which deals with the fall of the Samanids and the rise of the Ghaznavids, ends around 1020 or 1021, and was written in the elegant Arabic *enshâ'* style, employing *saj'* and incorporating many panegyric poems addressed to or celebrating the rulers of both dynasties.[93] Jorbâdhqâni's work forms a complement to those of Kermâni and Râvandi, as it too employs the ornamental *enshâ'* style; it also takes some liberties in 'translating' Otbi's text.

91 Râvandi, *Râhat*, p. 392; cf. Meisami, "History or hybrid?," p. 200.
92 Nezâmi Ganjavi, *Khosrow o Shirin*, ed. Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran, 1924), p. 43.
93 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 53–66.

Jorbâdhqâni was a secretary in the administration of Mohammad Jahân Pahlavân's former *mamluk*, Jamâl-al-Din Ay Aba Ologh Bârbak.[94] Jahân Pahlavân was an important player in the politics of Toghrel III's reign, and the real power behind the throne until his death in 1187; Kokje, mentioned above, had formerly been his *mamluk*. The translation was commissioned by Ay Aba's vizier, Abu'l-Qâsem Ali ebn al-Hoseyn ebn Mohammad ebn Abi Hanifa, who resided in Kashan.[95] According to Najm-al-Din Qomi, author of the *Târikh-al-vozarâ'* (1188–89), who was a friend of Jorbâdhqâni, the latter had been forced by his detractors to retire from his post as *monshi* in the Divan of Toghrel's vizier Qavâm-al-Din Dargozini, and had retired to Jorbâdhqân (Golpâyegân).[96] He was apparently reinstated later, as he mentions having been at Toghrel's court in Hamadan in 1193.[97] Little else is known about Jorbadhqani; but he was clearly skilled in both Arabic and Persian. He includes a number of his Arabic poems in his translation, and mentions his Arabic work, the *Tohfat-al-âfâq fi mahâsen ahl-al-Erâq,* which was probably a collection of biographies of notables of Iraq.[98]

Jorbâdhqâni begins his preface with a doxology and praise of the Prophet, followed by a lengthy encomium of Jamâl-al-Din Ay Aba, who is praised for his justice, his compassion towards the populace, and his good works. When the Saljuq sultanate in Iraq came to an end in 1186, and civil strife erupted amongst the rebellious Turkish *mamluk*s, Ay Aba strove to preserve the noble family of the Atabegs.[99] He and the Turkish Khaqan Aytoghmesh, who ruled Hamadan from 1203 onwards, and who married a daughter of Ay

94 Ibid., pp. 256–57, and the references cited.

95 Abu'l-Sharaf Jorbâdhqâni, *Tarjome-ye Târikh-e Yamini*, ed. Ja'far She'âr (Tehran, 1966), p. 24; on the vizier, see C.E. Bosworth, *EIr*, s.v. Abu'l-Qāsem ʿAlī b. Ḥasan; the article states that he was vizier to Shams-al-Dowle Ghâzi Beg Aydoghmush.

96 See Luther, "A new source," pp. 118–19; Carla L. Klausner, *The Seljuk Vizierate: A Study of Civil Administration, 1055–1195* (Cambridge, MA, 1973), p. 110.

97 Jorbâdhqâni, *Tarjome*, p. 432.

98 Ibid., p. 25.

99 Ibid., p. 5.

Aba, were able to maintain Abu-Bakr, the current Atabeg, in place, and to fend off the various armies whose eyes were on Iraq.[100]

Jorbâdhqâni goes on to state that, since it is his good fortune to serve in the ruler's Divan, it would be appropriate for him to write down some accounts and stories of kings and rulers [*akhbâr o asmâr-e moluk*] as a gift to the royal court, so that in times of leisure the ruler might benefit and take admonition from "(accounts of) the alterations of states and the replacement of noble men (one by another) [*taqallob-e ahvâl o tabaddol-e abdâl*]." He was encouraged in this by the vizier Abu'l-Qâsem Ali, who suggested that he render Otbi's history into Persian, "in wording that is easily understood, and that both Turk and Persian can grasp," and that in so doing he should "not go beyond the style of the secretaries" (*az oslub-e kottâb farâ-tar nashavi*); the vizier, in turn, undertook to present the work to the Amir.[101]

While the following comments are attributed to the vizier, they undoubtedly express Jorbâdhqâni's own views. He states that, while the kings of the past expended much wealth on men of the sword, it was the humble scribes (*dabir*s), the men of the pen, who for a mere pittance preserved their memory. But while for centuries tales have been told about Mahmud of Ghazna, the Buyids, and their achievements,

> The memory of the Saljuqs … will soon vanish … For since men of learning did not prosper in their days, and did not attend to recounting their deeds…no one will remember them, and there will remain no memorial of their efforts.[102]

In his preface, Jorbâdhqâni apologizes for his deficiencies in style. Should his own style fall short of that of Otbi, he pleads two excuses: first, that he wished that the accounts in the book should not be "concealed by the veil of ambiguity through [the use of] artifice and excessive ornament;" and second, that though his Persian style may

100 Ibid., pp. 5–6. For a negative opinion on Nosrat-al-Din Abu-Bakr, see Râvandi, *Râhat*, pp. 401–3; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 253–54.

101 Jorbâdhqâni, *Tarjome*, pp. 7–8.

102 Ibid., p. 9.

be deficient, his eloquence in Arabic, as evidenced by his works in that language, is not in doubt.[103]

Although Jorbâdhqâni generally follows Otbi closely, he often adds his own rhetorical flourishes, and occasionally departs from, or comments on, the text.[104] His passage in praise of the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, Abu-Nasr Seboktegin, shows the combination of both the simple style (which characterizes the narrative portions of his work), and the ornamental *enshâ'* style.

> Amir Nâsir-al-Din Seboktegin was a slave of Turkish origin [*gholâmi bud torki nezhâd*], singled out by divine grace [*makhsus be-feyz-e elâhi*], adorned with the ornament of rule and kingship [*ârâste be-âyin-e saltanat o pâdeshâhi*], on days of battle [*kushesh*] like a lion, all ferocity [*onf*], at the time of generosity [*bakhshesh*], like the cloud, all munificence and kindness [*lotf*]; when administering justice like a strong wind with (both) powerful and weak [*za'if*]; like the shining sun over (both) humble and noble [*sharif*] …[105]

Jorbâdhqâni's comments and emendations show that he saw in Otbi's history a work suited both to the presentation of an idealised past—the exemplary reign of Mahmud of Ghazna—and as a means to address contemporary issues. This places his 'translation' on much the same level as Râvandi's history of the Saljuqs. And there is yet another parallel with Râvandi: for just as the latter followed the accounts of earlier rulers, taken primarily from Nishâpuri, with his own eyewitness account of events in the aftermath of the defeat of the great Saljuqs and the death of Toghrel III, so Jorbâdhqâni added to his translation of Otbi a similar account of events following the death of Mohammad Jahân Pahlavân in 1186,[106] and concluding with an elaborate Arabic qaside dedicated to the court's *mostawfi*, one Ali ebn Mohammad ebn Abi'l-Leys. Jorbâdhqâni expresses gratitude for the latter's support in completing his book and praises his forebears for their literary achievements.[107] This is followed by a passage in Arabic rhyming prose, in which the histo-

103 Ibid., pp. 10–11.
104 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 259–63.
105 Jorbâdhqâni, *Tarjome*, p. 19.
106 Ibid., pp. 419–36.
107 Ibid., p. 440.

rian complains of living "in a time when the free man is a stranger amongst his own people, and the noble man is feared by his own group" (*nahnu fi zaman al-hurr fi ahlihi gharib wa'l-karim fi qawmihi murib*), and in two states of exile, both of which are pure torment (*ghorbatân humâ korbatân*): those of culture (*al-fadl*) and of remoteness from homeland and family (*al-bo'd an al-watan wa'l-ahl*). Although the "august assembly" which he addresses is filled with servants of the court; yet "should it meet with ruin, the dove of its learning would no longer utter its coo [*hadil*], nor should the cymbals of its talent sound, they would be aided by no echo [*rasil*]." However, "should [the assembly] wish to add a heavy (one) [*thaqilan*] to its light weight, or a discerning person [*aqilan*] to its state, I would frequent it day and night, and serve it as bodies serve souls; for in this would be the greatest honor and the most enormous felicity."[108]

Whatever Jorbâdhqâni's expectations might have been, we know from a later source that they remained unrealized. Sa'd-al-Din Varâvini, the author of the *Marzobân-nâme* (written between 1210 and 1225), lists in his preface the many books he has studied as models of style. Among them is the *Tarjome-ye Yamini*, of which he says:

> If they swear with solemn oaths that its translator possessed great eloquence, this is no false swearing. And if, because of having suffered a loss in the bargain, like Ferdowsi he expressed repentance for what he had written, and wished to dissociate himself from it, and, having sown his seed in salt ground and planted his sapling in base earth, he obtained no harvest, and said,
>
> > My fortune has harmed me, and my right hand has withered:
> > I have wasted my efforts in translating the Yamini,
>
> yet Time still recites "His fingers have not withered, nor has his tongue grown weary" over those elegant pages.[109]

But if Jorbâdhqâni's efforts went unrewarded in his lifetime, his work nonetheless lived on as a model of style for later writers.

108 Ibid., pp. 441–42; see also Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 268.
109 Sa'd al-Din Varâvini, *Marzobân-nâme*, ed. M.M. Qazvini (Leiden, 1909), p. 4.

Both the 'simple' style and the *enshâ'* style continued to coexist in later periods. These periods are beyond our purview here, and will be treated in later chapters (see in particular Chapter 2). A final word may be said concerning the *enshâ'* style. Aside from the fact that works written in this style often constituted attempts to curry favor with (superior) court officials, their language and style is meant to encourage such officials not only to grant the authors preferment but to read between the lines, as it were, and by so doing to discern the authors' views on contemporary issues. An example in case is Râvandi's often ironic use of quotations from his contemporary Nezâmi, which would have been well known, as seen in his treatment of Kokje: whereas the context of the original verses is a positive one, the segment quoted occurs in a negative context. Moreover, while the panegyrics incorporated in many works (notably those of Râvandi and Jorbâdhqâni) are, on the surface, a *de rigeur* element of works intended for a (real or prospective) patron, their sometimes excessive nature suggests, again, an element of irony, as do many other of the 'interpolations' in these authors' works. Therefore, it is as well to keep an eye open for such 'excesses,' as well as an open mind when interpreting the texts.

So far we have considered style more or less in generalities. Let us now turn to some textual examples, given here in translation, with additions in parentheses to show certain stylistic details. We shall concentrate on two closely related topics clear to the heart of Persian historians and which often provided 'set pieces' in which they exhibited their stylistic talents for the purpose not only of such exhibition but to affect their audiences profoundly: "murder most foul" of a prominent leader and, especially in later times, of a vizier or other important official. We shall begin with early accounts, touched upon briefly above, of the murder of Abu-Moslem.

4. Texts and Analyses

The Murder of Abu-Moslem

The military leader Abu-Moslem Khorasani was perhaps the most influential force in securing the rise of the Abbasids and their take-over of the caliphate. He was greatly favored by the first Abbasid caliph, Saffâh, for whom he secured the eastern provinces; but the second caliph, Abu-Ja'far Mansur, who held some old grudges against him and probably saw him as a rival for power in the east, conspired to have him murdered. Two treatments of Abu-Moslem's murder will be considered here: those of Bal'ami and Gardizi.

Bal'ami. Bal'ami's account of the rise of the Abbasids focuses on their *da'wa* in the east, on the efforts of Abu-Moslem in securing their success, and on the eventual betrayal of the Alids, in whose name the revolt was undertaken, by the Hashemites, who betrayed the expectations of many who had supported the revolt.[110] What is notable about the chapter on Abu-Moslem's murder is its initial informality of register and simplicity of language, coupled with its dramatic plot line and its enhanced style as it reaches its climax.[111] Bal'ami's narrative has little resemblance to the various, discrete and often contradictory, accounts recorded by Tabari.[112] His sympathies are clearly with Abu-Moslem, and his characterization of the two chief protagonists, Mansur and Abu-Moslem, and their supporters and minions, acutely shows his bias in favor of the Khorasani leader. He begins:

> Bu Ja'far (Mansur) was displeased with Bu Moslem because of several things. One reason was that, in a gathering (*majles*) of Saffâh during Saffâh's reign, he (Abu-Moslem) had not saluted [*salâm nakarde bud*] him (Mansur). During his [Saffâh's] reign Bu Ja'far had

110 See Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, p. 1042.

111 Ibid., pp. 1081–92.

112 See Tabari, *Ta'rikh-al-rosol wa'l-moluk*, tr. Jane Dammen McAuliffe as *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume XXVIII: ʿAbbāsid Authority Affirmed* (Albany, NY, 1995), pp. 18–43.

> said to Saffâh many times, "Kill Abu-Moslem."[113] But Saffâh would say, "If I kill him, the whole world will blame me." Then, at the time when he [Mansur] returned from the pilgrimage,[114] he could not kill him, for he needed him because of [the rebellion of] Abd-Allâh ebn Ali [Mansur's uncle]. Then, when he [Mansur] sent him [Abu-Moslem], and he defeated Abd-Allâh ebn Ali, this Mansur sent his *mowlâ*, Marzuq. Marzuq came to Bu Moslem and asked for the booty he had taken. Abu-Moslem was aggrieved by this and did not let [the booty] be shown to that Marzuq. (And that Marzuq's *konya* was Abu'l-Khasib.) Abu-Moslem spoke coldly to him and cursed him and said to him: "Tell Bu Ja'far [Mansur] that if it is so that I have rightfully shed their blood [*ber khunhâ-ye ishân ostovâr budam*], I am also rightfully entitled to their possessions [*ber khʷâstehâ ham ostovâram*]." Then Bu'l-Khasib returned, complained to Mansur, and said: "He cursed me and wanted to kill me."[115] Bu Ja'far was (continually) anxious about this matter and plotted [*tadbir hami kard*] against Bu Moslem. He thought, "If I cannot kill Bu Moslem right away, because people will blame [me], this is the plan: not to let him go to Khorasan, because then he will cause me trouble."

Stylistically, this passage is of the utmost simplicity; it verges both on the oral and the colloquial, and one can imagine it having been read aloud to an audience versed only in the most elementary Persian. Phrases such as "this Marzuq," "that Marzuq" (*in Marzuq*, *ân Marzuq*), "that Mansur" (*ân Mansur*) are both colloquial and familiar in their register; they are also somewhat demeaning in tone, diminishing the importance of these person. But as Bal'ami grows closer to the murder of Abu-Moslem, his register subtly begins to change.

> Mansur sent Abu-Moslem (a letter giving him) the governorship of Syria (and of Egypt), by way of his *mowlâ* Yaqtin, telling him, "Khorasan is far away; the governorship of Syria is better than (that of) Khorasan, and closer. Stay there, in Syria, that you may be closer

113 Cf. Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, tr. John Alden Williams as *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume XXVII: The ʿAbbāsid Revolution* (Albany, NY, 1985), pp. 209–10.

114 This was the pilgrimage of 754, on the return from which Saffâh died and Mansur was given the oath of allegiance as caliph; see Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, pp. xiii–xiv, 1–4.

115 Cf. ibid., p. 23.

> to us. Send a deputy to Egypt, so that, when we summon you, you can come quickly." Abu-Moslem was angered at this and told Yaqtin, "Go tell Abu Ja'far, 'Let Syria and Egypt be yours; Khorasan is enough for me, for I have business [*shoghlhâ*] there.' Then he went off towards Khorasan."[116]

Abu-Moslem was in Harrân, campaigning against Abd-Allâh ebn Ali; from there he went to Holvân, determined to go to Khorasan, despite Mansur's wishes. Mansur wrote to him, summoning him to the caliphal camp near Rumiya, on the Euphrates, ostensibly to reward his services. Abu-Moslem wrote back:

> Today you have no need of me. In the Persian books [*be ketâb-e ajam andar*] they say that viziers must be most afraid of kings when the world is at peace and the kings have no more foes; for as long as the kingdom has enemies, and kingship is unsettled, the king requires a vizier to protect him, and treats him well [*u-râ niku dârad*]; but when all is at peace, he will soon destroy him.[117]

Abu-Moslem's implicit referral to himself as among the class of "viziers" prefigures the events which follow, and anticipates later set pieces which deal with the murder of a vizier.

Abu-Moslem was finally prevailed upon to obey the caliph's summons, despite the warnings of his comrades, who told him that as soon as Mansur saw him, he would kill him.[118] As the tension heightens, so does Bal'ami's style, which is now aimed at a broader and more sophisticated audience. He continues (after various accounts of events, and the players in them, that do not concern us here):

> [Finally], on the next day, Bu Moslem came, in his travelling clothes [*bâ jâme-ye râh*], to the door of [Mansur's] tent, with many troops. He was given audience, alone, to come into Mansur's presence. He greeted him [Mansur]. Mansur, out of anger, could not smile at him, and had a grave face. Bu Moslem was very much afraid of him.[119]

116 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, p. 1082.

117 Ibid., p. 1082; compare Tabari, tr. McAucliffe, pp. 24–26. In one account (p. 24) Abu-Moslem states, "We would recount the saying of the Sāsānid kings: 'Viziers are most fearful when the mob is quiet'."

118 Bal'ami *Târikh-nâme* II, p. 1084; cf. Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, pp. 29–30.

119 Bal'ami *Târikh-nâme*, p. 1087; cf. Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, p. 32.

Mansur told him to go away, to camp and rest; Abu-Moslem did as commanded. When Abu-Moslem left, Mansur regretted his action; his secretary-vizier, Abu-Ayyub (Muriyâni; Tabari's source for many of the accounts of Abu-Moslem's murder), who was in attendance, advised him to be patient, and promised that, on the morrow, he (Mansur) could do as he wished (with Abu-Moslem). Then Abu-Ayyub went to Abu-Moslem and reassured him that all was well.

None of the parties—Abu-Moslem, Mansur, Abu-Ayyub—slept that night, for fear of what would happen on the morrow. The next morning, Mansur summoned four trusted guards, armed with sharp swords, hid them behind the curtains of his tent, and commanded them to kill Abu-Moslem if he so ordered. He then placed his own sword on the ground beside him, so there would appear to be no menace.[120] When Abu-Moslem came before Mansur, the latter greeted him and asked how his night had been. Abu-Moslem was reassured, and, at Mansur's request, laid his swords aside. Mansur inspected one, which Abu-Moslem had taken from Abd-Allâh ebn Ali, and declared that it should rightfully be his to keep in memory of his uncle. Abu-Moslem agreed. Then Mansur began to reproach Abu-Moslem for his acts and his lèse-majesté, calling him Abu-Mojrem ("criminal"); Abu-Moslem rebutted his charges one by one.[121]

> Mansur said: "Woe to you, Abu-Mojrem! Whatever I say, you bring forward some excuse and try to exculpate yourself!" Then he clapped his hands [and the armed guards came out and brandished their swords]. Bu Moslem said: "O Commander of the Faithful, do not kill me! Keep me so that whenever an enemy rises up against you I may sacrifice my life for you." Mansur said: "Woe to you! I have no greater enemy on the face of the earth than you" [*ma-râ bar ruy-ye zamin az to doshman-tar nist*]. Then he said, "Strike [*dahid*]!" Bu Moslem was standing [*bar pây bud*]; the first sword-stroke struck him in the leg and severed it. Mansur said: "May your legs and feet be severed! Strike him on the head!" So they struck him with their

120 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, p. 1088; the passage is too complicated to be summarized here; but in all versions swords play an important role.

121 Ibid., pp. 1088–90; compare Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, p. 33.

> swords and killed him. The carpet that had been spread there was covered with blood. Mansur commanded his servants [*farrâshân*] (so that) they rolled him up in the carpet, as he was, took it, placed it in a corner of the tent, and spread another carpet; and no one outside the tent knew about this.[122]

Here Bal'ami's style is immediate, presenting the scene it all its drama: the murder of the unsuspecting Abu-Moslem at a simple command by Mansur, the violence of the scene, and the (temporary) disposal of the body, rolled up in a blood-stained carpet and hastily placed in a corner of Mansur's tent. There is little doubt that the audience, even if they already knew the outcome of this episode, would have been struck by the dramatic vigor of Bal'ami's narrative, and horrified both by Mansur's treachery, and by the bloody events recounted.

After these events, Isâ ebn Musâ, Saffâh's nephew and heir-designate,[123] arrived, asked if Abu-Moslem had come, and offered to go and fetch him. He reminded Mansur of Abu-Moslem's obedience, of his deeds on behalf of the Abbasid cause, and of his own promises for Abu-Moslem's safety, concluding, "The Commander of the Faithful must treat him well [*bâ u niku-i konad*]." Mansur said: "I have done (so); now he is inside that carpet." Isâ felt too shamed to reproach Mansur, but said: "O Commander of the Faithful, we were friends." Mansur said: "By God, no one on the face of the earth was more an enemy to you" [*bar ru-ye zamin to-râ az u doshman-tar nabud*]." (The repetition of this phrase labels Abu-Moslem—and, by implication, the Persian supporters of the Abbasid revolt—as enemies of the Abbasid cause.) "As long as he was alive," Mansur continued, "neither would my caliphate be strong nor would you be my heir." That night Mansur disposed of Bu Moslem's body by having it thrown, wrapped in the carpet, into the Euphrates.[124]

One final example of Mansur's treachery remains. On the day of Abu-Moslem's murder, Mansur had ordered that Abu-Moslem's

122 Bal'ami *Târikh-nâme* II, pp. 1090–91.
123 See Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, p. 2, n.5.
124 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, 1091–92; compare Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, pp. 36, 40.

ring be removed from his finger. He wrote a letter to Bu Nasr,[125] "as if from Abu-Moslem" [*az dahan-e Bu Moslem*], (saying), "Take all the baggage and possessions and come (to me) [*bar gir o biyâ*]." He sealed the letter with that ring. When Abu-Moslem left the baggage and possessions there with him, he had said, "When my seal comes to you, take my possessions and bring them (to me) [*bar gir o biyâvar*]." Bu Nasr said, "Give (me) a sign so that I will know that the seal and the letter are from you." (Abu-Moslem) said, "When you get a letter half-sealed in clay, it is my seal; (but) if it has a full seal in clay, know that I have not written that letter, but someone else has." No one knew this but these two. When Mansur wrote the letter, "as if it was from Abu-Moslem" [*az dahan-e Bu Moslem*], he sealed it fully in the clay. When the letter reached Bu Nasr, he said, "They have done what they wanted to do" [*kardand kardani*]. He took (Abu-Moslem's) troops and possessions and went to Khorasan.

In terms of this account's literary aspects, we have, first, a clear plot: Mansur harbors enmity towards Abu-Moslem, and finally succeeds in having him killed. Second, we have characterization: Mansur is depicted as both venal and vindictive. Having long sought to dispose of Abu-Moslem, he has him murdered, then conceals his act, promises Abu-Moslem's troops amnesty, and forges his seal in an attempt to acquire Abu-Moslem's possessions. Abu-Moslem is presented both as hero and as victim of Mansur's enmity. Bal'ami's style in this segment is characterized both by its apparent simplicity and its vigor; the audience would most likely feel caught up in the dramatic sequence of events.

A prominent feature of Bal'ami's style is his use of repetition or near-repetition of phrases: for example, Mansur's declaration that he has no greater enemy than Abu-Moslem, echoed by his statement to Isâ ebn Musâ. His phrase (in the false letter), *be-gir o biyâ*, is paralleled by Abu-Moslem's command to Bu Nasr, *bar gir o biyâvar*; this parallelism serves to emphasize the difference in mo-

125 Abu-Nasr Mâlek ebn al-Heysam, Abu-Moslem's chief of security, with whom he had deposited his possessions on leaving to meet with the caliph; see Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, p. 10, n. 57, and p. 42.

tives between Mansur and Abu-Moslem: one vindictive, the other protective. We might also note that Bal'ami incorporates several Arabic verses, taken from Tabari,[126] which could only have been understood, and appreciated, by more sophisticated members of the audience. Although Bal'ami's style verges on the novelistic, we should not conclude that his intention was to write 'fiction.' As Bal'ami departs from Tabari (his acknowledged and authoritative source), he weaves Tabari's discrete accounts into a continuous narrative, designed to attract sympathy and to serve his own particular agenda, the 'demonization,' as it were, of the Abbasids.

Gardizi. Gardizi's treatment of the murder of Abu-Moslem is, in keeping with the overall style of his work, succinct, but nonetheless dramatic.[127]

> They say that when Abu-Moslem went to Bu Ja'far (Mansur) from Helwân with Jarir al-Bajali,[128] he sent for the finest horse in his stables. He mounted that horse, intending to go to Mansur. The horse bolted [*andar sar âmad*] under Abu-Moslem three times. One of Abu-Moslem's comrades said: "Go back!" Abu-Moslem said, "Let what God wills be!" When he came to Mansur, he (Mansur) sat him down and asked politely (after his health). Then he said: "With what sword did you make all these conquests and (do) all these battles?" Abu-Moslem said, "With this," and pointed to the sword that he was bearing. Mansur said, "Give (it to) me." He gave (it) to Mansur. Then Mansur said, "Do you know what you have done to me; you did such-and-such! [*dâni ke to bâ man cheh kardi? chonân kardi*]" He numbered (these things), one by one; Abu-Moslem answered each, until Mansur turned sour [*be-torshid*], and shouted at him. Abu-Moslem said, "O Commander of the Faithful! This is no recompense for the good deeds I have done!" Mansur said: "O Abu-Mojrem! Do you remember when you came to Abu'l-Abbâs (Saffâh), and did obeisance to him [*u-râ khedmat kardi*], and I was sitting there, and you paid no attention to me! And remember that you said to my nephew, Isâ ebn Musâ, 'Do you want me to depose Abu Ja'far and

126 Bal'ami *Târikh-nâme* II, pp. 1086, 1091; Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, pp. 30, 39.
127 Gardizi, *Zeyn*, p. 122.
128 Mansur had sent Jarir al-Bajali to persuade Abu-Moslem to come to him; see Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, p. 25.

put you in his place?' And remember that, in Syria, you insulted me before Yaqtin ebn Musâ! [Mansur listed other slights;] Abu-Moslem responded to each (accusation).

Then Mansur said, "You have not done anything out of friendship to us! No; this, the rise of our reign [*dowlat*], was the work of heaven, and (of) divine support [*in kâr-e âsmâni bud o enâyat-e izadi*]! Then Mansur signalled to that person who was standing beside Abu-Moslem; he struck (with) his sword, and Abu-Moslem fell, and cried out "Oh! Alas" [*âh, âh*]!" Mansur said, "(Look at) you, who have done the acts of tyrants [*jabbârân*], crying like a child!" The first person to strike Abu-Moslem was Othmân ebn Nahik, who was formerly one of Abu-Moslem's commanders;[129] then the *hâjeb* Abu'l-Khasib [Marzuq] struck him with his sword and dispatched Abu-Moslem. Outside, Abu-Moslem's army was in an uproar. Abu'l-Khasib went out and delivered Mansur's message to the troops [*hashm*] of Khorasan: "The Commander of the Faithful says: Abu-Moslem was our servant; we ordered his punishment because of his disobedience; you have no recourse against this [*shomâ-râ bar ân sabili nist*]." He ordered that a stipend be given them from the treasury, and they became calm.

Gardizi's style is not only more succint than Bal'ami's; it verges on the crabbed. Whereas Bal'ami tends to be more expansive, not to say leisurely at times, and more complex, Gardizi reduces his narrative to a bare minimum. His sentences are brief, often consisting of only a few words. One notable difference from Bal'ami's version is Gardizi's account of the horse bolting under Abu-Moslem, taken as a bad omen (Gardizi is, in general, fond of omens and prophecies). But even this is related in a matter-of fact manner, and serves chiefly to presage the events that follow.

The Murder of a Vizier

This is a favorite topic of historians both Arabic and Persian, and is generally illustrative of the dangers of service to kings, who will

129 For the text's *sar-e kas-e Abu-Moslem* read *sar-e haras*; Othmân ebn Nahik was commander of Mansur's guard. See Tabari, tr. McAuliffe, p. 33 and n. 157.

easily turn against their loyal advisors should they consider them excessively wealthy, influential, and a threat to their own power. Most such events ultimately have negative consequences; they thus provide an object lesson, which is all too often ignored by subsequent rulers. Here we shall deal with three such accounts: Bal'ami on the murder of Ja'far the Barmakid; Beyhaqi on the execution of Mahmud of Ghazna's former vizier Hasanak; and Râvandi's account of the murder of the vizier Kondori.[130]

Bal'ami: The Murder of Ja'far the Barmakid. The Barmakids were a powerful Persian family of viziers and officials, who served both the Umayyads and the Abbasids.[131] Their fall, precipitated by the murder of Ja'far on the command of Hârun-al-Rashid in 803 but already predictable, provided an exemplary set piece for many historians, who saw in it an opportunity for comment on the danger of acquiring too much power, influence, and wealth, on the fickleness of rulers, and on the moral decline of the Abbasid caliphate. While historians disagree about the reasons for this catastrophe, most concur that its immediate cause (or excuse) was the caliph's discovery of the affair between his sister, Abbâsa, and the Barmakid Ja'far.[132]

Bal'ami's version of this story constitutes an independent chapter, in which the events leading up to Ja'far's death form the climax. The chapter may be briefly summarized as follows. The Barmakid vizier, Yahyâ, had four sons (Fazl, Ja'far, Musâ, and Mohammad); all were powerful officials, possessed great wealth, and were close to the caliph. (Bal'ami's comment on the caliph's habit of drinking

130 See also, Meisami, "History as literature," pp. 19–29.

131 See I. Abbas, *EIr*, s.v. Barmakids; W. Barthold [and D. Sourdel], *EI*², s.v. al-Barāmika.

132 See Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, pp. 1193–1200. There is an extensive literature on the Barmakid catastrophe and its historical and literary treatments. See, for example, Meisami, "Mas'ūdī on love" and the references cited; Andras Hamori, "Going down in style: The Pseudo-Ibn Qutayba's story of the fall of the Barmakis," *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1994), pp. 89–125; J. Sadan, "Death of a princess: Episodes of the Barmakid legend in its late evolution," in Stefan Leder, ed., *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1998), pp. 130–57.

in the company of his womenfolk, female slaves, and musicians is a detail that will prove relevant later.) Various reasons are given for the Barmakids' downfall. When Yahyâ sought to retire, the vizierate alternated between Fazl (whom Yahyâ preferred) and Ja'far (whom the caliph preferred), until Yahyâ finally resumed his duties. His lengthy service (some seventeen) made him many enemies, one of whom accused the Barmakids of heresy (that is, of secretly practicing Zoroastrianism), as had Ja'far, by freeing a rebel who had been in his custody; the caliph pardoned him, but remained displeased. Last (but not least), in order to enjoy the company of both Ja'far and Abbâsa in the same gatherings, the caliph arranged a marriage between the two. This was to be a marriage in name only; but nature took its course, and Abbâsa bore a child, who was sent away to Mecca to be hidden. Eventually, Hârun learned about the child's existence from a disgruntled slave. In 803 Hârun went on the pilgrimage, along with Yahyâ and the other Barmakids. In Mecca, he discovered Abbâsa's son, and at first wanted to kill him; but because of his beauty and innocence, he refrained from doing so.[133]

It is the events of the return journey that concern us here.

> When [Hârun] returned [from the pilgrimage] and reached Anbâr [a station on the pilgrimage route], he camped there for three days. On the third day he summoned Ja'far, Fazl and Musâ, Yahyâ's sons, and bestowed robes of honor upon them, along with other honors, as he did upon Yahyâ too, so that all were happy and felt secure. At the time of the noonday prayer he said: "Tonight I will drink wine with my slave-girls; otherwise I would not let you go." Then he said to Ja'far: "Tonight you, too, make merry and drink with your slave-girls." Ja'far left.
>
> Rashid entered the slave-girls' tent and sat down to drink. Some time passed. He sent someone to Ja'far to see if he was drinking; he was not. Rashid sent someone (else) to (tell) him, "By my life and soul! Organize a drinking party, and drink and make merry tonight, because wine is not pleasing to me unless I know that you too are drinking!" Ja'far was distressed and frightened; against his will he

133 See further Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 28–37, and the references cited.

organized a party, and withdrew. He had a blind singer called Bu Zakkâr. When they had drunk some wine, Ja'far said to Bu Zakkâr: "I am fearful tonight, and feel very unwell." Bu Zakkâr replied: "O vizier, the caliph has never honored you and your family as much as he has done on this day and night; you should be happy." Ja'far said: "Bu Zakkâr, my heart is ever fearful, and I am very anxious." "Such thoughts are suggestions (of the devil); put them out of your mind, and make merry tonight."

At the time of the evening prayer a messenger from Rashid came to Ja'far bearing sweetmeats and fragrant incense which (the caliph) had taken from his own party and sent to him; the same (happened) at the time of the late-night prayer. Three times that night Rashid sent a messenger to Ja'far with sweetmeats and incense. When the night was half-gone, Rashid went from the women's tent to his own, summoned Masrur al-Khâdim [the royal executioner] and said: "Go now, take Yahyâ's son Ja'far to your tent, cut off his head and bring it to me." When Masrur entered (Ja'far's tent) Bu Zakkâr was singing this verse of poetry (in Arabic): "Do not go far away! For to every noble youth death will come, whether he travel by night or by morning."

Masrur went in and stood over Ja'far. When Ja'far saw him he was afraid. Masrur said: "The Commander of the Faithful summons you." (Ja'far) asked: "Where is the Commander of the Faithful?"—"He was with the women, but (now) he has gone to his own (tent)." Ja'far said: "Give me enough time to go to my women's tent and make my testament." Masrur replied: "You cannot go there; whatever testament you wish to make, make it here." So Ja'far made his testament right there; (then) Masrur took him to his own tent and drew his sword. Ja'far asked: "What has he [the caliph] commanded?" (Masrur replied): "He has commanded that I take your head to him."—"Beware; he said this while drunk, and will repent of it. You must go once more (and ask him)." He swore an oath (to Masrur), and reminded him of the obligations and friendships of the past.

Masrur went to Rashid, who was in the place of prayer (*mosallâ*), waiting for Masrur. He said: "So, where is Ja'far's head?" (Masrur) answered: "O Commander of the Faithful, I have brought Ja'far."—"I did not ask for Ja'far; I asked for his head!" Masrur went back, cut off (Ja'far's) head and brought it to Rashid. He said, "Keep his head and his body until I ask you for them; now, at once, take Yahyâ and his three sons, Fazl and Mohammad and Musâ, and his brother

> Mohammad ebn Khâled, to your tent and put them in chains, and seize whatever belongings you find with them." Masrur did so. When it was day, Rashid sent Ja'far's head to Baghdad to be exhibited on a gibbet [*dâr*].[134]

Following this account, Bal'ami moves to the consequences of the Barmakid affair. People blamed the caliph for having made a private matter public; Rashid's affairs began to decline, and he was unable to put down the rebellions that broke out against him. He repented his actions publicly, and was criticized for having done so, and for revealing his dependence on the Barmakids.[135]

Bal'ami's narrative moves forward rapidly. The climax of the story of Ja'far's murder is enlivened by the singer's prophetic verses and by direct discourse, which together enhance the dramatic effect. One striking feature of this account is its depiction of the combination of duplicity and arbitrariness which characterizes the caliph's actions: first, he honors the Barmakids with robes of honor and other favors; then he insists that Ja'far make merry as he himself intends to do, and sends gifts from his own feast; and finally, he orders Masrur to execute Ja'far, and then destroys the entire Barmakid family. Bal'ami conveys both criticism (attributed to "people" [*mardomân*]) and moral and political comment: the caliph's actions ultimately brought about his own political collapse.

Beyhaqi: The Execution of Hasanak. Scholars express conflicting opinions in regard to this segment of Beyhaqi's history, which reflects both the complexity of the events recorded and of Beyhaqi's style.[136] Hasanak was executed in 1031, the first year of Mas'ud's reign. Beyhaqi, relying on his audience to recall events mentioned earlier—how Hasanak had incurred the enmity both of Mas'ud (for his support of Mas'ud's half-brother Mohammad) and of Mas'ud's crony Bu Sahl Zowzani, who had been insulted in the past by

134 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme* II, pp. 1197–98.

135 Ibid., pp. 1199–1200.

136 For discussion of the death of Hasanak, see Julie S. Meisami, "Exemplary lives, exemplary deaths: The execution of Hasanak," in *Actas XVI Congreso UEAI* (Salamanca, 1995), pp. 357–64; also Chapter 3 and the references cited there.

Hasanak's chamberlain, and who, when Mas'ud had wrested the throne from Mohammad, had had Hasanak arrested.

Beyhaqi devotes an entire chapter to the events leading up to and surrounding Hasanak's arrest and execution. He comments both on Bu Sahl's vindictive nature and on Hasanak's arrogance (he is compared with the equally arrogant Barmakid, Ja'far): "Servants should mind their tongues when speaking to their superiors." He recalls how Hasanak, when criticized for his support of Mohammad, sent a message to Mas'ud via the latter's confidant, saying: "Tell your master: Whatever I do is in accordance with my master's [i.e. Mahmud's] orders; should you gain the throne, you must execute me."[137] Bu Sahl prevailed upon Mas'ud to revive an old charge of heresy against Hasanak, made by the Abbasid caliph, al-Qâder, who had ordered Mahmud to execute Hasanak; Mahmud (with some forthrightness) declined.[138] Urged on by Bu Sahl, Mas'ud, after some vacillation, finally decided to proceed.

After a lengthy account of how Hasanak was tried, condemned, and his property confiscated, Beyhaqi moves to the scene of his public execution in Balkh, which stands at the precise midpoint of this chapter.[139]

> All that day and night they made preparations for Hasanak's execution. They had got up two men in messengers' dress, as if (they had come) from Baghdad with the caliph's letter ordering that Hasanak … be crucified and killed by stoning. … When all was done, on the next day … Amir Mas'ud mounted up and went off to hunt and make merry for three days, with his boon companions, familiars, and minstrels. He commanded his deputy in the city to erect a scaffold next to the Balkh *mosallâ*, at the bottom of the city, and everyone set out for that place. Bu Sahl mounted up, came near the scaffold and halted on a high place. Cavalry and foot soldiers had gone to bring Hasanak; when they brought him out from near the Bâzâr-i Âsheqân [a market of Balkh], and he reached the city, Mikâ'il [an old enemy of Hasanak], who had halted his horse there, came to meet him, called him a traitor, and cursed him foully. Hasanak paid no

137 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 223.
138 For further details see Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 88–89.
139 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 232–34.

attention to him, and did not reply. The common people cursed him, and what the elite said about this Mikâ'il cannot be told. …

They brought Hasanak to the foot of the scaffold … where they had stationed the two messengers, (got up) as if they had come from Baghdad. The Qor'an-readers recited the Qor'an; Hasanak was told, "Take off your clothes" [*jâme birun kesh*]. He put his hand beneath (his garments), tightened the belt of his undertrousers [*ezâr*] and closed their ankle-strings; then he took off his cloak and shirt and cast them aside, along with his turban. He stood there stripped, in (only) his trousers, his hands folded, (his) body like white silver, (his) face like a hundred thousand (beautiful) idols. The people all wept in anguish. They brought an iron-banded helmet, one that was, deliberately, too tight, so that it did not cover his head and face, and cried out, "Cover his face, so that it will not be ruined by the stones, for we are going to send his head to the caliph in Baghdad." They kept Hasanak there in that state, his lips moving, reciting something under his breath, until they brought a larger helmet. In the meanwhile Ahmad, the Keeper of the Robes, came up on horseback, looked at Hasanak and gave him a message: "Our lord the sultan says: This is what you wished for when you said, 'When you become sultan, then execute me.' We wished to be merciful to you; but the Commander of the Faithful has written that you have become a heretic; it is by his order that they execute you." Hasanak, of course, made no reply.

Then, when they had brought a larger helmet, they covered his head and face with it. Then they shouted to him, "Run!" He did not move, and paid no attention; some people cried out, "Aren't you ashamed to make a man you're going to kill run to the scaffold?" A riot nearly broke out; the horsemen rode at the people and put down the disturbance. They brought Hasanak to the scaffold and placed him there; they set him on a mount he had never ridden. The executioner bound him fast, and brought down the noose. They shouted, "Stone him!" But no one touched a stone, and all wept bitterly. … Then they gave money to a bunch of ruffians to stone him; but he himself was dead, since the executioner had put a cord around his neck and strangled him. Such was Hasanak and his fate. … And if he had wrongly seized the land and water of Moslems, neither land nor water remained; all those slaves, properties, possessions, gold and silver and luxuries were of no profit to him. He departed, and those who plotted (against him) have departed, may God have mercy on them! And this story is a great admonition: for they left

> behind them all those causes of conflict and strife for the sake of worldly rubbish.

There follows a brief homily on the error of fixing one's heart on worldly things, for this world "gives blessings, but takes (them) back in an evil way." After quoting some verses on the transience of this world, Beyhaqi concludes: "And when they were finished with all this, Bu Sahl and his people left the foot of the scaffold, and Hasanak remained alone, just as he had emerged alone from his mother's womb." But there is more to come: After the execution, Bu Sahl, drinking and feasting with his friends, had Hasanak's head brought in to them on a covered platter, saying, "They have brought us fresh fruits;" when it was uncovered, those gathered there were disgusted and horrifed. Hasanak's body was left to rot on the cross for nearly seven years, until Mas'ud commanded that it be taken down and buried.[140]

Now Beyhaqi launches into the second half of his chapter,[141] beginning with the reaction of Hasanak's mother to her son's death: she did not grieve "as women do," but wept bitterly, then said: "What a great man was this son of mine, to whom a king like Mahmud gave this world, and a king like Mas'ud the next." (This motif will be echoed in Râvandi's account of the murder of the vizier Kondori.) "Such a thing has happened (before) in the world," observes Beyhaqi, launching into one of his characteristic digressions, which includes four stories (two fairly lengthy, two so short as to be merely allusive) about two sets of individuals: first, two 7th-century rebels against Umayyad authority, who were killed and their bodies hung on crosses; and second, two viziers—Ja'far the Barmakid and the Buyid vizier Ebn-Baqiyye—who met similar fates because of their arrogance and inability to hold their tongues. Beyhaqi tells these stories, he says, to show that "Hasanak had companions in this world greater than he; if what happened to him happened to them, it should not be marvelled at."

Stylistically, this chapter presents many points worthy of discussion. Beyhaqi's use of narrative style is, of course, characteristic

140 Ibid., pp. 235–36.
141 Ibid., pp. 236–41.

of his work as a whole, whether in the main 'historical' text or in the digressions. The first element to be noted is the chapter's structure: Hasanak's execution stands at the midpoint, dividing the chapter (which is clearly meant to be taken as a whole, although commentators usually ignore the digressions and concentrate on the historical account) into historical narrative and related digressions. R.S. Humphreys (for example), ignoring the digressions and seeking to find the bases upon which the Ghaznavid 'state' rested, sees here evidence of Beyhaqi's political realism, his following of "the newly emerging Perso-Islamic tradition," leading to his acknowledgement that the ruler had "the right to do whatever he wished with his servants." The "complex charade" of Hasanak's trial, in which Mas'ud exhibits a "punctilious concern for form and due process," demonstrates that "in order for the state to maintain itself, there must appear to be law even when there is no law."[142]

It was, indeed, a "complex charade;" but Beyhaqi's treatment of Hasanak's trial and execution—i.e., his style—leads us to see more than, apparently, meets the historian's eye. Take, for example, Hasanak's appearance on the scaffold: stripped to only his undergarment, he is, nevertheless, both beautiful and dignified—one might almost say, an iconic figure—and his dignity is reinforced by the executioner's act of garroting him before the actual execution (the gruesome details of which are not described). Then we have a contrast between the onlookers (*mardom*; *khalq*; *har kas*, etc.), who weep at his state, who refuse to stone him, and who blame Bu Sahl for his subsequent conduct, and the anonymous "they" (Mas'ud's agents) who prepare the scene for Hasanak's execution, bring the helmets to cover his head, and command him to run to the scaffold, at which all (*har kas*) remonstrated. Mas'ud's own conduct is likewise singled out for blame, albeit obliquely: it was, presumably, his agents who prepared the whole scenario, including the messengers dressed up "as if they had come from Baghdad" with the order for Hasanak's execution, of which Mas'ud absolves himself, on this pretext, and goes off to make merry with hunting and pleasure. Thus, reading this passage in terms of its style, we

142 Humphreys, *Islamic History*, pp. 141–45.

see that it has nothing to do with the preservation of the State, and everything to do with the qualities of the actors in the events. And even though Hasanak's arrogance and cupidity are acknowledged, he is nevertheless (especially when placed in the company of Ja'far the Barmakid) yet another victim of royal vindictiveness.

Râvandi: The murder of Abu-Nasr Kondori. This is the first event in the reign of Alp Arslân recorded, after the 'portrait' with which Râvandi begins his account. That this portrait is largely based on Nishâpuri has already been noted; the same is true of the account of Kondori's murder, to which, however, Râvandi adds his own embellishments.[143]

> Following the death of his uncle Toghrel Beg, [Alp Arslân] seized Amid-al-Molk [Kondori], who had been his uncle's vizier, and gave the vizierate to Nezâm-al-Molk, who had served Alp Arslân before he became sultan. He took Bu Nasr Kondori with him wherever he went, for a year. Proverb: The greatest of afflictions is the violation of protection. [Persian translation:] The violation of rights is the greatest of afflictions and plights. In [1064], in the city of Nasâ, he ordered that Amid-al-Molk be killed; and Nezâm-al-Molk was complicit in this. Proverb: When you seek counsel from the unwise, he will choose for you only lies. [The Persian translation follows]. … I heard that when the assassin came into his presence, (Kondori) asked for a brief respite. He performed his ablutions, completed two prostrations of prayer, and then made (the assassin) swear, "When you have carried out the king's command, take a message from me to the Sultan, and another to the vizier. Tell the Sultan: 'What an auspicious service was my service to you. Your uncle gave me this world, so that I governed it, and you have given me the next world, and provided me with martyrdom. Thus through serving you I have gained both this world and the next.' And tell the vizier: 'You have introduced an evil innovation [*bed'at*] and a foul principle [*qâ'edat*] into this world by killing a vizier; I hope you will see this custom once again with respect to your-self and your descendants'." Proverb: He who loves himself will avoid sins; and he who loves his son will be merciful to orphans. …

143 Râvandi, *Râhat*, pp. 117–18; compare Nishâpuri, tr. Luther, pp. 47–48, and ed. Morton, pp. 21–22 (which excludes the proverbs).

There follows the Persian translation of the proverb, and verses culled from Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, beginning, "Thus has it been, long as the sphere has rolled: sometimes it's filled with hate, sometimes with love,"[144] constituting a meditation on the theme of the transience of this world, and concluding:

> That same one that it raised with love it casts,
> bewildered, down again into a pit.
> It brings one from the pit onto the throne,
> and places on his head a jewelled crown.
> But in the end both lie in earth; the vine
> gives way unto the clasping of the thorn.[145]

In this account, the interpolated proverbs serve to provide comment (by heeding the bad advice of an unwise counsellor the sultan has violated his moral obligation to protect a loyal servant); the dramatic account of the murder concludes with Kondori's message to the Sultan (which echo the words of Hasanak's mother), and his prophetic words to the vizier (who, as Râvandi's audience well knew, met his death at the hands of an assassin). Whereas Nishâpuri concludes his account of the murder succinctly—"From that time onward no vizier died a natural death"[146]—Râvandi uses proverbs and poetic quotations to transform this tale into an exemplary episode in which the seeds of the Saljuqs' eventual downfall are clearly sown. While Nishâpuri shows some concern for political motivation, Râvandi's interest in the early Saljuqs is largely limited to how certain events foreshadow their decline. Thus, for example, the "evil innovation" introduced by Nezâm-al-Molk would haunt the Saljuqs throughout their rule, as would their failure, in later years, to support the "true faith" and men of religious learning.[147]

144 Ferdowsi, *Shahname*, ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh, VI, p. 260, verse 88.

145 As noted by the editor, these verses come from different parts of the *Shahname*, and especially the end of the story of Bizhan and Manizhe, *Shahname* III, p. 397, verses 1273–74.

146 Nishâpuri, ed. Afshâr, p. 24; not, however, in ed. Morton, p. 22, suggesting this is a later interpolation.

147 See Râvandi, *Râhat*, pp. 29–33.

5. Concluding Remarks

Are the accounts we have discussed, or the works in which they occur, to be considered as 'literature'? Insofar as they possess decidedly aesthetic characteristics, the answer must be yes. But should the fact that they feature recognizable narrative strategies, conscious emplotment, direct discourse, recurrent topoi and so on lead us to view them as 'fiction'? Our own, modern standards, which are colored by the fact that the novel has for some two centuries been the dominant genre in Western literature, might tempt us to do so. But none of our authors set out to write 'fiction;' nor would their audiences have received their accounts as such. The events depicted were a matter of historical record; their outcome was already known to their audiences, but their meaning was geared both to contemporary and to general concerns. The fact of telling them is part and parcel of the historian's task; the means of telling them has to do with the historian's choice of style; and style is all-important in conveying meaning. Were these accounts not considered 'true,' the purpose behind their telling, and the meaning they convey, would, arguably, be lost; but were they not told in the most effective manner, their meaning might not be clearly grasped. This is where style—and the function of rhetoric—comes in; and we might examine stylistic features a bit more in order to grasp what means the authors had at their command to convey, and to persuade audiences of, the importance of a given event's political and (not least) ethical significance.

We can discount narrative style as a given: most Persian historians employ narrative style, and even in such works as Ebn-al-Balkhi's *Fârs-nâme* or the anonymous *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*, which are divided into various segments, within these segments the narrative style prevails. We are left with the so-called 'novelistic' features, and the rhetorical strategies employed by our authors, which may be seen to overlap to a significant extent.

The first of these features comes under the rubric of 'characterization,' which may be accomplished either directly or obliquely. The Caliph Mansur held a grudge against Abu-Moslem; Hârun-al-Rashid held a grudge against Ja'far the Barmakid; Abu-Sahl Zow-

zani held a grudge against Hasanak; Nezâm-al-Molk held a grudge against the former vizier Kondori. Already, we have a recurrent motif. Such characterization, accompanied by other aspects of character—vindictiveness, venality, obstinacy, envy—provides motivation for the actions described. Their description does indeed read in a 'novelistic' manner, complete with tension; although the outcome of the events described was already known, the audience would nevertheless be waiting to see *how* they were treated, and what their meaning was. Generally speaking, this 'meaning' supported and re-affirmed already pre-conceived notions: that the service of rulers is dangerous, and that it is rewarded only by treachery and death.

The second 'novelistic' feature (if we may call it so) is the use of direct discourse, which is seen prominently in our authors, and often serves to reveal the character of the actors in events. For example: in Bal'ami's recounting of the deaths both of Abu-Moslem and Ja'far the Barmakid, direct discourse plays an important part: when Mansur lists Abu-Moslem's offenses (Abu-Moslem's reply is in indirect discourse: "He countered these accusations, one by one," which the audience would have received as evidence of Abu-Moslem's innocence); and when Ja'far is confronted by the executioner, Masrur (he asks, "What has the caliph commanded?"), although, again, his response is conveyed indirectly ("He asked for permission to go and make his testament"). The interweaving of direct and indirect discourse is a feature of the authors' style: commands, such as Hârun's to Masrur—"Bring me Ja'far's head"; Mansur's, to his concealed assassins, "Strike!"; or, in Gardizi, the call of one of Abu-Moslem's supporters, "Go back!", serve to enhance the dramatic tension of the account. A notable exception is Beyhaqi's tale of the execution of Hasanak, which eschews direct discourse in favor of description: the false messengers from the caliph, Mas'ud's departure to make merry during Hasanak's execution, Hasanak's appearance on the scaffold, and so on, all of which serve to present both character and motivation, even if obliquely.

In this chapter I hope to have shown, first, how the literary analysis of historical texts can be used to elucidate meaning by giving due attention to stylistic details, and second, that histori-

cal texts cannot simply be used as mines for historical data, but must be treated as literary texts. For historians, literary analysis can provide meaning beyond the mere statement of facts, and will shed light on what lies 'beyond' the facts, and, perhaps, encourage them to eschew simple models (for example, that of the State, a concept that did not exist in the period under discussion). For literary critics, the field for analysis is ample, and such analysis will yield a greater understanding of texts that are not always obviously 'literary,' and of the contexts in which all texts exist. The literary analysis of historical texts can greatly enrich our knowledge of the circumstances surrounding their production and of the stylistic means employed by historians to convey meaning.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORIAN AT WORK

Charles Melville

As noted at the end of the Introduction, the 'literary' element of historical writing should not be thought to undermine the concern of the authors with reporting events accurately, whether as they themselves witnessed them, or on the basis of reliable sources. We are not proposing to suggest that the historians of the past were deliberately writing fiction—or 'lies'—rather than a true record of events. Nevertheless, as discussed by Julie Meisami, this is not to say that our authors were not concerned to get across the didactic message of history by using whatever rhetorical devices (such as 'artificial' language) were available to them.[1]

This chapter will explore briefly some of the literary and aesthetic dimensions of the chronicles and histories discussed in this volume, such as their use of language, how they fulfilled the need to be both instructive and entertaining, how they upheld the literary tradition of which they were a part, as well as the values of the milieu in which they were composed. In so doing, it will also be necessary to consider the authors themselves and the reception of their work. We will focus especially on the post-Saljuq period, which has not received the same attention as the formative eras analyzed by Waldman, Luther, Meisami, and others.

1 Meisami, *HPL* I, pp. 246–51, idem, "History as literature," pp. 29–30; and Chapter 1.

1. Bureaucrats, Historians, and Littérateurs

One measure of the aims and literary approach found in Persian historical works comes from understanding more of the authors themselves. Many, indeed most, of the historians were not professional historians in the modern sense, or as described in Chapters 8 and 11. They were generally government officials of varying rank, ranging from the highest administrative offices, such as the viziers and court ministers, like Bal'ami, Atâ-Malek Joveyni, Rashid-al-Din, and E'temâd-al-Saltane; accountants and financial officials, such as Vassâf of Shiraz, Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi, Âqsarâ'i, Siyâqi Nezâm, and Mohammad Mohsen; secretaries in the chancellery (*monshi*s), such as Mo'in-al-Din Esfezâri, Budâq Qazvini, Eskandar Beg Turkmân, Mohammad Mirak b. Mas'ud, and Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi, down to perhaps more peripheral members of the central or provincial courts, such as Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi, Jorbâdhqâni, or Fazli Beg Khuzâni-Esfahâni.

Others, while also in government service, were primarily members of the religious establishment, such as Qâzi Beyzâvi, Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi, Qâzi Ghaffâri Qazvini, Qâzi Ahmad Qomi, or Sayyid Hasan Astarâbâdi. We also find astrologers, such as Monajjem Yazdi and his son, Kamâl b. Jamâl, and in the Timurid period Ali Yazdi, who after being in the service of Ebrahim-Soltân and his father, Shâhrokh, was attached for some time to Ologh Beg's observatory in Samarqand. Some historians were also military figures: Hasan Yazdi started as a *tovachi* (troop inspector) under Prince Bâysonghor, who also employed Fasih Khʷâfi in his divan; Zahir-al-Din Mar'ashi was active in military engagements and Hasan-e Rumlu was a *qorchi-bâshi* (head of the royal guard). The list could be greatly extended.

What these officials had in common as historiographers was connection with the court and access to information, whether by word of mouth, or documents and archives. They also no doubt had a similar educational background, which would have included elements of the religious sciences, and, especially for monshis and secretaries, knowledge of poetry, the prerequisite

qualification to be considered learned and literate enough to deal with the court's correspondence. Nezâmi Aruzi Samarqandi (ca. 1156) gives a description of the sort of training required for a scribe (*dabir*):

> He must accustom himself to … read the books of the ancients, and to study the writings of their successors … and, amongst the Persian poets, [to read] the poems of Hakim Rudaki, the epic of Ferdowsi, and the panegyrics of Onsori, since each one of these works that we have enumerated was … the unique product of its time; and every scribe who has these books and does not neglect to study them, stimulates his mind, polishes his wit, and kindles his fancy, and raises the level of his diction, whereby a scribe becomes famous.[2]

It is thus hardly surprising that the chroniclers aspired to emulate the literary achievements of their predecessors and saw themselves as operating within a durable cultural tradition. As Persian prose writing developed, indeed, the *enshâ'* (epistolary, chancery) style of the monshis came to dominate, with all its literary flourishes, use of synonyms, insertions of poetry and quotations from the Qor'an as appropriate.[3]

It is therefore a significant marker of the literary training and outlook of some of the authors of historiographical texts, that they are associated also with collections of documents and letters preserved as models for their elevated style. Among them are the Joveyni letters of the Sâheb-e Divân and his brother Atâ-Malek the historian (d. 1283); *enshâ'* collections of Ali Yazdi (d. 1454), Mo'in-al-Din

2 Nezâmi Aruzi, *Chahâr maqâle*, ed. Mirzâ Mohammad Qazvini (Leiden/London, 1910), p. 13; revised tr. E.G. Browne (Leiden/London, 1921), pp. 14–15 (lightly modified).

3 Colin P. Mitchell, "To preserve and protect: Husayn Va'iz-i Kashifi and Perso-Islamic chancellery culture," *Iranian Studies* 36/4 (2003), pp. 487–507; idem, "Out of sight, out of mind: Shah Mohammad Khodabanda and the Safavid Dar al-ensha," *Studies on Persianate Societies* 3 (2005), pp. 66–98, esp. 77–79.

Esfezâri (ca. 1494), Khʷândamir (ca. 1523) Mohammad-Tâher Vahid (d. 1694) and Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi (ca. 1750).[4]

Apart from their bureaucratically-honed epistolary skills, or rather, reflecting the wide range of knowledge such a training was designed to foster, there might be considerable variations in the authors' literary profiles. For many, historical works were only one aspect, and not even the most important one, of their oeuvre, an example being the 12th-century Abu'l-Hasan Ali Beyhaqi (Ebn-Fondoq), credited with over 70 titles. Qâzi Beyzâvi, author of a brief 'universal history' in Persian, is famous particularly for his Arabic commentary (*tafsir*) on the Qor'an, *Anvâr-al-tanzil wa asrâr-al-ta'wil*, together with numerous other theological texts.[5] Rashid-al-Din, statesman and polymath, also wrote a large number of works apart from the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, including theological and philosophical treatises, works on medicine, food and agriculture.[6] Ali Yazdi, historian of Timur's conquests, wrote a famous book of riddles (*Resâle-ye mo'ammâ*), and was celebrated as a mathematician, with works on counting by fingers (dactylic enumeration), and magic squares, as well as a poem on chess and several other pieces.[7] Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân (d. 1519) also wrote many varied works, in Arabic and Persian, including an account of a fire in Medina in 1481, a theological treatise on the virtues of

4 Jürgen Paul, "Some Mongol *Inshā'*-collections: The Juvayni letters," in C. Melville, ed. *Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies, Part 2. Mediaeval and Modern Persian Studies* (Wiesbaden, 1999), pp. 277–85; Ali Yazdi, *Zafar-nâme*, ed. Mir Mohammad Sâdeq and A. Navâ'i, 2 vols. (Tehran, 2008), intro., pp. xli–xlii; *Monsha'ât*, ed. Iraj Afshâr and M.R. Abu'i Mehrizi (Tehran, 2009). See also, C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* III/2 (London, 1990), E. Ornate Prose, pp. 252, 257, 269, 291, 315, 346–48.

5 See Lutpi Ibrahim, "al-Baydawi's life and works," *Islamic Studies* 18 (1979), pp. 311–21.

6 Hashem Rajabzadeh, *Khajeh Rasidol-din Fazlol-lah* [sic] (Tehran, 1998), esp. pp. 301–25; Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001).

7 Mahdi Farhani Monfared, "Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi: Historian and mathematician," *Iranian Studies* 41/4 (2008), 537–47; Ali Yazdi, ed. Sâdeq and Navâ'i, intro., p. xl; *Manzumât*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 2007), e.g. on chess, pp. 45–47.

the Twelve Imams (from a Sunni perspective), a Mirror for Princes or tract on government (*Soluk-al-moluk*), and an account of his stay in Bukhara, among other texts.[8] Qâzi Ahmad Qomi, author of a Safavid dynastic history, also wrote a valuable biographical compendium of famous calligraphers and painters.[9] During the 19th century, Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat (d. 1871) wrote widely on Sufism and Shi'ite religious lore, as well biographical dictionaries of Sufi poets and literary figures, not to mention his own substantial collections of poetry.[10]

Several other authors of history books were also known as poets, and in some cases primarily so. Mohammad Sâdeq Nâmi (d. 1789), author of the *Târikh-e giti-goshâ*, was known to his contemporaries as a leading poet at the court of Karim Khan Zand.[11] Perhaps more prominent was Abdi Beg Shirâzi (d. 1580), author of a general history up to the early Safavids entitled *Takmelat-al-akhbâr*, who was renowned as a poet under the name Navidi of Shiraz, "praised and preferred among all others in the vale of poetry and perfection." According to Amin Râzi (writing ca. 1601), Abdi Beg was famed for his skill in correspondence and *siyâq* (account keeping), but whenever he had completed his writing tasks, he turned to reciting poetry, so that he produced two emulations of the *Khamse* (of Nezâmi) and a divan of more than 10,000 verses.[12] This makes the relatively few passages of poetry (mainly chronograms) in the *Takmelat-al-akhbâr* the more remarkable, and the same could be said of Mohammad-Tâher Vahid, author of the *Jahân-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* and Mohammad-Ma'sum b. Khʷâjegi, author

8 Ulrich W. Haarmann, "Yeomanly arrogance and righteous rule: Fazl Allah ibn Ruzbihan Khunji and the Mamluks of Egypt," in Kambiz Eslami, ed., *Iran and Iranian Studies. Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 109–24.

9 *Golestân-e honar*, ed. Ahmad Soheyli Khʷânsâri, 3rd ed. (Tehran, 1987); tr. V. Minorsky as *Calligraphers and Painters. A Treatise by Qadi Ahmad, son of Mir-Munshi (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)* (Washington, D.C., 1959).

10 Cf. *EIr*, s.v. Hedayat, Rezāqoli Khan (Paul E. Losensky).

11 Mohammad Sâdeq Nâmi-Esfahâni, *Târikh-e giti-goshâ*, ed. S. Nafisi (2nd ed. Tehran, 1984), intro., pp. j–r.

12 Amin Râzi, *Haft eqlim* (Tehran, N.D.), I, p. 236; see Abdi Beg Shirâzi, *Takmelat-al-akhbâr*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 1990), intro., pp. 14–15.

of the *Kholâsat-al-siyar*, whose poetic talents are both memorialised in the *Tadhkere-ye Nasrâbâdi*.[13] Other authors of the Safavid period often included verses extending to several pages in their work, among them Vali-Qoli Beg, author of the *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, sometime mostowfi of Sistan himself also a noted poet.[14] Hâfez-e Tanish of Bukhara (d. ca. 1589) was perhaps first and foremost a poet, and the main historical work of Motrebi of Samarqand (d. ca. 1630) was an anthology of poets.[15]

This was hardly an innovation of the Safavid era, for it was characteristic of historical writing from the beginning. We may note also substantial passages of poetry in the work of Ebn-Bibi in Anatolia (d. ca. 1288), Seyf b. Mohammad Haravi (ca. 1320), Ali Yazdi, Amin Haravi (ca. 1519), Qâzi Ahmad Qomi (ca. 1590), and Mirzâ Mohammad Kâzem of Marv (ca. 1752), to mention but a few. It is not always clear whether the verses are their own compositions, or quotations from the work of others, a question occasionally elaborated by the authors themselves. In addition, verse chronicles, generally in the manner of the *Shahname*, are known from at least the mid 12th century, such as the now lost *Sanjar-nâme*.[16]

Vali-Qoli Beg concluded the *Qesas-al-khâqâni* with an extensive list of poets of the time (of Shah Abbâs II, d. 1666), and in this he was not alone; Mohammad Mirak b. Mas'ud, author of *Riyâz-al-ferdows-e khâni* (1671), a general history of Iran with a particular emphasis on Fars and the Kuhgiluye region, cited poetry—both in Persian and Arabic—throughout his text, and included a brief annex of sayyids, shaikhs, and poets, starting with Hâfez and Sa'di.[17] This trait too has a long pedigree, probably deriving from the merging of biographical records (or necrologies) with annals

13 Mohammad-Tâher Nasrâbâdi, *Tadhkere-ye Nasrâbâdi*, ed. Mohsen Nâji Nasrâbâdi (2 vols., Tehran, 1999), I, pp. 26–29, 109.

14 *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, ed. Hasan Sâdât-Nâseri (2 vols., Tehran, 1992), e.g. I, pp. 217–40, quoting Mirzâ Abd-al-Qâder Jonâbadi, the "Ferdowsi of the Age;" Nasrâbâdi, I, pp. 130–31.

15 See Chapter 9; poetry was a major preoccupation of the Central Asian authors discussed.

16 See below, Chapter 4.

17 *Riyâz-al-ferdows-e khâni*, ed. Iraj Afshâr and Fereshte-ye Sarrâfân (Tehran, 2006), pp. 463–64.

in the works of the Arabic chroniclers, who mentioned the deaths of important figures at the end of each year, or from the example of writers such as Hamze of Isfahan (ca. 961). In the hands of Persian authors, whose chronicles were seldom organized annalistically, poets might be listed among the prominent men of a particular town or region (Ebn-Fondoq for Beyhaq; Ebn-Esfandiyâr for Tabarestân; Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi for Qazvin),[18] or among the prominent figures active during a particular reign. An early example of this is the *Habib-al-siyar* of Khʷândamir (1524), who mentions the men of letters who flourished under the Ilkhans and subsequent dynasties, an example followed by Eskandar Beg Monshi, and Fazli Beg Khuzâni and later authors.[19]

The combination of this bureaucratic training and chancellery service (in many cases), with the significance attached to the appreciation and practice of poetry, beyond a doubt leads to the recognition of a strong literary impetus behind the production of works of history. The boundaries are sometimes sufficiently blurred for historical works to be accused of scarcely being 'history' at all—for example, the *Râhat-al-sodur* of Râvandi, or of containing scant historical value or factual interest—such as Jorbâdhqâni's Persian version of Otbi.[20] A work entitled *Ferdows-al-tavârikh* provides a more striking, though much less known example, not so much because of language as for contents. The sole, autograph, manuscript (dated 1405) sets out to provide a history of the rulers of Iran, but quickly becomes more like a commonplace book, with substantial extracts copied from the works of different poets, particularly Fer-

18 Ebn-Fondoq, *Târikh-e Beyhaq*, ed. A. Bahmanyâr (Tehran, 1929), pp. 137–90; Ebn-Esfandiyâr, *Târikh-e Tabarestân*, ed. Abbâs Iqbâl, 2nd printing (Tehran, 1987), pp. 90–139 (including scholars and philosophers); Mostowfi, *Târikh-e gozide*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 1983), pp. 707–57.

19 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar*, ed. M. Dabir-Siyâqi (Tehran, 1983), III, pp. 219–21, 542–51; Iskandar Beg, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbasi*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1956), I, pp. 178–89 (under Tahmâsp); for Fazli Beg, *Afzal-al-tavârikh*, see Melville, "New light," p. 69; also Abu'l-Hasan Ghaffâri, *Golshan-e morâd*, cf. John R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand. A History of Iran, 1747–1779* (Chicago/London, 1979), p. 305.

20 See Chapter 3; Julie Scott Meisami, "Rāvandī's *Rāhat al-sudūr*: History or hybrid?" *Edebiyât* 5 (1994), pp. 183–215.

dowsi, and concluding, after a brief history of the Ilkhans, with an unfinished catalogue of poets, arranged alphabetically. The title given to the work perhaps reflects a homage to the author the *Shahname*, but the genuinely historical contents of the work are negligible.[21] On the other hand, Vassâf of Shiraz's notoriously bombastic continuation of Joveyni's history of the Mongols was generally prized for its rhetorical sophistication rather than as an historical source, although its considerable value as a record has also been recognised, with a sense of frustration, at least by modern historians. In the case of Vassâf, the author's own intentions seem to reflect an ambiguity as to the nature of the work: not just a record of the "annals of memorable events … [but] a compendium of all the arts of learning, a register of the marvels of literary attainment, a model of excellent style."[22] Albeit an extreme example, this does clearly set out the nature of the fluid borderlines between 'history' and 'literature,' and the attitude towards the historians' craft on the part of the medieval chroniclers.

Finally, there is another important aspect of the dynamic between historiography and belles-lettres, especially poetry, beyond the incorporation of poetry and other 'literary' qualities into the recording of events: in the case of panegyric poetry, at least, the function of the poet and the historian was convergent, both to memorialise important events and to celebrate the ruler (and offer advice). To quote Nezâmi Aruzi again, "A king cannot dispense with a good poet, who shall conduce to the immortality of his name, and shall record his fame in *díwáns* and books."[23] To this extent, court poets might be regarded also as historians, and certainly poetry

21 Ebn-Mo'in, *Ferdows-al-tavârikh*, ms. Dorn 267, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, f. 3a–b for the date of composition and a list of sources, f. 4a for a statement of the contents.

22 See J. Pfeiffer, "'A turgid history of the Mongol empire in Persia.' Epistemological reflections concerning a critical edition of Vaṣṣāf's *Tajziyat al-amṣār va tazjiyat al-aʿṣār*," in Judith Pfeiffer and Manfred Kropp, eds., *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts* (Beirut, 2007), p. 113.

23 Nezâmi Aruzi, p. 27; tr. Browne, p. 29.

can be a useful ancillary source for a period's history.[24] Chronicles written entirely in verse are the most obvious demonstrations of this relationship. That the rulers did not always appreciate the poetry incorporated into their official histories is shown by the example of Habib-Allâh Khan, Amir of Herat (reg. 1901–19), who expunged pages of verse from the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* submitted to him by their author Feyz-Mohammad for approval.[25]

Without exception, the authors of medieval chronicles were part of an élite milieu of scholars and writers whose place in society and at court was predicated on their verbal skills and cultural sophistication, a literate minority in an ocean of illiteracy. This explains the fact that the historians often recited their work at court, or gave readings from it, and rulers had works of past history read aloud to them. This situation may also have affected the writing style of some works, or passages of them, conceived as appropriate for oral delivery or as performance texts, to win the admiration of their audience. The chroniclers had a range of styles at their command, from what we might call a studied simplicity of diction to a flamboyant display of erudition and mastery of forms. Before turning to some examples of how this repertoire was applied to the composition of history, it is useful to consider how the chroniclers themselves saw their task and the language appropriate to its fulfilment.

2. Aims and Means

In a highly interesting passage in Fazl-Allâh Khonji-Esfahâni's *Âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, the author follows a rather standard statement of the value and aims of history, and a useful analysis of the different classes or types of historical literature, with an appraisal of his own work as an example of the last type, dynastic history. The

24 See G.E. Tetley, *The Ghaznavid and Seljuk Turks. Poetry as a Source for Iranian History* (London/New York, 2009); also F. Abdullaeva, "Poetry as history," in *HPL* II (forthcoming).

25 See Chapter 11.

seven particular qualities of his work are essentially stylistic and linguistic virtues. He draws attention to (1) the excellent style of the preface (*dibâche*), which cannot be found in any other history, like a chain of gold connecting the stories of the past Caliphs and their praiseworthy qualities, which is a whole book in itself. (2) The avoidance of referring to matters not pleasing and agreeable according to the *shari'a*, especially excessive accounts of drinking wine, and of the efforts of those whose actions go beyond the proscribed limits and punishments. The works of many historians are defiled with this sort of filth: Vassâf's History could be described as 'Book of odes to wine,' and many occurrences in Timurid history are excessive in this respect.[26] The author supposes that the Timurid historians indulged in this to demonstrate their eloquence (*ezhâr-e balâghat*), but exclaims that the scope of speech (*sokhan*) is wide enough for one not to need to plunge into the straits of "what causes divine displeasure," and "the pool of the (Paradisiacal) Kowthar of words is copious enough for one not to need to perform ablutions in wine for the sake of precedence in the rank of the masters of eloquence." Similarly, (3) he has not mentioned in the book any actions undertaken by the subject of a history, or by an army, such as killing and plundering, that are not in accordance with the shari'a, for mentioning such actions is very damaging, both for the calumniation of the perpetrator and because it encourages the army to emulate them. One should not mention Timur's plundering, looting, and killing, "which is sweeter than honey and more desirable than power (*qebal*) to the Turks," making it sweet to the taste of the Chaghatay, so that they consider these evil deeds lawful to them by emulating the example of the great amir [Timur]."

These first three points concern the contents of the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, but also indirectly address the very nature of the role of the historian and his use of language, for the Preface is considered as the showcase for literary skill in the service of praising the subject

26 The author probably means by this the history of Timur, i.e. perhaps obliquely criticizing Ali Yazdi in the same way that he specifically criticizes Vassâf, though praising them both a little earlier.

of the history. The rejection of mentioning illegal actions such as wine drinking and the plunder and massacre (of Muslims) underlines the ethical dimension of the work, while also asserting that there are plenty of other areas in which the author can display his rhetorical skills.[27] This implies, of course, that it is exactly these reprehensible topics on which historians of Timur's conquests felt themselves obliged to use their most polished speech, blunting the impact that a less abstract account would have, and also distracting attention from the events recorded by a superficial display of attractive or complicated language.

The remaining merits that Khonji-Esfahâni sees in his work are also specifically related to style. First (4), the narratives are told in such as a way as to be easy to understand and extraneous matters are not included in such a way as to cause the sort of confusion found in the *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ* (of Joveyni). If a strange expression arises, either in an Arab proverb or in an allusion to a story, a short explanation will be found in the margin. Secondly (5), the author has shunned lies and marvels that increase the glory (*showkat*) of the subject of the History. He has mentioned only what he has heard from reliable people or seen with his own eyes, and avoided the particularities of events that are for the most part irrelevant to the aims and purposes of history: such as giving excessive numbers of those ranged in battle ranks in any one place. (6) He has not employed the manner of the monshis (*da'b-e monshiyân*) who introduce poetry into their speech, but has been content to include only what came to mind in the flow of composition. He prefers to include his own verses, but when he gives the verses of someone else, he refers to this, as indeed other recent histories have done; with the difference that Khonji-Esfahâni tries to include a whole range of forms—mathnavis, ghazals, qasides, and robâ'is, selected only for their "tastiness" (*khush-mazegi*). Finally (7), the author

27 Khonji-Esfahâni in fact displays the full force of his eloquence in describing a ban on wine drinking, issued by Sultan Ya'qub in Ramadan of 1488 as an act of repentance, within a discourse on mysticism and replete with Qor'anic and poetic verses, Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân Khonji-Esfahâni, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, ed. John E. Woods (London, 1992), pp. 317–28, with revised abbr. tr. by V. Minorsky, p. 73.

admits that there is hardly a passage in the book that is devoid of elegance (*latâfat*) and artifice (*san'ati*), as appropriate to the context (fanciful or narrative). Whatever in the book is excessive in fantasy and elegance (*takhayyol va tazviq*) is worthy to be avoided rather than praised by a traditionist and jurist, and an orthodox scholar should show himself sated (i.e. wearied) with it rather than hungry for it. The author thus intends to make amends by writing a legal commentary on Muslim's *Sahih* [collection of *hadith*], once he has finished the book.[28]

Khonji-Esfahâni thus claims to be writing a work free of confusion and obfuscation, and yet adorned throughout with literary artifice and imagination. It is clear that he holds the literary qualities of the *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Amini* to be of prime importance, hence his self-praise for the Preface, which juxtaposes prose and poetry throughout its brief doxology and survey of the Prophet, his family, and the early Caliphs. His insistence on the veracity of his narrative, uncontaminated by wonders and hyperbole, echoes a long line of similar remarks from poets and authors who sought to distance themselves from what they saw as the unreal, fantasy world epitomised by the *Shahname*, full of stories only fit for nighttime recitals.[29] It is also noteworthy that Khonji-Esfahâni is happy to criticize the defects of his predecessors, specifically Joveyni and Vassâf, and by implication also Ali Yazdi, either for their language or the contents of their work. This brings out the sense of belonging to a tradition, yet also the need to excel in that and indeed surpass previous masters, whether in felicity of diction, veracity, or orthodoxy. It is clear from the works of many other historians that the same preoccupations were of persistent concern, as the authors sought to establish their credentials against well-established standards and the expectation of their peers. The parameters of the field of historiography, in other words, were clearly marked out, and the authors had little scope for departing significantly from them.

28 Khonji-Esfahâni, ed. Woods, pp. 92–96, abbr. tr. Minorsky, pp. 11–12.
29 See Tetley, pp. 4–6.

In view of the relative novelty of writing in Persian in the early periods, it is perhaps surprising that the earliest authors do not appear to draw attention to the language of their works. In the period after the fall of Baghdad, self-awareness about language seems to increase; Qâzi Beyzâvi, who employed very simple language, merely remarks that he wrote his history in Persian "so that its benefits would be more widespread."[30] Joveyni, though implicitly claiming superiority to those who have benefited by the Mongol conquests to improve their position, so that "every valet [has become] a learned scholar," does not remark on his use of language, except to advance the common topos of requesting the reader's indulgence for the "deficiency of his language and style" (*rekâkat va qosur-e alfâz va ebârat*).[31] Rashid-al-Din, on the whole—unlike Joveyni—a model of clear and plain writing, remarks in the introduction that after verifying the accuracy and reliability of the information, he was instructed to organize and arrange the material in refined speech (*be lafzi mohazzab*), and he undertook to write each chapter in a style easy to comprehend by (people) of different understanding (*be ebârati-ke afhâm-e mokhtalef ân-râ be sohulat dar yâband*).[32] Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi similarly records his instructions to record Timur's campaigns in a style "far from extravagance (*takallof*—also with the shade of meaning of insincerity) and close to understanding (*be ebârati az takallof dur va be fahm nazdik*)," perhaps reflecting the fact that Timur was illiterate and doubtless impatient with pretentious language.[33] He goes on to say that, despite being preoccupied with religious studies and having little experience of *enshâ'*, he set out to obey these exalted commands, and seeks pardon for any failings in the writer.

30 Qâzi Beyzâvi, *Nezâm-al-tavârikh*, ed. Mir Hâshem Mohaddeth (Tehran, 2003), p. 3.

31 Joveyni, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*, ed. Mirzâ Mohammad Qazvini (London, 1912–37), I, pp. 4–5, 7; tr. J.A. Boyle, *Genghis Khan. The History of the World-Conqueror* (Machester, 1958), I, pp. 6–7, 10.

32 Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, ed. M. Rowshan and M. Musavi (Tehran, 1994), I, pp. 35, 37.

33 Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi, *Sa'âdat-nâme: Ruznâme-ye ghazavât-e Hendustân*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 2000), p. 15.

Other protestations of simplicity are couched in terms of criticism of the writing of earlier authors. Kotobi and Mar'ashi, for example, both complained of the wearisome and pretentious style of their sources, and the need for an abridgement of Ebn-Bibi's work implying it was similarly unmanageable.[34] Eskandar Beg Monshi is, like Khonji-Esfahâni, a little more ambivalent:

> Whatever the rays of my knowledge had shone upon, I put into writing without increase or shortfall. Whatever I had no information about, necessarily relying on the words of reliable narrators, I drew into the thread of composition without the redundancies of the monshis (*bi takallofât-e monshiyâne*). This celebrated work of excellence and precious text has been called the *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*. Realising the necessity of avoiding abstruse quotations and unfamiliar expressions that cause weariness to the temperament, I have brought to the nuptial bed of appearance auspicious-looking images of events (*akhbâr*) and well-behaved witnesses of deeds (*âthâr*), adorned in the simplest of clothes. But this is not a hard and fast rule, since it is fitting that from time to time the nightingale of the palace garden of genius, alighting on the melody-nurturing branches, should begin its speech-singing call; and sometimes it may be that the sweet-speaking parrot pen, reaching the phrase-adorned sugar plantation, should give increase to its pleasant-speaking rhetoric. In short, being satisfied with every expression, moist or dry, which flowed on the tongue of the pen in the course of writing, I have not overlooked it. No attention has been given to [quote] appropriate poems (*ash'âr*) and if as a rarity two or three verses have been written in any one place, most of them are the consequence of the traces of good taste and the offspring of the virgins of [original] genius,

34 Mahmud Kotobi, *Târikh-e Âl-e Mozaffar*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 1985), p. 27 (concerning the *Movâheb-e elahiyye* of Mo'in-al-Din Yazdi); Mar'ashi, *Târikh-e Tabarestân va Ruyân va Mâzandarân*, ed. A. Shâyân (Tehran, 1955), pp. 3–4 (concerning the work of a certain Ruyâni). See also Ch. Melville, "The early Persian historiography of Anatolia," in Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh Quinn, eds., *History and Historiography in Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 141–42.

> which have sprung to mind extempore while explaining events, and have flowed on the tongue of the speech-delivering pen …[35]

As Sholeh Quinn has noted,[36] Eskandar Beg's chronicle provided a model for many later authors, and in this case we can see that the pattern of imitiative writing extended to the question of the use of language, as seen in the following words of Mohammad Kâzem, author of the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi* (ca. 1752), who was neither an *adib* nor historian or researcher by upbringing:

> [The author], not being out of favour, and taking his place among the rows of shoes of those who adorn the assembly for the orator's feast, thought that by blackening a few sheets of paper he would draw the thread of composition by transmitting the events of past times and the occurrences of the days of former sultans in everyday language (*amiyâne*), empty of the expressions of the monshis and the metaphors used in letter-writing (*khâli az ebârât-e monshiyâne va este'ârât-e motarasselâne*) … It is (his) hope that his simple and unpretentious expressions (*ebârât-e sâde-ye bi-takallofâne-ash*), devoid of the abstruse points and decorations of pictures and images, will be pleasing to the generality of people of the time (*âme-ye ahl-e ruzgâr*).[37]

Similar expressions continued into the 19th century, from authors associated with the desire for a return to a style and presentation of historical material reminiscent of the classical period of the Samanid and Ghaznavid courts—the so-called 'literary return' movement (*bâzgasht-e adabi*), which seems to have affected prose writing less immediately and less fully than the poets' rejection of the prevalent 'Indian style' (*sabk-e hendi*). Nevertheless, several Qajar historians professed their desire to write in a more accessible language, even though it was not until Nâser-al-Din Shah's reign, and the example of his own travel diaries, that this became a reality.[38]

35 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Târikh-e Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1956), p. 4; abbr. tr. Roger M. Savory as *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great* (Boulder, Colorado, 1978), p. 5 (sense only).

36 See Chapter 5.

37 Mohammad Kâzem Marvi, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, p. 3, see also p. 885, and intro., xlv–li on his language and style, and Chapter 6.

38 *EIr*, s.v. Bāzgašt-e adabī (William L. Hanaway); idem, in *HPL* I, pp. 89–90. See also Chapter 7 for the protestations of Donboli and Khâvari.

Other writers such as Ali Yazdi, already frequently invoked, together with Vassâf of Shiraz, as masters of style, are less repentant about their use of language; indeed, Ali Yazdi also boasts (like Khonji-Esfahâni) of the stylistic excellence of his work. In the lengthy preface to the *Zafar-nâme*, essentially a separate work entitled *Târikh-e jahân-gir* (thus echoing Joveyni's *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*), the author describes its genesis and the congruity between true contents and the words in which they are expressed:

> When it was established that the countenance of sincerity is bare and innocent of the dust of extravagance and boasting … the lofty command was issued that he (the author) would display [the whole story from Creation and the appearance of man] in eloquent Arabic and beautiful Persian, in a cloak of pearls of poetry and a garment of pearls of prose, on a bridal throne of words and on sofas of syllables and present [it] on a bridal bower of expression and metaphor, [so that the genealogical tree of Timur would be connected right back to Adam], in such attractive and comprehensible (*qarib-al-fahm*) expressions and exciting and pithy (*qalil-al-hajm*) metaphors that magicians among the eloquent (*sâherân-e ahl-e balâghat*) and weavers in the workshop of excellence will be able to acknowledge that, while the pages of the heavenly registers and the twinkling dots of the stars have been adorned, and the layers of the "seven hard (years)" [Q. 12: 48] have been raised up without the means of pillars or columns, they have never placed in any history (*târikh*) like this, a mole (beauty spot) on the cheek of the bride of accomplishment, and at no time has a curl from the locks of such an idol run through the thousand-toothed comb (*shâne*) of "Every day He is at work (*fi sha'nin*)" [Q. 55: 29].[39]

Whether the historians embraced or eschewed the whole range of verbal artillery available for their writing of history, it is clear from these and many other examples that they were consciously engaged in a literary exercise, in which they needed to balance their own predilections with the desires of their patrons, and the likely

39 Ali Yazdi, *Zafar-nâme*, ed. Sâdeq and Navâ'i, pp. 22–23. He gives a much briefer account of the reasons for composing the work in the *dibâche* (foreword), see *Monsha'ât*, pp. 20–31; Ando, "Die Timuridische Historiographie."

expectations of their readers, who were acutely alert to issues of style and the learning it revealed. In many cases, the production of history was an imposed (commissioned) task, in others undertaken to seek promotion, and not necessarily the author's main interest or job. Their writing nevertheless reveals the application of their writing and secretarial skills to the task in hand, a pride in their work, and an interest in locating it in a literary framework.

A consequence of the milieu and context within which they worked, and thus of their subject matter—writing about courts and kings, military expeditions and the administration of just government—was the ever-present danger of giving offence, the need to record triumphs and to flatter, but also to advise. Various rulers were said to enjoy historical works, whether reading themselves or having them read out aloud. Thus Alâ-al-Din Keyqobâd Saljuqi (1196–1237) banned jesting from his convivial assemblies and was engrossed in the histories of kings and mentioning the good qualities (*mahâsen*) of the lives of (past) pâdshâhs.[40] Timur's desire to have histories read to him is well known, and in more recent times the same was reported of Nâser-al-Din Shah Qâjâr.[41]

This is where the authors' command of language and allusion helps. The question then is how their style enhanced their message and the language used helped them to achieve their aims. As noted, these aims varied, naturally, in specific cases, but in general they were didactic: to point out the benefits of a knowledge of history. They could at times face dilemmas, in that the historians before the modern period were obliged to present the subject (a ruler or dynasty) in a creditable light, while at the same time recording events of which they could scarcely approve. To be effective and well received, it was important to command an attractive style, and also be entertaining. In a rare comment on the appropriate use of language, Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi remarks that verse—which he had employed in his metrical *Zafar-nâme* (1335)—was not suitable

40 Ebn-Bibi, *al-Avâmer-al-alâ'iyye fi'l-omur-al-alâ'iyye*, facs. ed. A.S. Erzi (Ankara, 1956), p. 228.

41 For Timur, John E. Woods, "The rise of Tīmūrid historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 42/2 (1987), p. 82 (citing Ebn-Arabshâh); for E'temâd-al-Saltane, see Chapter 6 and Iraj Afshar in *HPL* I, pp. 439–40.

for recording the dark times that followed the death of the Ilkhan Abu-Sa'id (in 1336), so "it seemed best to continue to write the description of these particulars in prose, so that the beginning and the end of the *Ketâb-e Zafar-nâme* would be adorned with prose."[42] In the final sections of this chapter, we will look at a few examples of historical writing about two topics already identified as exemplary, one in the civil sphere and one in the military, namely the downfall and execution of viziers and the conduct of battles and warfare.

3. Bureaucratic Crises and Military Conflicts

Civilian Casualties

The murder of viziers has already been used by Julie Meisami for observing the literary style of presentation of historical events in the chronicles.[43] Although political murders became almost a commonplace in the Mongol period and after, it might prove useful to extend the discussion beyond the cases studied by Meisami, to see how the topic was viewed and reported by later authors.

In the Mongol period, one of the most prominent cases was the execution of the Sâheb-e Divân, Shams-al-Din Joveyni, brother of the historian, in 1284.[44] Joveyni's fall is recorded by Rashid-al-Din, who gives in detail the mounting hostility between the Joveynis and their opponent, Majd-al-Molk, who had plotted against both brothers, and accused Shams-al-Din of having poisoned Abaqa Khan (d. 1282). Majd-al-Din was eventually executed by Ahmad Khan, but the historian, Atâ-Malek Joveyni, died of stress the following spring, 1283. Once Arghun seized the throne, Shams-al-Din came under renewed threat from intrigues among the officials, who persuaded the Mongol vizier, Buqâ, to abandon his support

42 Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi, *Dheyl-e Zafar-nâme*, facs. ed. V.Z. Pirieva as *Dheyl-e Târikh-e gozide* (Baku, 1978), p. 435.

43 Meisami, "History as literature," pp. 19–29, and see Chapter 1.

44 See J. Aubin, *Émirs mongols et viziers persans dans les remous de l'acculturation* (Paris, 1995), pp. 37–38.

for Joveyni and have him destroyed. Shams-al-Din was required to make cash huge payments, which he was unable to do, as his wealth was all tied up in property (*amlâk*), which yielded an income of 1,000 dinars a day. Joveyni wrote to Buqâ, saying, "Don't do [it]. Don't teach the king to kill viziers, for they may kill me today, but soon it will be you they kill; so that you know for sure that it [killing me] did not benefit you."[45] After further inquisitions, Joveyni called for pen and paper and wrote his last 'testament.' In this, he starts with a quotation from the Qor'an (41: 30): and goes on to bid farewell to the world, entrusting the care of his children to God, to be encouraged to study and dissuaded from entering employment (*gird-e amal*),[46] but to make do with what God has given them. After further considerations for his family and the disposal of his properties, he concludes with the phrase, "Peace be on him who follows the way of salvation (*hodâ*)." After a final beating, he was taken out and martyred (*shahid kardand*). This is followed by a chronogram:

> Regulator of the broad horizons, the Sâheb-e Divân
> Mohammad ebn-Mohammad, unique pearl of the age,
>
> On the 4th of Sha'bân in the year 683,
> On Monday at the time of afternoon prayer, on the Ahar riverbank,
>
> Freely, with the hand of resignation (*taslim*: also, professing Islam), by force,
> He tasted a draught of poison from the brim full goblet of the sword.

This story contains several points of interest, with its structure of oscillating fortunes building up to the climax, Joveyni's testament, which is also found in the collections of Joveyni letters and the authenticity of which might reasonably be questioned.[47] Joveyni's

45 Rashid-al-Din, p. 1157; cf. tr. W.M. Thackston, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah Jami'u't-tawarikh. Compendium of Chronicles* (Harvard, 1998), p. 564. The last phrase could be taken to mean: "just so you know (i.e. you have been warned)." It was no use (i.e. writing the letter didn't work).

46 Rashid-al-Din, p. 1158; Thackston translates this as 'taking up imperial service,' which seems to read rather too much into the phrase; had Joveyni intended this, he could surely have said so.

47 Cf. Paul, "The Juwayni letters," pp. 282–84.

warning to Buqâ echoes Kondori's warning to Nezâm-al-Molk in Râvandi's account of that episode;[48] the testament itself, of course, is a moral reflection on Joveyni's innocence, god-fearing, and devotion to Islam, although one might detect an element of censure too: how come he had acquired such wealth, and why, if he had an income of 1,000 dinars per day, did he have no cash? Furthermore, the accusation that Joveyni poisoned Abaqa (highly unlikely), is left hanging. Finally, the poem too, while sealing the story in an epigrammatic way, seems to point to the hubris of the Sâheb-e Divân, one moment regulator (*nezâm*) of world, the next, forced to taste the bitter cup of death: a common enough comment on the transitory nature of power. The story is told in simple language and indeed gains force from this: the bluntness with which Joveyni's ordeal is narrated underlines the brutality of the minister's 'martyrdom,' the term used for the death of subsequent viziers as well.

> He threw the document [i.e. his testimony] to the guards. When they read it and [saw] there was no money, they struck him many times with a cudgel (*chub*) but without result. The order was given that he should be executed.[49]

The same story is told more briefly in Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi's *Târikh-e gozide* (ca. 1330), which starts by recording Joveyni's appointment as Sâheb-e Divân and his hostility (*qasd*) towards Majd-al-Molk Yazdi, who was martyred (*shahid kardand*) on Ahmad Khan's orders. There is no indication of the reason for this hostility to Majd-al-Molk. Then, in the next reign,

> Arghun Khan suspected Khʷâje Shams-al-Din Sâheb-e Divân, who for twenty-nine years had been vizier to his father (Abaqa), uncle (Ahmad) and grandfather (Hulagu), of poisoning Abaqa Khan, and on 4 Sha'bân 683 killed him outside Ahar. Fate (*zamâne*) required revenge from him for Majd-al-Molk.

Mostowfi then quotes three separate poems, including the one given by Rashid-al-Din; the first reads:

48 Meisami, "History as literature," pp. 28–29.
49 Rashid-al-Din, p. 1160; tr. Thackston, p. 565.

When Majd-al-Molk, by God's decree,
Was martyred in the plain of Nowshahr,

At the instigation (*qasd*) of Mohammad the Sâheb-e Divân,
Who was the administrator of the realm (*dastur-e mamâlek*) of the time (*dahr*),

After two years and two months and two weeks,
He too tasted the fatal draught through fate (*dowrân*).

Do not do evil in your dealings in the world,
For the elixir (of life) is balanced in the scales with poison (*zahr*).

The final poem begins and ends as follows:

The vizier who raised his head above the Heavens,
Through God reached the dignity of martyrdom…

See the Heavens (*falak*) that torment such a person,
See the World that does not suffer such a one.[50]

As before, the poetry is used to close the episode and to draw the moral; in this case, less sympathetically, Mostowfi not only muses on the theme of the transience of power, but suggests that Joveyni got what he deserved. He moves quickly on to the demise of most of Joveyni's family, and then to Buqâ's own execution.

Mostowfi's contemporary, Shabânkâre'i (ca. 1343), is equally brief and without any extended rhetorical treatment of the topic:

> When he (Arghun) realised that Ahmad's sultanate had been due to the efforts and arrangements of the chief vizier, Shams-al-Din Mohammad, he had him killed in the environs of Ahar; may God have mercy on him, for he was a good vizier and many pleasing deeds and good actions on behalf of the majority of the people were reported of him.[51]

He too moves quickly on to Buqâ's downfall, without drawing any specific connection, but in more elaborate language:

> When Buqâ became well in control, he displayed traces of deceit and the appearance of treachery (*âthâr-e makr va ezhâr-e ghadr*) in his

50 Mostowfi, *Târikh-e gozide*, pp. 593, 595–97.
51 Shabânkâre'i, *Majma'-al-ansâb*, ed. Mir Hâshem Mohaddeth (Tehran, 1984), p. 266.

> thoughts and he was seized. On the same day he was tried and his crime determined, and, together with his whole family and following, he passed under the sword.[52]

Here, the vagueness of the language and the lack of detail go together in creating the impression of entirely random and arbitrary action against the vizier. Shabânkâre'i merely hints at what other sources report in more detail, namely the self-aggrandisement of Buqâ, his alienation of others of the élite, his resulting desperate plot and its exposure. Shabânkâre'i thus requires his audience to read between the lines and to supply the information he omits, if his account is to have any substance beyond mere allusive abstraction. On the other hand, it could be taken to imply some doubt as to the "treachery" of the official.

Although Vassâf's account of Joveyni's demise is, like Rashid-al-Din's, considerably more detailed (and in some respects quite similar), the language used, while more ornate, is relatively restrained. Joveyni's flight after the defeat of Ahmad, his return to court and his initial favor with the new Khan, Arghun, are reported, followed by Buqâ's alarm at Joveyni's power and return to influence. Then the order was given for a trial (*yarghu*) and:

> The Sâheb was brought in to the yarghu—by the author: "*the stations of fear, and pain, and torment*" (Arabic). As was their custom, when his wrists were bound, a cry went up from the Turk and Tajik officials, "why are they closing the door of the wealth of the people (*khalâyeq*)?" In response to the accusations of the malignant and the casting of lies, he said, "with regard to the sins and shortcomings of this servant (*man bande*), which the slanderers have brought to the noble ear (may God attribute to it a place where people whisper!), in the hope of clemency from the pâdshâh I acknowledge (each) one to be one hundred; but I have no knowledge of any connection with this treachery and suspicion asserted (*qasd*) by this benefactor [Buqâ]." Verse:
>
> I have neither given tongue to this nor has it ever been through my mind, nor in my thought,
> It was not employed in such cleverness (*hadhâqat*) and skill (*labâqat*) in explanation.

52 Ibid.

Half line:

> The blood of the Messiah drips by the decree of Fate.

It was decreed that they would destroy the foundations of grace and grandeur, and draw off the wellhead of generosity and excellences. In a place called Mowine near Ahar, the executioner of violence (*qahr*) with the sword of venomous poison (*zahr*) brought the Sâheb to the place of punishment; the dawn-blood (of pity) rained from the eyes of the stars, and the clamouring tongue of Mercury and the twisting locks of Venus cried out. Verse:

> What can the azure (*nilufari*) sword do, in the end, to the body of him whose affliction was from the fragrance of the water lily (*nilufar*)?

He realised there was no escape, and before his soul—which gave its last breath in liberality and [to carry out] the desire of the pâdshâh—expired on the spot, on the pretext of remaining he sought redress, so that they gave him a moment's respite. Then and there he performed his ablutions and became ritually clean, took an augury from a Qor'an (*mashaf*) that he had, then wrote his testament to his sons and wrote this document for the learned ones of Tabriz …[53]

There follows another, brief, version of the testament and several more poems, including verses of Vassâf's own composition. His account concludes with the aftermath of the execution, the universal distress even in Shiraz (where Joveyni had never been), the plundering of his property and the death of his children. Vassâf mentions that he visited the graves of Joveyni and his sons at Charandâb (Tabriz) and "sought rest there for an hour in that soul-stirring station and blessing-bestowing place," where he recorded the inscriptions on the graves. He concludes with some verses from an Arabic qaside written by one of the eloquent of the age, posted on the *qible* wall.

Altogether, despite its extremely literary style, Vassâf seems to be at pains to give an informative account of the event, while emphasising the pity of the scene, the bound vizier and the injustice of his fate, his popularity and the religious decorum with which he

53 Vassâf, *Tajziyat-al-amsâr va tazjiyat-al-a'sâr*, lith. ed. (Bombay, 1853), p. 141; ed. A. Âyati, *Tahrir-e Târikh-e Vassâf* (Tehran, 1967), p. 83. See also, Kh^{w}ândamir, *Dastur-al-vozarâ*, ed. S. Nafisi (Tehran, 1976), pp. 293–95.

acted. Nevertheless, compared with Beyhaqi's account of the death of Hasanak, the treatment of the vizier's downfall is abstracted and lacking in realism.

The fate of many other Ilkhanid viziers attracted similar attention, not least that of Rashid-al-Din himself (in 1318), also the result of factionalism at court and the jealousy of rivals. One way of dealing with this painful matter was to fail to mention it altogether: Vassâf merely records Tâj-al-Din Alishâh becoming Sâheb-e Divân at the start of Abu-Sa'id's reign, without any partner.[54] Other sources, such as Mostowfi and Shabânkâre'i, record the execution of Rashid-al-Din, in straightforward language and without circumlocutions.[55] The story is more elegantly told by Âqsarâ'i, writing in Anatolia, who records suspicion falling on the aged vizier:

> And with that suspicion, the dust of strange matters settled on the margins of his work, the breadth of the wide world became narrow for him, the roadworthy horse of his fortune became lame, and the duration of his life drew to a close; the messenger of his fate arrived, and the string of his bow became so slack that not one of the arrows of his plans hit the right target. When destiny attacked, his accomplishments were of no avail, and with the soul-releasing sword he said farewell to his body.

This is followed by some Arabic verses, then a reported remark (in Arabic) on the fate of the Followers (of the Prophet):

> I saw the head of al-Hoseyn in front of Ziyâd, the head of Ziyâd in front of al-Mokhtâr, the head of al-Mokhtâr in front of al-Mos'ab, and his head before Abd-al-Malek ebn Marwân. Verse:
>
> > Isâ saw a lamb, fallen down killed,
> > in astonishment, he bit his fingertips with his teeth,
> > He said, Who have you killed, that you are killed lamenting?
> > tomorrow they'll kill those who killed you today.[56]

Although Âqsarâ'i is making the general point here, that those who live by the sword will perish by the sword, the idiom he uses, with

54 Vassâf, p. 620; Âyati, *Tahrir*, p. 357.
55 Mostowfi, *Gozide*, p. 613, Shabânkâre'i, pp. 278–79 (with some verses).
56 Âqsarâ'i, *Mosâmerat-al-akhbâr*, ed. O. Turan (Ankara, 1944), p. 314.

its abundant metaphors, is another example of the way in which deeds can be made abstract rather than reported in concrete detail.

The execution of a vizier was not necessarily to be viewed as an act of royal tyranny, and indeed the punishing of officials could be portrayed as an example of the ruler's justice and concern for his subjects. Thus, in 1462, in the reign of the Timurid Soltân Abu-Sa'id (1424–69), an investigation was carried out in Herat into the affairs of the city during the Sultan's absence on campaign in Astarâbâd. Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi reports the matter as follows:

> After a few days, while the Shelter of the Caliphate (*hazrat-e khelâfat-panâh*) rested from the weariness and bruising of the road, he ordered a necessary investigation and enquiry into the circumstances and events that had occurred during the absence of the victorious standard. It became known that during that time when Khʷâje Mo'ezz-al-Din was taking the army and conscription tax, he had been very oppressive and excessive, had taken a large amount in bribes, and likewise Shaikh Ahmad Sarrâf, who had exacted [money] from the merchants as a loan and had written a great deal down against the people and then changed [the amount owed]. When the explanation of these circumstances was presented (*be mowqef-e arz rasid*), the lofty intellect [the Sultan] determined that they should be killed in such a way as to serve as a warning (*ebrat*) to other heedless elements (*bi-bâkân*). The royal decree was issued that, having been skinned at the Darvâze-ye Molk (gate), they should kill Shaikh Ahmad with the most painful death. The next day, they threw Khʷâje Moʿezz-al-Din into a cauldron of boiling water at the foot of the fort, opposite the Sultan's madrasa and khâneqâh (school and Sufi convent), and he boiled until the sparks of his life were extinguished. A directive was issued that thereafter they [the officials] should not seek the conscription money in Herat and its districts, and they should not cause oppression to any creature for this reason, and they should inscribe [this order] on stone and set it up in a suitable place in the Friday mosque. As he had commanded, so they did, and while that benevolent sultan remained alive (*dar qeyd-e hayât*), he never changed or altered that decree.[57]

57 Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi, *Matla'-e sa'deyn*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 2004), II/2, pp. 906–7.

Abd-al-Razzâq also mentions accusations against other officials, among them the Sâheb-e Divân, Khʷâje Mozaffar son of Khʷâje Mokhtâr, at this time. The same events are narrated by Khʷândamir in the *Habib-al-siyar* (1524), which, while clearly dependant on Abd-al-Razzâq's account, uses different language with more rhyming elements:

> … the Khʷâje, on the pretext of raising money for the army and conscription levies had caused great harm to the small and the mighty in the lands of Khorasan (*be-behâne-ye zar-e lashkar va nâmbardâr ezrâr-e besyâr be-seghâr va kebâr-e diyâr-e khorâsân rasânide*); the flames of kingly anger blazed up and an order that had to be obeyed (*methâl-e lâzem-al-amthâl*) was issued … [and carried out] … The king, shelter of justice (*pâdshâh-e adâlat-panâh*), bringing verdure by the dripping clouds of beneficence to the gardens of hope of the subjects (peasants) and cultivators, gave the order … [to be inscribed] …[58]

Khʷândamir also mentions the dismissal of the other figures in the administration, and the terror of one, Khʷâje Shams-al-Din Mohammad the Sâheb-e Divân, when he heard of the punishment of Moʿezz-al-Din, encapsulated in a mocking verse by one of the poets of the time. Khʷândamir's account, therefore, is not only slightly different in contents, but also in its expression, which, in line with many other later Safavid authors, is considerably more artificial than the relatively straightforward and plain-speaking narratives of the Timurid historians.

The murder of the grand vizier, Mirzâ Salmân Jâberi, during the siege of the citadel of Herat in 1583, by a group of amirs after being abandoned by his master, Soltân-Hamze Mirzâ, can serve as another example.[59] The detailed account by Qâzi Ahmad provides a reasonably plain narrative of the plot of the disgruntled Qezelbâsh

58 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar*, ed. M. Dabir-Siyâqi (Tehran, 1983), III, p. 81; tr. W.M. Thackston, *Khwandamir. Habibu's-siyar, Tome Three* (Harvard, 1994), II, p. 395.

59 For this episode, see R. Savory, "The significance of the political murder of Mirzā Salmān," *Islamic Studies* 3 (1964), pp. 181–91; H. Roemer in *Cambridge History of Iran* VI, pp. 254–60.

amirs to murder the vizier at Gâzorgâh, which backfired, and their subsequent representations to Hamze Mirzâ and the Shah. After surviving the first night under royal protection, the opposition against him became more determined, in view of the way he spread discord among the Qezelbâsh, and signed a resolution in the presence of the ulama, and carried it to the king accompanied by a prominent sayyid.

> When the Shah and Prince, after investigating and being apprised of the matter, knew for sure that the rage of the Qezelbâsh was greater than they could prevent by abstaining [from action] … of necessity they dismissed Mirzâ Salmân who went along with the two great amirs, … who took him on foot from the madrasa to the Bâgh-e Zâghân and held him in chains by the tent of Maqsud Beg, vizier of the *qorchi-bâshi* (Head of the Royal Guard).

It was decided that he would make an inventory of all his possessions both in the ordu, in Qazvin where his encampments were, in Shiraz which was his homeland, and in other places, to hand over to the amirs. He said it would take twenty days to do the necessary research, but some of the disaffected scribes (*nevisande-hâ*) undertook to find out in one day; fearing that he would find some way to delay his fate and escape, they decided to kill him.

> In the afternoon of this day, a group came to the door of his room and after stripping him naked, struck a sword into his stomach and cut his head from his body and sent it to Ali-Qoli Khan Shâmlu in Herat, who was his enemy. After that, they went round the city quarters and bazaars. For a day or two his headless body was thrown down, until by order of the Shah and Prince Hamze and a testament that he had made in his lifetime in the presence of … the Qâzi Mo'askar, that his body should be prepared and shrouded, they carried that out in obedience to his will, stitched his head back on his body and transported him to the holy Mashhad where he was buried under the dome (*gonbad*) of Mir Vali Beg.

There follow verses with a familiar sentiment:

> This was the custom of the transitory world (*sarây-e sepanj*),
> that his wealth (*ganj*) was associated with pain (*ranj*),
> His fortune is transferable; his circumstances soon alter.

The next day, Salmân's daughter, who was married to Hamze Mirzâ, was divorced, which occasioned more poetry, beginning:

> O you who have been up in the firmament in rank and favour,
> you know nothing of the depths of the pit…[60]

Eskandar Beg Monshi gives a similar account, with deeper analysis of motives, and showing how the Shah and Hamze Mirzâ secured the loyalty of the amirs before giving permission for Salmân's death. After his execution, Eskandar Beg marvels at the fate of those who seek to secure themselves: "he who brings himself by the greatest effort to the meadow of his hopes, becoming afflicted by the thorn beds of disaster, plucks the flowers of error and loss." His account, after recalling briefly his background and days of pomp, ends with the quotation of several different poems.[61]

The later author, Vali-Qoli Shâmlu, after mentioning Mirzâ Salmân's ambitions to restore central control in Khorasan, describes the escalation of hostilities within Herat and Sultan Hamze's siege of the citadel:

> In short (*kholâse-ye sokhan*), the duration of the siege became lengthy and every day a large number trod the road to destruction through the arrows and guns of the defenders, until Mirzâ Salmân closed the account book of his administration and gave the anthology of his life to the wind of annihilation, in the manner mentioned in the *Âlam-ârâ*.[62]

This 'death,' entirely unexplained without reference to Eskandar Beg's history, precipitated the resolution of the immediate conflict in Khorasan.

As a final example of the treatment of this subject, we might consider the case of the murder of Amir Kabir, the all-powerful minister (*Atâbak-e a'zam*) of Nâser-al-Din Shah, killed in the Bâgh-e

60 Qâzi Ahmad Qomi, *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*, ed. Ehsân Eshrâqi (Tehran, 1984), pp. 743–47.

61 Eskandar Beg Monshi, I, pp. 286–89; tr. Savory, pp. 417–20; for a different version, see Jonâbadi, *Rowzat-al-safaviyye*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Majd Tabâtabâ'i (Tehran, 1999), pp. 622–26.

62 Vali-Qoli Shâmlu, *Qesas-al-khâqâni* I, pp. 108–9.

Fin in Kashan in 1852.[63] A detailed account of his career is given by the later court minister, Mohammad-Hasan Khan, E'temâd-al-Saltane, in rather traditional terms, in the framework of the hubris of the vizier and the delusions of power, combined with the scheming of his enemies at court.[64] His account is of particular interest, in view of his own close association with Nâser-al-Din Shah and the danger of causing offence; a passage detailing the arrangements for Amir Kabir's elimination was censored from the final version of his narrative, which oscillates awkwardly between blame and praise for the deceased minister. After reciting his many titles, E'temâd-al-Saltane calls him a

> vizier who, had he not towards the end of his life mixed the elixir of accomplishment (*nush-e kefâyat*) with the sting of treachery (*nish-e khiyânat*) and [put] devilish fantasies (*khiyâlât-e sheytâni*) above obeying the sultan (*motâbe'ât-e soltâni*), would have held such a rank that after his life, his statue would have been made in a mixture of silver and gold, and placed in every country as a memorial to him, and to honour him. Alas, that his arrogance and self-deceit brought him from the highest zenith to the lowest nadir, and as a result of resistance to the light of mercy (*nur-e rahmâni*), he heard the verse: 'go forth, for you are accursed' [Q. 15: 34].[65]

He goes on to compare the Amir Kabir with some previous all-mighty viziers, such as Hasan-e Sabbâh in falsehood, Ebn-Alqami in rebelliousness and Morshid-Qoli Khan in his twisted dealings with Shah Abbâs.

After this introduction, E'temâd-al-Saltane gives an account of his rise and fall, including the many good deeds and praiseworthy actions of Amir Kabir, protected from his enemies partly (like

63 See Chapter 7. For the history of Amir Kabir, see also Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe. Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–1896* Washington, D.C. 1996), ch. 4. His ministerial career is the subject also of studies by two important historians of the modern period, Abbas Eqbâl and Fereidun Âdamiyat, see Chapter 8.

64 E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Sadr-al-tavârikh*, ed. Mohammad Moshiri (Tehran, 1978), pp. 196–232. Any blame attaching to the Shah's discreditable role in abandoning his minister was written out of the final version, see Chapter 7.

65 E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Sadr*, p. 196.

Mirzâ Salmân) by his marriage connection to the Shah.[66] After his insubordination to the Shah at Qom, the Amir's fortunes quickly declined, leading to the serial dismissal from his posts, his despatch to Kashan and, in view of the fears of his rivals of a return to office:

> With these considerations, one by one they explained his treacheries and futile fancies in the royal presence (*hozur-e homâyuni*) and gave shape to his ugly deeds. Therefore (*le-hâdhâ*) a loyal official was despatched to Kashan and he was eliminated.[67]

The author continues with a lengthy recital of his merits and especially numerous anecdotes of his rigorous justice and concern for the country, concluding with a passage strangely at odds with the opening tirade:

> In the era of the Amir, there was such order (*nezâm*) that wolves were in fear of sheep and all the subjects were content with him (*budan-e u*); but the notables of the kingdom, since they did not have the opportunity for oppression and boldness, strove for his dismissal and attained their aim; in the end they regretted it, and recognized the power and rank of the Amir, the remains and continuation [i.e. legacy] of which were the order of the kingdom and the nation.[68]

The structure of the whole account underlines the authors' sympathy for his subject, reinforcing the ironical nature of its opening passages, while maintaining a persistently respectful attitude towards the Shah—"that merciful and kind (*ra'uf va atuf*) Shah, who had the nature of divine mercy and was not content to spill the blood of the least of his subjects"—and drawing attention to the hostility of the self-seekers at court: all traditional and means of conveying a mixed message.[69]

A more specific, if allusive, report of the Amir Kabir's death was given by Mohammad-Ja'far Hoseyn Khormuji, in 1864, repressed

66 Ibid., *Sadr*, p. 212.
67 Ibid., *Sadr*, p. 218.
68 Ibid., *Sadr*, p. 230.
69 Ibid., *Sadr*, p. 216.

by the Shah, in an account also adorned with poetic utterances, such as the Sa'di-esque

> Seeking an opinion contrary to the Shah's mind,
> is washing your hands in your own blood.

> On the 18th Rabi' I, in the baths, without displaying weakness or imploring [mercy], the malignant bleeder (*fassâd-e dozhkhim-nehâd*), sealing his fate by opening the veins of his left and right hands, which for a long time had kept the right and left [hands] of enemies and evildoers defeated and humbled (*ayâdi'i-ke moddati motamâdi az yamin o yasir-e a'âdi* …), sent him to the realms of annihilation ("This is the decree of the Dear, the Knowing"); [followed by four verses].[70]

These different accounts of the death of viziers, a fraction of the numerous passages reporting such episodes, characteristic of the long-term political history of Iran and the exercise of sovereignty, reveal the interest of the historians in events that affected them, as bureaucrats and courtiers, often quite deeply. Generally, the fuller histories give detailed narratives of events, including passages of direct speech, which bring out the drama and personalities of the actors and the intricacies of the confrontations. They are also aware of historical precedents and of the competing thematic issues at stake: the absolute authority of the ruler; the dangers and temptations of power; the demands of justice; and the exemplary nature of the stories, whether to serve as a warning to over-ambitious ministers or fickle rulers easily swayed by court intrigue. The morals of the murders are driven home by citations of poetry and Qor'anic verses; the language, if often studded with artifices such as rhyming prose, use of synonyms, and excessive metaphors, is nevertheless generally sufficiently clear to put across the authors' intentions and communicate his views on the events reported, even if not to convey a realistic picture of the actual events concerned.

70 Khormuji, *Haqâ'eq-al-akhbâr-e Nâseri*, cit. A. Navâ'i, *Motun-e târikhi be-zabân-e fârsi*, (Tehran, 1997), p. 240. Cf. Afshar, "L'historiographie persane," p. 62.

The Ruler at War

We recall Fazl-Allâh Khonji-Esfahâni's remarks about the coverage of war, the desirability of not mentioning any military actions contrary to the shari'a, inflating the numbers of troops involved, and glorifying the bloodthirsty exploits of the 'Turks.' On the whole, he keeps to these restraints, saving accounts of brutality in warfare for campaigns against Georgia, which, being 'heathen,' was presumably not contrary to the shari'a. The reporting of warfare was necessarily a large part of the work of the chroniclers, being one of the main activities of the rulers and regimes they were memorialising. Success in warfare and the chivalrous conduct of war, the maintenance of central authority and the defeat of rebels, defence of the kingdom and particularly triumph over non-Muslim neighbours and aggressors all provided exemplary material as well as a fertile subject for embellishment and spinning a good story. Defeat is normally due to pride and mistaken belief in one's own glory (as in the case of the fall of over-mighty viziers), victory is due to humility before God.

These elements are all to be discerned in the accounts of the battle of Manzikert (1071), in which the Saljuq Sultan, Alp Arslân, defeated and captured the Byzantine Emperor, Romanus, and opened up Anatolia to penetration by the Turks. In her interesting study of the battle, which acquired great significance in the development of Turkish national identity, Carole Hillenbrand analyzes the narrative accounts from the 12th to the 15th century; so far as the Persian sources are concerned, the earliest is Zahir-al-Din Nishâpuri's *Saljuq-nâme* (ca. 1186) and the last is Mirkh^{w}ând's *Rowzat-al-safâ* (ca. 1469).[71] Two major trends can be discerned in the coverage of this crucial event over time. The first is the aggregation of narrative elements leading to ever fuller versions of the battle, such as the decision to delay fighting until the Friday, an auspicious day for Muslims; elaboration of the way Romanus was recognized and captured by a puny and insignificant *gholâm*; the prayers of Alp

71 Carole Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth and Muslim Symbol. The Battle of Manzikert* (Edinburgh, 2007), esp. pp. 35–36, 89–105, 125–38.

Arslân that succeeded in turning a hot wind that started blowing in the face of Turks back towards their Byzantine foes; the treatment of the captured Romanus at the hands of the Sultan, including the entirely fictitious marriage concluded between the daughter of the Emperor and the son of Alp Arslân, and the accretion of passages of direct speech, which provided the account with stirring exhortations and a sense of immediacy and verisimilitude. As Hillenbrand notes, however, all the accounts are very vague about military details and it would be "fruitless to hope to reconstruct a battle from medieval Muslim sources," which portray the Byzantine host as 300,000 men, compared with the 12,000 or so on the Saljuq side (a good example of the exaggeration that Khonji-Esfahâni objected to).[72]

Secondly, the language also changes from the earliest, simple account by Zahir-al-Din to the more polished style of the Mongol and Timurid authors, reflecting the rhetorical sophistication of the way the battle was portrayed to serve its edifying purpose and reinforcement of Muslim identity. Despite a few passages of 'purple prose,' as in the uncharacteristically fanciful description of dawn in Rashid-al-Din's account:

> On Friday, when the cockerel of the morning (*sabbâh*) gave the call (*siyyâh*) "Come to salvation" and the backgammon players of the heavens (*samâvât*) gathered up the stones of the fixed stars and the planets (*sayyârât*) on the blue board and the quicksilver-colored playing cloth of the dark blue celestial globe.[73]

the Persian accounts are considerably less ornate than many of their Arabic counterparts. Furthermore, this is not a linear development, some authors (such as Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi), choosing not to exploit "the narrative potential of the battle."[74]

72 The number 300,000 for the Byzantine forces stays quite consistent across time—only Âqsarâ'i reporting fewer (50,000); the Saljuq forces vary between 15,000 (Rashid-al-Din) and 10,000 (Mirkh^{w}ând).

73 Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, vol. II, part 5, ed. Ahmed Ateş (Ankara, 1999), p. 35; tr. Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth*, p. 92 (slightly modified: *saqlâtun* can mean dark blue, as well as red, and seems more likely in this context).

74 Hillenbrand, *Turkish Myth*, p. 98.

The remains of this section will look briefly at some other accounts of battles of great historical significance as examples of the general treatment of warfare.

The *Shahname* by the epic poet Ferdowsi (d. 1020) is the *locus classicus* for the language of battle and it is worth starting with his account of the defeat of the Sasanians by Sa'd b. (Abi) Waqqâs at Qâdesiyye, which marked the beginning of the collapse of the Persian Empire and the triumph of Islam. Ferdowsi's narrative—which does not need to be taken as a dispassionate effort to record the details of the battle—starts with the drawing up of the battle ranks:

> He ordered them to bring forth the flutes; the army advanced from its position like the sea.
> A dust rose up and there was such a clamour that men of sharp hearing became deaf.
> You would say the diamond-pointed spears in the dust were stars in the deep blue [sky].

The battle lasted three days, and the Iranians were afflicted with thirst; both they and their horses became weakened. Then a great cry went up like thunder, and the two generals, Sa'd and Rostam, faced each other in single combat away from the sight of their armies. Rostam struck the first blow, which knocked Sa'd from his horse, and he was about to finish him off when he was blinded by swirling dust. Rostam dismounted but he could see nothing, and Sa'd took advantage of the moment to strike Rostam a blow that filled his eyes with blood and then another fatal cut. When the Iranians came and saw his body lying there, they turned and fled.[75]

This account has several interesting features, including the distillation of the conflict into the single encounter of the two generals. Even if it is not justified to see an allusion to the events of Karbalâ in the thirst experienced by the Persian army, the blinding dust intervenes, as so often the case, to the discomfort of the army whose fortune has run out. The role of the dust-filled wind

75 Ferdowsi, *Shahname*, ed. Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, vol. VIII (New York, 2008), pp. 429–31.

is almost the only element of Ferdowsi's narrative that is consistent with Bal'ami's account of the battle.[76]

Based on Tabari's enormously long and unwieldy record, Bal'ami provides a much more manageable account of the three days of battle, in which many Muslims were killed but all the single combats were won by the Arab champions; the Persians were characterized as wearing golden belts and gold-embroidered clothes. Throughout the encounter, Sa'd was too ill to ride out and gave the order to fight by shouting the *takbir* (*Allâhu akbar*), upon which signal the Muslims charged. The narrative interest is maintained on the second day, of further defeats for the Muslims, by the intervention of a Sa'd's wife, formerly the wife of the Muslim hero Mothannâ b. Hârethe, who was watching the progress of the battle with him. She called out, "Alas for Mothannâ—where are you?", which at first provoked Sa'd to strike her. She told him that it was not the time for jealousy while the Muslims were being killed, and he resolved to take a more active part in the battle the following day, which was enlivened by the ruse of detaching five thousand men from the Arab forces and pretending their re-appearance in the battle was the arrival of reinforcements. The two sides fought till nightfall, the Persian general Rostam exclaiming:

> "We will fight till morning to finish the matter once and for all." The fight became intense. They called that night "the night of howling," because everyone was pouncing on one another, and pulling one another's beard, and the noise of the striking of swords was like the [din of] blacksmiths' hammers. Never before had the Arabs and Ajams had such a battle. They fought like this till day dawned. Six thousand Muslims were killed that night. When it was day, they fought again.

Finally, however, a strong wind blew up in the face of the Persians, obscuring everything. The canopy that had been erected over Rostam's throne (from which he was directing the battle) blew into the river, obliging him to shelter under a mule laden with a chest of dinars and dirhams. As the Muslims attacked, one of them struck

76 Bal'ami, *Târikh-nâme-ye Tabari*, ed. M. Rowshan (Tehran, 1998), III, pp. 445–52.

at the cord that secured the chest, which fell on Rostam and broke his back.

> He threw himself into the water in pain. Helâl knew it was Rostam and seized his leg and pulled him out of the water. He cut off his head and put it on the end of a spear.

On seeing his head, the Persians fled, leading to a massacre—altogether 100,000 'kâfers' were killed in the battle. Only at this point did Sa'd b. Abi Waqqâs emerge from his pavilion, to the scorn of the men, a certain Jarir b. Abd-Allâh composing a poem (in Arabic) to the effect that they fought till God sent victory, while Sa'd held back at the gate of Qâdesiyye; "many women became widows, but there are no widows among the women of Sa'd."[77]

In other words, contrary to the presentation in the *Shahname*, there was no encounter between Sa'd and Rostam, the former being laid up with boils and the latter dying in flight, not in combat. Bal'ami nevertheless provides a story full of incident and drama, which caters for both Muslim and Persian sensibilities; as in the case of the battle of Manizkert, noted above, the extraordinary wealth and the ostentatiously rich garments of the Persians are noted, in contrast to the simplicity of the Muslim fighters. The same point is made in the *Fârs-nâme*, which otherwise has no details of the battle at all.[78]

A much later account in the universal history of Khʷândamir (1524) contains several different elements, including a different version of the death of Rostam and some more elaborate writing, again in the description of the daybreak:[79]

77 Bal'ami, pp. 451–52; the same version, but greatly abbreviated to the final denouement of Rostam's death, is found in the *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*, pp. 272–73, with the detail added (as found in Tabari's account) that the royal banner (*darafsh-e kâviyâni*) was brought before Sa'd, together with all Rostam's treasure.

78 Ebn-al-Balkhi, *Fârs-nâme*, ed. G. Le Strange (London, 1921), pp. 111–12, refers to Rostam's massive jewel-studded crown; there was heavy fighting (*jang-hâ-ye azim raft*) and in the end (*be-âqebat*) Rostam was killed.

79 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* I, pp. 480–81.

> The next day, at an auspicious hour (*tâle'-e sa'd*) when the peak-striking sun galloped a single horseman across the field of the heaven, and defeated and put to flight the cavalry of the stars that bring misfortune (*kheyl-e nojum nokhusat-hojum*) with the blows of its ray-like lances, the traces of weariness and defeat became visible on the pages of the affairs of the Ajam … [the Muslims charged and the firm stand of the Persians wavered]. They fled to the wadi with the Muslims in pursuit. Helâl b. Alqame came upon Rostam and the Persian commander loosed an arrow at him, which struck Helâl's leg in such a way that his foot was pinned to the stirrup. Helâl in that rush of zeal struck Rostam with his sword and lightened his neck of the burden of his head.
>
> When Rostam's eyes became full of blood, that world-seeking Arab became victorious over him;
> He struck another blow on his head and neck, his warlike body fell to the ground.

These verses are a direct quotation from the *Shahname* (see above), making the discrepancy with Ferdowsi's account the more remarkable. Khʷândamir also mentions the capture of the jewel-studded Kayâni banner, and earlier in the text quotes a passage from the History of Ahmad b. A'tham, concerning the improbable response of the ageing Amr b. Ma'di to the challenge of the Iranian champion Shâhanshâh, who had already despatched four Muslim braves in single combat. Amr, of course, emerges the victor, deflecting a sword blow from the Iranian and then killing him with a blow that pierced his brain.[80] The passage is enlivened by direct speech and clearly presents the battle in such a way as to reaffirm the triumph of Islam.

Timur's career of conquests and the way they are presented in the sources would alone provide more than ample material for an analysis of the treatment of warfare in the chronicles; one brief example must suffice here, providing an interesting focus on single combat as a measure of heroic manliness.[81] In the course of his prolonged hostilities against Khʷârazm, on his fourth expedition

80 Ibid., *Habib-al-siyar*, p. 480.

81 E. A. Polyakova, "Timur as described by the 15th century court historiographers," *Iranian Studies* 21 (1988), pp. 33–34.

in 1379, Timur received a challenge to single combat from the local ruler, Yusof Sufi, as a way to spare the Muslims the death and destruction resulting from their hostilities. Timur gladly accepted, despite the alarm of his entourage, but when he rode up to the fortress where Yusof was installed, the latter regretted his challenge and refused to come out, attracting universal censure while Timur, by contrast, was praised for his courage and fortitude. As noted by Polyakova, the incident probably never took place and can be seen as a literary device.[82] It is certainly the case that Ali Yazdi's treatment of the episode takes full advantage of the opportunity to present Timur in the most favorable light, partly to save the innocent deaths of the Muslims, partly to show his own strength and self-confidence. Yazdi's account is punctuated by poetry reminiscent of the *Shahname*,

> The Sâheb-qerân dressed for war, he sat on his charger without delay,
> He adorned his glorious chest with a khaftan, a royal (*khosravi*) helmet on his head

The loyal officers try to restrain him:

> When a Khosrow goes to fight alone, what's the use of so many knights in the field?

Whereas in Shâmi's account, Timur orders his arrival at the fortress to be announced, in Ali Yazdi's version Timur cries out his challenge himself, and on receiving no response, calls once more, "Death is better than living for someone who does not keep his word." He returns to camp to the praise of all:

> All at once they called out praise, "May there be no time or place without you!
> Everyone benefits from your words, the sun and moon shine through your deeds."

82 Ibid., p. 34. See Nezam-al-Din Shâmi, *Zafar-nâme*, ed. F. Tauer (Prague, 1937), p. 80; Ali Yazdi, ed. Sâdeq and Navâ'i, pp. 478–80.

The campaign ended soon afterwards, with the capture of the fortress and the sickness and death of Yusof Sufi. According to Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi,

> An earthquake afflicted his existence out of fear of the royal crown [of Timur] and a severe pain appeared, so that the hands of the methods of the doctors fell short of the skirts of a cure, and the tree of his life crashed down in the meadow of leadership through the violence of the storm wind of fate, and the banner of his world-command was overturned.[83]

An example from the Safavid period also reveals the now customary divergences in choice of language and in narrative content. One of the earliest significant victories of Shah Esmâ'il was his defeat of the Uzbek ruler, Sheybâni Khan, in late 1510 near Marv-e Shâhejân. The earliest account, by the contemporary author, Ebrâhim Amini Haravi, is extremely long and couched in the most convoluted *saj'* (rhyming prose), richly adorned with Qor'anic quotations and passages of poetry.[84]

> On the morning of Friday the 28th (Sha'bân) [the enemy—thinking the Safavids were in retreat] reached the bank of the river Mahmudi. The soul-melting, enemy-burning, friend-cosseting fire of war having started, the amirs of the rank-arranging *tovâchi*s (troop inspectors) went from both sides. *Hazrat-e Shâh Din-panâh* [Esmâ'il] had held back a number of amirs of the numberless troops on that side of the river Mahumdi, who, when the warring army of the opponents reached them—having started a battle to be fled and a war to be viewed with caution and avoidance, making the opponents bold and confounded (*chire va khire*?) against them—would drag their hands and collars towards the unlucky water, and having doused the fire of their injuries in that water, would give the dusty bodies of that malevolent party to the wind of annihilation … Mohammad Khan Sheybâni … [being informed that the Safavid force had crossed the river], headed that way, his mind fixed on the defeat of the army of Fate, the predestination of "Say, even if you had been in your houses,

83 Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali, *Sa'âdat-nâme*, p. 24, who doesn't mention the 'single combat.' Cf. Ali Yazdi, *Zafar-nâme*, p. 481.

84 Ebrâhim Amini Haravi, *Fotuhât-e shâhi*, ed. Mohammad-Rezâ Nasiri (Tehran, 2004), pp. 329–47.

> those whose being killed was written [preordained] would have sallied forth to the place where they were to die" (Q. 3: 154) having seized his hem [and …] he having come out with the whole army, nay, with small and great from that place of danger, signifying:
>
> When a bird's time is up, it goes towards the hunter.[85]

There is little concrete information about the course of the battle, which is described in almost mystical terms, except that in the end, three thousand of the Uzbeks were killed, including the Uzbek leader.[86]

A different type of non-information is provided by Budâq Monshi Qazvini (ca. 1574), in an account that first mentions the failed negotiations—beginning with a sectarian debate, during which the Safavid envoys make the interesting observation that Hulegu Khan and Sultan Oljeitu were both sympathetic to Shi'ism and were relatives of the Chengisid Uzbeks—and then moves on to the conflict, in which Sheybâni Khan, despairing of his expected reinforcements, came out with fifteen thousand men and began to fight. The Shâh-e Ghâzi [Esmâ'il] had twenty thousand men in this expedition. The battle takes place largely in verse:[87]

> The two armies faced each other; champions came out from both sides.
> When the clouds were in turmoil on both sides, two seas of fire came to the boil.
> When army mixed with army, they aroused the Resurrection in the world.
> The twanging of arm-breaking bows carried off many creatures.
> The world was ruined by the cupbearer of death; his goblet a head and the wine pure blood.
>
> The victory-proclaiming banner [Safavid army] fought from morning till evening. Sheybak Khan came to an old fort with five hundred men, and had no way out. Borun Soltân Tekkelu with a number of amirs followed [them] to that fort and fought with those five hundred

85 Ibid., pp. 339–40.
86 Ibid., pp. 344, 346.
87 Budâq Monshi Qazvini, *Javâher-al-akhbâr*, ed. Mohsen Bahrâm-nezhâd (Tehran, 2000), pp. 127–28.

> men until they were all killed and fell on top of each other. Sheybak Khan was killed in the middle of that and no-one knew. In the end, when they investigated, they pulled him out from under forty dead bodies. Nearly ten thousand people were killed on both sides.

The language here is altogether plain and accessible; the poem is reminiscent of the *Shahname*, but the verses do not come from the epic. The final verse about the goblet no doubt refers to the fact that Sheybâni Khan's head was turned into a wine cup by Esmâ'il, a fact that Budâq Monshi later mentions.

The striking difference in tone in these two accounts is perhaps explained by the fact that Amini was writing in Herat in the early, heady days of the Safavid rise, whereas Budâq Monshi was writing at the court of Shah Tahmâsp, at a time when the Uzbek threat had been temporarily neutralised and there was a lively interest in the sectarian polemic between Sunni and Shi'i.[88] A similar account, rather less prosaic but lacking in verse, was written by Abdi Beg Shirâzi (ca. 1570), while another contemporary work, written by the ex-soldier Hasan Beg Rumlu (ca. 1578) is also mainly composed in straightforward manner, though with frequent insertions of poetry, and a much extended story-line, including discussions in direct speech involving Sheybâni Khan and his amirs (ignoring their advice that the Safavid withdrawal was a ruse, such was his pride), and then his wife Moghul Khânom castigating him into action.[89]

The accounts of this important encounter are too numerous to analyze here, let alone consider others of the battles that fill the Persian chronicles. Early in the career of Nâder Shah, his victory over the Afghan ruler Ashraf near Damghan in 1729 is reported in some detail and with different elaborations by Mirzâ Mahdi Khan and Mohammad Kâzem, the one with assistance of Qor'anic quotations, the other with verses of his own composition (once more, redolent of the metaphor of the *Shahname*), but sufficient for a

88 For both authors, see further Chapter 5.

89 Abdi Beg, *Takmelat-al-akhbâr*, pp. 49–50; Hasan Beg Rumlu, *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 1970), p. 157.

reconstruction of the battle to be possible.[90] Further discussion of the treatment of military actions in the histories of Nâder Shah and the Qajars can be found in the chapters that follow.[91] Generalizations are particularly hazardous without a number of detailed studies to draw upon, and the choice of language, even to report identical events, comes down ultimately to the personality and taste of the author. Mohammad Tâher Vahid's description of Esmâ'il's battle against the Uzbeks is taken directly from Eskandar Beg Monshi's, but retold in a much simpler language than the intricate phraseology of his model.[92]

Although it would be convenient to be able to be able to demonstrate that the writing of battle accounts, as indeed the rest of the information recorded by the chroniclers, had a tendency to accumulate narrative details that were both entertaining and of moral purpose, and that these accounts were inscribed in a language and idiom that started with a pristine clarity, became increasingly self-consciously 'literary' and tending towards the abstraction of 'real' events into a pattern of words bereft of meaning, until such a point that a return to simplicity became fashionable,[93] such a formulation would be misleading. Not only does each period of history find chroniclers who chose both the more and the less artificial styles of writing, but even within the same work there can be passages juxtaposed in very different language, in which the amount of concrete detail—or naturalistic information—does not necessarily coincide with the

90 Mirzâ Mahdi Khan, *Jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi*, ed. A. Anvâr (Tehran, 1998), pp. 97–98; Mohammad Kâzem Marvi, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, ed. M. A. Riyâhi (Tehran, 1985), pp. 109–12; cf. Ch. Adle, "La bataille de Mehmândust (1142/1729)," *Studia Iranica* 2/2 (1973), pp. 235–41. Mohammad Kâzem does occasionally quote directly from Ferdowsi, as from the battle between Bahman son of Esfandiyâr and Farâmarz son of Rostam, during Nâder's attack on Jalâlâbâd, see *Âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, p. 619.

91 See esp. Chapter 6.

92 Compare Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 36–38 with Mohammad Tâher Vahid, *Târikh-e jahân-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, ed. Mir Mohammad Sâdeq (Tehran, 2005), pp. 32–34. Roger Savory's helpful translation of Eskandar Beg, pp. 60–63, entirely disguises the language of his account.

93 That is, during the 19th century, see Chapters 6 and 7.

style employed: that is to say, simple language does not guarantee objective closely-observed reporting, nor does an intensely ornate style necessarily militate against it.[94] However, accounts of warfare that glorify the exploits of the ruler and the military (generally Turkish) élite tended to put image before substance, even when, as was sometimes the case, the authors must have been present at the scene. The din, dust and confusion of battle no doubt excuse a lack of precision, and make it easy to fall back on the heroic metaphors of the *Shahname*, and exemplars such as Rostam and Esfandiyâr, to produce the required effect. It is not until the 20th century, and the rejection of the traditional aims, contents, and concomitant style of the court-centred chroniclers, that a new historiography arose in Iran.[95]

4. The Measure of Success

This chapter in surveying the literary qualities of the Persian chronicles cannot, of course, be taken as a surrogate for a survey of the history of Persian prose literature. The large and numerous works of the chroniclers nevertheless provide a substantial example of literary creativity over a long period of Persian history. There are still very few detailed historiographical studies of individual events or individual texts from this vast body of work. Further discussion of many of the points raised here will be found in the following chapters devoted to different periods.

As for the assessment of the literary qualities and rhetorical strategies of the historians, convenient and summary discussions can be found in the anthologies produced by Iranian scholars,

94 See the discussion by E. A. Poliakova, "The development of a literary canon in medieval Persian chronicles: the triumph of etiquette," *Iranian Studies* 17/2–3 (1984), pp. 237–56, focusing on the 13th–15th centuries.

95 See for example Afshar, "L'historiographie persane," pp. 60–68; Shahrokh Meskoob, *Iranian Nationality and the Persian Language*, tr. Michael C. Hillmann, ed. J. R. Perry (Washington, D.C., 1992), esp. pp. 65–100, for a review of the whole pre-modern period.

starting with Bahâr's pioneering *Sabk-shenâsi*.[96] It seems, however, that among many commentators there is little agreement over how to qualify an historian's style, terms such as ornate, florid, artificial, difficult, and so on being used more or less subjectively and depending on the author's actual understanding of the texts. The style of the monshis can cover as many variations as there are monshis, while it is seldom useful to characterise a whole work on the basis of particular passages. Many authors switch styles in the course of a work—perhaps reflecting the use of different sources as well as their own inclinations—and even the work of Joveyni and Vassâf, universally singled out for their high rhetorical complexity, have passages that are completely straightforward. Such changes of register, indeed, should be the object of further study.

Meanwhile, it seems acceptable to measure the achievements of the historians according to their own criteria.[97] Pending a detailed analysis of the actual survival of historical texts and their distribution, which would give a certain numerical indication of their popularity and how widely they were disseminated, an impression of this can be gained from the authors' own citation of the work of their peers and their readiness to improve on them or continue from where they left off. By this measure, it is clear that the most valued works, which were frequently emulated, referred to, and acknowledged, include Joveyni's *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*, Vassâf's *Tajziyat-al-amsâr* (conceived as a continuation of Joveyni), Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nâme*, and Eskandar Beg Monshi's *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*. A second strand, which to some degree coalesces with the first in the great Timurid compendiums of Mirkh^{w}ând and Kh^{w}ândamir, looks back to Rashid-al-Din's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, and continues through Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi's *Târikh-e gozide* and the work of Hâfez-e Abru, which also absorbed the earlier work of Bal'ami and was in turn absorbed by Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi

96 Malek-al-sho'arâ Bahâr, *Sabk-shenâsi* (3 vols., Tehran, 1942); see also Zabihollâh Safâ, *Ganjine-ye sokhan*; and Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i, *Motun-e târikhi*.

97 See Julia Rubanovich, "Literary canon and patterns of evaluation in Persian prose on the eve of the Mongol invasion," *Studia Iranica* 32/1 (2003), pp. 47–76.

and Mirkh^{w}ând. Finally, the great Persian epic, Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, retained an enduring status as a point of reference for kingly deeds and heroic metaphor, even if direct emulation of the poem shifted, after the 14th century, from the repertoire of serious historical writing to panegyric and popular story-telling: that is, from the realm of history to the realm of literature.

It is noticeable that neither Beyhaqi's great history, nor the world history of Rashid-al-Din (despite the latter's renown), found any real emulators, and that the second strand, which on the whole are 'universal' histories, tend to be admired for their contents rather than their literary quality. The first strand, however, and certainly the most commonly and widely celebrated works, by Joveyni, Vassâf and Ali Yazdi (all dynastic chronicles), are famous for their style and linguistic superiority. From an earlier period, Jorbâdhqâni's translation of Otbi (and Otbi himself) is also regarded as a model of prose writing and this was the main work of history that seems to have entered the canon of Persian prose literature before the Mongol period.[98] This makes clear the aspirations of the pre-modern chroniclers, their sense of the cultural environment in which they were writing, and the literary lens through which history was viewed. Necessarily, this must determine our own engagement with their work.

98 Rubanovich, "Literary canon," pp. 61–63.

CHAPTER 3

THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Elton L. Daniel

The corpus of historical literature in Persian during the more than five centuries from the Islamic conquest to the Mongol invasion is relatively small. Leaving aside works that include some historical content but fall within other literary genres (such as hagiography, biographical collections, literary anthologies, or mirrors for princes), it is difficult to identify much more than a dozen specimens of such writing.[1] The total could be expanded by taking into account works known to have been lost, but the number of titles would still probably be less than twenty. As will be seen, this literature developed slowly and sporadically, with most titles coming from the very end of the period under consideration. Much of it was rather parochial in scope, being limited to the history of particular regions or dynasties. Some works were, at least in part, only *tarjome*s (translation-redactions) of histories first written in Arabic. In terms of significance as a source of historical information and literary brilliance, there is really only one work of genuine historiographical distinction, Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi's history of the Ghaznavids, but it has survived only in truncated form. Moreover, for the whole of the pre-Mongol period Persian historiography

1 Based on inventories of manuscripts and edited works found in C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (London, 1927–39); with revisions and additions in Yu. E. Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura: Biobibliograficheskiĭ obzor* (Moscow, 1972); and Ahmad Monzavi, *Fehrest-e noskhe-hâ-ye khatti-ye fârsi*, vol. VI (Tehran, n.d.). See also Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999).

was completely overshadowed by Arabic historiography, certainly in terms of quantity and perhaps, as many would argue, in quality as well.

One might well wonder why Persian historiography existed at all. Arabic historiography had entered its maturity by the time Persian historiography even appeared. It had already fully assimilated the equivalent of pre-Islamic Persian 'history,' that is the semi-legendary body of information about the ancient Persian kings that constituted what Ehsan Yarshater calls the 'Iranian national history.'[2] It is by no means clear that Persian historiography ever broke free of the models established by Arabic historiography in any way except the language of composition. Since knowledge of Arabic was a standard expected of any educated person during this era, it would seem likely that the audience that produced and consumed historical literature could have done so just as easily in Arabic as in Persian (and in fact often did so). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the rise of Persian historiography was in many ways a haphazard affair that depended to a great degree on questions of patronage, the personal interests of authors, and historical circumstances.

At the same time, consideration of the rise and development of Persian historiography forces one to confront an assorted array of difficult questions, and not just about matters of authorship, methodology, and motivation: What exactly is a work of history? What are its genres and sub-genres? Should it be judged as a work of science and scholarship for its accuracy, clarity, and utility or as a work of literature for its aesthetic, intellectual, and rhetorical values? The issue of literary style is particularly important; some modern critics see the tendency that developed towards the use of ornate language as diminishing or obscuring the historical value of the texts, while others believe it reinforced the meaning of the content or subtly disguised a deliberate discrepancy between what the author seemed to be saying and what he really intended. These problems cannot be fully addressed here but should be kept in mind.[3]

2 See Ehsan Yarshater, "Iranian national history," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. III (1) (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 359–477.

3 See further, Chapter 1.

1. Abu-Ali Bal'ami and the Genesis of Persian Historiography

The various preconditions for the rise of Persian historiography—the evolution of the New Persian language; the development of a system for writing it; its sanction as a chancery language; the formation of its literary tradition, mostly in the form of poetry; the waning influence of a centralizing caliphate; the appearance of more or less autonomous local dynasties; a renewed interest in the ancient history or pseudo-history of Iran—had all been met by the 10th century. The establishment of Persian as a literary language was well underway by the time of the Samanid amir Nasr b. Ahmad (reg. 914–43), who endorsed the use of Persian in his chancery and commissioned a Persian translation of *Kalile va Demne*, and Persian poetry flourished under the patronage of his successor Nuh b. Nasr (reg. 943–54). The 'history' of pre-Islamic Iran, which had much earlier been translated from Pahlavi into Arabic by Ebn-al-Moqaffa' and others, reappeared in New Persian when Abu-Mansur b. Abd-al-Razzâq, the *dehqân* of Tus and an important Samanid military vassal, and his minister Abu-Mansur Ma'mari arranged the compilation and translation of a prose version of the *Shahname* in 957, of which only the preface survives.[4]

The specific point of origin for Persian historiography, however, was the decision in 963 by Mansur b. Nuh (reg. 961–76) to commission a translation by his minister Abu-Ali Bal'ami of the famous Arabic chronicle by Abu-Ja'far Mohammad b. Jarir Tabari (d. 923), the *Ta'rikh-al-rosol va'l-moluk (*History of the Prophets and Kings).[5] Bal'ami, the son of a celebrated Samanid vizier

4 V. Minorsky, "The Older Preface to the Shāh-Nāma," in *Iranica: Twenty Articles* (Tehran, 1964), pp. 260–73.

5 The pre-Islamic section has been edited by Mohammad Bahâr as *Târikh-e Bal'ami* (2 vols., Tehran, 1974); the Islamic section by Mohammad Rowshan as *Târikh-nâme-ye Tabari* (3 vols., Tehran, 1987); and the complete work by M. Rowshan with the same title (5 vols., Tehran, 1999). A French translation of a variant edition of the text was done by Hermann Zotenberg as *Chronique de Abou Djafar-Mohammed-ben-Djarir-ben-Yezid Tabari* (4 vols., Paris, 1867–74).

(Abu'l-Fazl Bal'ami), completed the assignment, one of several Arabic to Persian translations then being produced, and his version of Tabari's history became extremely popular, as attested by the very large number of manuscripts of the work still in existence—something that also makes it difficult, or even impossible, to establish the original text with much certainty because of the various redactions, revisions, and alterations made to it in the course of textual transmission.[6] Curiously, for example, the fragment of the narrative found in the oldest known manuscript contains a version of the text that is quite dissimilar to that in any other manuscript and has been ignored in all editions of the work.[7]

Any attempt to understand the genesis of Persian historiography must deal with the problem of the motivation, rationale, and method of Bal'ami's work. The best evidence for this appears in the author's preface—written, ironically enough, in florid Arabic:

> Long live Amir Abi-Sâleh Mansur b. Nuh! Almighty God had caused al-Amir al-Sayyid al-Malek al-Mozaffar Aba-Sâleh Mansur b. [Nuh b.] Ahmad b. Esma'il b. Sâmân b. Sasek b. Bahrâm al-Shubine [sic] al-Râzi, the Esfahbad, the Marzbân (God be pleased with them all), to be one of the foremost in zealously reading this book and persistent in using it until its contents were clear to him. In the year 352 [963], he dispatched the command, via his secretary (*amin*) and major-domo (*khâss*) Abi'l-Hasan Fâ'eq al-Khâsse: "Translate this book ascribed to Mohammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, author of *al-Tafsir al-kabir*, entitled *Ketâb-al-ta'rikh* and containing information about the ancients and narratives about those of the past. Abridge the reports (*akhbâr*) so that they do not have the chains of authorities (*esnâd*s) and rectify what is in this book in repetitiveness and spreading out the sequence of the story of every prophet and king and event of every time in the proper way and order." After that, I translated it into Dari Persian so that the reading of it and its information could

6 See A. N. Boldyrev and P. A. Gryaznevich, "O dvukh redaktsiyakh 'Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī' Bal'amī," *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie* (1957/iii), pp. 46–59; Elton L. Daniel, "Manuscripts and editions of Bal'amī's *Tarjamah-i tārīkh-i Ṭabarī*," *JRAS* (1990), pp. 282–321. A. C. S. Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal'amī's Tārīkhnāmah* (London, 2007).

7 Published in facsimile as *Tarjome-ye Târikh-e Tabari* (Tehran, 1966).

> be shared by subject and ruler (*al-ra'âye va'l-soltân*) and to make it easier for whoever examined it. God, be He exalted, said, 'We have not sent any prophet except in the language of his people,'[8] and He established prophets for all people in their own tongue and language. I translated this book, and I compared it with *al-Tafsir al-kabir*, and I rearranged the stories as appropriate so that every story was in the proper sequence and every report in the proper place. I compared everything with its counterpart and collated each to its like. I divided the book into chapters based on reports about the prophets and kings and dated them according to the name of the era and times. I compared this, my book, with the verses of the Qor'an and the narratives of the prophets, and I trimmed the long chains of authorities from it. I asked God, be He exalted, for assistance in writing and compiling it, and the completion of all of that is through the assistance of God …[9]

At some later point, the author's Arabic preface was itself replaced by a more succinct Persian one:

> Know that this is the great chronicle (*Târikh-nâme*) compiled by Abi-Ja'far Mohammad b. Jarir [b.] Yazid al-Tabari, which the king of Khorasan, Abu-Sâleh Mansur b. Nuh, ordered his minister (*dastur*) Abu-Ali Mohammad b. Mohammad b. [sic] al-Bal'ami, "Turn this work of history by the son of Jarir into Persian as best as you can so that there may be no deficiency in it."
>
> Thus [the author] said: "Then I examined it, and I saw that there was much information and evidence (*elm-hâ-ye besyâr va hojjat-hâ*) in it, and Qor'anic verses, and good poetry, and I saw much of value. I toiled hard and burdened myself and, by the power of the Almighty, be He praised and exalted, turned it into Persian."[10]

These comments, along with similar ones in other translations and prose works of the period, have created the impression that the goal was to provide an accessible version of a classic of Arabic scholarship to a Persian-speaking general audience. As Gilbert Lazard put it, such works showed that

8 An allusion to Qor'an 14:4.

9 Text in Gryaznevich and Boldyrev, pp. 52–53 (not found in any of the published editions).

10 *Târikh-e Bal'ami*, ed. Bahâr, I, p. 2.

> there existed in Iran a wide public sufficiently interested in intellectual matters to wish to be informed, but not very familiar with the Arabic language; the Samanid amirs were among them and their individual action contributed to the development of Persian prose.[11]

However, the notion that a work like Bal'ami's history was produced to offer a simplified version of high scholarship in Arabic to the Persephone masses and semi-literate rulers is not very convincing. For one thing, the Arabic preface makes very clear that the Amir, far from being "not very familiar" with Arabic, had actually taken a diligent interest in the Arabic text. It is true that in another work he is said to have found reading Tabari's *Tafsir* "difficult" (*doshkh*^{w}*âr*),[12] but that is a fairer assessment of Tabari's Arabic than of the Amir's linguistic abilities. Neither is there much reason to think that many ordinary people would have had either the inclination or the opportunity to peruse such works, nor that the likely reading audience was all that unfamiliar with Arabic. In fact, Bal'ami's 'translation' actually preserves a good deal of poetry and even some prose in Arabic, which would suggest that the readership was expected to have more than a passing familiarity with the language. Beyond that, the tone of the Bal'ami prefaces suggests that something more than an altruistic interest in turning out a vernacular version of the text for ordinary readers was at work.

What is most remarkable about the quite specific instructions given to Bal'ami is that they required him not just to translate the text but to *change* it in some very fundamental ways. The details provided in the Arabic preface show that when the Persian preface speaks ambiguously of making a translation "with no deficiency in it," this did not mean to make a faultlessly exact translation but one that removed the "defects" in the original Arabic text. Tabari had followed a method, drawn from the religious study of hadith, of providing multiple versions of events, each with its own chain of authorities. For the Islamic period, these were arranged in a strictly annalistic, year by year, fashion. This resulted in a very fragmented

11 G. Lazard, "The rise of the New Persian language," in *Cambridge History of Iran* IV, p. 631.

12 *Tarjome-ye Tafsir-e Tabari*, ed. Habib Yaghmâ'i (3rd ed., Tehran, 1988), I, p. 5.

and repetitive narrative of events. In accordance with the Amir's directive, Bal'ami did away with all of this: the *esnâd*s were abbreviated or scrapped altogether; the narratives of events were combined and harmonized; and the annalistic format was replaced by a hierarchical organization based on events, rulers, dynasties, and eras. At a minimum, these changes addressed some of the considerable literary defects in Tabari's work, especially the repetitions, digressions, redundancies, and other interruptions which make following and understanding the course of an event difficult—a problem noted quite presciently by the Amir Mansur. Bal'ami not only deleted and rearranged material from the Arabic text, he freely added material drawn from other sources and on numerous occasions explicitly rejected what Tabari had written. He did not do so, as has recently been suggested, out of some egotistical desire to show that he was an "independent historian in his own right,"[13] but because he had in fact been explicitly ordered to "rectify" the text and remove its "deficiencies." It rather seems as if the Samanids were simultaneously both awed and disturbed by Tabari's text and the reputation it had acquired (clearly linked to the prestige of his commentary on the Qor'an), and the translation was an effort to create a suitable replacement that would be followed by *all*, subjects and the ruling elite, not just those who were not comfortable with Arabic. But why?

It should be noted that in the medieval period, whether in the Islamic world or elsewhere, the concept of "translation" did not mean, as it generally does today, producing an exact replication in a new language of the text in the original language.[14] A "translation," *tarjome*, might better be called a "transformation" of the work culturally as well as linguistically—edited, abridged, expanded, annotated, or reshaped according to the interests of the translator and the expectations of his audience. It may well be that the concept of history itself as exemplified in Tabari was not one shared by the Samanids, and they thus wanted to remold it according to their

13 Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography*, p. 172.

14 See, for example, Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991).

understanding of what a history should be. In this regard, Ehsan Yarshater's comments about the Sasanid model of history are helpful: History, i.e., records of a "succession of kings" produced by "members of the scribal class," was "an educational instrument of social stability and cohesion;" it served "to maintain and promote the national and moral ideals of the state" and "to strengthen a common heritage and to promote a common ideal;" it needed "to be readable and persuasive."[15] Tabari's work, with its annalistic approach, its roots in religious methodology, and its confusing and multiple versions of events, does not fit this model in any respect, but it applies quite well to Bal'ami's history.

Certainly, at the time Bal'ami's history was written, the Samanids would have had good reason to want to promote "stability and cohesion." The dynasty, entering the final phase of its existence, faced challenges on numerous fronts. In the struggle with the Turks of Central Asia, the balance of power had shifted far away from what it had been for the Samanids in the glorious days of Nasr b. Ahmad. It was increasingly difficult to control both the Iranian warlords and the Turkish slave-soldiers on whom the military strength of the dynasty rested. The traditional relationship with the Abbasid caliphate was profoundly altered by the Buyid conquest of Baghdad in 955, and the fiction that the Buyids were somehow vassals of the Samanids was no longer tenable. The Hanafi and Shâfi'i Islam favored by the Samanid élite was challenged on one side by Karrâmi fundamentalism and on the other by Ismaili heterodoxy and other forms of Shi'i esotericism. One way to confront this would be through the promulgation of a uniform, official version of history like Bal'ami's and the suppression of those like Tabari's conducive to alternative and competing visions of history.

Of course, it was not just the content of the text that needed modification; the salient point here is that the language of the text also needed to be changed. Both Bal'ami's preface and the preface to its counterpart, the translation of the *Tafsir*, emphasize the appropriateness and desirability, perhaps the necessity, of the use of Dari Persian, even for purposes of religious instruction. The desire for

15 Yarshater, "Iranian national history," p. 369.

stability in a multi-ethnic state like that of the Samanids required perhaps above all an insistence on language as a unifying bond, and the conscious promotion of Persian as a literary language served that need. It is also possible to detect a social as well as political dynamic to this sudden emphasis on Persian as a vehicle for scholarly prose. Luke Treadwell, for example, has noted the apparent rivalry within the Samanid élite between nativists, who wanted Persian to have the status of an official language, and immigrants or other non-Persian speakers, who preferred Arabic as a way of evening out the competition to enter the élite.[16] At the same time, the use of Persian as the official language of the government—the contentious debate over whether to use Arabic or Persian continued on into Ghaznavid times, with several reversals of policy along the way—would also have had implications for foreign policy: The use of Arabic helped continue the convenient fiction that the Samanid policy was part of a commonwealth still centered on the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. The use of Persian staked out a separate and independent identity for the Samanids that differentiated them from the Buyids, whose high culture continued to be composed almost exclusively in Arabic, and it emphasized the new nature of the Samanid relationship with the caliphate.

The Arabic word *ta'rikh*, a generic term for 'history,' literally refers to dating and chronology. Both Tabari and Bal'ami begin their works with a discussion of subjects highly relevant to the philosophy of this process—cosmology, creation, the nature of time, and eschatology—but do so in ways that are quite different in tone and content. Most of Tabari's discussion of cosmology, the order of creation, and the period before the Day of Judgment is jettisoned in Bal'ami. Moreover, Bal'ami inserts a discourse on the "duration of the world," which he explicitly notes is not found in Tabari but drawn from the works of "astronomers" and Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato as well as the *Shahname* of Ebn-al-Moqaffa' and traditions reported by Wahb b. Monabbeh. He also makes very clear the underlying concern in treating this topic:

16 W.L. Treadwell, "The Political History of the Sāmānid State" (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford, 1991), pp. 173–80.

> We have reported these words before beginning the text, so that it may be known that apart from God no one has knowledge of the date of the judgment day. As for what Mohammad b. Jarir says, we will present it after this [preamble].[17]

Apocalyptic speculations about the imminent end of the world were widespread at the time, and it is likely that these anxieties helped fuel interest in esoteric religious doctrines such as those being propagated by the Ismailis. Bal'ami wanted to debunk the idea that anyone, even a Prophet or Imam, had any genuine knowledge about these matters, while there is good reason to think that Tabari believed the end of the world was imminent—perhaps one of the "deficiencies" that needed removing from his text.

Turning to pre-Islamic history, both Tabari and Bal'ami attempted to integrate the information about the sequence of Iranian kings preserved in the 'national history' with the stories of the prophets found in the Abrahamic religions. This could be done by identifying a figure from one tradition with that in the other or by comparative chronology, although both approaches presented difficulties. The Iranian tradition, for example, had no flood story to mark off an antediluvian age, and it was debated whether Kayumarth was identical to Adam or if Adam and Eve should rather be identified with Mashyâ and Mashyânâ. Tabari and Bal'ami each attempt to intersperse the histories of individuals from each tradition and both follow the same basic chronological sequence. Nonetheless, Bal'ami's account, especially of the Iranian kings, is hardly identical to Tabari's. Although Tabari is scrupulous about citing Muslim authorities, he tends to be rather vague about his sources for ancient Iranian history, usually referring just to "Persian scholars" or "the Magians." Bal'ami consulted a broader range of sources about ancient Iran, written and oral, in order to emend Tabari's text. He mentions not only the *Shahname* of Ebn-al-Moqaffa' but works by Mohammad b. Jahm Barmaki, Hâshem b. Qâsem Esfahâni, Zâduyah b. Shâhuyah, Bahrâm b. Mehrân Esfahâni, Musâ b. Isâ Khosravi, and the Mobad-e Mobadân Farrokhân. The two most noticeable places where Bal'ami's account diverges from Tabari's are in his ac-

17 Bal'ami, ed. Bahâr, p. 18.

counts of Kayumarth and Bahrâm Chubin. Bal'ami's depiction of Kayumarth is entirely different and much expanded from Tabari's, and he tells us that it was derived from the traditions preserved by the dehqâns. His much more extensive material on Bahrâm Chubin probably comes from some lost *Bahrâm Chubin-nâme*[18] (or conceivably again from the oral traditions of the dehqâns) and might be explained by the fact that the Samanids claimed Bahrâm Chubin as their ancestor. But there are also many other smaller but telling differences in the handling of ancient Iranian history between Tabari and Bal'ami. Bal'ami, for example, has been accused of being more ready to include incredible stories drawn from legend and myth. Yet there is far less of that in his account of Jamshid than in Tabari's. Instead, he gives a more detailed description of the creation of the four classes and adds the advice given to Jamshid on how a ruler can avoid losing his throne: "Be just and treat people well and protect the oppressed from the oppressor."[19] Both changes are good examples of how Bal'ami's handling of the material reflects the conception of history as the expression of the "national and moral ideals" described by Yarshater.

The second major section of Bal'ami's history, like Tabari's, is a detailed account of the life of the Prophet Mohammad. Since this material was relatively fixed by the author's time and not very malleable, one does not find nor should one expect to find much difference here apart from the cosmetic changes necessary to produce a more flowing and readable narrative. Most disagreements between the two accounts are over apparently minor points such as the number of Emigrants to Abyssinia. Even so, it is obvious that Bal'ami did engage in some critical filtering of what Tabari had written. In one place, for example, he objects quite vigorously to what Tabari had written on a very minor detail as something incompatible with the dignity of prophethood:

18 Such works are known to have been in circulation; see Ebn Nadim, *Fehrest*, tr. B. Dodge as *The Fihrist of al-Nadim* (New York, 1970), p. 716.

19 Bal'ami, ed. Bahâr, p. 131; tr. Zotenberg, I, p. 103 (the last part of the phrase is found in manuscripts used by Zotenberg but not Bahâr).

> Mohammad b. Jarir reports a story that is unbelievable. He says: "When Mohammad arrived in Medina, he had a mosque constructed on a plot that he had bought between a date grove and a cemetery. He had the trees cut down and the bodies taken out of their graves, and then he had it built." But that cannot be; it is an unheard of action, and one must not believe such a thing about a prophet. Although those dead people were infidels, a place of worship is still not important enough to take corpses from their graves and destroy a cultivated field. Intelligent people reject such stories.[20]

The report does indeed appear in Tabari's account, based on the authority of none other than the celebrated traditionist Anas b. Mâlek.[21] For Bal'ami (assuming that it was he who wrote this passage) thus to say that "intelligent people reject such stories" is quite startling; coupled with his instructions to excise esnâds from this history (and remembering that the same approach was taken by the translators of Tabari's *Tafsir*), it could even be read as an implicit criticism of the influence of the *ahl-al-hadith*.

The third section, on the history of the caliphate, is well within what could be called an orthodox (*sonni-jamâ'i*) interpretation; the surprising element is rather Bal'ami's apparent perception that at least parts of Tabari's text were outside that tradition. This is very noticeable, for example, in his positive assessment of Abu-Bakr and Omar, where he accuses Tabari of claiming that Zeyd converted before Abu-Bakr—a report that Bal'ami says has "no foundation" and "is contradicted by all the traditionists and all the believers"—and of failing to give due attention to the conversion of Omar.[22] Bal'ami also provides a generally favorable account of Umayyad history, emphasizing the history of their conquests and their administration of Khorasan; in this regard he is much better informed than Tabari about campaigns in Armenia and against the Khazars (perhaps because his own ancestors are reputed to have been involved in those operations). Not everything, however, fits the orthodox establishment pattern; one anomaly is his account of

20 Bal'ami, tr. Zotenberg, II, p. 449 (cf. Bal'ami, ed. Rowshan, pp. 339–40).
21 Tabari, I, pp. 1259–60.
22 Bal'ami, tr. Zotenberg, I, pp. 400–1 (but cf. Bal'ami, ed. Rowshan, I, pp. 36–40); and ed. Rowshan, I, pp. 40–42.

Hasan b. Ali, which explicitly accuses Mo'âviye of conspiring to have him poisoned. This may be an interpolation by a later hand, but there are other places too where one finds a philo-Alid tone.

In contrast, Bal'ami's treatment of the Abbasids is highly ambivalent. The treacherous murder of Abu-Moslem, architect of the Abbasid Revolution, is of course one of his major concerns, as is the equally tragic treatment of the Barmakids by Hârun-al-Rashid. He gives an unflattering picture of the deceit and cowardice of Mansur and, to a much greater degree than Tabari, indicates there was widespread support in Khorasan for the Shi'i rebellion of Mohammad b. Ali against that caliph. The most striking departure from Tabari's text, however, is in a longish chapter Bal'ami adds on the history of the Zendiqs during the reigns of al-Mahdi and al-Hâdi.[23] It is quite detailed, if of questionable historicity, and Bal'ami is the earliest source known to have made the allegation that the Zendiqs were engaged in a project to diminish the status of the Qor'an by trying, and naturally failing, to prove that humans could compose a text of comparable literary quality. Bal'ami is also very explicit about the participants in the heresy (*zandaqe*), naming intellectuals like Ebn-al-Moqaffa' (although he himself had no qualms earlier about using that writer as an authority on ancient Iranian history) and even members of the Abbasid family. It is impossible to know whether this material was original with Bal'ami or lifted from some now lost text, but one may certainly guess why he chose to include it. The parallels with stories of the spread of Ismailism at the Samanid court are striking, both in terms of the stature of the participants and the blossoming of the conspiracy—and we know that the enemies of the Samanid Ismailis called them Zendiqs too.

One final point derived from a comparison of the so-called 'translation' with the 'original' (that is, the modern edition of Tabari) is that the text of Tabari known to Bal'ami appears at points to have been quite different from that of versions known today. For example, Bal'ami explicitly chastises Tabari for not discussing the Battle of Badr in detail, which he sees as a critically important event,[24] yet

23 Bal'ami, ed. Rowshan, II, pp. 1171–76.
24 Bal'ami, ed. Rowshan, I, p. 106.

the extant version of Tabari includes a very lengthy account of this battle that is not particularly different from that given by Bal'ami. In other cases, he suggests Tabari wrote something not found in the version of the text known to us, or something that varies from it considerably. Whether this is because the Samanids had somehow acquired a defective or preliminary or redacted version of the text, or whether Tabari's Arabic text has itself been extensively modified in the course of transmission, are open questions.

2. Other Arabic to Persian Translations

A number of other Arabic to Persian translations of historical literature were made during the period under consideration here. Several such translations are listed in bibliographical sources, but most are still in manuscript and have never been studied to determine what historiographical significance, if any, they might have. Three have been published and are worth discussing briefly.

The most important is the translation of a history of Bukhara.[25] The original Arabic text was written by Abu-Bakr Mohammad b. Ja'far Narshakhi, about whom practically nothing is known, for the Samanid amir Nuh b. Nasr in 943.[26] That Arabic text has been lost. The surviving Persian 'translation' has its own complicated history of transmission, partly described in the text and now sorted out by R. N. Frye.[27] The initial translation was done around 1128 by Abu-Nasr Ahmad b. Mohammad Qobavi. Qobavi is quite candid about his rationale for making this translation, and there is no particular reason to doubt him: By his time, not many people had any desire to read a book in Arabic, and some of his friends, who apparently did have an inclination to read history, prevailed upon him to translate Narshakhi's book into Persian.[28] Qobavi's translation

25 Narshakhi, *Târikh-e Bokhârâ*, ed. M. Razavi (Tehran, 1984); tr. R. N. Frye as *The History of Bukhara* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954).
26 Frye, tr., pp. xvii–xviii, notes 9 and 10.
27 Frye, tr., p. xii.
28 Narshakhi, ed. Razavi, p. 4; tr. Frye, pp. 3–4.

was itself abridged and modified half a century later (ca. 1178) by Mohammad b. Zofar, in his case rather obviously in an attempt to curry favor with a Hanafi official serving as governor of Bukhara, whom he extols in a flood of honorific titles. His abridgment must have then been emended or redacted yet again by a hand or hands unknown as the extant version of the text contains some references to events of the Mongol era.

The 'histories' of cities from the period under consideration here, and mostly written in Arabic, actually tended to be biographical dictionaries of the urban élite, mostly religious scholars, with perhaps a brief historical sketch and description of the merits of the city by way of a preface.[29] That may well have been the case with Narshakhi's Arabic text too: Qobavi describes it as having an account (*dhekr*) of Bukhara, its excellent qualities, the products of the city and its dependent villages, and hadiths about its virtues, and he complains that mentioning all the ulama of Bukhara would take many volumes.[30] If so, all that is left of the biographical section are some brief notices of people who served as qadi of Bukhara. Qobavi also freely admits that he did not translate "useless" and "wearisome" things found in the Arabic,[31] so it is possible that the relatively brief Persian *Târikh-e Bokhârâ* is essentially an abridged version of the preface to the original Arabic text. On the other hand, Qobavi (and others) modified the text by adding material from other sources to it. The result of all this is that the *Târikh-e Bokhârâ*, unlike most of the other city-histories in Arabic or Persian, really does read like the history of a city.

Whatever the problems of its textual transmission may be, it is fascinating reading, tracing the history of the city from its foundation through the building of its citadel, the rule of the Bokhârkhodâhs, the Muslim conquest and caliphal period, to the Samanid period. Interspersed with the historical survey are digressions on

29 There were, of course, some exceptions: Azdi's *Ta'rikh al-Mowsel* was a genuine annalistic history of Mosul, and if the late Persian translation of the *Târikh-e Qom* is any indication of what the now lost Arabic original was like, it was also a richly detailed history of that city.

30 Narshakhi, ed. Razavi, p. 7; tr. Frye, p. 6.

31 Narshakhi, ed. Razavi, p. 4; tr. Frye, p. 4.

subjects such as the famous buildings, products, and coinage of the city, as well as vivid descriptions of events of local significance such as the revolts of Sharik b. Sheykh and Moqanna'. Much of the information, geographical and historical, is found in no other extant source.

An Arabic to Persian translation was also made of Otbi's celebrated history of the Ghaznavids, by Abu'l-Sharaf Nâseh b. Zafar Monshi Jorbâdhqâni, in 1206.[32] It would perhaps not be overly harsh to describe Jorbâdhqâni as an obscure bureaucrat in the service of a minor official of the petty vassal of the last prince of an extinct dynasty. He was at first a scribe at the court of one of the Saljuq cadet princes in the west, Toghrel b. Arslân, who was killed in 1194 when he dared to contest the authority of the Khʷârazmshâh over Rayy. Then, in an attempt to gain employment at the court of Ologh Bârbak Aybeh (Ay Aba), commander of Farrazin, a fortress between Hamadan and Isfahan, Jorbâdhqâni decided to present him with a historical composition so that "at times of leisure and hours of privacy, he might receive recreation from hearing it, and might derive example from the vicissitudes of circumstances and the changes of the eminent."[33]

For encouragement and guidance in this project, Jorbâdhqâni sought the advice of Ologh Bârbak's 'vizier,' Abu'l-Qâsem b. Mohammad b. Abi-Hanife. Abu'l-Qâsem recommended that he make a translation of Otbi's *al-Ta'rikh al-Yamini*, a "useful book" and "not too bulky" (*ketâb-i mofid ast va bâ qellat-e ajzâ va kheffat-e hajm*).[34] One might almost take that as a joke, since Otbi's history is one of the most notoriously difficult to read and controversial to interpret of all the classical Arabic historical texts.[35] Still, the idea is not quite as out of place as it might seem. The main subject of

32 Jorfâdqâni [sic], *Tarjoma-ye Târikh-e Yamini*, ed. Ja'far She'âr (Tehran, 1966), p. 10; tr. James Reynolds as *The Kitab-i-Yamini* (London, 1858).

33 Jorfâdqâni, ed. She'âr, p. 7; follow tr. Reynolds, p. 10.

34 Jorfâdqâni, ed. She'âr, p. 8.

35 Abu-Nasr Otbi, *al-Ta'rikh al-Yamini*, ed. in margins of commentary by Ahmad Manini, *al-Fath al-wahbi* (2 vols., Cairo, 1869); on interpretations of the text see Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 137 n. 9; Ali Anooshahr, "'Utbi and the Ghaznavids at the foot of the mountain," *Iranian Studies* 38 (2005), pp. 271–91, and Chapter 1.

al-Ta'rikh al-Yamini, the troubled end of the Samanid dynasty and the stellar rise of the Ghaznavid sultans from their background as slave soldiers, was quite appropriate to the times in which Jorbâdhqâni lived, certainly in regards to troubled times and perhaps to wistful yearning for a new Mahmud to emerge. The project also had moral and practical justification. Abu'l-Qâsem pointed out that such a book would at least serve as a reminder that, no matter how great a ruler's power might be, one day nothing would remain of potentates "except their good name, their virtues, their generous acts, their examples, and their mercy," and in that way might inspire the ruler to such deeds.[36] It would also illustrate the importance of patronizing historical scholarship since the historian, for a few coins worth of paper and ink, could guarantee that the fame of a dynasty would endure.[37]

Another piece of advice Abu'l-Qâsem gave Jorbâdhqâni was that he should translate the book into an appropriate Persian that could be understood by Turk and Tajik alike. Thus, when Abu'l-Qâsem presented his work to the ruler he "might act as father to the bride and make the unsalable goods of this stock [i.e., the impenetrable Arabic of the original] pass freely with the Amir."[38] Jorbâdhqâni effectively ignored this commendable advice. Although he professed that the "barbarian language" (*loghat-e ajam*) offered few opportunities for elegance, that Persian could not possibly capture the "lawful magic" (*sehr halâl*) of Otbi's Arabic prose, and that one would blush in shame upon comparing his Persian translation with its deficiencies against the Arabic original,[39] his work is almost entirely an exercise in rhetorical imitation.[40] He strove to duplicate the linguistic sophistication of the *Yamini*'s rhymed prose and rhetorical flourishes, probably as much to show off his understanding of the Arabic original as his mastery of Persian. Both the historical and the literary merits of Jorbâdhqâni's translation, as indeed of

36 Jorfâdqâni, ed. She'âr, p. 8; following tr. Reynolds, p. 11.
37 Jorfâdqâni, ed. She'âr, p. 9.
38 Jorfâdqâni, ed. She'âr, p. 8; following in part Reynolds, pp. 10–11.
39 Jorfâdqâni, ed. She'âr, p. 10; tr. Reynolds, pp. 10–11.
40 See Theodore Nöldeke in *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie* (1857), pp. 15–102; Browne, *Literary History* II, p. 472.

Otbi's original Arabic text, are debatable. In terms of providing concrete, useful information as a source, it has some value but not nearly as much as one would desire. Jorbâdhqâni tinkered freely with the content of Otbi's history but added little if anything of demonstrable historical value to it, apart from the scraps of information it provides in the preface and a short appendix about his own time.[41] As literature, the text has its defenders;[42] it may indeed be the Persian peer of Otbi's philological wizardry in terms of excessive flattery, multiple metaphors, hyperbole, and other flights of rhetorical fancy.

Lastly, there is a partial Persian translation of Abu Mohammad Ahmad Ebn-A'tham Kufi's *Ketâb-al-fotuh*. As was the case with the works of Tabari and Bal'ami, the Arabic text has been preserved in only a few, mostly defective, manuscripts, while there are numerous copies of the Persian translation. Lithographs of the translation were published as early as 1887 in Bombay and then elsewhere (and there is now a critical printed edition of it.[43]) Consequently, the work was for long much better known both to Muslim audiences and Western scholars through the Persian translation rather than the Arabic original, and this has led to a somewhat distorted view of the significance of both texts. Discovery of a major manuscript of the *Fotuh* in Istanbul, followed by the recent publication of an edition of the text,[44] has renewed interest in this work, and it is now possible to make a better evaluation of the Persian translation with the Arabic original.

Ebn-A'tham apparently lived in the early 9th century: The Persian translation claims he wrote his work in 819, and the Arabic text uses sources consistent with that dating. Yâqut, one of the few classical authorities to mention Ebn-A'tham, described him as a Shi'ite and an unreliable transmitter of traditions who wrote a history going down to the time of Hârun-al-Rashid, with some kind of continuation to the death of al-Moqtader (932). The Arabic text as it has come down to us indeed has a pronounced Shi'ite, quite

41 Cf. Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 259–62.
42 Notably ibid., p. 268.
43 *al-Fotuh*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i Majd (Tehran, 1993).
44 Ebn-A'tham Kufi, *Ketâb-al-fotuh* (8 vols., Haidarabad, 1968–75).

probably Kaysani or Hâshemi, character. This is no doubt why the Arabic work, despite its early date, was rarely mentioned by other historians. It may, however, have been more widely appreciated in the Islamic East: It is almost certainly the *Fotuh* mentioned by Bal'ami as one of the sources he used to supplement Tabari (the two are very similar, for example, in their treatment of the conquests in Armenia and the Caucasus).

The Persian translation was begun around 1200 by one Mohammad b. Ahmad Mostowfi Haravi at the request of an unnamed 'vizier.' This vizier is styled, among other titles, *eftekhâr-e akâber-e Khʷârazm o Khorâsân* and so, from the date and locale, would appear to have been an official of the Khʷârazmshâh Alâ'-al-Din Mohammad.[45] One can only speculate as to why a Khʷârazmian official would have had any interest in sponsoring a translation of this particular work: It may have been because Ebn-A'tham had a detailed interest in the history of Khorasan (in the Arabic text, that is, as this is completely missing in the Persian translation), or perhaps because its pro-Alid aspects were thought useful for Alâ'-al-Din's anti-caliphal policies.

Mohammad Mostowfi supposedly died after finishing only part of the translation, specifically the portions on the caliphate of Abu-Bakr. The work must thus have been finished at some point, probably much later, by another translator or translators, as it continues on to the aftermath of the Battle of Karbalâ and death of Imam Hoseyn. According to one manuscript, the continuator was an obscure individual named Mohammad b. Ahmad Mâbarnâbâdi.[46]

Although clearly based on Ebn-A'tham's work, the Persian translation differs from it in several respects. The main Arabic manuscript begins not with Abu-Bakr but with the revolt against Othman. Some, but not all, of the material in the Persian translation on the earlier period is found in other Arabic manuscripts (which may well be retranslations into Arabic from the Persian); numerous passages are found only in the Persian text. On the other hand, the Persian translation, by ending with the aftermath of the

45 Storey, *Bio-Bibliographical Survey* I/1, pp. 207–9.
46 Bodleian 124, *apud* Storey, *Bio-Bibliographical Survey* I/1, p. 208.

Battle of Karbalâ, is also a greatly truncated version of the Arabic text, omitting virtually all of its quite extensive and valuable treatment of Umayyad and Abbasid history. The translation thus seems to be an effort, probably completed at a much later date than the period covered in this chapter, to tailor the work to the interests of a specifically Shi'ite Persian audience.

3. Gardizi and the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*

About a century after the composition of Bal'ami's *Târikh*, original works of history in Persian began to appear, the earliest extant example being the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr* by Abd-al-Hayy Gardizi.[47] Nothing is known about Gardizi beyond what little can be deduced from incidental remarks in his work; no other sources mention him, and no subsequent writers seem to have made any use of his book. The text gives the full name of the author as Abu-Sa'id Abd-al-Hayy b. al-Zahhâk b. Mahmud Gardizi,[48] and he was presumably a native or inhabitant of the city of Gardiz. He had obviously served as an official under the command of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (reg. 998–1030), since he states that he was an eyewitness to many of the outstanding events of the reign of that ruler.[49] He was also still active as late as the time of Sultan Abd-al-Rashid b. Mahmud (1049–52?), who was certainly the ruler at the time Gardizi was writing as he invokes praises and blessings upon him.[50] In addition to his involvement in governmental affairs, Gardizi also seems to have been at least slightly acquainted with the celebrated scholar Abu-Reyhân Biruni (ca. 973–1050); he states that he "heard" certain information from Biruni,[51] and the influence of Biruni's work on his own is indeed quite apparent.

47 Gardizi, *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, ed. Abd-al-Hayy Habibi (Tehran, 1984).
48 Ibid., p. 173.
49 Ibid., p. 174.
50 Ibid., p. 174.
51 Ibid., p. 210.

The text of the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, at least in the form of the two late and defective manuscripts of it that have come down to us, is divided into nineteen sections. The first five are called *tabaqe*s, 'groups' (or, perhaps better, 'cycles'); the remaining fourteen are called *bâb*s, 'chapters.' Whether this system is the author's own or are merely additions by a later copyist is uncertain. They correspond only awkwardly to the actual divisions of the text. The five tabaqes are devoted to the corresponding five cycles of the ancient Iranian kings, which Gardizi refers to as the *akhbâr-e ajam*. For the most part, his treatment of this pre-Islamic history of Iran is a concise and unremarkable summary of the 'Iranian national history' found in the more extensive works of other authors such as Bal'ami, Ferdowsi, or Tha'âlebi. He gives a prosaic sketch of the Pishdadian and Kayanian kings (beginning with Tahmurath; part of the text is obviously missing at the beginning). His account of the 'regional kings' (*moluk-e tavâ'ef*) is even more terse; only Alexander is discussed at any length (a subject to which he returns in even more detail later in the text). Interestingly, he does not regard the Sasanid period as a unity but divides its rulers into two tabaqes, the Sasanid and the Akâsere (beginning with Khosrow Anushirvân), a division often found in manuscripts of the *Shahname*. His conception of history is thus clearly cyclical but not purely dynastic; the pattern seems rather to be periods of strong rule interrupted by phases of weakness and disintegration. Unlike Bal'ami, Gardizi makes no effort to integrate the history of the ancient Iranian kings with that of the Biblical and Qor'anic prophets.

Gardizi then turns to the "history of the caliphs and kings of Islam," beginning with a chapter containing charts (*jadval*), one of information about Mohammad (his uncles, aunts, wives, in-laws, mounts, battles, etc.) and one on rulers from Abu-Bakr to Marwân b. Mohammad (names and honorifics, their officials, dates, etc.). These tabular charts are a recurrent feature of the text and might be ascribed to the bureaucratic and utilitarian mindset of the author (or perhaps to the example set by his mentor Biruni, who was also quite fond of such devices). His subsequent account of Islamic history is lumped together in one 'chapter' but actually consists of several different sections set off by summary charts: the

early caliphs, the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the governors of Khorasan. Gardizi's history of the caliphate again tends to be concise and selective. It is marked by a particularly obvious animus towards the Umayyads, who are barely mentioned in the narrative and are presumably the rulers Gardizi has in mind when he says "kings of Islam." He refers blandly to the "period of the rule of the Banu Omayye" (*ruzgâr-e velâyat-e banu Omayye* [sic])[52] as opposed to the rather grandiose "caliphate and empire of the Abbasids" (*khelâfat va dowlat-e bani Abbâs*). The listing of the governors of Khorasan, which includes the Taherids, Samanids, and Ghaznavids as well as all the earlier governors, is the most detailed and historically significant section of the text. The chapter ends rather abruptly with an account of the reign of Sultan Abu'l-Fath Mowdud (reg. 1041–50); since Gardizi had made plain his intention to write about his successor Abd-al-Rashid, either part of the text has been lost or it was not finished.

Most modern critics find the historical sections of Gardizi's narrative to be rather dry and overly concise reports of events during the reigns of various rulers.[53] However, it should be remembered that this was most likely his intention; conciseness and utility, not comprehensiveness, was a goal more likely to fit the needs of his potential readership among the bureaucratic and military élites of the time. Although the main preface to the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, which might have explained Gardizi's purpose, is missing from the text, there is a passage, found after his account of the last Samanid ruler, which is relevant to this issue. There, Gardizi indicates that having finished with the history of earlier rulers, he set out to write a history of Mahmud and the Ghaznavids "in a concise and abbreviated fashion" (*bar tariq-e ijâz va ekhtesâr*) based on things he had read, things he had been told, and things he had himself seen. He also wanted to select that information which was best and most interesting (*khoshtar va ajabtar*) and, as far as he could, to present it in condensed form (*va har chand keh betavânastam mokhtasar*

52 Gardizi, p. 56.

53 Muhammad Nāzim, *The Life and Times of Sultān Maḥmūd of Ghazna* (2nd edition; New Delhi, 1971), p. 6; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 69.

kardam).[54] This would thus seem to be his general method throughout the text.

The remaining chapters (eight to nineteen), about a third of the text, deal with various matters related to comparative chronology and the culture and ethnology of Muslim and non-Muslim peoples. It is in these chapters that the influence of Gardizi's association with Biruni is obvious, but they are also typical of a tradition that was apparently deeply rooted in the chanceries of the eastern Iranian dynasties. As early as the time of Ebn-Farighun, reportedly a student of Abu-Zeyd Balkhi (d. 934), this tradition emphasized that secretaries (*kottâb*) must be familiar with the chronologies of the "three nations" (Persians, Greeks, and Muslims) and that history was really a type of "wisdom" (*hekme*) derived from the study of famous and unusual events and personalities.[55] Gardizi himself stresses how this approach was put into practice by the great Samanid minister Abu-Abd-Allâh Jeyhâni.[56] Gardizi's own work essentially follows Ebn-Farighun's model and is marked by a utilitarian character.

The work concludes with a section on ethnology, i.e. the customs and ancestry (*ma'âref va ansâb*) of the Turks (among whom he includes some non-Turkish Eurasian peoples), the Greeks (where he provides another rather lengthy account of Alexander), and the Indians. Some of his information is derived from the classical Arabic geographers (particularly Ebn-Rosteh and Ebn-Khorradâdhbeh) and Biruni (for the Indian material), but his account of the Turks, long recognized as one of the most significant sections of the text, seems to be based primarily on personal knowledge and observation.[57]

One rather curious and as yet unexplained aspect of the text as a whole is the amount of material in it that could be regarded as quasi-Shi'i in orientation. Gardizi's extreme disdain for the Omayy-

54 Gardizi, pp. 173–74.

55 See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (2nd ed., Leiden, 1968), p. 52

56 Gardizi, p. 150.

57 See Arsenio Martinez, "Gardizi's two chapters on the Turks," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982), pp. 109–217.

ads, whom he clearly does not regard as legitimate caliphs, has already been noted. He includes Hasan as the successor to Ali, in effect extending the number of rightly guided caliphs to five. In his list of Muslim "holidays," he includes Tâsu'â and Âshurâ; the martyrdom of Zeyd b. Ali; the birthdays of Ali, Fâteme, and Hoseyn; Ali's assassination; the death of Ali b. Musâ-al-Rezâ; the marriage of Ali and Fâteme; and even Ghadir Khomm (though the explanation of its significance is either missing or has been expunged from the extant text). It seems most unlikely that a Ghaznavid official like Gardizi would have actually been a Shi'i in the sectarian sense; it may be that he simply expressed the philo-Alid sentiments common in the Islamic East. In any case, he also includes material more compatible with orthodox sentiment on events such as the death of Abu-Bakr, the assassination of Omar, or the murder of Othman by what he calls the "rabble" (*gowgâ'*).[58]

The two threads that really tie together the seemingly disparate parts of the *Zeyn-al-akbar* are the author's interest in a very particular geographical region and his attachment to the Ghaznavid dynasty. Gardizi refers over forty times to what he calls *Irân* or *Irânshahr*. He does not precisely define what he means by these terms, but it certainly constituted for him a real geographical and cultural entity that could be distinguished from the lands of the Greeks (*Rum*) or Turks (for him, *Turân*). In fact, Gardizi's own interests are unabashedly in the history of Khorasan as the heart of Iran.

This is also largely contiguous with the areas that came to be ruled by the Ghaznavids at their peak, and Gardizi's enthusiasm for that dynasty, and especially for Sultan Mahmud, is equally apparent. They are not really presented as just additions to a line of governors. Gardizi repeatedly emphasizes that Mahmud was invested with administrative and military authority over Khorasan by the Caliph al-Qâder; he not only calls him amir but sultan and *pâdshâh*.[59] Indeed, the main divisional break in the text that can unequivocally be attributed to the author is the one that precedes the

58 Gardizi, p. 54.
59 Ibid., p. 175.

reign of Mahmud. All prior history is in a sense the prelude to this event, which constitutes for him the virtual pinnacle of history:

> Now that I have finished the history and chronologies of the prophets, kings, Kayanids,[60] Persian kings, caliphs of Islam, and governors of Khorasan, I begin to relate the history of Yamin-al-Dowle, may God have mercy on him …[61]

When Gardizi invokes blessings on Abd-al-Rashid b. Mahmud and prays that his reign will be extended, his banners triumphant, and his enemies defeated, it is hard to doubt his sincerity. His concern is perfectly understandable when one remembers that he had personally witnessed both Ghaznavid triumphs in India and Central Asia as well as the humiliation by the Saljuqs at Dandânqân. In sum, it can be argued that Gardizi really conceived of the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr* as a work in three parts: an account of the history that led up to the establishment of Ghaznavid rule, the history of the great events of the Ghaznavid era down to his own time, and an account of the peoples, cultures, and customs relevant to the Ghaznavid experience.

Finally, it should be recognized that many sections of his book are of considerable significance. He had clearly read quite widely and incorporated material from a variety of other works into his own. Some of his sources are familiar and still accessible to us today. Of others that are lost, one, as noted by Barthold, was certainly the celebrated history of Khorasan by Sallâmi.[62] He also quotes from an otherwise unknown *Ketâb-e tavârikh* by Jeyhâni, and describes how a manual on irrigation law, the *Ketâb-al-quni*, was prepared for Abd-Allâh b. Tâher.[63] Just as important for modern historical research are those parts of the *Zeyn-al-akhbâr* that reflect Gardizi's own experience of the events he records, and of the culture of the Turks.

60 The word is unclear in the manuscript and was read *k-l-anian* by the editor; from the context, however, it must be Kayanian, which matches the actual sequence of sections in the text (and suggests that an earlier section on the 'prophets' may be missing).

61 Gardizi, p. 175.

62 W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* (4th ed., London, 1977), pp. 20–21.

63 Gardizi, pp. 286, 137.

4. Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi and his *Târikh*[64]

Abu'l-Fazl Mohammad b. Hoseyn Beyhaqi, according to the biographical notice of him given by his compatriot Ebn-Fondoq (see below), was born in 995 in the village of Hârethâbâd, a suburb of the town of Beyhaq (modern Sabzavâr), itself a dependency of the city of Nishapur. At some point, probably towards the middle of the reign of Sultan Mahmud (reg. 998–1030), he obtained a position in the Ghaznavid secretariat (*divân-e resâlat*). For some nineteen years, he was a protégé of Abu-Nasr Moshkân, the head of the office. After his mentor's death (ca. 1039), Beyhaqi had a clearly troubled relationship with the new head of the office, Abu-Sahl Zowzani. For a brief period under Sultan Abd-al-Rashid (1049–52), Beyhaqi himself became head of the secretariat, but was dismissed and jailed, ostensibly because of a legal charge against him but, according to his defenders, really because of the machinations of his enemies; his property was also confiscated. The overthrow of Abd-al-Rashid by the slave soldier Toghrel did nothing to relieve his misfortune as he was transferred to an even more secure prison. After Toghrel's fall in 1052, Beyhaqi was freed; he appears to have been on satisfactory terms with the new ruler, Farrokhzâd, but did not return to any official post. Most of his time must have been spent composing his history, and he was certainly working on it in 1059, as he himself frequently notes in the text. He also indicates that he had some kind of support for his effort as he composed it at the court.[65] Whether the work was completed or not before his death in 1077 is a matter of conjecture.

From his own comments, it is clear that Beyhaqi had formed the idea of writing a history well before his fall from favor and used his position in the secretariat as a way of preparing for it. The history is deeply colored by his experience in that office in at least two major ways. To appreciate them, it is important to recognize

64 Beyhaqi, *Târikh-e Beyhaqi*, ed. Ali-Akbar Fayyâz (Mashhad, 1971); see G.H. Yusofi, *EIr*, s.v. Bayhaqi, Abu'l-Fazl, and Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 79–108.

65 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 128–29.

that the Ghaznavid secretariat was not exactly an executive or even administrative bureau; it was more an adjunct to the court, responsible for composing and making copies of official orders, directives, and other correspondence. It did not make policy nor carry it out; it produced the documents that conveyed the ruler's wishes to the responsible party in the proper manner and style. This necessarily required close proximity to the ruler and consultations with him to determine precisely the message he wanted to convey; while also providing the scribes with an opportunity to advise the ruler and to influence his decisions. Beyhaqi's profession thus provided him with a historian's gold mine: He was in a position to listen to and gain insights from the innermost discussions of the government, which he apparently recorded on an almost daily basis in some kind of diary, as well as to make personal copies for his records of any official documents that came his way. His history is filled with many examples of these conversations and copies of documents (the latter in both Persian and Arabic). Second, Beyhaqi absorbed what can be called the *esprit de corps* of the scribal bureaucracy, which he expresses in his history through the person of his mentor Abu-Nasr. In its idealized form, the secretariat was an independent institution with an institutional memory that transcended the reign of any individual ruler. The head of the secretariat had a unique responsibility and freedom to speak frankly with the ruler, to persuade him to moderate his policies, to turn him away from injustice, to dissuade him of a mistaken decision. The history Beyhaqi produced is mostly a record of how well this structure performed, or did not perform, its duty. He does not disguise his scorn for mediocre secretaries whose technical skills were not up to his standards, nor for those who did not live up to the moral and ethical responsibilities of the institution.

The original text of Beyhaqi's history reportedly comprised thirty books covering the entire era from Seboktegin to Ebrâhim, down to the time of Beyhaqi's death. The books may have been arranged into volumes titled after the honorific of the ruler; the title of the whole series is not known for certain. Unfortunately, only a small part of Beyhaqi's history survives today. Apart from some fragments quoted in later works, the extant text preserves all or

part of only five of the thirty books; they are presented as annals, with year by year descriptions of events from 1030 to 1039. It is doubtful, however, that any other decade in medieval Islamic history has received a treatment as richly detailed as this: In a modern printed edition, it amounts to almost a thousand pages (the same period is covered by Gardizi, for example, in less than ten pages), and the original work in its entirety must have been enormous. The sheer bulk of the text, and the consequent trouble and expense of copying it, is probably the main reason so little has survived. Even in earlier times, it was difficult or impossible to find a copy of the whole work; Ebn-Fondoq could locate only a few of the books scattered among different libraries, and in the possession of various individuals.[66]

Beyhaqi was himself aware of how unusually long and detailed his history was and took pride in the fact that he wanted to explore every angle and hidden aspect (*zavâyâ va khabâyâ*) of his subject.[67] He made clear that he did not want to write a mere record of events, what would be dismissed today as *histoire événementielle*, but a deep, solid, "foundational" history (*târikh-pâye-i*).[68] By the same token, he professes he was not writing primarily for his contemporaries, who already knew the illustrious accomplishments of the Ghaznavid house; he wanted to create a monument that would endure "to the end of time" and from which future generations of "wise men" would be able to derive lessons and guidance. Yet one is left to wonder how he envisaged such an imposing work would be disseminated after his death, and it is certainly ironic that so little should be left of a work so consciously written for the ages. On the other hand, the reflective, contemplative, rather private and apologetic tone of much of it—no less than the brutal frankness of some of its observations—suggest that it was not intended to be a book with a wide circulation, especially during the lifetime of the author. That might also help explain why Beyhaqi chose to write it in Persian, while books of a more public and encomiastic nature,

66 Ebn-Fondoq, *Târikh-e Beyhaq*, ed. Ahmad Bahmanyâr (Tehran, 1929), p. 175.
67 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 11.
68 Ibid., p. 112.

such as the history of the Ghaznavids by Beyhaqi's near contemporary Otbi, were written in Arabic.

It is risky to evaluate a work of which only a small part is extant. But from the surviving portion, which happens to begin at the point where Beyhaqi felt his book took over from what its predecessors had covered, it is safe to conclude that his work is unusual in the whole of Persian and Islamic historiography, not only in its wealth of detail and documentary material, but in several of its literary characteristics. One of them is the extent to which the author is willing to insert his own persona into the narrative, either as observer or as commentator. He does so in ways that are sometimes innocuous, such as commenting that he was nineteen years old when he first saw some dignitary, or sometimes more pointed, such as praising or censuring the conduct of an individual. He also does not hesitate to refer, wryly or allusively, to how events he has described have affected him personally, as in his disingenuous assertion that he undertook writing the history so those who could have done it better could concentrate on the affairs of state assigned to them and to pre-empt those who would have done an inferior job from trying.[69] Indeed, in some ways, the work could be better described as memoir than as history.

Other authors tend to confine comments about their purpose and historical method to a few remarks in a preface; Beyhaqi makes them repeatedly and expansively throughout the text. To some extent, he shares the classical view of history as a way of memorializing events, but to preserve for future generations the moral lessons they teach rather than just to celebrate heroic personalities. He also accepts a cyclical view of history, not as the repetition of eras, but of parallel events from which one may deduce lessons about how to act to safeguard the state—or to advance one's career. Rather like Chinese historians with their theory of the mandate of heaven, he detects the will of God manifesting itself through the determination of who becomes ruler, and sees a direct correlation between the virtue of the ruler and the prosperity of the state.[70]

69 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 128–29.
70 Ibid., p. 115.

> Kingly power [is based on] subtle thought, a far-reaching grasp, military victories over enemies, and the administration of justice in accordance with the ordinances of God, be He exalted. The difference between divinely assisted and favored kings and a triumphal rebel (*khâreji*) is that one owes obedience to kings who are just, do good, and are virtuous in character and deed, and one recognizes their legitimacy. Those who are powerful (*motaghalleb*) but are oppressive and iniquitous ought to be considered outlaws, and jihad should be waged against them. This is the scale by which good and bad can be distinguished, and one knows of necessity to which of two people one owes obedience.[71]

Beyhaqi is also curiously modern—at least 19th-century modern—in his concept of history as an exact science with tools for determining the truth about events. In his famous "discourse" (*khotbe*) on history, found at the beginning of book ten,[72] he argues that history is the means by which humans satisfy their natural curiosity about the past and, in the process, increase their intellectual capacity to distinguish between good and bad, joy and sorrow. Such knowledge is useful, but it cannot be regarded as predictive since the future is known only to God. It is also commemorative, in that it keeps alive the story of past notables and remembrance of the historian himself. Historical knowledge can be acquired only by rigorous effort through traveling and making inquiries in order to obtain either oral reports from trustworthy informants or to consult appropriate written sources; in all cases, the historian must insist on the rationality and credibility of what is reported, and reject the fabulous and foolish. In his own case, Beyhaqi emphasizes that everything he reports is based on either his own eyewitness knowledge or material taken from sources of impeccable reliability.

Beyhaqi was a master of the supplementary anecdote (*hekâyat*). The profusion of these digressions chiefly accounts for the considerable bulk of the text. Most deal with incidents from Abbasid history or earlier periods of Ghaznavid or Samanid history, but

71 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 117. Cf. Marilyn Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative* (Columbus, Ohio, 1980), p. 155.

72 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 903–6; translated in Waldman, pp. 196–97.

occasionally they discuss other times or dynasties as well. Beyhaqi professes that these anecdotes were added to "adorn" the text and to make it more interesting to read, but they are also directly related to his historical philosophizing and moralizing. They are typically situated at a position in the narrative that suggests a close historical parallel and drives home a moral point: the struggle between the brothers Mohammad and Mas'ud over the succession to Sultan Mahmud is followed by anecdotes about the conflict between the brothers Amin and Ma'mun over the succession arrangements to Hârun-al-Rashid; the need of the king for reliable counselors is followed by an anecdote about the young Samanid Amir Nasr b. Ahmad turning to the vizier Bal'ami (father of the historian) and the secretary Mos'abi for help; mention of the arrest of Abu-Sahl is juxtaposed with a story about the supposed arrest and persecution of the Sasanid vizier Bozorgmehr by Anushirvân; the rising resentment over the presumptuousness of the general Asightegin Ghâzi leads to a story about the civilian élite having to defer to the successful Abbasid general Ashnâs (a curious mistake since Beyhaqi is actually referring to Afshin in this passage).[73]

Yet there are a number of puzzling features in the use of these anecdotes, which have just enough discordant elements in them to force one to ponder exactly what message they were really intended to convey. They also contain much fascinating detail, but Beyhaqi is vague about their source, usually referring just to some *Akhbâr-al-kholafâ'* or the like. The historical parallels are apt, perhaps, but not always exact: There was a civil war between the Abbasids Amin and Ma'mun, and Amin was killed; the army merely mutinied in favor of the Ghaznavid Mas'ud, and Mohammad was only imprisoned. The whole anecdote about Bozorgmehr is of dubious historicity, especially in the religious angle Beyhaqi gives it, and jarring in other respects: Given his manifest antipathy to Abu-Sahl, it can hardly be that Beyhaqi regards Bozorgmehr as his moral equivalent; moreover, the temporary arrest of Abu-Sahl was merely a sham to appease the ruler of Kh^{w}ârazm, not at all like the unjust imprisonment and persecution alleged to have been inflicted on Bozorgmehr.

73 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 11ff.; 126ff.; 425ff.; 168.

The motive behind the anecdotes thus does not seem to be drawing historical parallels of the sort that history repeats itself, but rather enhancing the force of Beyhaqi's ethical ideas—or, to put it more bluntly, the special status he wants accorded to the secretarial bureaucracy. For example, it is ultimately not reflection on the problem of succession disputes that leads to the first set of anecdotes mentioned above. They are meant to celebrate Mas'ud's decision to destroy certain secret and confidential letters turned over to him after Mahmud's death, in which the sultan complained about Mas'ud's "disobedience", and had indicated his desire to be succeeded by Mohammad. According to Beyhaqi, Mas'ud refused to succumb to the temptation to criticize the officials who had composed the letters, who were only doing what was required of them. He had the letters torn up and thrown into a canal, to the immense relief of the officials and bureaucrats implicated in them. Beyhaqi approved of this act of magnanimity, as "wise men" will see "how noble and praiseworthy the actions of this king were;" it is one of those things that show how sometimes "kings receive an inspiration from God" in what they do.[74] In the same vein, the subsequent anecdotes dwell not on the civil war, but rather on the reconciliation of the new caliph with members of the former regime. Beyhaqi claims that Ma'mun also rejected the advice of his vizier Hasan b. Sahl to punish supporters of Amin named in secret correspondence he had left behind.[75] Read closely, however, the story is less a testimonial to Ma'mun's magnanimity than to the persistence and subtlety of his *hâjeb*, Abd-Allâh b. Tâher, in preserving the institutional solidarity of the bureaucracy, and his willingness to reconcile with old rivals.

The anecdotes are quite effective in reinforcing Beyhaqi's view that a change of ruler should not be accompanied by purges as well as his belief that the actions of current rulers can be shaped for the good by reference to past events. Yet what they do not say can be just as suggestive as what they do say. In insisting that God makes king whomever He will, Beyhaqi glosses over other equally valid

74 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 30.
75 Ibid., p. 38.

ethical issues such as the acceptability of usurpation of power and ignoring or overturning the directives of the former ruler. The value of institutional solidarity and protecting the bureaucracy against reprisals, not absolute moral rectitude, seems to be what Beyhaqi is actually celebrating. Ironically, though, after all this praise of reconciliation and magnanimity, it is not long before we see just such purges and vendettas being carried out by Mas'ud's retainers against Mahmud's old guard.

In short, Beyhaqi's digressions and anecdotes raise some puzzling questions about his approach to history. Where exactly did he get all the detailed information—apart from the documentary material—he cites and just how reliable is it? How much has it been shaped to support his ethico-philosophical and political ideas? Can we take what he says at face value or is there a heavy tone of irony and even sarcasm in his comments? These are questions whose answers will necessarily affect one's reading of the entire text.

As for the central figure of these books, Mas'ud himself, Beyhaqi's attitude is to say the least enigmatic. He calls Mas'ud a great king (*pâdshâh-e bozorg*) and always adds the proper phrase of respect when mentioning him. He praises him for his beneficence, piety, religious zeal, courage, bravery, military prowess, pursuit of justice, and resistance to oppression. Mas'ud and Mahmud were greater than Alexander and Ardashir I, the only other monarchs who might rival them. Yet most readers of the text come away with a very unfavorable impression of Mas'ud, and the evidence of Beyhaqi underlies the extremely harsh assessment of Mas'ud given by modern historians like Barthold.[76] Indeed, as one reads more closely the subtext to the formal praise emerges. Beyhaqi notes the "many signs of weakness and decline" that had appeared twenty-nine years after Mahmud,[77] and the implication is that their roots went back to Mas'ud. Mahmud and Mas'ud were two shining suns in the firmament, but Mahmud's was the glow of dawn and Mas'ud's that of sunset.[78] Kings, Beyhaqi tells us, have a duty

76 Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 293.
77 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 137.
78 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 116.

above all others to know themselves, to recognize their faults and shortcomings, and to seek out sincere, honest, selfless councilors who will help keep them on the right course. And that, Beyhaqi never lets us forget, is precisely what Mas'ud did not do. In a sense, the whole history becomes a morality play in which we follow the downward spiral of a ruler who began so promisingly, and we are spared the tragic and inevitable end only because of the loss of that part of Beyhaqi's text.

It would be a mistake, however, to read the history as an indictment exclusively or even primarily of Mas'ud. Kings alone do not make history, and history is not just the record of their battles and exploits. Behind the world of the king and the official version of events is the world of bureaucracy and the complex of motives which drive it. Most of the other early Muslim historians could only speculate about such matters, but Beyhaqi was in a unique position to treat them with an insider's knowledge. He relentlessly lifts the veil that separates these two aspects of history, puts faces and names and personalities on the officials about whom we would otherwise be mostly ignorant, and exposes the extent to which their petty ambitions and rivalries and intrigues, so much at variance with the idealized version of the duty of the scribal institution professed by Beyhaqi, affect affairs of state (as, rather obviously, they had also affected his own career). Above all, he castigates the destructive competitiveness and vindictiveness of the scribes as they attempt to advance their careers, or to take advantage of their position to push their own agendas. The leading protagonist is Beyhaqi's mentor Abu-Nasr Moshkân, who is almost invariably depicted as a fount of wisdom and sound advice and good intention. Opposed to him is the man who had been closest to Mas'ud even before he became king, Abu-Sahl, who is identified as soon as he is introduced as a man who "treated people badly and was harsh, unpleasant, and full of spite."[79] Beyhaqi vows to say no more than this about his character, since he has passed away, and even pays tribute to his religious orthodoxy, but then proceeds to paint a scathing indictment of him. Unlike Abu-Nasr, Abu-Sahl does

79 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 27.

not use his influence to bring out the best in Mas'ud but to encourage and exploit his weakest traits. Instead of acting like a secretary, he presumes to act like a vizier, and the results are disastrous.

All in all, Beyhaqi created an unforgettable historical panorama, and he has been much admired for his skill as a historian, his artistry as a writer, and the humanism of his philosophy. Yet it has to be said that these three roles have different priorities, and it is not always clear where Beyhaqi the historian leaves off and Beyhaqi the creative artist or philosopher begins. The historical framework of his text is sound enough, but we deem the rest credible mostly because there is nothing available to contradict it. He certainly has biases that at least have the virtue of being conspicuous—his fondness of Abu-Nasr, his animus to Abu-Sahl, his attachment to Nishapur and the interests of its landed élite—as well as philosophical convictions he would hardly want to see undermined by historical reality. Was Abu-Nasr actually so saintly? Was Abu-Sahl truly so malevolent? Are the moral lessons of history always so tidy? There may be little reason, for example, to doubt Beyhaqi's facts surrounding the execution of Hasanak or his interpretation of the gap between the official reasons for his execution and the baser motives for what was in effect a judicial murder. But when Beyhaqi tells us that Hasanak's body, stripped for the execution, "was like white silver, and his face like a hundred thousand beauties," or when he repeats the gossip that Abu-Sahl gloated over Hasanak's head presented on a platter at a banquet the night of his execution (a story whose credibility is undermined by at least two other assertions in the narrative), we are more in the domain of poetry or hagiography than history.[80] Yet Beyhaqi is careful to mix good and bad in what he says about people, and he does not exempt himself

80 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, pp. 233, 235. The story of Hasanak has been discussed in detail, see Waldman, pp. 166–73; Homa Katouzian, "The execution of Amīr Hasanak the vazir: Some lessons for the historical sociology of Iran," in Charles Melville, ed., *Persian and Islamic Studies in Honour of P. W. Avery*, Pembroke Papers 1 (1990), pp. 73–88; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry* (rev. ed. London, 1991), pp. 141–45; J.S. Meisami, "History as literature," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 22–26, and see Chapter 1.

and his own troubled career from having shortcomings. Consequently, we may do best to give him the last word on this subject:

> I know what I have written, and I will bear witness to it on the Day of Judgment … May God preserve us and all Muslims from envy, defects, mistakes, and faults through His grace and favor.[81]

5. The *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*

Apart from Bal'ami's *Târikh* and, to a lesser degree, Gardizi's *Zeyn-al-akhbâr*, there is only one other extant specimen of an attempt to write a generalized (i.e., non-dynastic or local) history during the period under consideration here, a work entitled *Mojmal-al-tavârikh va'l-qesas*.[82] The exact authorship is obscure, but the text does contain a number of remarks relevant to the authorship and purpose of the book, and these have been comprehensively reviewed by Julie Meisami.[83]

The author mentions that he began writing the book in the year 1126, when Mahmud b. [Mohammad b.] Malekshâh was prince sultan (reg. 1118–31) and "crown prince of the two realms," a status he acquired after a treaty with Sanjar and marriage to one of his daughters.[84] That is the closest the text comes to a dedication and is one of several hints that the author was somehow connected to

81 Beyhaqi, *Târikh*, p. 28.

82 What was once thought to be the unique manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale dated 1410 (813 Q.) gives the name of the copyist, but, unfortunately, not the name of the author; this manuscript was used for the first modern edition of the work, *Mojmal-al-tavârikh va'l-qesas*, ed. Mohammad-Taqi Bahâr (Tehran, 1939). A facsimile of an older manuscript has been published by Iraj Afshâr and M. Omidsalar, *Mojmal-al-tavârikh va'l-qesas: ta'lif-e sâl-e 520 qamari: noskhe-ye aksi-ye movarrakh-e 751 (Ketâbkhâne-ye Dowlati-ye Berlin)* (Tehran, 2001). An edition by Sayf-al-Din Najmâbâdi and Siegfried Weber (Edingen-Neckarhausen, 2000), based on all four of the manuscripts now known, was unfortunately not available to this author.

83 Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 188–91, 206–9.

84 *Mojmal*, p. 9.

the court of Mahmud. The author also explains that he had earlier been inspired to write such a history after a conversation at a drinking party in Asadâbâd with a *mehtar* who was "one of the famous and great" people of the time. He actually started scribbling down a text over the drinks but then tore it up so he could give the project the due deliberation it deserved. What he meant by *mehtar* is uncertain; it often just means "leader," but it was also used in this period as a technical term for the oldest surviving juvenile member of a family, as when the thirteen-year old Barkyâroq became *mehtar* after the death of Malekshâh.[85] Mahmud, it may be noted, was also only thirteen and the eldest of several sons when he became the sultan of Iraq, and Asadâbâd was the site of his victory over his rebellious brother Mas'ud in 1120. Mahmud is known to have been fond of both scholarship and socializing. The author also indicates that he planned to devote the last chapter of the book to the reign of Mahmud, but that chapter is missing from the surviving manuscript.

Whether *mehtar* was a circumspect way of referring to Mahmud himself, or to one of the dignitaries of his era, the author must certainly have been a member of an élite family living in the area ruled by Mahmud. Many other aspects of the text show a familiarity with and fondness for the area around Hamadan and especially Isfahan (he relies heavily on authors and books related to Isfahan, and he rarely misses a chance to enhance the importance of that city, as in his assertion that Abu-Moslem was an Isfahani).[86] In addition, the author gives a precise reference to the name of his grandfather, Mohallab b. Mohammad b. Shâdi, whose daughter probably married into the family of the Hasanid sayyids the author describes as living in Hamadan and Isfahan.[87] The grandfather was certainly a bibliophile and a scholar; the author notes that his own book is the result of his research into the many books of his grandfather's library.

85 See Mohammad Mo'in, *Farhang-e Mo'in* (Tehran, 1993), IV, p. 4460.
86 *Mojmal*, p. 315.
87 See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 207.

As the title indicates, the work is essentially nothing more than an organized digest of information gathered from the author's reading of a wide variety of sources. He makes no claim to originality as "everything I have written is nothing but what I have read,"[88] and any mistakes that may be found can be attributed to his sources. Anything he found in Arabic, he translated into Persian, as that was the norm for the speech of the time. The text actually contains a good deal of information that is not attested elsewhere but may well have come from some text the author had at his disposal. He is not shy about alluding to other works; the list of titles he mentions is quite long and includes several that cannot be identified precisely.[89] Most of what he writes, however, seems to come from a few key texts, especially the works of Hamze Esfahâni. He often mentions Tabari, but it is clear that he was using Bal'ami's translation rather than the Arabic text; the list of sources he gives for ancient Iranian history, for example, matches that given by Bal'ami, and a zodiacal chart he gives as that of the first Nowruz is the same as Bal'ami gives for the exaltation points of the planets at the time of creation. It is even possible to tell that the author used a manuscript containing Bal'ami's Arabic preface, since he gives an account of the translation that mentions the date and the conveyance of the order by Fâ'eq Khâsse as found there.[90] Surprisingly, he refers three times to Ya'qubi's *Ta'rikh*,[91] a text recognized as important today but which was very rarely mentioned or cited in other works, even in Arabic historiography. However, Ya'qubi appears to have sometimes been called *al-Esfahâni* or *al-kâteb al-Esfahâni*,[92] and an Isfahani connection might explain how his history found its way into Mohallab's library.

The term *tavârikh* refers to dates and chronologies and *qesas* to stories about the prophets and other more or less fantastic or mi-

88 *Mojmal*, pp. 2–3.
89 See the list compiled by the editor in *Mojmal*, pp. lṭ–m.
90 *Mojmal*, p. 180.
91 Ibid., pp. 229, 271, 278.
92 E.g., Ebn-al-Faqih, *Ketâb-al-boldân*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1885), p. 290; see also Mohammad Âyati, tr., *Târikh-e Ya'qubi* (Tehran, 1968), pp. xvi–xvii.

raculous things, and these are the main building blocks of the work. After the preface, chapters 2–7 are just short lists of the duration of various eras and rulers. They are followed by chapters of varying length giving conflicting versions of the reign of Kayumarth (8), accounts of the Iranian kings (9), the times in which prophets and religious figures appeared (10), genealogies of the Turks (11), Hindu rulers (12), Greek kings (13), Roman kings (14), the Egyptians (15), the Hebrews (16), the Arabs (17), the prophets (18), Qoraysh, Mohammad, and the caliphs (19), the Samanids, Buyids, Ghaznavids, and Saljuqs (20), the honorific titles of various rulers (21), the burial places of prophets, rulers, and members of Mohammad's family (22), the geography of the world (23), and Muslim cities (24). The last chapter (25), apparently intended to be a more detailed account of some Saljuq rulers, appears to have been lost. This eclectic mix of topics, coupled with the author's generally undiscriminating methodology, makes it difficult to describe the genre of the book. It cannot be called popular history, as there is little reason to think it was ever widely read or intended to be; neither is it a work with any obvious propagandistic, ideological, or philosophical purpose like most of the others discussed here. It is too credulous and unsystematic to be regarded as serious history but too well informed to be dismissed as amateur antiquarianism. It seems ultimately to be simply a casual quasi-historical text, written according to the personal taste and whim of its author, and for his own satisfaction.

6. Provincial and City Histories

Early Persian historiography also included a considerable number of histories devoted to specific regions or cities. It is possible to detect in this a pattern of steady erosion in breadth of historical vision and thus to wonder if it should be attributed to the phenomenon of writing in a vernacular language, Persian, with a necessarily more limited audience than works in the language of the oecumene, Arabic. Language, however, cannot be the limiting factor since the same genres and trends appear in Arabic historiography,

and indeed many works about cities and provinces of Iran were written in Arabic rather than Persian. The historiography rather seems to be following historical developments in a reflection of the increasingly fragmented political system prevailing in the Islamic world.

What is thought to be the earliest example of a work of this type in Persian is a history of Sistan, a term that the text uses more or less as a synonym for the city of Zarang and its hinterland in the Gowd-e Zereh (Lake Hâmun) basin of what is today part of southeastern Iran and Afghanistan. This history, now conventionally referred to as the *Târikh-e Sistân*, came to the attention of Mohammad-Taqi Bahâr in 1925 and was edited and published by him in 1935.[93] However, the unique manuscript on which the edition was based, although quite old (copied before 1460 [864 A.H.] according to Bahâr), was defective, with many substantial lacunae, and no proper title page or attribution of authorship. That naturally raises the problem of the date of composition for the work and whether it even belongs to the period under consideration here.

In Bahâr's view, followed by most other scholars, the *Târikh-e Sistân* as it now exists is a composite work by at least two different authors. The manuscript has a blank half-page marking a break in the narrative as it is recounting the arrival in Sistan of a Saljuq official, Amir Bayghu, in 1056. It then resumes, in what Bahâr regarded as a markedly different style, to treat events from 1073 down to a time eight years after a peace settlement between the competing sons of the former ruler, the Mehrbanid king of Nimruz, Nâser-al-Din (which would have been ca. 1326).[94] At one point (followed by another brief gap in the text), the pre-1073 section notes that the Friday sermon was delivered in the name of the Saljuq Sultan Toghrel (reg. 1037–63) and speaks of him as being alive: "May God perpetuate his rule!"[95] From this, it could be

93 *Târikh-e Sistân*, ed. M. Bahâr (Tehran, 1935); tr. Milton Gold as *The Tārikh-e Sistān* (Rome, 1976).

94 *Târikh-e Sistân*, p. 355 for the lacuna; see also C.E. Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz (247/861 to 949/1542–3)* (Costa Mesa/New York, 1994), pp. 440–41.

95 *Târikh-e Sistân*, p. 373; tr. Gold, p. 305.

conjectured that the 'core' text, which would have ended somewhere in the seventeen-year gap marked by the lacuna, was written during the early Saljuq period and that the 'continuation' was the work of a contemporary of the successors of Nâser-al-Din. Meisami has more recently argued that the work should be attributed to "three separate authors, distinguished by style and by thematic interests."[96] She detected stylistic changes in the passages immediately following the description of the reading of the sermon in the name of Toghrel. Moreover, "the addition of astrological references and mention of auspicious and inauspicious portents is a distinguishing feature of this section not found elsewhere …"[97] A second author thus added the material dealing with the later part of Toghrel's rule, and a third the material covering a period sometime after 1056 and down to Mehrbanid times.

Either of these theories would mean that the bulk of the *Târikh-e Sistân* dates from the early Saljuq period and is thus within the formative period of Persian historiography. There is some reason, however, to think that Bahâr's view is speculative and Meisami's not tenable. 'Stylistic' differences are easily exaggerated and can in any case be attributed to a number of factors, including the use of different source materials for various parts of the texts (as is quite noticeable, for example, in Tabari's Arabic chronicle). Thematic changes, such as the use of astrological material, are rather more convincing. One problem, however, is that this usage *precedes* the point Meisami identifies as marking a stylistic change; an even more serious one is that this interest in astrology is not confined to this part of the text as Meisami suggests. There is, for example, a very detailed horoscope given much earlier for the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad.[98] It could rather be argued that there is a remarkable continuity and consistency of themes in the supposedly different sections of the work—an interest in revenues and the prices of commodities, for example, as well as hostility towards outside interference and support for local rule in Sistan. The significance

96 Meisami, *Persian Historiography,* p. 133.
97 Ibid., p. 132.
98 *Târikh-e Sistân*, pp. 60–61; tr. Gold, p. 47.

attached to the invocation of a blessing after the name of Toghrel for dating the core text, while difficult to dismiss, is suspect: It is glaringly out of place given the rest of the work's manifest hostility to the Saljuqs and everything Turkish. Finally, it is worth noting that in the introduction the author indicated that he would deal with events down to the reign of a king (*pâdshâh*) whose name is lost due to a lacuna in the manuscript. Toghrel, however, is styled only as an amir and is never called by this favorable title; given the text's antipathy towards the Saljuqs, it seems unlikely he could be the pâdshâh in question. By way of contrast, the terms shâh and pâdshâh are frequently used for later rulers such as the Mehrbanids. Rather than a 'continuation' or continuations to a 'core' text, we may rather simply have redacted pages to replace those damaged or lost in the course of manuscript transmission. The most prudent conclusion is that the original author's text could have been written and broken off at any point down to 1326, but that there is at least some reason to regard the main body of the work as a product of the historiographical period under consideration here.

Whatever its date, the *Târikh-e Sistân* is a precious historical document, above all because it provides a rare and much needed alternative perspective to that found in the mainstream of early Islamic historiography: It is quite clearly written from the point of view of the periphery rather than the center of political power. Indeed, although it is often held to be anachronistic to attribute sentiments of 'patriotism' or 'nationalism' to pre-modern periods, these terms do not seem at all inappropriate when it comes to describing the author's sense of Sistan as a place, his obvious attachment to and affection for that land, and his nativist set of values. His history begins, significantly enough, with the story of the foundation of Sistan (i.e., Zarang) by Garshâsb four thousand solar years before the Islamic era and proceeds to describe the superior historical, religious, geographical, and economic merits of the region. It also lists the towns, districts, and tax revenues of Sistan. As the author recounts the history of Sistan, he shows a general disdain for any outside intrusion into the affairs of the region, but not for the arrival of the Islamic religion. He emphasizes the similarity of the religious values of pre-Islamic Sistan with those of Islam (the

people followed the same dietary laws, did not accept the Zoroastrian practice of incestuous marriages, etc.), and he is at great pains to emphasize the voluntary submission of the shah and people of Sistan to the invading Arab army of Rabi' b. Ziyâd because the appearance of Mohammad and Islam had been foretold in their sacred texts. He counts the prompt recognition of the truth of the religion of Islam as Sistan's greatest moral virtue. Although Meisami has argued that the author's "pietism … betrays no specific orientation,"[99] he certainly seems to have been not only an enthusiastic Muslim but a staunch Sunni, since he praises Abu-Bakr and Omar and commends the caliph Motavakkel for freeing Ahmad b. Hanbal and suppressing the Mo'tazele.[100] The great theme of the history proper, however, is the persistent tension between the people of Sistan and the successive outside powers of the caliphs, the Taherids, the Samanids, and the Saljuqs. The countryside, particularly after the arrival of the Kharejites, is depicted in a state of almost constant unrest. The urban élite is typically willing to recognize the nominal suzerainty of an outside power as long as this does not involve much more than mentioning the name of the caliph in the *khotbe* rather than the rigorous collection of taxes. The author is most strongly attracted to those figures who emerge as local leaders in their own right, enhance the stature of the region, maintain social order, and act justly in the collection and distribution of revenues. One of the earliest of these leaders is Hamze b. Abd-Allâh (Adharak in other sources), depicted as a pious local notable who becomes the leader of the Kharejites, in effect fusing nativist and sectarian resistance to Abbasid fiscal policies, but the most exemplary of these heroes for the author are clearly the Saffarids, Ya'qub and Amr, who are literally and figuratively at the center of the text. The subsequent diffusion of Saffarid autonomy and the advent of Turkish rule under the Ghaznavids and Saljuqs is depicted as an affliction (*mehnat*) and the first great calamity (*asib*) to befall Sistan.

99 Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 111.
100 *Târikh-e Sistân*, pp. 192–93; tr. Gold, p. 153.

The *Târikh-e Sistân* is thus a remarkable and in some ways most unusual example of Persian historiography. It is written in a clear but common language and does not indulge in the appetite for rhetorical polish typical of so many other works of the period. The author, rather like his hero Ya'qub b. Leyth, does show a deep affection for the Persian language and Persian poetry. There is also a strain of populism in his historical methodology. He relies on an eclectic array of sources ranging from the *Bondaheshn* (presumably in an Arabic or Persian translation if not an oral tradition) to Qodâme b. Ja'far's *Ketâb-al-kharâj*, but most heavily on works with some local significance such as a *Ketâb-e Garshâsb,* Helâl b. Yusof Uqi's *Ketâb Fazâ'el Sejestân*, and an otherwise unknown *Akhbâr Sistân*; these were probably supplemented to some extent by memory and oral tradition. The author must have had access to some general historical text or texts for establishing the chronology of the caliphs and related matters, but he is not well informed and is often wrong about the larger historical context of events outside of Sistan itself (as, for example, when he has Abu-Moslem going to Iraq to bring Abu'l-Abbâs from Medina to be installed as the first Abbasid caliph).[101] He also freely mixes historical accounts with information drawn from popular literature and stories of legends and fables (*qesas* and *ajâ'eb*). That is noticeable not only in his accounts of geographic marvels, or his mention of the Sistani hero Rostam, but in his biography of Mohammad, which in contrast to conventional *sira* dwells on stories about the prophet's childhood, or in his account of Hamze the Kharejite, which towards the end drifts into the realm of a literary *Hamze-nâme*.[102]

Another work of this general type is the *Fârs-nâme.*[103] The manuscripts are defective at the end and do not give the name of the author. However, in the preface and later in the narrative, the author mentions that he is the grandson of an official who came from Balkh to work as tax accountant (*mostowfi*) for the Atâbak

101 *Târikh-e Sistân*, p. 135; tr. Gold, p. 108.

102 *Târikh-e Sistân*, pp. 156–203, passim. For the Hamze-nâme tradition, see W. L. Hanaway, *EIr*, s.v. *Ḥamza-nāma*.

103 Ebn-al-Balkhi, *Fârs-nâme*, ed. G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson (London, 1921). See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 162–88.

Khomartegin (ca. 1098). For this reason, it has become customary to refer to the author by the pseudonym of Ebn-al-Balkhi ('son of the man from Balkh'). He was thus not a long-standing native inhabitant of Fars, and also unlike the *Târikh-e Sistân*, the author was specifically requested to write the work, for Sultan Mohammad b. Malekshâh (reg. 1104–17). He finished his task sometime before the death of Atâbak Chavli in 1116.

The text is only partly a history and most of that is connected only tenuously with Fars. The bulk of the narrative, 104 pages out of 172 in the printed edition, is given over to the history of the pre-Islamic Iranian kings, first a short chronological list and then more detailed accounts of individual rulers. The author styles them "kings of Fars" and tries to tie them whenever possible to that province—claiming, for example, that Kayumarth had Estakhr as his capital.[104] His account is of some interest since it contains numerous minor details not found elsewhere. Other short historical sections deal with the Muslim conquest of Fars and, more importantly, some events in the author's lifetime. The rest of the book is made up of miscellaneous information about the geography, revenues, and qadis of Fars.

Abu'l-Hasan Ali b. Zeyd Beyhaqi, also known as Ebn-Fondoq (d. 1169), was a celebrated scholar who wrote over seventy books, in both Arabic and Persian, on a great variety of subjects ranging from astrology to law. He was certainly interested in history and wrote, presumably in Arabic, a now lost continuation of Otbi's chronicle. His only work to survive in full is the *Târikh-e Beyhaq*,[105] a prime example of the 'local' or 'city histories' produced during this period (often in Arabic rather than Persian). As noted earlier, the city histories tend to be more prosopography than history; they were mostly compilations of biographical notices about the members of the city's patricianate, sometimes preceded by short discussions of the merits of the city, how Islam came to be established there, etc. Ebn-Fondoq's history of his hometown fits this general pat-

104 Ebn-al-Balkhi, *Fârs-nâme*, p. 6.

105 Abu'l-Hasan Beyhaqi [Ebn-Fondoq], *Târikh-e Beyhaq*, ed. Bahmanyâr (2nd ed., Tehran, n.d. [1965]).

tern but has some significant distinctions. Like several of the major histories discussed here, the *Târikh-e Beyhaq* contains a substantial discourse on the nature of history and the benefits of studying it.[106] It makes an attempt to elucidate the sources on which it was based.[107] It gives a relatively long account of the history of the city and the dynasties that ruled there.[108] Most importantly, the prosopographical section is more than a mere uncritical mass of biographical data. Ebn-Fondoq concentrated not on individuals but on the great families that dominated the life of the city.[109] In the case of individual biographies, he did not aim at comprehensiveness nor did he limit himself to listing members of the ulama. He sought rather to identify and describe a select group of outstanding personalities—his notice of Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi, mentioned earlier, being a good example.[110] These are fleshed out with anecdotal details that provide modern historians with information and insights about events in the history of the city.[111] On the other hand, the text has some features that do not reflect particularly well on the author. He has a tendency to boast about his own ancestry, abilities, and virtues, as well as to speak disparagingly about the state of scholarship—and patronage for it—in his own time. He shares with other writers of the time a strong sense of social élitism and contempt for the masses, whom he refers to as the 'rabble' of the city. Despite his discourse on history as a field of scholarship, he does not hesitate to have recourse to myth, folklore, and plain gossip. In his biography of Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi it is also possible to detect a tendency to suppress inconvenient information.[112]

Finally, from the very end of the period under consideration here, there is the *Târikh-e Tabarestân*, written in part by Bahâ'-al-Din

106 Ebn-Fondoq, *Târikh-e Beyhaq*, pp. 4–15.
107 Ibid., pp. 19–21.
108 Ibid., pp. 25–73.
109 Ibid., pp. 73–137. Cf. Jean Aubin, "L'aristocratie urbaine dans l'Iran seldjukide: l'exemple de Sabzâvar," *Mélange offert à René Crozet* (Poitiers, 1966), I, 323–32.
110 Ebn-Fondoq, *Târikh-e Beyhaq*, pp. 175–78.
111 See Parvaneh Pourshariati, "Local historiography in early medieval Iran and the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 156–64.
112 See, for example, comments by Gh.-H. Yusofi, *EIr*, s.v. Bayhaqī.

Mohammad b. Hasan Ebn-Esfandiyâr around 1210.[113] This work is difficult to assess, partly because it seems never to have been properly finished, and partly because it has been garbled in the complicated process of manuscript transmission.[114] The surviving text is certainly a composite, only about half of which can be attributed with some certainty to Ebn-Esfandiyâr himself.[115] However, the author does provide a preface and some incidental remarks that indicate the purpose and plan of the work. He appears to have begun writing around 1206, perhaps inspired (rather like the author of the *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*) by a chance query from the Bavandid ruler for whom he worked, Hosâm-al-Dowle Ardashir (reg. 1171–1206), about an ancient king of Tabarestân. In subsequent journeys, Ebn-Esfandiyâr was able to visit various libraries and collect material for his book. In Rayy, at the library of Rostam b. Ali b. Shahriyâr, he discovered an account of Gâvbare, the obscure king about whom he had been questioned earlier. While in Khʷârazm, he found, among other things, a copy of Ebn-al-Moqaffa's Arabic translation of the "Letter of Tansar," a Pahlavi text purporting to be a letter from Tansar, the high priest under Ardashir I, to the ruler of Tabarestân. Ebn-Esfandiyâr translated the Arabic version of this important document into Persian and included it in the opening chapter of his history. The result of these researches was supposed to be a book in four parts: the antiquities of Tabarestân and the early Islamic period; the period of rule by the Âl-e Voshmgir (Ziyarids) and Buyids; the period of rule by the Mahmudian (Ghaznavids) and Saljuqs; and the period of Bavandid rule. The three sections of the existing text, apart from the additions, deal only with the first, last, and part of the second of these topics; it is possible that the author fell victim to the Mongol invasion and never completed the work, or that parts may have been lost. It is not clear why he chose to use in his title and elsewhere the archaic term Tabarestân rather

113 Ebn-Esfandiyâr, *Târikh-e Tabarestân*, ed. Abbâs Eqbâl (2 vols., Tehran, 1941).

114 Charles Melville, "The Caspian provinces, a world apart: Three local histories of Mazandaran," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), p. 56.

115 I.e., Ebn-Esfandiyâr, I, pp. 1–302 and II, pp. 32–173; see Melville, "Caspian provinces," pp. 56–58.

than Mâzandarân, as that area of the Caspian littoral was by then generally called.

At first glance, the *Târikh-e Tabarestân* seems to provide a close parallel to the *Târikh-e Sistân*. Both are about distinct regions, isolated by geographical features, with a strong sense of local identity, and rather resistant to outside rule. Both authors appear to have been writing out of personal interest and attachment to the subject rather than for a particular commission or patron. However, there are some significant differences between the two works as well. The most obvious is religious: The author of the *Târikh-e Sistân* was a Sunni, while Ebn-Esfandiyâr was a Shi'i; these religious orientations inevitably color the works in different ways. There are also thematic differences. The author of the *Târikh-e Sistân* celebrates the separateness, distinctiveness, and independence of Sistan, and he champions local heroic figures like Ya'qub b. Leyth. Ebn-Esfandiyâr is aware of the special character of Tabarestân but is not uniformly hostile to outside rule; he is willing both to criticize local rulers like Mâzyâr and to praise foreign rule like that of the Samanids.[116] He has no real equivalents of the Saffarids to celebrate, and he does not judge rulers either by how spectacular their accomplishments may be, or by how unobtrusive they are in local affairs, but by how justly they rule. In that sense, it is no accident that Ebn-Esfandiyâr began the text with the "Letter of Tansar," a classic Sasanid treatise on statecraft and social structure, and other exhortatory examples of proper kingship. It is also interesting that the "Letter" was written in order to induce the submission of the ruler of Tabarestân to Ardashir, and the relation of local magnates to greater adjacent powers is a kind of recurring motif in the *Târikh-e Tabarestân*. It was just at the time the text was being written that Tabarestân came under the rule of the Khʷârazmshâh Alâ'-al-Din (1210); it might thus be read as either advice to the Khʷârazmshâh on how to handle his new conquest or to the surviving local authorities on how to accommodate themselves to the new order.

116 Charles Melville, *EIr*, s.v. Ebn Esfandiār.

7. Saljuq Dynastic Histories

After the vizier Abu'l-Qâsem had explained to Jorbâdhqâni how histories served to immortalize the deeds of rulers, he pointedly singled out the Saljuqs as an example of a dynasty that had failed to encourage such writing. Even though the accomplishments of the early Saljuq sultans were far greater than those of the Ghaznavids, he predicted, it would be only a short while before their name was effaced from memory and their deeds forgotten because no one among the distinguished people (*ahl-e fazl*) had written a record of them.[117] Many modern scholars also lament the paucity of historical works from this period and often see this evidence of a "decline of learning" due to the disinterest of "ignorant and semi-literate" officials and the inability of Saljuq rulers to appreciate "written communication" or to be "great patrons of letters."[118] Such severe judgments certainly need to be qualified. In point of fact, the accomplishments of the Saljuqs have hardly been forgotten, and the intellectual achievements of the period were formidable.

It is true that we have no dynastic history of the early Saljuq rulers that would be the equivalent of Otbi's history of the early Ghaznavids and that most Saljuq historiography dates from the end of the period. However, it is Otbi rather than the Saljuqs who seems to be the exception here. The main historical works we have mostly come from the time of a dynasty's descent rather than its zenith—such is the case with Bal'ami, Gardizi, and Beyhaqi. Moreover, we cannot be entirely sure that such works were not written during the earlier Saljuq period; they may simply have been lost. Among Persian works, there certainly was a *Malek-nâme*, an account of the

117 Jorfâdqâni, p. 9.

118 See Claude Cahen, "The historiography of the Seljukid period," in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 59–78; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, pp. 141–45, and idem, "Rulers and the writing of history," in Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers. Perspectives on their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times* (Wiesbaden, 2004), esp. pp. 82–92.

rise of the Saljuqs perhaps written for Sultan Alp Arslân,[119] as well as at least two now lost chronicles from the end of the Great Saljuq period: Abu-Tâher Khâtuni's *Târikh-e âl-e Saljuq*, known only from vague references in later works, and Anushirvân b. Khâled Kâshâni's *Fotur zamân-al-sodur va zamân-al-fotur*, embedded in an Arabic recension of a dubious 'translation' and redaction. If one takes into account Arabic as well as Persian works, the amount of historiography produced during the Saljuq era compares quite favorably with pre-Saljuqid periods. Finally, the apparent lack of early Saljuqid historiography might well be attributed not to the philistinism of the rulers, but to the lack of competent historians in their time and their realm. If the empty bombast of a Jorbâdhqâni or the rambling of the author of the *Mojmal* is representative of what the supposedly neglected historians might have produced, it constituted no great loss to historiography. The real problem with Saljuq historiography is not so much its dearth, or date, as the remarkably poor quality of most of the works that are left.

The oldest (albeit not very early) dynastic history of the Saljuqs available today is the work of Zahir-al-Din Nishâpuri, conventionally known as the *Saljuq-nâme*, which has long been regarded as the fundamental source from which other such histories derived.[120] Very little is known about Zahir-al-Din, although it can be deduced that he was probably once in the service of Sultan Mas'ud b. Mohammad (reg. 1133–52), perhaps was employed as tutor to Mas'ud's nephew Arslân b. Toghrel, and wrote his history after the accession of Toghrel b. Arslân (1176) and before the death of Atâbak Jahân-Pahlavân (1186).[121]

The text was incorporated into several later historical compendia, but A.H. Morton has identified a manuscript at the Royal Asiatic Society that he believes to contain the most reliable copy of the

119 Claude Cahen, "Le *Malik-nâmeh* et l'histoire des origines seljukides," *Oriens* 2 (1949), pp. 31–65.

120 See Cahen, "Historiography," p. 73.

121 A.H. Morton, *The Saljūqnāma of Ẓahīr al-Dīn Nīshāpūr* (Warminster, U.K., 2004), p. 49.

Saljuq-nâme as written by Zahir-al-Din, and has prepared a new edition on that basis.[122]

The chief difference among the versions of the text is the amount of detail they contain. If Morton is correct, it serves as a good example of the tendency for Persian historical works to accrete material from additions by copyists and redactors in the process of transmission (although of course things might also be lost due to physical damage to manuscripts over the years), for example in the opening passage of the book as found in Morton's edition compared with that in Rashid-al-Din.[123]

Even in the more extensive redactions of Qâshâni and Rashid-al-Din, the *Saljuq-nâme* is a relatively brief text and likely to be "regarded as disappointing" by anyone looking for substantive historical information.[124] A typical chapter on a ruler comments on his moral qualities and physical appearance, names his vizier and other officials, and relates some stories about important events, almost invariably battles with enemies or rivals. This is based on memory, oral tradition, or popular tales and folklore, and rarely if ever on documents and written sources, and can thus be rather inaccurate. The history does have a certain charm, however; Zahir-al-Din could tell a good story, and his simple and direct language is a refreshing change from the verbosity of other works of the period. It is also a history with a point that is evident if not belabored. Like several other of the historians considered here, Zahir-al-Din was writing when the dynasty that was his subject was fading, and he was looking back to the glory days of former rulers he had served. For Zahir-al-Din, Mas'ud b. Mohammad represents the zenith of the Saljuq dynasty; he frequently depicts later rulers as inept and degenerate. Even with those for whom he professes some respect

122 See earlier editions, *Saljuq-nâme, ta'lif-e Zahir-al-Din Nishâburi*, ed. E. Afshâr (Tehran, 1953), from Abu'l-Qâsem Qâshâni's *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, and ed. Ahmed Ateş from Rashid-al-Din's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* as *Câmi' al-tavarīḫ: Selçuklular tarihi* (reprint, Ankara, 1999); tr. Allin Luther and ed. C.E. Bosworth as *The History of the Seljuq Turks from The Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* (Richmond, U.K, 2001).

123 Ed. Morton, p. 5; tr. Luther, p. 29.

124 Morton, p. 50.

such as Arslân and Toghrel, he leaves little doubt that the real credit for the accomplishments of their reigns should go to their atabegs.

Heavily indebted to the *Saljuq-nâme* is another Persian history of the Saljuqs written in the pre-Mongol period, the *Râhat-al-sodur va âyat-al-sorur* by Mohammad b. Ali Râvandi.[125] The autobiographical details scattered throughout his work have been brought together by the modern editor of the text, Muhammad Iqbál.[126] The main feature of his life seems to have been a remarkable string of bad luck (or bad judgment). He was orphaned at a young age and brought up by his maternal uncle, with whose help he acquired a reputation as a religious scholar and a calligrapher. In 1189, he joined another of his uncles on a mission to Mâzandarân but found the Caspian climate oppressive and soon returned to take a job as tutor to the children of a distinguished family in Hamadan. He claims he was inspired to write the book by a favorite pupil, but he may well have conceived of writing the *Râhat-al-sodur* to restore good relations with Sultan Toghrel b. Arslân, who however was defeated and killed in 1194. Râvandi did not actually get around to writing the book until 1202, and then had the problem of finding a patron who could reward him appropriately. For that, he turned to the Saljuqs of Rum (Anatolia) and initially dedicated the work to a usurper, Rokn-al-Din Soleymânshâh. Upon learning that the rightful ruler, Ghiyâth-al-Din Kay Khosrow, had been restored to the throne, he rewrote the dedication and tried, incompletely, to efface the flattering references to Soleymânshâh scattered about the text. He then journeyed to Konya to present the fruit of his labor to Kay Khosrow, to what effect we do not know.

Râvandi admits to having been torn between the idea of writing a history or a literary composition. In the end, he did both. It is a strange mélange of history, proverbs, anecdotes, and poetry (mostly mediocre), along with essays on kingship and the religious legality and nature of various courtly activities for the boon-companion (ranging from chess, archery, horse-racing, hunting, and drinking

125 Râvandi, *Râhat-al-sodur*, ed. Muhammad Iqbál (Mohammad Eqbâl) (London, 1921).

126 Râvandi, ed. Iqbál, pp. xv–xxi.

to calligraphy).[127] The historical sections of the text, stripped of all the miscellanea and decoration, would amount to barely a fourth of the whole. Moreover, that historical content comes almost entirely from Zahir-al-Din's *Saljuq-nâme*. Only the sections on Toghrel and the Khʷârazmian occupation have (perhaps) some claim to originality and significance as a historical source.

Modern scholars have concluded that it is not really appropriate to consider the *Râhat-al-sodur* as a 'history' in any conventional sense, so much as a didactic work of the 'mirrors for princes' genre.[128] This same applies to a number of other works from the Saljuq period that are quasi-historical in nature, such as Nezâm-al-Molk's *Siyâsat-nâme* and the last work which may be mentioned briefly here, the *Eqd-al-olâ* by Afzal-al-Din Kermâni (fl. 1188).[129] Only a small part of the *Eqd* is devoted to a historical account of the conquest of Kerman by the Ghozz Turks under Malek Dinâr in 1185. It too was written to curry favor with a ruler, and to offer advice on how to govern, not as history *per se*. As with several of the other works mentioned here, its distinguishing feature is really its use of language, which Meisami considers "an outstanding example of the ornate chancery style."[130] Afzal-al-Din also wrote a general history of the Kerman branch of the Saljuq dynasty, the *Badâye'-al-azmân fi vaqâye'-e Kermân*, preserved in the work of later historians, which thus acts as a sort of preamble to the *Eqd-al-olâ*. This is a straightforward dynastic history, organized episodically

127 See A.H. Morton, "The Mu'nis al-ahrar and its twenty-ninth chapter," in M.L. Swietochowski and S. Carboni, eds., *Illustrated Poetry and Epic Images. Persian Painting in the 1330s and 1340s* (New York, 1994), pp. 51–55, for some of Râvandi's own accomplishments.

128 Julie S. Meisami, "Rāvandī's *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr*: History or hybrid?" *Edebiyât* 5 (1994), pp. 183–215; idem, *Persian Historiography*, p. 239. Carole Hillenbrand, *EI²*, s.v. Rāwandī; and see Chapter 1.

129 Afzal-al-Din Kermâni, *Ketâb eqd-al-olâ*, ed. Ali Nâ'ini (Tehran, 1977).

130 Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 234. For both works, and the genre of 'Mirrors' in general, see A.K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes," in *Atti del Convegno internazionale sul tema: La Persia nel Medioevo, Roma, 31 marzo–5 aprile 1970* (Rome, 1971), pp. 436–38; and Marta Simidchieva, "Kingship and legitimacy as reflected in Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyāsatnāma*, fifth/eleventh century," in Gruendler and Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers*, pp. 97–131.

by reigns, but with regular chronological details. Among its interesting features is the use of the old (unreformed) solar *kharâji* calendar, with the Persian months, either alone or sometimes in correspondence with the lunar hejri calendar. The language is a little ornamented and enhanced by occasional verses of poetry, but mainly unadorned, the narrative being enlivened by passages in direct speech and the use of the first person.[131]

The didactic nature of historical writing, and the incorporation of 'advice for kings' into the works of the chroniclers, whether operating at the center of affairs or in some provincial court, becomes an even more dominant feature of the period that follows.

131 Afzal-al-Din, *Badâye'-al-azmân*, ed. Mehdi Bayâni (Tehran, 1947). On the kharâji calendar, see Reza Abdollahy, *EIr*, s.v. Calendars ii. Islamic period (p. 670a).

CHAPTER 4

THE MONGOL AND TIMURID PERIODS, 1250–1500

Charles Melville

As described in the previous chapter, historical writing in Persian, though rich and varied, remained relatively rare in the period up to the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258. Much has no doubt perished without trace, but what remains demonstrates that quite a wide range of works was composed, each with its own idiosyncrasies, which among other things makes it difficult (and arguably, pointless) to identify different genres of historical writing. Works of 'universal', dynastic, provincial and local history can all be found, sometimes with a leaning towards biographical and social information, others almost purely concerned with the narration of political events. Some are organized in annals, others by dynasty or by reign, some thematically and others in a mixture peculiar to the author's personal interests and circumstances. The period did produce two chronicles of outstanding importance, by Abu-Ali Bal'ami and Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi, whose works were very different in origin, aim, language, and contents. Their fate was also very different: Bal'ami's work was extremely influential as a popular and authoritative source for later writers; Beyhaqi's, far more complex and far more revealing of life below the surface, must quickly have gone out of circulation, and blazed a path that was not followed by later historians. Partly, this was no doubt due to its enormous bulk, partly, because times changed.[1]

1 See e.g. Julie Scott Meisami, "Dynastic history and ideals of kingship in Bayhaqi's *Tarikh-i Mas'udi*," *Edebiyat* 3 (1989), p. 72; idem, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), p. 108. Nevertheless, a wider look at the existing historical documents suggests that Beyhaqi's work was referred to more widely than is generally assumed.

PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The advent of the Mongols, in two waves of conquest under Chengis Khan (1219–22) and his grandson Hulegu (1256–58), dramatically altered the direction and nature of Iran's political and cultural development, both in the short and longer-term. Almost within a generation, Iran was transformed. From an unwieldy collection of semi-autonomous principalities, asymmetrically disposed vis-à-vis the center of the Abbasid caliphate and chafing against its authority, Iran became a large kingdom integrated into the vibrant (if still untidy) Mongol imperial system. This was not just a change of masters, but a complete reorientation. Among its immediate consequences were the revival of a sense of Iran as a distinct geographical whole, despite its size and territorial diversity, and an echo of past imperial glory under the Sasanids.[2] One of the more tangible signs of this transformation, marking a clear departure from the previous centuries, was that Persian quickly became the dominant language of historical writing. Another consequence was that dynastic legitimacy, at least to start with, was couched in totally new terms. The challenge facing a new generation of Persian historians was how to record and explain these transformations, how to come to terms with alien, pagan, even brutish new rulers, how to draw appropriate lessons from the traumas inflicted on their land and people, how to preserve some continuity with the recent pre-conquest past, and how to respond to or encourage court patronage.

The resulting historiography is a rich and diverse corpus of chronicles, taking many different forms.[3] While some of these

2 Bert Fragner, "The concept of regionalism in historical research on Central Asia and Iran (A macro-historical interpretation)," in Devin DeWeese, ed., *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel* (Bloomington, 2001), esp. pp. 349–50. See also Charles Melville, "The Mongols in Iran," in L. Komaroff and S. Carboni, eds., *The Legacy of Genghis Khan. Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New York, New Haven and London, 2002), pp. 37–61.

3 C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature. A Bio-bibliographical survey*, vol. I (London, 1970), pp. 68–109 (General history), 260–301, 348–66 (History of Persia—dynasties and places); Yu.E. Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura. Biobibliograficheskiĭ obzor* (Moscow, 1972), pp. 759–849, 1008–96. For general surveys, see also Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian literature*, ed. K. Jahn

works, such as the great 'Compendium of Chronicles' (*Jâme'-al-tavârikh*) of Rashid-al-Din (d. 1318), and the output of the Timurid historians, Hâfez-e Abru (d. 1430), Mirkh^{w}ând (d. 1498), and Kh^{w}ândamir (d. 1535), have received considerable attention, others remain available only in manuscript—including indeed parts of the texts of Rashid-al-Din and Hâfez-e Abru themselves, covering the pre-Mongol period. This hinders a full appraisal of these writers, their outlook and their use of sources, especially in determining how they chose to represent the more distant past. Even a contemporary account by such a well-known historian as Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi (d. ca. 1345), is still only available in facsimile.[4] In almost all cases, though use has been made of these works for reconstructing the narrative history of the Mongol period, there is still rather little historiographical analysis of the texts themselves.[5] It is also the case that the study of Persian historiography has so far entirely avoided the gaze of deconstructionist literary theory, and can be said to have emerged unscathed through a debate that has been both provocative and productive in the analysis of European historical writing.[6]

If we accept, as we must, that historical writing (as other forms of literature) reflects the times in which it was produced, whether consciously or otherwise, we will expect to identify new elements in the work of historians of the Mongol era, or at the least, modifications of previous traditions. The main difficulty associated with understanding the significance of such characteristics is that the surviving narratives are not just a product of their times, but also

(Dordrecht, 1968), esp. pp. 438–59 (F. Tauer); *EIr*, s.v. Historiography iv (Ch. Melville) and v (Maria Szuppe); A. Bayât, *Shenâsi-ye manâbe' va ma'âkhedh-e târikh-e Irân az âghâz tâ selsele-ye Safaviyye* (Tehran, 1998); and M. Mortazavi, Masâ'el-e asr-e Ilkhânân (Tabriz, 1980 and later editions).

4 *Zafar-nâme*, facs. ed. N. Rastegâr and N. Pourjavâdi (Tehran and Vienna, 1999).

5 Notable exceptions are John E. Woods, "The rise of Tīmūrid historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46 (1987), pp. 81–108, and idem, *The Aqquyunlu. Clan, confederation, empire* (2nd ed., Salt Lake City, 1999), esp. pp. 219–28. See also Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. pp. 49–78.

6 See above, Introduction.

the main record of them. It is thus seldom possible to be sure of what they have omitted, or chosen to record in a way that obscures the complete picture of the period. There must in practice have been many competing narratives, and ways of presenting current events. We therefore need to read between the lines and take advantage, where available, of different accounts of the same events. Much work remains to be done in this respect.

Naturally, the histories written in this period are distinctive first in terms of their contents, recording the specific events of their times. More subtle differences, difficult to articulate clearly, derive from the distinct nature of the times themselves. In that rulers continued to rule, surrounded by a courtly entourage that was composed of both military and civilian officials (the 'men of the sword' and 'men of the pen'), responsible for maintaining the territorial integrity of their kingdom and collecting (and to some degree, redistributing) taxes, it could be said that the contexts that might affect the work of the historian remained largely unchanged: especially so, as the Mongol rulers might be thought to differ from their Ghaznavid, Saljuq, Ghurid, and Khʷârazmian predecessors less in kind than in degree. The activities of the ruling élite remained the chief concern of the historian. Nevertheless, fundamental contrasts lay at the heart of Mongol rule and were endemic throughout the period, notwithstanding the Islamization of the Mongols within three short generations of the fall of Baghdad. Political authority derived from Chengizid notions of legitimacy, whether described as 'Inner Asian,' 'nomadic,' or 'steppe,' and was based on the somewhat intangible concepts of the *töre* and *yasa* (Mongol custom and 'law code').[7] Attitudes to power, its acquisition and transmission, owed little to precedents in caliphal history and less to Islamic

7 For a recent statement of the yasa debate, see David Morgan, "The 'Great *Yasa* of Chengis Khan' revisited," in R. Amitai and M. Biran, eds., *Mongols, Turks, and Others* (Leiden, 2005), pp. 291–308. A valuable set of papers on 'steppe' rule is found in David Sneath, ed., *Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth-Twentieth Centuries* (Bellingham, WA, 2006). For the continuing tensions in the late 15th century, Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition. Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden, 2007), esp. pp. 39–42.

political theory. Mongol rule was unabashedly secular, apparently barely restrained by concepts of the obligations of office and the welfare of the subject populations. It was arbitrary and brutal, and service to the ruler was dangerously insecure, as witnessed by the oft-repeated fate of a succession of viziers and other courtiers.[8]

The historians could hardly avoid these tensions, and found the need to balance the harsh facts of contemporary political life with some semblance of justification according to the familiar norms of Muslim society. One result of this has been judged as "the defense and praise of the actions of despotic sultans and sycophancy [leading] to the neglect of professional honor," precipitating the decline of historiography.[9] The example Meskoob gives, Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi's account of the massacre of the population of Isfahan in 1388, recording "such tragedies as if he were talking about miracles of saints," is compelling up to a point, but suffers from being taken at face value.[10] Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi's account of the same massacre ends with the verse: "At the number of dead who had fallen in the city and the plain, the World said 'enough, for it has exceeded the limit'."[11] Surely in this, as in many other comparable cases, the contrast between the events recorded and the language used enables the reader to read between the lines.

At the same time, the relative disenfranchisement of political Islam encouraged a revival of Iranian concepts of imperial rule. The historians found themselves obliged to oscillate between various loyalties: to the ruler and his dynasty, to the Muslim community, and to Iranian culture, which enjoyed a remarkable flourishing that might appear paradoxical in such violent and unpromising times. All this is reflected in the chronicles of the period, partly in

8 Jean Aubin, *Émirs mongols et viziers persans dans les remous de l'acculturation* (Paris, 1995); see also Chapter 2.

9 Shahrokh Meskoob, *Iranian Nationality and the Persian Language*, tr. Michael Hillmann, ed. J. Perry (Washington, D.C., 1992), p. 78.

10 Meskoob, p. 78, citing Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi, see his *Zafar-nâme*, ed. F. Tauer (Prague, 1937), p. 105, but intending Ali Yazdi, see *Zafar-nâme*, ed. M. Abbâsi (2 vols., Tehran, 1957), pp. 313–14; ed. Mir Mohammad Sâdeq and Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i (2 vols., Tehran, 2008), pp. 588–89.

11 Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi, *Sa'âdat-nâme*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 2000), pp. 39–40.

their language, partly in their attempts to mix realities with ideals. In earlier times, works of ethical and practical advice, or 'mirrors for princes,' were mostly a separate branch of writing, although the ethical concerns of the historians were also clear. In the Mongol period the historians absorbed almost completely this overtly didactic role and presented, however implicitly and often seemingly with heavy irony, a vision of ideal kingship. This was anchored, as before, most specifically in the timeless concept of justice.[12]

Thus for Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi (writing ca. 1400), reflecting on the government of Omar (b. Mirânshâh), Timur's grandson, in Samarqand during Timur's absence on campaign in India, "one hour of justice from kings is equivalent to seventy years of devotions by ascetics," an observation that he follows with a short homily on justice and its benefits in this world and the next.[13] One can imagine either the horrors of Timurid government in the city while the conqueror was away, or else the need to remind Timur to adjust from the arts of war to the arts of peace, on his return. Interestingly, after noting that the massacre in Isfahan, mentioned above, was caused by the 'rabble' attacking Timur's tax-collectors during the night, killing them and several of the soldiers in the city, Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi (writing ca. 1404) produces a verse with the sentiment that according to the proverb, "one hundred years of tyranny and oppression from kings is better than two days of evil, chaos and uproar on the part of the common people."[14] The rulers thus have it both ways, whether just or tyrannical, but the underlying concern is the stability of society and the need for order. Saïd Amir Arjomand has recently analyzed this "Perso-Islamicate political ethic and culture" as a fundamental aspect of "Persianate Islam."[15]

Most historians of the period were faced with reconciling their allegiance to their ruling patrons, whether genuine or expedient,

12 For Mirrors, see *HPL* I, pp. 255–60 (J.S. Meisami).

13 Ghiyâth-al-Din, *Sa'âdat-nâme*, pp. 182–83.

14 Nezâm-al-Din, *Zafar-nâme*, p. 104. Cf. A.K.S. Lambton, "Early Timurid theories of state: Hâfiz Abrū and Nizām al-Dīn Šāmī," *Bull. des Études Orientales* 30 (1978), p. 9.

15 Saïd Amir Arjomand, "The salience of political ethic in the spread of Persianate Islam," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 5–29.

with the knowledge of their atrocious acts. Upholding legitimacy where hardly any existed, and intimating the reality and nature of their deeds, required all their literary skills and mastery of the language. The result is several works of history produced in the Mongol and Timurid periods that are rightly regarded as masterpieces of Persian prose literature, such as the *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ* of Joveyni on the conquests of Chengis Khan, and Ali Yazdi's *Zafarnâme* on the conquests of Timur. On the whole, the tendency for elaborate rhyming prose, incorporating Arabic and Persian verse, already seen in Jorbâdhqâni's Persian translation of Otbi's history of the Ghaznavids, continued undiminished, peaking in the notorious history of Vassâf of Shiraz in the 1330s, often regarded as a work of literature rather than history, despite the importance of the author's account of his own times, especially in the southern provinces of Fars and Kerman.[16] The flowery language used in such works, rich in Arabic and often expressing the most mundane activities in the loftiest diction, was a perfect vehicle for irony, while at the same time spreading a patina of elegance and refinement over events at courts riddled with faction and intrigue. Nevertheless, a great range of writing styles can be encountered throughout the period, from the simple accessibility of the language of Beyzâvi, to the sophisticated though plain language of Rashid-al-Din, to the more ornate and elaborate syntax of the Timurid historians such as Hâfez-e Abru and Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi.[17]

16 Judith Pfeiffer, " 'A turgid history of the Mongol empire in Persia'. Epistemological reflections concerning a critical edition of Vaṣṣāf's *Tajziyat al-amṣār va tazjiyat al-a'ṣār*," in J. Pfeiffer and Manfred Kropp, eds., *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts* (Beirut, 2007), pp. 107–29. On its use, A.K.S. Lambton, "Mongol fiscal administration in Persia," *Studia Islamica* (part II), 65 (1987), pp. 97–123, and earlier I.P. Petrushevsky, "The socio-economic conditions of Iran under the Il-Khans," in *The Cambridge History of Iran* V (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 483–537.

17 See also Chapter 1. Extracts from many of these authors, with brief examples of their style, can be found in several useful anthologies, starting with Dhabih-Allâh (Zabihollâh) Safâ, *Ganjine-ye sokhan. Pârsi-nevisân-e bozorg va montakhab-e âthâr-e ishân* (5 vols., Tehran, 1969; repr. 1974), esp. vols. IV-V; see also B. Dabiri-Nezhâd, *Sabk-e nathr. Âthâr-e târikhiye dowre-ye moghul* (Isfahan, 1991); A. Navâ'i, ed., *Motun-e târikhi be zabân-e fârsi* (Tehran, 1997).

Given the great volume of historical writing produced in the two and a half centuries between the fall of Baghdad in 1258 and the establishment of the Safavid dynasty in 1501, it is hardly practical to mention every text, many of which are still little known. Instead, this chapter will concentrate on two or three themes that seek to locate historical writing in its particular time and place, and in the context of Persian culture under Turko-Mongol rule.

1. A Sense of Place

If, as suggested above, Iran had a new place in the world in the wake of the Mongol conquests, we might expect to find this reflected in the work of the historians of the period, or at least, their narrative of events to be in some way conditioned by a perception of a new *mise-en-scène*. To what extent were medieval Persian historians concerned with incorporating geographical information (as currently understood) into their chronicles? How relevant did they consider geography to be to history, and if it was important, how did they structure their works in order to include it? Can we discern any attempt by the Persian historians to achieve a sense of space, or any idea of the "connection between events and the space in which they take place," other than a purely topographical connection?[18]

A secondary and contingent question is whether the geographical awareness of the historians improved and how this improvement might be reflected in their work. Did greater sophistication alter the presentation or nature of the geographical material in the chronicles?

18 Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), pp. 166–72; Patrick Gautier-Dalché, "L'espace de l'histoire: le rôle de la géographie dans les chroniques universelles," in J.-P. Genet, ed., *L'historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris, 1991), quotation from p. 288; André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle* (2nd ed., Paris/La Haye, 1973), I, esp. pp. 239–41.

The concept of the 'Land of Iran' (*Irân-zamin*) rising from the ashes of the ancient Irânshahr, had been invoked already by Gardizi, for whom, however, as for Beyhaqi, Khorasan was regarded as the essential core (*asl*) and the rest, such as lands east towards India or westwards towards Erâq-e Ajam, were considered peripheral, at least in terms of Ghaznavid territorial stability. Under the Mongols, the notion of the centrality of Iran vis-à-vis different climes was bolstered by drawing on far more influential texts, such as the *Shahname*, where *Irân-zamin* and the tragedy of Iraj are brought to the forefront. The concept is both a geographical and a political one, which could be promoted not only to give the new conquerors something to identify themselves with and accommodate themselves to, but also a way of asserting Iranian self-awareness in the face of the shock and humiliation of the Mongol conquests. The concept of Arab-Islamic history, at least, was linked to the political and cultural reality of the Islamic empire, and change could only come when that empire was destroyed.[19]

In England too, after the Norman conquest of 1066, there was a crisis of cultural identity, and the concern of some historians to find new principles of legitimate sovereignty and historical explanations for what had happened. There was a great increase in historical writing, but the very thing that provoked this—the emergence of a complex secular world obedient to secular imperatives (i.e. Norman government)—disabled the most characteristic way of understanding history, in terms of a providential pattern that explained everything as a sign of God's purpose. One response, for example by writers such as William of Malmesbury, was to create a simplified notion of 'England' imagined fully as a sacred place, with a noticeable emphasis on shrines in the country. Another response was to put a stress on king lists and genealogies, as in Lazamon's *Brut*.[20]

19 I am grateful to Mohsen Ashtiany for helping me clarify my thoughts here, and indeed throughout the volume.

20 Robert M. Stein, "Making history English", in Sylvia Tomaschi and Sealy Gilles, eds., *Text and Territory* (Philadelphia, 1998), pp. 97–99, 106–7. See also the stimulating study by Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge, 2007).

While there is no need to attempt to develop detailed parallels and contrasts between post-conquest England and post-conquest Iran, it is clear that pursuing similar considerations can lead to some valuable insights. The earliest historiographical reaction to the Mongols, in Atâ-Malek Joveyni's *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ* (1260), was very much an attempt to explain the conquests as God's will. The author was heavily involved in the history he narrates, which has other consequences for his work, but he was perhaps too near to events to accommodate them into a new vision of Persian history. Joveyni refers to Hulegu's expedition "to the western lands," i.e. from a Mongol perspective, and does not use the term Iran, or Irân-zamin. His account ends before the fall of Baghdad. His contemporary Juzjâni, writing at the same date, but tucked away safely in India, has no distinct geographical section but carries on in the tradition of Gardizi and the *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*, with a survey of the prophets and pre-Islamic and Islamic dynasties, mainly in Iran, but with in addition the rulers of the Delhi Sultanate. His backward-looking world is one into which the 'accursed' Mongols have still to be absorbed.[21] Nevertheless, both authors present the Mongols as displacing the existing powers and so, at least by implication, as their natural successors.

Striking evidence of this process is found in the brief chronicle of Qâzi Beyzâvi, *Nezâm-al-tavârikh* (ca. 1275), which provides another, unremarkable, survey of the dynasties that ruled the Iranian lands, but does so in such a way as to incorporate the Mongol rulers of Iran into the king lists, as the latest dynasty in an unbroken chain. Beyzâvi underlines the justice and encouragement to cultivation of earlier rulers, as a way of inciting the Mongols to emulate them. He also displays two basic geographical conceptions: first,

21 Atâ-Malek Joveyni, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*, ed. M. Qazvini (3 vols., London, 1912–37), tr. J. A. Boyle as *Genghis Khan. The History of the World Conqueror by 'Ata-Malik Juvaini* (Manchester, 1958, repr. 1997); Qâzi Menhâj Juzjâni, *Tabaqât-e Nâseri*, ed. Abd-al-Hayy Habibi (Kabul, 1963–64, repr. Tehran, 1984). For both, see D. O. Morgan, "Persian historians of the Mongols," in idem, ed., *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), pp. 109–24, and idem, *The Mongols* (2nd ed., Oxford, 2007), pp. 15–21.

emphasizing his native province of Fars as the center of the former Persian Empire and, secondly, briefly invoking the concept of the land of Iran, Irân-zamin, which he defines as extending from the Euphrates to the Oxus—or rather, from the Arab lands to the borders of Khojand (Tajikistan). His work can thus be seen as a small but significant step in the direction of linking the Ilkhanid regime with the past imperial history of Iran (and, in a second recension of the text written on Ghazan's conversion to Islam in 1295, also with its Islamic present), and with its ancient territories. Beyzâvi also drew attention to the choice of Persian rather than Arabic for his work, thus implicitly linking language to identity.[22]

Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi made more significant progress in this direction, but in his geographical work, the *Nozhat-al-qolub* (ca. 1344), rather than his historical writings.[23] Here we have an example of a Persian author who produced both, but did not take the next logical step of combining them. In this, we may compare him with the earlier Arabic writer, Ya'qubi (d. 890), author of the *Ta'rikh* and *Ketâb-al-boldân*, and with Mostowfi's contemporary, the Syrian prince Abu'l-Fedâ of Hamâ (d. 1331), author of *al-Mokhtasar fi akhbâr-al-bashar* and the *Taqvim-al-boldân*. Mostowfi mentions that one motivation for composing the *Nozhat-al-qolub* was that almost all previous literature about the Creation in general and Iran in particular was contained in works written in Arabic (e.g. by Abu-Zeyd Balkhi and Ebn-Khordâdbeh). 'His friends' urged him to put together all the information he had acquired in Persian (*be-zabân-e fârsi*), both from reading and from the experience of his own travels (in Tabriz, Baghdad, Isfahan, Shiraz, and elsewhere), and from reliable informants, which he modestly agreed to do.[24]

22 Charles Melville, "From Adam to Abaqa," parts I and II, *Studia Iranica* 30 (2001), pp. 67–86 and 36 (2007), pp. 7–64; Persian tr. Mohammad-Rezâ Tahmâsbi (Tehran, 2008).

23 Mostowfi, *Nozhat-al-qolub*, ed. and tr. G. Le Strange (London, 1915, 1919).

24 For other examples of the timeless and perhaps universal convention of the reluctant author being encouraged to write by his friends, see Joveyni, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*, p. 2; Nâser-al-Din Monshi Kermâni, *Semt-al-olâ le'l-hazrat-al-olyâ*, ed. Abbâs Eqbâl (Tehran, 1985), p. 7; Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi, *Matla'-e sa'deyn*, ed. A. Navâ'i (2 vols. in 4, Tehran, 1974–2004), I, p. 51; Sayyid Hasan, *Târikh-e soltâni*, ed. E. Eshrâqi (Tehran, 1985), p. 7.

He provides a long list of the sources for his work, apart from the Arab geographers mentioned above and the Persian *Jahân-nâme* of Ebn-Bakrân, including such local histories as Ebn-Balkhi's *Fârs-nâme*, Nâser-al-Din Monshi Kermâni's *Semt-al-olâ*, and the *Târikh-e Esfahân* of a certain Hâfez Abd-al-Rahmân.[25]

The Persianizing strain of Mostowfi's *Nozhat* is equally clear in his emphasis on the land of Iran,[26] though he briefly mentions distant lands (including China) as well as their marvels and chief places, in the final sections. Indeed, his descriptions (*sefat-e boldân*) start with Mecca and Medina (and Jerusalem), even though these are not actually within Iran, "for they are the most excellent, being the *qebla* of the faithful, and it seemed best to begin with them." Mostowfi then turns to Irân-zamin, with different views of its place in the division of the world; its borders (from Qonya to Balkh and Darband to Abbâdân) and its length and breadth, comparing the calculations according to Ptolemy and Biruni. We thus see Iran's claims (under the Mongol Toluids) to territories beyond the Oxus, to 'greater Khorasan,' which had no grounds in contemporary reality, but reflected earlier Sasanid paradigms, and indeed the importance of Khorasan and the security of the province to dynasties such as the Samanids and the Ghaznavids in the pre-Dandânqân period. Nevertheless, the actual description of places 'in Iran' starts with Erâq-e Arab, for "the *Masâlek-al-mamâlek* (of Ebn-Khordâdbeh) says it used to be called the heart of Irânshahr, and the *Sowar-al-aqâlim* (of Balkhi) says it was situated on the qebla (best) side of Iran, so it is proper to deal with it first" (whereas Ya'qubi starts his *Boldân* with Iraq "as it is the centre of the world and the navel of the earth").[27] There are thus still many

25 Mostowfi, *Nozhat-al-qolub*, ed. M. Dabir-Siyâqi (Tehran, 1958), preface, pp. xxiv–xxvii.

26 Mostowfi, *Nozhat* (ed. Le Strange), p. 1; tr. p. 1.

27 Mostowfi, *Nozhat* (Le Strange), pp. 30–31, 38; tr. pp. 22–23, 34. Ch. Melville, *EIr*, s.v. Hamd-Allāh Mostawfi; Ahmad b. Abi Ya'qub, *Ketâb-al-boldân*, ed. J.M. de Goeje (Leiden, 1892), p. 233; see also Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 116–17. See also Mohammad Mohammadi-Malâyeri, *Târikh o Farhang-e Irân dar dowrân-e enteqâl az asr-e sâsâni be asr-e eslâmi*, Vol. II: *Del-e Irânshahr* (Tehran, 1996), pp. 54–56.

conventional and inherited aspects to the way Mostowfi presents his material, not least structurally, including to some extent its depiction on maps, which follow Biruni's formulation of the relative distribution of land and sea. However, his map of Iran and Turkestan was highly original for its time and seems to be centered, like his world map, on central Iran and the southern Zagros.[28]

There remains a contrast with the comparably derivative work (that is, based on earlier authorities) by Abu'l-Fedâ that is worth making here: for the Arab author there is still no sense of the existence of a separate entity called Iran. The Iranian provinces, Khorasan, Fars, Sistan, and the rest, are given their own sections in the traditional way, often with no up-to-date information at all. The encyclopedic dictionary of Yâqut, written on the very eve of the Mongol invasions, also has no reference to Iran as a geographical or political space: he only refers briefly to Irânshahr for its historical significance.[29] A much greater sense of contemporary reality is found in Omari's *Masâlek-al-absâr* (ca. 1334), an administrative manual arranged geographically, but taking into account, for bureaucratic and diplomatic purposes, the modern history of each region, to inform government officials.[30]

The topographical part (*sefat-al-boldân*) of Mostowfi's *Nozhat-al-qolub* contains much of real interest from the point of view of human geography, the people (and their faith) and their produce.[31] It is not just a bare list of provincial localities, though it is obviously written by an accountant, with its interest in yields and revenues, and its rather straightforward language. Nevertheless, it includes much information about urban history and various events and personalities, and in many important cases describes the current

28 G.R. Tibbetts, "Later cartographic developments," in J.B. Harley and David Woodward, eds., *The History of Cartography* (Chicago, 1992), II bk. I, pp. 148–52. He is incorrect to assert, however, that Mostowfi was the first to use a graticule: this was already achieved by Ebn-Bakrân, *Jahân-nâme* (ed. Tehran, 1963) p. 11.

29 Yâqut al-Hamawi, *Mo'jam-al-boldân* (ed. Beirut, 1955), I, p. 289.

30 Various sections have been published; for Iran, see K. Lech, *Das Mongolische Weltreich* (Wiesbaden, 1968).

31 Parts 1 and 2 are devoted to the animal world and Man, see *Nozhat*, ed. Dabir-Siyâqi, preface, pp. xxviii–xxx.

situation at the end of the Ilkhanate, not just in the past. For example, he reports of Sâuj Bulâgh, that "its people are mostly nomads and as such are indifferent to religious matters;" the tomb of Arghun is there, a royal reserve (*qoruq*) but made known by his daughter Oljei Khâtun, who built a dervish convent (*khâneqâh*).[32] He also tells us that Sultan Oljeitu ordered the author with the help of engineers to calculate the height of Mount Bisotun, near Hamadan, in 1311.[33]

Mostowfi's historical works, by contrast, have few geographical data. The *Târikh-e gozide* (1330) is the best known. This contains little that could be described as geographical, being rather a standard account of the prophets and kings, from pre-Islamic times to the Mongols, very much along the lines of Juzjâni, Beyzâvi and the second part of his main model, the work of Rashid-al-Din (see below). Only in providing an account of his hometown, Qazvin, at the end of the *Gozide*, can we see some specific attachment to 'place' in this work, which thereby acquires some characteristics of a local history. One reason for Mostowfi's neglect of geography in a work of history is perhaps revealed in his statement in the preface (p. 17), which likens this world to a prison, from which the believer is constantly trying to seek release to attain God (a standard cliché, perhaps, but suggestive of a conservative outlook). Muslim history is, like its medieval Christian counterpart, primarily a history of the evolution of God's community, and spatial considerations are perhaps not in themselves important enough to dwell upon in much detail.

Although Mostowfi cites the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* of his patron, Rashid-al-Din, as a source for his chronicle, he does not mention it in his geography, nor does he make any effort to incorporate into his own history the geographical elements (or accounts of other nations) that Rashid-al-Din included in his work (unlike Banâkati

32 Mostowfi, *Nozhat* (Le Strange), pp. 63–64; tr. pp. 68–69. For Arghun's tomb, see R. Zipoli, "The tomb of Arghūn," in *Primo Convegno Internazionale sull'arte dell'Iran islamico* (Venice and Tehran, 1978), pp. 5–37.

33 Mostowfi, *Nozhat* (Le Strange), pp. 192–93; tr. p. 183; the result was 4800 cubitts.

in his digest of the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*).[34] Such information as he had about lands outside Iran, for instance, Mostowfi included in his *Nozhat-al-qolub*. Thus, in the final sections of this work, he has brief details of cities that, though not within in Iran, were built by the rulers of Iran, among which he includes Peking, Samarqand, and Saray [capital of the Golden Horde], and a short list of places, not built by Iranian rulers, in other countries such as Uighur territory, China, Khʷârazm, and the Dasht-e Qepchaq. These are not visualized, however, as part of a coherent view of the Mongol Empire.[35] This serves chiefly to underline the exceptional and original quality of Rashid al-Din's work.

The *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* (ca. 1310) is usually described as the first world history,[36] not least because of its attention in the second part of the work to the many people outside the world of Islam and the Mediterranean basin, which had constituted much of the known world for earlier Muslim authors. This new breadth of view was, of course, a direct consequence of the incorporation of Iran into the Mongol Empire, which was truly a world empire on a scale not previously (or subsequently) seen. These 'foreigners' were now for the most part no longer beyond the pale, but within in it or at least within earshot of the clanking of Mongol armor.

On the other hand, accounts of the Chinese, Indians and Turks (and to some extent, the Europeans (Franks or *farangis*, Rumis, Greeks), were already a regular part of traditional Arab geography, and even, as noted earlier, of Persian historiographical works (such as Gardizi's *Zeyn-al-akhbâr* and the *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*).[37] What distinguishes Rashid-al-Din's treatment from these earlier attempts

34 Banâkati, *Târikh*, ed. Ja'far She'âr (Tehran, 1969), pp. 245–359, on the Jews, Franks, Indians, and Chinese, with a map and account of the seven climes, pp. 315–18, cf. Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh: Târikh-e Hend*, ed. M. Rowshan (Tehran, 2005), pp. 12–14 ("though it has little to do with the science of History").

35 Mostowfi, *Nozhat* (Le Strange), pp. 243, 245–46, 255, 256–59; tr. pp. 235, 237–8, 246, 249–52 (Books 3 and 4 of Part 3).

36 J.A. Boyle, "Rashīd al-Dīn: The first world historian," *Iran* 9 (1971), pp. 19–26; Melville, *EIr*, s.v. *Jāmeʿ al-tavārik̲*.

37 See Chapter 2. Cf. V. Minorsky, *Sharaf al-Zamān Tāhir Marvazi: On China, the Turks and India* (London, 1942).

(and from Mostowfi's), apart from the sheer improvement in the quality of the information available, especially about China and Turkish Central Asia, is the vision with which it is incorporated as an integral part of the history, rather than as a separate entity. Although the author's focus remains on the Mongol khans and their government, the quality of Rashid-al-Din's geographical awareness is evident from the main text of his chronicle, particularly in delineating the tribal groupings and their territories at the outset of the work. Apart from the specific sections devoted to other peoples (such as the Indians and the Chinese), the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* does also seem to be informed by a greater sense of the space in which the actions occur than is the case in many earlier and later works. This partly involves simply naming places (thus establishing at least a topographical connection with the events occurring there), but in such detail that it appears to reflect very precise sources of information, for whom the lie of the land held some significance. The long account of Barâq Khan and his struggle with Abaqa, for instance, is full of references to deserts, mountains, rivers, canals and particular bridges, giving a genuine sense of place, even though there is no specific description of them.[38] Battles, marches, hunts, and maneuvers no longer seem to be occurring in a spatial vacuum.

This integrative attitude is particularly to be seen in the intended geographical section of the work, which was to form a final volume. According to Rashid-al-Din's own introduction, the historical narrative was to be accompanied by maps (*sovar*) of the climes, countries, routes, and distances, researched and authenticated to the extent possible from what was previously known in Iran and described in books and depicted (in maps), and from the learned tradition of other countries. Elsewhere, Rashid-al-Din describes his geographical work in more detail: it included a discussion of the borders of the seven climes, the extent and position of the major countries and states, their principal cities, rivers, lakes, seas, valleys and mountains, their longitude and latitude, and an enumeration of

38 Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, pp. 1075–88; tr. Wheeler M. Thackston (Harvard, 1998), pp. 525–31. The 'fictional' nature of this whole narrative is also enhanced by the use of speeches and conversations.

the postal stations (*yâm-hâ*) established throughout Eurasia by order of the Mongolian rulers. All these data were depicted on maps according to a system devised by the author.[39]

The disappearance of this geographical volume, which seems to have been completed, is highly regrettable, perhaps particularly for the loss of precious information on the Mongol postal system. It is possible that some of Rashid-al-Din's material did however find its way into Mostowfi's *Nozhat* (as in the chapter on routes and distances),[40] but in any event, Rashid-al-Din's own description of his chapter chimes uncannily with the contents of Hâfez-e Abru's geographical history, the so-called *Joghrâfiyâ* of ca. 1414–20. Indeed, this work, the intended title of which is unknown, might be considered to have fulfilled Rashid-al-Din's vision, although in other ways Hâfez-e Abru seems to have taken a step further in the combination of history and geography.[41]

Let us first glance at the arrangement of the material in the *Joghrâfiyâ*, before examining more closely the author's aims and introduction to his work. After a rather sophisticated description of the earth's globe, Hâfez-e Abru discusses first the division of territory in the inhabited quarter between Noah's three sons, the alternative (Persian) traditions of the division between the sons of Faridun or into the seven lands (*keshvar*), with Irânshahr in the middle (a concept illustrated in the *Mojmal-al-tavârikh*),[42] and the more 'scientific' division into the seven climes. There follow chapters on the seas and gulfs, rivers, mountains, and a brief statement of the dimensions of each country (Iran not being mentioned as a separate entity). Next comes a description of each, beginning with Arabia, for it is the home of the qebla and "mother of all towns."[43] This, and subsequent chapters, have a tripartite arrangement, a brief

39 Rashid al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, pp. 9, 20; Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 103; Hashem Rajabzadeh, *Khajeh Rašidol-Din Fazlol-lāh* [sic] (Tehran, 1998), p. 332, citing Rashid-al-Din's *Latâ'ef-al-haqâ'eq* II, pp. 12–14.

40 *Nozhat* (Le Strange), pp. 163–89.

41 See M.E. Subtelny and Ch. Melville, *EIr*, s.v. Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru.

42 *Mojmal*, p. 478. facs. ed., f. 170a.

43 *Joghrâfiyâ*, p. 199.

geographical description of the territory as a whole being followed by a descriptive catalogue of places, and finally an enumeration of the routes through the country.

Although there is a certain amount of historical information in most of the chapters, this begins to predominate when the account reaches the Iranian lands, which again starts with Iraq. In the sections on Fars and Kerman, for example, detailed chapters on the rulers of these provinces account for the vast bulk of the book, bringing the narrative of events down to the author's own time (1414 for Fars, 1419 for Kerman). This is history reorganized on geographical or regional lines, and Dalché's criterion of the equality of historical and geographical material is fulfilled: the work seems to be truly a historical geography, even if only in the sense of a juxtaposition of historical and geographical matter.

Hâfez-e Abru himself appears to have been uncertain as to whether he was producing a work of history or geography. The initial impetus was geographical. Hâfez-e Abru says that just as astronomers have divided the world up into climes, so he has too, with details of all the countries in each, so that anyone who contemplates his map (inserted here) can distinguish each clime and its countries from each other; and he has provided separate maps of each.[44] Thanks to God's wisdom and design, the world has always had a ruler, and if the people are fortunate it has been one who has brought prosperity to cities and provinces, as is now the case with Shâhrokh. That is, the flourishing state of the world is linked to the justice of the prince, which in turn is known by reflection on the state of the world; a viewpoint also found in the slightly later work of Ja'far b. Mohammad on Yazd.[45] "Since this monarch [Shâhrokh] evinced an interest in the Earth and its features, knowledge of which is desired by both the nobility and commonality of people, an Arabic work on the subject was brought to his attention." Hâfez-e Abru offered to translate this into Persian, adding material from other books and from the store of his own

44 *Joghrâfiyâ*, pp. 46–47. For an example of his map, see Tibbetts, "Later cartographic developments," p. 151.

45 *Târikh-e Yazd*, p. 3; cf. Isabel Miller, "Local history in ninth/fifteenth century Yazd," *Iran* 27 (1989), pp. 75–79.

experience: at which point he enumerates at length the places he had visited, ranging from Turkestan to Asia Minor and from Georgia to Delhi, and where he had also collected oral information.[46] In addition, he used the *Masâlek-al-mamâlek* of Ebn-Khordâd (*sic*) and the *Sowar-al-aqâlim*, written by Mohammad b. Yahyâ in India; also Ebn-Bakrân's *Jahân-nâme*, Nâser-e Khosrow's *Safar-nâme* and other works.[47]

His aim was to make known the characteristics of the countries of the inhabited quarter, with its cities and natural features, having verified their location from the astronomical tables. He describes the contents much as they are (see above), stating that his information is only an abridgement of everything available, which would require a lifetime's work. He gives the date of composition as 1414 (817 A.H.) and goes on to say that his reason for mentioning this is that in the passage of time, changes might occur in the places and forms (*ashkâl*) that he has described, such as the destruction or prosperity of a place, the cutting off or flowing of rivers, the drying up of one sea and the appearance of another, the shifting of mountains (none of which is as absurd as the reader may think). The main point, he emphasizes, is that no-one has attempted to do this before.[48] This explicit awareness of change is, indeed, an original historical perspective in Hâfez-e Abru's work, although it should be noted that Mostowfi also frequently mentions places once flourishing and now ruined, or former ruins now much restored, and the new names given to places. Thus Sarjahân, chief center of fifty villages all ruined in the Mongol invasions (*fetrat*) had now ceded its place to Qohud, which the Mongols call Sâ'en Qal'e and was flourishing due to its proximity to Soltâniyye; similarly, Kâghaz-konân, which was ruined in the Mongol invasion, was now a Mongol settlement, called Mogholiyye, where they carry out farming. Dargozin, formerly a village, was now the local centre, thanks perhaps to being home to a local saint, Sharaf-al-Din

46 Hâfez-e Abru, *Joghrâfiyâ*, pp. 49–50.

47 See the editor's preface to the *Joghrâfiyâ*, pp. 22–33, for a detailed analysis of Hâfez-e Abru's borrowings.

48 Hâfez-e Abru, *Joghrâfiyâ*, p. 52.

Dargozini.[49] In other words, geographical information is now part of the living fabric of contemporary history, not merely an abstract and stereotyped concept based on 'dead' classical knowledge.

Confusingly, a second preface follows, found in all manuscripts of the *Joghrâfiyâ*, which now invokes Shâhrokh's interest in history, in response to which Hâfez-e Abru has written a compilation based on Bal'ami, Rashid-al-Din and the *Zafar-nâme* (of Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi). This is brought down to his own time, 1417: a repetition of similar passages in Hâfez-e Abru's other historical works.[50] There follows a discourse on history and its benefits (or lessons).[51] It is striking, in this context, that there is no reference to the role of geographical knowledge in history, nor any indication that place or space was of any significance; a striking contrast, for instance, with the statements of the nearly contemporary English historian, Ranulph Higden (d. 1360s).[52] There is thus no connection whatever between the geographical and historical introductions, which might refer to two separate works. Very probably, in a sense, they do: like much of his other work, it is a composite text made up from various materials, much of which he also reused or revised elsewhere, like the 13th-century St. Albans historian, Matthew Paris.[53]

A geographical element persists in later chronicles of the Timurid period, but rather than being incorporated into the body of the text, is found as an annex in such works as Mirkhʷând's *Rowzat-al-safâ* and Khʷândamir's *Habib-al-siyar*, much in the way that many modern surveys of Iran's history start with an obligatory chapter on 'the land of Iran' and then entirely ignore the *genius loci* in the subsequent treatment of events. Both these later chronicles include an account of the division of the world into seven climes,

49 Mostowfi, *Nozhat* (Le Strange), pp. 64, 66, 73; tr., pp. 69–70, 76.

50 Cf. Woods, "Tīmūrid historiography," pp. 96–97.

51 *Joghrâfiyâ*, pp. 73–88; cf. Felix Tauer, "Ḥâfiẓi Abrû [sic] sur l'historiographie," in *Mélanges d'orientalisme offerts à Henri Massé* (Tehran, 1963), pp. 10–25.

52 Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* II (London, 1982), pp. 45–46; Gautier-Dalché, pp. 291, 293.

53 See Richard Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (revised ed., Cambridge, 1979), e.g. p. 110.

listing some of the most important places with a brief account that owes almost nothing to contemporary history, followed by a list of seas and rivers, springs, islands, mountains, peoples, and marvels of the *jinn*s (spirits, genii) and of animals.[54] Most of this material can be found in the earlier classical sources.

One further example may be noted of a work that contains a substantial chapter on 'geography,' namely Ahmad of Niğde's *al-Walad al-shafiq*, completed in Anatolia in 1333. This rather eccentric compilation can hardly perhaps be described as a work of history, yet it does contain much historical information (some of it inaccurate and deliberately misleading), especially about the Saljuqs of Rum.[55] The third of its five divisions (*mojallad*) is a 'geographical' section, which starts with an account of the seven climes, and the natural world of thunder, lightning, hail, rain, and storms, before progressing to discuss the 'geography' of the Throne (of God) and heavenly spheres (*aflâk*).[56]

Evidently, in the works described, geographical knowledge, even if incorporated into historical compilations, generally takes the form of ancillary information, although in the works of Rashid-al-Din and Hâfez-e Abru, at least, it is recognized as an important part of historical enquiry. Knowledge of the lands of the empire and the routes between them was as of much concern to the Mongol rulers of the 14th–15th centuries as to the Abbasid bureaucracies of the 9th–10th centuries. In addition, in the work of Hâfez-e Abru, we see a merging of geography with local and dynastic history. The narrative of events that could and did form the stuff of general history were reorganized and retold on a geographical basis in his *Joghrâfiyâ*.

54 Mirkhʷând, *Rowzat* VII, pp. 370–521; Khʷândamir, *Habib* IV, pp. 619–703, more or less similar in content, though different in organization, and both written by Khʷândamir; cf. Storey, *Persian Literature* II/1, pp. 134–35.

55 See A.C.S. Peacock, "Ahmad of Niğde's *al-Walad al-Shafiq* and the Seljuk past," *Anatolian Studies* 54 (2004), pp. 95–107; idem, "Local identity and medieval Anatolian historiography: Anavi's *Anis al-qolub* and Ahmad of Niğde's *al-Walad al-shafiq*," *Studies on Persianate Societies* 2 (2004), pp. 115–25.

56 Ahmad of Niğde, Istanbul, Suleimaniye Library, Ms. Fatih 4518, ff. 2a, 157b.

The improvement in geographical knowledge of the contemporary world (rather than simply the reproduction of 'classical' or academic descriptions) was reflected more directly in the actual narrative of events, and the extended areas over which they took place, thanks to the restless nature of the ruling élites and the size of the empire.

A World on the Move

An essential aspect of the Turko-Mongol period was the mobility of the rulers and their governments. Simply by chronicling the movements of the court (*ordu*) or the army, historians unavoidably set their narratives on a wider stage, in a space often opened up to them personally by virtue of their presence in the ruler's retinue. We have already noted the list that Hâfez-e Abru (and Mostowfi) give of the places they have been, in the former case, accompanying first Timur's and then Shâhrokh's expeditions in Iran and elsewhere.

In his chronicle, *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, Hâfez-e Abru's accounts of these journeys are more or less a simple statement of the routes taken and dates of the movements of the ruler—he gives almost no description of the numerous places along the way, for instance, on Shâhrokh's journey to Qandahar and back in the winter of 1417–18 and later to Mashhad-e Tus, or on his expedition west in 1420. These itineraries are valuable in providing a sense of the movements of the court and the preferred routes, but not of the nature of the journey itself.[57] Similarly, Ghiyâth-al-Din's account of Timur's Indian campaign in 1398–99 is almost devoid of details of the places themselves, beyond one or two minimal statements about the width or ferocity of a river, or the density of a jungle compared with the thickets of Mazandaran.[58] The quantitative data

57 *Zobdat*, II, pp. 666–71, 692–94, 714–29. Cf. Jean Aubin, "Réseau pastoral et réseau caravanier: les grand'routes du Khurassan à l'époque mongole," *Le monde iranien et l'Islam* 1 (1971), pp. 105–30, for some of these routes.

58 *Sa'âdat-nâme*, pp. 79, 83, 154. See also Michele Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande à l'époque timouride* (Paris, 2008), p. 112.

provided in these accounts, concerning the number of stages or the distances between them, the time taken for journeys, or recording exceptional feats of speed and so on, can be used also to examine an author's enhanced concern for precision and accuracy in historical narrative, although this line of investigation is perhaps more revealing of individual preferences than general trends. On the whole, this type of information indicates the nature of the records being kept, on the basis of a court diary, as in the Safavid period by the *vâqe'e-nevis*.[59] The language of both works is elegant but appropriately practical.

The personal involvement of the historians in the new mobility of the times and access to new worlds is evident from the outset of the period. Atâ-Malek Joveyni (d. 1283), whose work is on the dynastic history of the Mongols and the people they overthrew, the Khʷârazmians and the Ismailis of Alamut, traveled widely in the Mongol empire ("Transoxania, Turkestan, and northern and southern China") but, like most other writers, gives no descriptions of places. The fact that he refers to his own meetings with some of the figures he mentions adds to the authority with which he writes and brings the narrative alive. Joveyni also refers to his constant movements, and the limits this imposed on his writing, both in terms of the time available to him, and access to libraries; complaints that were echoed by Fazl-Allâh Khonji-Esfahâni two hundred years later.[60]

These and other authors often had active roles to play in the events of the time, and their presence is made clear in their works. Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi (d. 1482), for example, gives a long account of his diplomatic mission to south India on behalf of Shâhrokh from 1441 to 1444, seeking the indulgence of his readers

59 Cf. Mahdi Farhani Monfared, "Sharaf al-Din 'Alī Yazdī: Historian and mathematician," *Iranian Studies* 41 (2008), pp. 537–47, and Ch. Melville, "The itineraries of Sultan Öljeitü, 1304–16," *Iran* 28 (1990), pp. 54–70; see also Chapter 5.

60 Ch. Melville, *EIr*, s.v. Jahān-gošā-ye Jovayni. Joveyni, I, pp. 6, 118; tr. Boyle, pp. 10, 152; Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân Khonji-Esfahâni, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, ed. John E. Woods with abbr. tr. V. Minorsky, rev. and augmented (London, 1992), text, pp. 77, 95; tr. Minorsky/Woods, p. 12; ed. Mohammad Akbar Âsheq (Tehran, 2003), p. 65ff.

for the digression.[61] This included a narrative of his journey, as well as many of the remarkable things he saw in India, such as the methods for catching elephants, the brothels of Bijângar and the festival of Mahanawi.[62]

Both Abd-al-Razzâq and his main source, Hâfez-e Abru, also include details of the mission to China undertaken by Ghiyâth-al-Din Naqqâsh in 1420–22. This is a lively and colorful account of the embassy's journey and their experiences in China and Central Asia.[63] These travel narratives might be described as 'digressions' for the reader's entertainment, as well as a record of the embassy's mission. They contrast with the general lack of description of other more everyday places encountered throughout the relation of affairs, and thus they stand out as set pieces. As such, they were incorporated into the later geographical sections of Mirkh^{w}ând and Kh^{w}ândmir, where once more they contrast with the brief and perfunctory nature of other information recorded.[64]

Similarly, Ebn-Bibi's account of his father's mission to Batu Khan in 1243, and Abu'l-Qâsem Qâshâni's description of Gilan, embedded in his chronicle at the outset of his account of Oljeitu's campaign to subdue the province in 1306, could be taken as diversions in the text, although in both cases they are relevant to the events concerned, and they are at least partly geographical.[65] Qâshâni also has an account of India, in explanation of events there following the death of Alâ'-al-Din (Khalji) and the succes-

61 Abd-al-Razzâq, *Matla'* II, pp. 511–16, 519–31, 535–60, 569–76; tr. Sir H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *History of India*, vol. IV (London, 1872), pp. 95–126.

62 *Matla'*, pp. 540–41, 547–51.

63 Hâfez-e Abru, *Zobdat* II, pp. 817–64; Abd-al-Razzâq, *Matla'* II, pp. 327–50. See K.M. Maitra, *A Persian Embassy to China; being an Abstract from Zubdatu't Tawarikh of Hafiz Abru* (Lahore, 1934).

64 Mirkh^{w}ând, *Rowzat* VII, pp. 498–504 (India), 478–98 (China); Kh^{w}ândamir, *Habib* IV, pp. 626–29, 634–47.

65 Ebn-Bibi, *al-Avâmer-al-alâ'iyye*, facs. ed. A.S. Erzi (Ankara, 1956), pp. 540–44; Qâshâni, *Târikh-e Uljâytu*, ed. M. Hambly (Tehran, 1969), pp. 56–61; cf. Ch. Melville, "The Ilkhan Öljeitü's conquest of Gilan (1307): Rumour and reality," in R. Amitai-Preiss and D.O. Morgan, eds., *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden, 1999), p. 75.

sion of his son, in 1316, evidently borrowed from Vassâf, whose brief description of Ma'bar was used by Rashid-al-Din in his own section on India.[66]

Although the interest in India, at least, builds on a long scholarly engagement with the country since the pioneering work of Biruni in the Ghaznavid period, the narratives of the Timurid embassies to India and China as well as the geographical accounts embedded in the Ilkhanid histories serve to show how Asia was opened up by the Mongols and how these regions became part of the contemporary world view. This trend is most perfectly epitomized by the separate treatment of both India and China in part two of Rashid-al-Din's chronicle.[67]

A Sacred Space

One conspicuous feature of the accounts of the court's itineraries is the record of the ruler's pilgrimage (*ziyârat*) to the numerous saints' shrines along the way. This is particularly the case in the work of the Timurid historians, for example in the narratives of Hâfez-e Abru mentioned above: in 1420, Shâhrokh visited five shrines between Torbat-e Jâm, Bahrâbâd, Kharraqân, Bestâm, and Ardabil. Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi, too, mentions Soltân Abu-Sa'id's visits to numerous shrines in Khorasan before heading west in 1468. Earlier, Ghiyâth-al-Din records Timur's encounters with shaikhs on his return from the Indian campaign, as well as the presence of various ulama during the expedition

66 Qâshâni, pp. 179–84; cf. Vassâf, *Tajziyat al-amsâr va tajziyat al-a'sâr* (lith. ed., Bombay, 1853), pp. 300–3; abr. version by M. Âyati as *Tahrir-e Târikh-e Vassâf* (Tehran, 1967), pp. 184–86, and Rashid-al-Din, *Târikh-e Hend*, pp. 40–42. The three authors are close, also, on the contemporary history of the Delhi sultans, and it is less clear who borrows from whom; Vassâf, pp. 646–51; *Tahrir*, pp. 371–72; Rashid-al-Din, *Hend*, pp. 61–67, Qâshâni, pp. 184–94.

67 For China, see Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, *Târikh-e aqvâm-e pâdshâhân-e Khitây*, ed. M. Rowshan (Tehran, 2006).

itself.[68] This partly reflects the desire on the part of the historians (and their patrons) to highlight their piety and respect for local charismatic figures, as well as to gain some vicarious sanctity and approval for their otherwise scarcely defensible activities. Arghun visited the shrine of Bâyazid Bestâmi in the course of his struggle for power with Ahmad Tegudar in 1284, and Timur was careful to visit the shrine at Torbat-e Jâm before his attack on Herat.[69] Occasionally these visits, fleetingly mentioned in the chronicles, are described at more length in the saints' lives, where they serve to demonstrate the power and influence of the shaikhs.[70]

The chroniclers may also have had in mind a secondary purpose of depicting Iran as a sacred space, each new locale along the routes taken by the courts being the preserve of another holy figure and coming under the protection of his shrine. Apart from conferring legitimacy on the ruler, such a portrayal of contiguous sanctified geographical spaces also served to underline the Islamic character of Iranian soil and its spiritual integrity in the face of the Turko-Mongol intruders. In this light, it is perhaps not surprising that pilgrimage guides and descriptions of shrines became more common in this period—an example being Mo'in-al-Din Joneyd's *Shadd-al-ezâr* (written in Arabic, ca. 1389) for Shiraz, containing accounts of holy figures buried in the city's cemeteries, also partly found in Mo'in-al-Din b. Zarkub's *Shirâz-nâme* (1343).[71] The 15th-century *Târikh-e Yazd*, by Ja'far b. Mohammad, has a section devoted to

68 Ghiyâth-al-Din, *Sa'âdat-nâme*, pp. 177–78; Hâfez-e Abru, *Zobdat* II, pp. 715–29; Samarqandi, *Matla'* II, p. 965; cf. Ch. Melville, "Between Tabriz and Herat: Persian historical writing in the 15th century," in M. Ritter, R. Kauz, and B. Hoffmann, eds., *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen. Studien zum 65. Geburtstag von Bert G. Fragner* (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 35–36.

69 Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, p. 1137; Abd-al-Razzâq, *Matla'* I, pp. 523–24.

70 Ch. Melville, "History and myth: The Persianisation of Ghazan Khan," in É. M. Jeremiás, ed., *Irano-Turkic Cultural Contacts in the 11th–17th Centuries* (Piliscsaba, 2003), pp. 133–60.

71 The *Shadd-al-ezâr* was later translated into Persian by the author's son, as the *Hazâr mazâr*. Ebn-Zarkub, *Shirâz-nâme*, ed. E. Vâ'ez Javâdi (Tehran, 1971), pp. 125–208. Denise Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la domination mongole. Politique et fiscalité (XIIIe–XIVe s.)* (Paris, 2005), pp. 61–63.

the cemeteries (*mazârât*) of sayyids and shaikhs of the city, containing some detailed accounts of the people buried there, in which the author's presence, recounting stories and miracles and personal experiences, is rather noticeable. The same format was adopted by Ahmad b. Hoseyn in his substantial revision and updating of the *Târikh-e Yazd*, though without the personal presence of the author, and with no reference to his predecessor; stories are introduced by words such as, "They say …" (*guyand*), or "it is related …" (*naql ast*). The emphasis on the notion of Yazd as the 'abode of worship' (*Dâr-al-ebâde*) is strong in both works.[72] The period saw a growth of Persian literature on the subject, especially from Khorasan and Central Asia in works devoted to Balkh, Bukhara, Samarqand, and Herat. The trend continued into the Safavid period and beyond, with compositions such as Hâfez-Hoseyn Karbalâ'i's *Rowzât-al-jenân* (1582), concerning cemeteries in Tabriz.[73]

We may also note the production of several hagiographical works during the Mongol and Timurid period, such as Aflâki's life of Jalâl-al-Din Rumi and his family, Ebn-Bazzâz's life of Shaikh Safi-al-Din of Ardabil, Mahmud b. Othmân's life of Amin-al-Din Balyâni of Kâzerun, and the *vitae* of Ne'mat-Allâh Vali, among others. Important as sources for local history and society, such works are distinguished from the bulk of contemporary chronicles by the accessibility of their language and their attractive narrative framework of anecdotes and moral tales, aimed at the pious followers of the shaikhs. Not without literary elegance and often incorporating Persian and Arabic verses, the hagiographers present the antithesis of the world of the courtly chroniclers, in portraying the lives of the common people, whether in villages or the cities, often the victims of the oppression of the ruling military elites, with whom the shaikhs interacted more or less actively.[74]

72 Ja'fari, *Târikh-e Yazd*, pp. 106–37; Ahmad b. Hoseyn, *Târikh-e jadid-e Yazd*, pp. 150–96; cf. Miller, "Local history," pp. 76–77.

73 M. Szuppe, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography v. and Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, pp. 55–56, 70–71.

74 See in particular the pioneering work of Jean Aubin, e.g. *Matériaux pour la biographie de Shah Ni'matullah Wali Kermani* (Tehran, 1956), and idem, *Deux Sayyids de Bam au XV^e siècle. Contribution à l'histoire de*

Small is Beautiful: Local Histories

Such bio-geographical writings chiefly belong to the realm of local historiography, and most city or provincial chronicles written in this period contain some record of the lives of prominent local figures, as well as passages devoted to local topography, religious monuments and public works.[75]

One of the more long-lived traditions of local historiography was carried on in the Caspian provinces, with Ebn-Esfandiyâr's *Târikh-e Tabarestân* on the very eve of the Mongol period (ca. 1216) being followed by Owliyâ-Allâh Âmoli's *Târikh-e Ruyân* (1362) and the histories of Gilan and Mazandaran by Zahir-al-Din Mar'ashi (1476, 1489).[76] These works generally cover the characteristics, special merits (*fazâ'el*) and foundation legends of the districts concerned, together with dynastic history and contemporary affairs. The historical narrative tends to be organized by ruling family rather than in annals, though the continuation of Mar'ashi's *Târikh-e Gilân* is distinct in this respect. Mar'ashi, as an active participant in many of the events he records, also provides much geographical or topographical information based on his own knowledge of the territory and his personal experience, which leads him to interesting and pertinent views on the nature of historical accuracy and the uncertainty even of eyewitness evidence.[77]

l'Iran timouride (Wiesbaden, 1956), developed also by Denise Aigle, ed., *Saints orientaux. Hagiographies médiévales comparées* I (Paris, 1995), and "Le soufisme sunnite en Fârs. Cheikh Amîn al-dîn Balyânî," in Aigle, ed. *L'Iran face à la domination mongole* (Tehran and Paris, 1997), pp. 233–61.

75 For local histories, see Miquel, *La géographie*, pp. 253–57; A.K.S. Lambton, "Persian local histories: The tradition behind them and the assumptions of their authors," in B. Scarcia Amoretti and L. Rostagno, eds., *Yadnama in memoria di Alessandro Bausani*, Studi Orientali 10 (Rome, 1991), pp. 227–38; Ch. Melville, "Persian local histories: Views from the wings," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 7–14; *Ketâb-e Mâh. Târikh va joghrâfiyâ* 44–45 and 46–47 (2001).

76 Melville, "The Caspian provinces: A world apart," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 45–91.

77 Mar'ashi, *Târikh-e Tabarestân*, pp. 394–95; cf. Melville, "The Caspian provinces", p. 73; see also above, Introduction, p. liv.

The variety of these works defies uniform characterization and each should be approached on its own terms and in its own context. As sources they can provide valuable corroborative or counter evidence of events mentioned on a wider scale elsewhere. Mar'ashi's account of events after the deaths of Jahânshâh Qara Qoyunlu and the Timurid ruler, Soltân Abu-Sa'id in 1467–69, and his own participation in action in Qazvin and Târom, complements and elaborates the details provided by the Aq Qoyunlu chronicler, Abu-Bakr Tehrâni, as well as providing a far more immediate sense of events unfurling. The narrative is borne along by phrases such as, "When daylight came …," "When this news arrived …," "The next day …," "Meanwhile …," and so on.[78] In other cases, for instance in southern Iran, we can see the shifting perspectives of the central court chroniclers and local historians on the role of the leaders of urban society during incidents of conflict with the Turko-Mongol ruling elites, allowing a more sophisticated analysis of the interactions between Turk and Tajik, and city and military in the 15th century, than could be provided by the main dynastic chronicles alone. These works (such as the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh-e Hasani*, Esfezâri's *Rowzat-al-jannât* or Fasih Khʷâfi's *Mojmal-e Fasihi*) do much, in addition, to elucidate the backgrounds and the connections of the officials who came to serve in the Timurid courts and bureaucracy.[79]

In Anatolia, Persian historical writing emerges in the period of transmission of power from the outgoing Saljuq dynasty of Rum to the increasingly dominant Mongol Ilkhans. The historians are concerned primarily with 'local'—provincial or urban—affairs, with a concentration of information on Konya or Aksaray, while at the same time witnessing the demise of the Saljuqs in its different stages. This leads to an informative difference in the treatment of events as time elapses. Ebn-Bibi writes at a moment of crisis in the Saljuq sultanate, and appears to invest some optimism in the return

78 Abu-Bakr Tehrâni, *Ketâb-e Diyârbakriyye*, pp. 494–95, 499–507; Mar'ashi, *Gilân*, pp. 330–34, 336–44.

79 Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Local histories of southern Iran," in Pfeiffer *et al.*, eds. *History and Historiography*, pp. 267–81, and idem, *Power, Politics and Religion*, pp. 68–71.

of Mas'ud b. Ezz-al-Din from the Crimea as the 'legitimate' heir in 1281, with which his history ends. For Âqsarâ'i, writing forty years later (ca. 1323), at the high water mark of Mongol power in the province and the Saljuqs long gone, this merely heralded another debilitating division within the sultanate, now increasingly shouldered aside by the Ilkhans and their officials. Âqsarâ'i, too, ends his history on a positive note, shortly before the rebellion and exile of his patron, Timurtâsh son of Chupân, events quickly followed by the collapse of Mongol authority.[80]

Most of the local histories are indeed local in their focus—with horizons not extending far outside the province; nevertheless, they are all more or less aware of events on a larger scale, especially as they affected their own regions. Ebn-Esfandiyâr's history contains much information of events across northern Iran, outside the Caspian provinces and Âqsarâ'i likewise shows a necessary concern with political developments in the Ilkhanid heartlands in northwest Iran, involving the changes of viziers at the center that prompted administrative changes in Anatolia. Nâser-al-Din Monshi Kermâni (a native of Yazd), while giving an account of the Qara Khitây dynasty in Kerman, concludes his history with events in the province from the perspective of one who had participated in affairs at the Ilkhanid court, and later had become an adherent of the great amir Esen-Qotlogh, to whom he dedicated the main text of the work in 1316.[81] Aziz b. Ardashir, author of the stylish *Bazm-o-razm*, a native of Baghdad who fled to Anatolia after the conquest of the city by Timur, also has a clear perception of the wider consequences of the "Chaghatay devil's" disastrous and destructive military activities in the Muslim west.[82]

80 Melville, "Early Persian historiography," pp. 156–57.

81 Nâser-al-Din Monshi, pp. 7–8. The concluding section (*tatemmat*), written in 1320, was dedicated to Malek Qotb-al-Din Nikruz, pp. 102, 105–6.

82 See Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande*, pp. 80–89. He draws interesting connections between Timur's expeditions in India and Anatolia, and the propaganda accompanying them.

2. History as Propaganda

Citing the example of the role of Onsori, Ferdowsi and Otbi in preserving all that remains of the good name and fair memory of Mahmud of Ghazna, Rashid-al-Din concludes that poets and historians are the best propagandists (*sokhan-varân va movarrekhân mehtar va behtar do'âchiyân-and*).[83] The local histories mentioned above were all, in their different ways, performing one of the main functions of the medieval chroniclers, whether in Iran or elsewhere, namely to affirm the dynastic rights of the current regime, whether the ruler of the time was monarch of a mighty empire, a local potentate, or indeed the representative of a religious order with an eye on preserving his claims to leadership. Although hagiographical writing does not fall within the scope of this volume, it is useful to remember that saints' lives, no less than the biographies of other prominent leaders of society, demonstrate many similar concerns with establishing the legitimate authority of their subjects, not least in the way they may have been marked out from birth, by dreams or other signs, as the chosen ones of their age (see also below). As mentioned earlier, hagiographical works are particularly numerous in the Turko-Mongol period, reflecting among other things the rise of Sufi orders, and the growing prominence of charismatic religious figures in society. Although not conceived as history in a scientific sense, saints' lives can contain historical information and offer a different perspective on events that are also reported by the chroniclers. Thus Aflâki's explanation for the demise of the Saljuq sultanate in Anatolia and the death of Sultan Rokn-al-Din Qelej Arslân in 1264 differs greatly from that of the historians, Ebn-Bibi regarding the Parvâne Mo'in-al-Din as responsible and Âqsarâ'i later blaming the Sultan's own immorality, whereas Aflâki sees the displeasure of Jalâl-al-Din Rumi as the hidden cause.[84] Dynastic

83 Rashid-al-Din, *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, p. 33. Echoed by Hâfez-e Abru, *Joghrâfiyâ* I, p. 82.

84 Shams-al-Din Ahmad Aflâki, *Manâqeb-al-ârefin*, ed. Tahsin Yazici (2 vols., Ankara, 1959), I, pp. 146–47; Ebn-Bibi, *Avâmer*, pp. 643–50; Âqsarâ'i, *Mosâmerat-al-akhbâr*, ed. O. Turan (Ankara, 1944), pp. 81–87; cf. Melville, "Early Persian historiography," p. 159.

change, and the transfer of power within and between ruling families, remained a constant source of conflict and uncertainty, requiring explanation, justification and, as importantly, providing a pretext for moralizing on the transitory nature of human worldly success.[85]

In the Abbasid period, as noted in the previous chapter, several historians engaged with the rulers of the time, particularly with the Ghaznavids, upholding their rule whether by faint praise, as in the case of Beyhaqi's portrayal of Sultan Mas'ud, or more open admiration, as in the case of Gardizi. The fulsome flattery of writers such as Jorfâdhqâni for his local prince is the natural consequence of the circumstances in which these authors were writing, and seeking patronage and a livelihood at court. An author such as Râvandi, roving in search of reward, might be rather vague on the merits of his changing dedicatees, but could give a positive account of the dynasty as a whole. Whatever their qualities and the strength of their actual power, Iran's rulers in the Abbasid period remained theoretically subject to the caliph and their legitimacy derived in large part from their adherence to Islamic norms. Alongside this remained the "resilient core of the Persian imperial tradition."[86]

With the collapse of the Abbasid caliphate and the establishment of Mongol rule, new political concepts had to be accommodated or existing ones transformed, in order to reflect the realities of power and their secular and military underpinnings. Whatever hints of such realities might be discernible in the pre-Mongol regimes of the Ghaznavid and Saljuq Turks, the framework remained that of the notional integrity of the Islamic community. This was shattered

85 For the intersection of history and hagiography, see Catherine Cubitt, "Memory and narrative in the cult of early Anglo-Saxon saints," in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 46–50; J.M. Pizarro, "Mixed modes in historical narrative," in Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti, eds., *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006), p. 92; for the Timurid era, Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, esp. pp. 72–77.

86 Marta Simidchieva, "Kingship and legitimacy in Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyāsatnāma*," in B. Gruendler and L. Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers* (Wiesbaden, 2004), p. 128. Cf. Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, 1997), esp. pp. 66–90.

by the Mongol conquests; the question is, what effect did this have on historical writing? The composition of the ruling élite, and to a large extent their lifestyle, differed to a greater or lesser degree from what went before, but was it more a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*? Did the historians' tasks, to record, to entertain and to instruct, differ substantially from before? In as much as the historians generally were still (or even more so) servants of the ruler, in one capacity or another, probably not. The state of research on individual writers and on comparisons with earlier and later periods makes generalizations particularly hazardous, as does the great range of styles and types of historical writing in the Mongol and Timurid periods. For the time being, it seems preferable to treat each work on its own terms and its particular context, while addressing the interplay of the main components of political legitimacy in this period, namely the Islamic, the Turko-Mongol (and Chengizid) and the Iranian, which might point the way to answering these questions.

Most of the historical works already mentioned have an element of propaganda in their make up, especially those most intimately associated with court patronage. Beyzâvi's *Nezâm-al-tavârikh* (ca. 1275) recognizes the reality of Mongol power as justified by the defeat of the Khʷâramshâh and the Abbasid caliph—a scholarly and abstinent man, but lacking (political) sense (*ra'y*), unlike Hulegu, who together with ra'y possessed personal courage. His successor Abaqa was just and benevolent.[87] By the reign of Ghazan, the restoration of Muslim rule and Iranian kingly traditions went hand in hand to ensure the legitimacy of the dynasty and its ability to defend and secure Iranian territory.[88] Beyzâvi seems to have been writing chiefly for the local vizier in Fars, as well as the *sâheb-e divân* ('chief minister') Shams-al-Din Joveyni, whose patronage also inspired Ebn-Bibi in Konya and served an ideological program of upholding the continuity of Iranian culture in the

87 Beyzâvi, *Nezâm-al-tavârikh*, ed. Mir Hâshem Mohaddeth (Tehran, 2003), pp. 83, 132.

88 Melville, "The rearrangement of history, II."

face of the Mongol threat.[89] The other Joveyni brother, the historian Atâ-Malek Alâ'-al-Din, also writing in the dark period before Ghazan's conversion, is similarly obliged to uphold the legitimacy of the regime and does so by emphasizing the rightful acquisition of power by the Toluids in the face of the misgovernment and treason of the Ogedeids and their Chaghataid cousins, the justice of Mongke's rule and his pretended concern for the Muslims. Nevertheless, Ogedei is routinely referred to as the "Hâtem of the Age," reflecting his remarkable generosity, celebrated in a series of anecdotes that make a welcome diversion from the grim record of the assaults on the cities of eastern Iran under Chengis Khan.[90] Hulegu's successful campaigns against the 'heretical' Ismailis on his entry into the Iranian lands, which forms the last section of the *Jahân-goshâ*, also tends to present as favorable an impression of the conquerors as could be envisaged, following the horrors of the first Mongol invasions. By removing this scourge from the bosom of the kingdom, Hulegu performed a great service to Islam.[91]

Rashid-al-Din, writing for Ghazan after his conversion to Islam in 1295, naturally has a different task to perform, and does so by emphasizing Ghazan's high moral and personal qualities, and also his role in fulfilling God's purpose, initiated in the conquests of his ancestor Chengis Khan, by bringing the Mongols into the Muslim fold.[92] Furthermore, the opening page of this work, completed after Ghazan's death in 1304, wastes no time in comparing his rule (favorably, of course), with the reigns of Dârâ (Darius III), Ardavân, Faridun, and Anushirvân—that is, the portrayal of kingship displayed in the *Shahname*.[93] In addition, Ghazan's successor, Oljeitu, "sat on the throne like Jamshid," and inaugurated a rule of perfect justice and peace—verse: "Oh spreader of justice,

89 Also A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Livre des Rois, miroir du destin II—Takht-e Soleymān et la symbolique du *Shāh-Nāme*," *Studia Iranica* 20 (1991), pp. 54–74; see further below.

90 Joveyni, I, pp. 158–95; tr. Boyle, pp. 201–39.

91 Joveyni, III, p. 278; tr. Boyle, p. 725.

92 Peter Jackson, "Mongol Khans and religious allegiance: The problems confronting a minister-historian in Ilkhanid Iran," *Iran* 47 (2009), pp. 109–22.

93 Rashid al-Din, *Jâmi'-al-tavârikh*, p. 1.

in the reign of whose justice no sword has been drawn from its scabbard"—with a battery of portentous epithets and titles that allude to every possible aspect of appropriate religious and dynastic qualities, both Islamic and Iranian, but not, except for the use of the title Qa'an, anything that might appear to legitimize Mongol rule on its own terms.[94] The mythic origins of Chengis Khan himself, however, are narrated by Rashid-al-Din in terms not so dissimilar from those found in Mongol tradition (in the *Secret History*). Elements of this survive in connection with Timur's supposed relationship to the genealogy of Chengis Khan, as inscribed on his tomb and reported in various early Timurid sources, including Hâfez-e Abru's *Zobdat-al-tavârikh* and the preface to Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nâme*.[95] The same trend can be observed in Mo'in-al-Din Natanzi's *Montakhab-al-tavârikh-e Mo'ini*, in two recensions (1413–14), the first dedicated to Eskandar-Soltân and the second to Shâhrokh, which clearly draw on Turko-Mongol sources and reveal a strong attachment to the Chaghatay milieu from which Timur emerged.[96] Controversies surrounding the legitimacy of the different Chengisid houses, as seen in the work of Mo'in-al-Din, are already reflected by the historians of the 14th century, such as Seyfi Haravi (ca. 1320), in his history of Herat, and Shabânkâre'i (ca. 1337–43), in his general dynastic history with a strong focus on southern Iran. These chronicles witness the continuing debates on the claims of the Jochids, Toluids, Chaghatayids, and Ogedeids to

94 Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

95 Denise Aigle, "Les transformations d'un mythe d'origine. L'exemple de Genghis Khan et de Tamerlan," in idem, ed. *Figures mythiques des mondes musulmans*, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89–90 (2000), pp. 151–68; John E. Woods, "Timur's genealogy," in M.M. Mazzaoui and V.B. Moreen, eds., *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson* (Salt Lake City, 1990), pp. 85–125. The texts diverge from the tombstone, in omitting the remarkable reference to the role of a descendant of the Imam Ali in the 'immaculate conception' of Alan Qo'a, the founding mother of the Mongols. For Yazdi's preface (*moqaddeme*), see the edition of Sayyid Sa'id Mir Mohammad Sâdeq and A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 2008), pp. 3–224.

96 Woods, "The rise of Tīmūrid historiography," pp. 89–93, noting also Hâfez-e Abru's tendency to water down these sympathies for the Turko-Mongol tradition.

sovereignty, in regional works that belied the uniformity of view presented by the mainstream historiography of the Ilkhanid and Timurid courts.[97]

In their turn, Ghazan and later Timur became the source of legitimacy for their successors, but increasingly distanced from their Chengisid origins. One historian prominent in the process of constructing Timur's credentials as a dynastic founder was Ali Yazdi, whose *Zafar-nâme* was commissioned by Timur's grandson, Ebrâhim-Soltân, in ca. 1419.[98] Yazdi gives a verse description of Timur's childhood, which revealed his outstanding nature and pre-eminence among his fellows, a literary topos found in many other narratives, as mentioned above, such as the hagiography of Jalâl-al-Din Rumi, and which became an important element of later manipulations of Timur's myth.[99] Ali Yazdi also pays considerable attention to Timur's family, reporting the birth of his children, their marriages and careers, particularly those who later came to prominence, such as Shâhrokh, the father of his patron, Ebrâhim-Soltân. Timur's Chengisid (Chaghatay) background is less prominent than in the Preface, completed in 1427.[100] The epithet used by Ali Yazdi for Timur, *Sâheb-qerân* or 'Lord of the [auspicious] planetary conjunction,' though also applied earlier by Rashid-al-Din to Oljeitu without any particular emphasis, became Timur's hallmark *par excellence*, and was to become a reference point for later rulers,

97 Beatrice Manz, "Mongol history rewritten and relived," *REMMM* 89–90 (2000), pp. 135–36.

98 For a study of Yazdi's background and aims in writing, see Shiro Ando, "Die Timuridische Historiographie II. Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī," *Studia Iranica* 24/2 (1995), pp. 219–46. The original title of the work seems to have been *Fath-nâme-ye sâheb-qerâni*, see also Ali Yazdi, *Monsha'ât*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 2009), p. 31.

99 Ali Yazdi, *Zafar-nâme* (ed. Abbâsi), I, pp. 11–12, (ed. Sâdeq and Navâ'i), I, pp. 238–39; the scene is illustrated in the famous manuscript commissioned by the Mughal ruler Akbar, now in the Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna. Cf. Beatrice Manz, "Tamerlane's career and its uses," *Journal of World History* 13/1 (2002), pp. 7, 13. For Rumi, see Aflâki, *Manâqeb-al-ârefin* I, pp. 74–77.

100 Woods, "Tīmūrid historiography," pp. 103–5.

such as the Aq Qoyunlu chief Uzun Hasan, to whom it is systematically applied by Abu-Bakr Tehrâni.[101]

Although Shâhrokh became increasingly concerned to promote his Islamic credentials as ruler, he did not necessarily distance himself from his father Timur, nor entirely reject Mongol tradition, but was able to find ways in which to harmonize the two, by evoking the example of Ghazan, the Muslim convert, and in particular emulating the historiographical model of the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* by commissioning a comparable chronicle from Hâfez-e Abru. This explicitly absorbed and continued Rashid-al-Din's work, as well as Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi's history of Timur, the *Zafar-nâme*.[102] Stylistically, too, Hâfez-e Abru's work tends to be couched in the similarly straightforward language of his sources, though ornamented with poetic quotations as was common custom.

Despite the persistence of the Turko-Mongol and to some extent Chengisid traditions in the chroniclers' portrayal of the rulers of the period, and the promotion of the Ilkhans and Timurids as sovereigns by virtue of their conquests and the establishment of new imperial dispensations, the rhetoric of legitimacy was primarily couched in Islamic terms. Rashid-al-Din's emphasis on Ghazan's conversion was common to all subsequent historians of the period. The Anatolian author, Âqsarâ'i, contrasted Ghazan's reign of justice and godliness with the chaos and confusion of his predecessor(s). Vassâf of Shiraz's work is assertively Islamic in tone, in his case still voicing the incompatibility and antagonism between the competing Mongol and Muslim traditions, rather than the scope for accommodations between them: his perspective was no doubt colored by the damage done to the economy of southern Iran by the Mongols' fiscal 'system.' On the other hand, of the slightly younger generation, Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi portrays Hulegu almost as if he were a Muslim, and Shabânkâre'i does the

101 *Ketâb-e Diyâbariyye*, cf. Melville, "Between Tabriz and Herat," p. 33.

102 Manz, "Mongol history rewritten and relived," pp. 144–46; idem, "Family and ruler in Timurid historiography," in Devin DeWeese, ed., *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2001), pp. 68–69.

same even for Chengis Khan with his God-given support.[103] In addition, it is possible to see Iranian concepts of sovereignty mediating between these competing ideologies, and being instrumental especially in the early stages of the acculturation of the Turko-Mongol warlords to their new acquisitions.

3. An Epic Age

One striking way in which Iranian concepts were reactivated in the Mongol period was the revival of interest in the *Shahname*.[104] The frequent citation of Ferdowsi's verses in Râvandi's *Râhat-al-sodur*, especially, indicates that the popularity of the work had never entirely faltered in poetic and courtly circles, as does such patchy evidence as the existence of *Shahname*-reciters in the service of the Bavandid ruler of Mazandaran, Hosâm-al-Dowle Ardashir (reg. 1173–1206), or the inscription of verses from the *Shahname* on the city walls of Saljuq Konya.[105] On the whole, however, the idiom and metaphor of the *Shahname*—allusions to the world of pre-Islamic Iranian kings and epic heroes—is absent from the surviving historical writing in Persian in the late Abbasid period. This changed markedly in Ilkhanid Iran, when the *Shahname* was once more also considered as an historical source.

Joveyni uses the *Shahname* in his *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ* as a subtext to his narrative of the Mongol conquests, as part of a wider program of asserting Iranian identity in the face of the threat posed

103 Âqsarâ'i, *Mosâmerat*, pp. 185–89; for Vassâf, see Ch. Meville, "Revolt of amirs in 1319," in Denise Aigle, ed., *L'Iran face à la domination mongole* (Paris/Teheran, 1997), p. 114; Mostowfi, *Zafar-nâme*, p. 1214 (f. 606b); Shabânkâre'i, pp. 223, 227.

104 Melikian-Chirvani, "Le Livre des Rois, miroir du destin," *Studia Iranica* 17 (1988), esp. pp. 31–45; idem, "Livre des Rois, II," and idem, "Conscience du passé et résistance culturelle dans l'Iran mongol," in Aigle, *La domination mongole*, esp. pp. 137–49.

105 J.S. Meisami, "Ravandi's *Rahat al-sudur*: History or hybrid?" *Edebiyât* 5 (1994), pp. 183–215; Ebn-Bibi, p. 254 (walls of Qonya).

by the Mongols, and as a vehicle for Persianizing the regime.[106] Although this tendency is not nearly so conspicuous in the much larger work of Rashid-al-Din, several of the verses cited by Joveyni are repeated by the later author too.[107] As previously noted, Rashid-al-Din is quick to allude to Persian kingly traditions to qualify Ghazan's rule at the outset of the *Târikh-e mobârak-e Ghâzâni*, and he similarly refers to the evildoers destroyed by Chengis Khan as like Zahhâk in their conduct (*sirat*), but this is generally the extent of the use of such imagery. In the preamble to the Mongol invasion of Syria and Egypt in 1260, Hulegu's envoy is supposed to have told the Mamluks that, "the reputation of our innumerable army became as famous as the story of Rostam and Esfandiyâr." This is similar to Beyzâvi's description of Ghazan as like Hâtem in generosity, Rostam in courage and Anushirvân in justice—these were already becoming formulaic stereotypes. The titles and attributes given to Oljeitu by the historian, Abu'l-Qâsem Qâshâni are even more spectacular and all embracing, among them Siyâvosh-like, with the pomp of Khosrow, and the discernment of Dârâ.[108]

More specific signs of the heightened interest in the *Shahname* are the proliferation of verse histories written somewhat later in imitation of Ferdowsi's epic, though examples are also attested from the Saljuq era.[109] The first of these in the Mongol period was by Shams-al-Din Kâshâni (ca. 1306), which the author claims is a poetic version of the prose history of the Mongols by Rashid-al-Din, which he further claims was commissioned specifically by Ghazan Khan for the (sole) purpose of being rendered into verse to perpetuate his name. On the whole, Shams-al-Din's *Shahname-ye Chingizi* does follow the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* quite closely, though with some differences of emphasis, designed to justify and applaud the Mongol invasions of Iran. However, towards the end,

106 See above, note 89; Claude-Claire Kappler, "Regards sur les Mongols au XIII^{e} siècle: Joveyni, Rubrouck," *Dabireh* 6 (1989), esp. pp. 196–201.

107 E.g. *Jame'-al-tavârikh*, pp. 349, 350, 474, 495, 496, 651, 1085.

108 *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*, pp. 32, 1029; Beyzâvi, in Melville, "Adam to Abaqa, II," pp. 32, 63; Qâshâni, *Târikh-e Uljâytu*, pp. 3–4.

109 Especially in Anatolia, see Melville, "Between Firdausi and Rashid al-Din," *Studia Islamica* 104–5 (2007 [2008]), p. 46, and for what follows.

the narrative coherence of the text is lost, partly in problems of transmission, and the work finishes with a number of homilies on kingship, and anecdotes of characters from the *Shahname*, such as Alexander the Great, Bahrâm-e Gur, and Anushirvân, with a clear didactic purpose. The work continues to the first year of the reign of Oljeitu.

Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi also produced a large verse chronicle, the *Zafar-nâme* (ca. 1334), of which the *Târikh-e gozide* was intended as an interim abridgement. Like Kâshâni, Mostowfi also relied very heavily on the chronicle of Rashid-al-Din, but the *Zafar-nâme* was conceived as a continuation of the *Shahname*, beginning with Islamic history from the Arab conquests, rather than a dynastic history of the Mongols. No critical attention has yet been paid to the narrative of pre-Mongol history in the *Zafar-nâme*, and indeed, it may be that it differs little in content from the *Târikh-e gozide* (or from Rashid-al-Din's own narrative). As in other such cases, studying the selection of what historians recorded of the past should be a fruitful avenue for research. For the history of the late Ilkhanid period, however, the *Zafar-nâme* is an important contemporary source, down to last year of Abu-Sa'id's reign, and it was heavily used, without acknowledgment, by Hâfez-e Abru in his continuations of the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*.[110] Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the *Zafar-nâme* is that Mostowfi sustained his verse rendering of Mongol history over such a large text, and was able to provide a fairly circumstantial record of events despite the rather unconducive medium he had chosen. The idiom and style of the *Shahname* naturally gave a specific character to the work, recalling the splendor and traditions of the past, and creating the impression of a continuity with the present world. Abaqa's troops, for example, address him in this way as he sets out to fight Barâq:[111]

> May the Shah of the World live forever! May the head of his enemies be hacked from their body!

110 Melville, "Hamd Allah Mustawfi's *Zafarnamah* and the historiography of the late Ilkhanid period," in Kambiz Eslami, ed., *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in honor of Iraj Afshar* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 1–12.

111 *Zafar-nâme*, f. 637a, facs. ed. p. 1275, lines 4–7.

When this Shahanshah behaves towards the army like this, may [our] life be his sacrifice on the day of revenge!
When Abaqa heard the words of the amirs, he showed them all favor;
He bestowed on them horses and gold without limit, he plied them with arms and armor,
The famous army was bedecked like an orchard of fruit and a garden in spring.

The conclusion of the work before the death of Abu-Sa'id is hardly a coincidence, in view of the collapse of political authority that followed; it is also significant that Mostowfi himself realized that the *Shahname* was not a suitable model for recording the dire events of the post-Abu-Sa'id period, which he chose instead to chronicle in prose in his *Dheyl-e Zafar-nâme*.[112] Evidently, even for the most optimistic author, the idealistic upholding of the fantasy of justice on the part of the rulers, which underpins much of the rhetoric of the *Zafar-nâme*, was hard to maintain in the interregnum that followed the death of Abu-Sa'id in 1335 and the chief vizier, Ghiyâth-al-Din son of Rashid-al-Din, the next year.[113]

A further verse chronicle, the *Shâhanshâh-nâme* by Ahmad-e Tabrizi, completed in this period (ca. 1337), is again specifically modeled on Ferdowsi's work and the unique copy is found in a collection of epics, including the *Shahname*, brought together in a manuscript made in Shiraz for the Timurid prince governor, Pir Mohammad and illustrated for his cousin Eskandar-Soltân, between 1397 and ca. 1410. This is a denser and more difficult work than Mostowfi's *Zafar-nâme* and has still been very little used, although it contains important information. It seems to have been completed, at least, under Jalayerid patronage and is dedicated to Shaikh Hasan-e Bozorg's vizier, Mas'ud-Shâh Inju.[114]

112 See Chapter 2.

113 Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan and the Decline of the Ilkhanate, 1327–37: a Decade of Discord in Mongol Iran* (Bloomington, 1999), esp. pp. 43–50.

114 Elaine Wright, "Firdausi and more: a Timurid anthology of epic tales," in R. Hillenbrand, ed., *Shahnama. The Visual Language of the Book of Kings* (Aldershot, 2004), esp. pp. 74–79; Melville, *The Fall of Amir Chupan*, p. 9; see also J. A. Boyle, "Some thoughts on the sources for the Ilkhanid period of Persian history," *Iran* 12 (1974), pp. 185–88.

An otherwise unknown author, Sâheb, composed a different verse epic around this time, the *Daftar-e del-goshâ* (1320). The author was a scribe and for a time Sâheb-e divân in the chancery of the Shabânkâre rulers of Fars, whose history he celebrates from their origins to the reign of Shah Mozaffar-al-Din Mohammad (d. 1260). Sâheb was disenchanted with his lot, and ends his story there, asking why should he mention characters in his chronicle from whom he had seen no generosity (*karam*). The work ends with a message from the lord of Gerdkuh, reporting the arrival of the Mongols and seeking support, to which Shah Mozaffar sent a favorable response; the outcome, however, is left hanging. The author was inspired to write after seeing Ferdowsi in a dream, and was sustained by his example; the work is full of references to the *Shahname* and of the language of Ferdowsi's poem, which Sâheb emulates rather effectively. The Shabânkâre region might have provided an especially fertile environment for such a composition; the historian Shabânkâre'i famously describes the warlord Nâser-al-Din Gudarz charging into battle bellowing out the *Shahname* before being hacked down by his foes, in around 1262. Although entirely devoid of chronological markers, it would repay proper investigation as a valuable account of the affairs of southern Iran at this time, and the relations between the Shabânkâre maleks and the Salghurid atabegs of Fars.[115]

The composition and copying of verse chronicles continued throughout the Mongol period and beyond, particularly with works dedicated to individual rulers, such as Ghazan Khan, Timur and Shâhrokh. The *Ghâzân-nâme* was composed in the reign of Sultan Sheykh-Oveys the Jalayerid (reg. 1346–74) by Nur-al-Din Azhdari, a former member of the bureaucracy under Ghazan, and is a more or less standard account of his reign on the basis of Rashid-al-Din, but with several exotic elements. These include an encounter with a Christian monk in the mountains of Kurdestan, a meeting with the philosopher Nasir-al-Din Tusi (who in fact died when Ghazan was

115 Sâheb, *Daftar-e del-goshâ*, ed. Rasul Hâdizâde (Moscow, 1965), p. 264 (f. 130b); cf. N. Takmil-Homâyun, "Âshnâ'i bâ Shabânkâregân: mo'arrefi va tahlil-e 'Daftar-e del-goshâ'," *Honar va Mardom* 188–193 (1978–79), consecutive issues (unfinished). See also Shabânkâre'i, *Majma'-al-ansâb*, p. 169.

aged 2) and an interesting episode in Daghestan, in which Ghazan slays a dragon in a cave and is guided by an ancient sage to the treasure of Alexander the Great.[116] Ali Yazdi wrote a *Timur-nâme* and another work of the same name was composed by the poet Abd-Allâh Hâtefi (d. 1522), dedicated to Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ (reg. 1469–1506).[117] Ali Yazdi's text has not been published, but Hâtefi's work became very popular in the Safavid period and was frequently illustrated, in manuscripts that combined the *Timur-nâme* not only with the *Shahname* but also the *Shâhanshâh-nâme* of Shah Esmâ'il by Mohammad Qâsemi Jonâbâdi (d. 1574), the poet-laureate who composed a verse epic on Shâhrokh in addition to the first two Safavid shahs.[118] These later epics are not best regarded as historical works, though they are based on historical sources—Hâtefi following the *Zafar-nâme* of Ali Yazdi—but they do represent the continuing importance of the figure of the heroic ruler in Iranian historiography and also the popularization of history for a wider audience. The illustration of these verse texts, allowing the depiction of contemporary monarchs in the guise of former shahs, performing the classical activities of hunting, feasting, and fighting, can help explain the lack of illustration of contemporary history in the chronicles of the late Timurid and early Safavid period.[119] As noted by Bernardini, far from these writers historicizing myths, we see the reverse: history turned into myth.[120]

116 Ed. M. Modabberi (Tehran, 2002); cf. Melville, *EIr*, s.v. *Ḡāzān-nāma*, and idem, "History and myth: the Persianisation of Ghazan Khan," in É. Jeremiás and I. Vásáry, eds., *Irano-Turkic Cultural Contacts in the 11th–17th Century* (Piliscsaba, 2003), pp. 133–60.

117 For Ali Yazdi's poem, see Mortazavi, *Masâ'el-e asr-e Ilkhânân*, pp. 574–86, with a comparison with Hâtefi's *Timur-nâme-ye Hâtefi* (ed. A. H. S. Yusha', Madras, 1958).

118 M. Bernardini, "Hatifi's *Timurnameh* and Qasimi's *Shahnameh-yi Isma'il*: Considerations for a double critical edition," in Andrew J. Newman, ed., *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East. Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 3–8; Fr. Richard, *Splendeurs persans* (Paris, 1997), p. 195.

119 Ch. Melville, "The illustration of history in Safavid manuscript painting," in Colin Mitchell, ed., *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran* (London, 2011), pp. 163–97.

120 Bernardini, *Mémoire et propagande*, p. 154.

4. Past and Present

The uses made of the past, in terms of the way authors chose to record the events of history before their own times, has not been much studied; it requires a close textual comparison between the work in question and its sources, to identify omissions, changes of emphasis, or a restructuring of the narrative. The question of the use of sources, and the debate about accuracy in reporting, has been touched on in the Introduction (see pp. li–liv). Although the chroniclers tend to follow their written authorities quite closely and conservatively, differences can be found, as already mentioned in the change of emphasis by Timurid writers from a Mongol to an Islamic perspective on the early period of the dynasty, and such as the reshaping of local history to emphasize the credentials of the current regime.[121] One problem that hinders a longer-term view is that in many cases the earliest parts of a 'general' or 'universal' history have either been lost or remain unpublished (e.g. parts of Book 2 of Rashid-al-Din and the early sections of Hâfez-e Abru's *Majmu'e* and *Majma'-al-tavârikh*, Âqsarâ'i's *Mosâmerat-al-akhbâr*, Shabânkâre'i's *Majma'-al-ansâb*, and Mo'in-al-Din Natanzi's *Montakhab-al-tavârikh*; a more acute problem for the Safavid period).[122]

On the more general use of history, however, the historians of the Turko-Mongol period are in close agreement, maintaining a view that had, indeed, altered little since its first expression, and which we find reiterated from the start to the end of the period.

121 E.g. the Mar'ashi sayyids, in *Târikh-e Mâzandarân*, cf. Melville, "The Caspian provinces," p. 63; for the Ismailis, see parallel texts of Hâfez-e Abru, *Majma'-al-tavârikh al-soltâniyye*, ed. M. Modarresi Zanjâni (Tehran, 1985), with Rashid-al-Din and Qâshani.

122 For Natanzi, see D. Aigle, "Les tableaux du *Muntahab al-Tavarih-i Mu'ini*: une originalité dans la tradition historiographique persane," *Studia Iranica* 21 (1992), pp. 67–83. For the Safavid works, such as the *Târikh-e Ilchi Nezâm-Shâh*, and the histories of Hasan-e Rumlu, Abdi Beg Shirâzi, Budâq Monshi and Qâzi Ahmad Qomi, see Chapter 5.

Morals and Memorials

For Joveyni, the first purpose of writing was to preserve the chronicles and annals of the reign of Mongke Qa'an, and the reasons for doing so were to achieve both spiritual and temporal advantage. Contemplation of the contents of the book would lead to spiritual awareness that nothing happens in the world without God's decree, and that among the hidden benefits of the Mongol devastations was the spread of Islam to new regions; while the practical benefit was to realize that in view of the power and success of the Mongol army, it was "necessary on the grounds of reason … to yield and submit and desist from rebellion."[123] If this sounds like the counsel of despair from a man too affected by the events of the time, the underlying arguments resurface in less haunted language in later works. For Qâzi Beyzâvi, the science of history contains both religious and worldly benefits (*favâ'ed-e din va donyâ*), and the experiences of those who have passed away are a sympathetic guide for those in charge of affairs.[124] Rashid-al-Din mentions that "it was the custom of wise men and scholars to record the dates of important events, both good and evil … so that they may serve as examples (*e'tebâr*) to … those who come after, that they may know the conditions of the past, and so that the names of renowned pâdshâhs and successful khosrows may thereby remain for ever on the … pages of time."[125] The theme of memorialising the past (and in the case of Rashid-al-Din, specifically preserving the record of the Mongols' own past, which was in danger of being forgotten), is ever present, but the usefulness of the record is similarly continuously in view. Mohammad b. Mahmud Âmoli, writing around this time (1334), notes that the practical value of history is that it teaches that the pomp and wealth of the great is not a reliable guarantee of a good memorial, and not setting his heart on worldly affairs ensures that a man will continue to be well spoken of and praised after his

123 Joveyni, I, pp. 3, 7–11; tr. Boyle, pp. 5, 11–16.
124 Beyzâvi, p. 3.
125 Rashid-al-Din, p. 33; cf. tr. Thackston, p. 17.

death.[126] These views were echoed a few decades later by Owliyâ-Allâh Âmoli and other local historians of Mazandaran; it is notable that subjects are enjoined to submit to the rulers, whether tyrannical or just, and leave God to exact punishment (more counsels of despair).[127] The historians thus take on a practical approach to the theory of kingship, as appropriate to the conditions of the time, as well as purveying the sort of advice to rulers, together with the types of anecdotes, that were the preserve of the writers of 'mirrors for princes' in earlier times.

Hâfez-e Abru, in a lengthy passage on the science of history and its benefits, starts by saying that,

> Every science has its own essence, starting point, and subject matter. The essence of history is knowledge of the world of existence and decay (*fesâd*), of the events of past times, previous centuries and former peoples, the founding and destruction of towns and cities … and monumental buildings, the occurrence of landslides, earthquakes and [other natural events] … and how and when each occurred. As for the ultimate point of history, it is to provide an example and an examination, an admonition and a warning, to know of the changes affecting dynasties, peoples, and faiths, so that one may follow the good and abstain from the sinful. As for the subject of history, it is the events of the world of existence and decay … for the subject of every science is that which provides a discussion of its essential characteristics. The historian discusses how events and vicissitudes occurred, and how they occurred is part of its essence. Intellectual proofs are not established for this science, rather it is perceived and witnessed—so in truth, the science of history is the knowledge of past people … and is a noble and honorable science, particularly for anyone seriously desirous of acquiring praise and a good name.[128]

By the statement that history is perceived by the senses, Hâfez-e Abru means that knowledge of history is not obtained by intellectual proofs, but rather by experience, based on what has been heard or seen. He continues with a discussion of the benefits of know-

126 *Nafâ'es-al-fonun*, ed. J. She'râni, vol. II (Tehran, 1959), p. 170; cf. Rosenthal, *Muslim Historiography*, pp. 39–40; Lambton, *EI²*, s.v. Ta'rikh 2. In Persian.

127 See Melville, "The Caspian provinces," pp. 65–67.

128 *Joghrâfiyâ*, p. 76.

ing history, including the awareness of the actions of past kings, both those to be emulated and to be shunned. This is especially important for those whose worldly portion is greatest, namely kings, amirs, viziers and other functionaries, so that they will not be heedless of events. It is also useful to know the tricks and stratagems of the military profession; the ruses of amirs and the treachery and deceit of viziers; the various remarkable accidents that have brought about victory, and the good ideas that have been voiced by viziers and courtiers (*moqarrabân*). Clearly, for someone becoming involved in affairs it is better to be aware of the likely outcome of his actions at the start, as opposed to only when it's too late. Hâfez-e Abru then cites a few interesting historical cases, which he says are all of a kind and all happened at different times: among them the experiences of Abu-Moslem with the Abbasids; Fazl b. Yahyâ the Barmakid with Hârun-al-Rashid; Buqâ Ching'sang with Arghun Khan; Nowruz and Toghachar with Ghazan Khan; Chupân with Abu-Sa'id Bahâdor; Amirkâ Mohammad with Timur, and Sa'id Khʷâje and Jahân-Malek with Shâhrokh—none of whom would have been hurled to destruction if they had made an intelligent study of the experiences of those who had gone before them.[129]

Hâfez-e Abru also makes the point of the impermanence of power and the durability of a good name, and repeats one or two anecdotes, taken from the work of Tha'âlebi.[130] Finally, from the end of the period, we may note the similarly substantial preamble to the *Rowzat-al-safâ* by Mirkhʷând (ca. 1469), in which he lists ten benefits of history, and discusses why governors (rulers) have more need of the arts (*fann*) of history than other people, from which they need to learn the lessons of good governance, and because of which they see the advantages of acting justly, and hope to surpass

129 *Joghrâfiyâ*, pp. 78–79. See also idem, *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, pp. 106–36 (Sa'id Khʷâje, in 1406–7), 206–14 (Jahân-Malek, in 1408); Yazdi, *Zafar-nâme* (ed. Abbâsi), I, pp. 324–27, and Abd-al-Razzâq, *Matla'* I, pp. 604–6 (Amirkâ > Mirke, in 1388). See also Chapter 1 for an elaboration of this theme.

130 *Joghrâfiyâ*, pp. 83–84, from the *Ketâb-e ghorar va siyar* and the *Arâ'es-al-majâles fi qesas-al-anbiyâ*, by a separate author, Tha'labi.

their predecessors in acquiring a good name.[131] Generally speaking, the historians upheld these theoretical positions, as normally expressed in the preface to their work, in the body of the texts themselves, either providing comments on the events reported or more usually letting them speak for themselves, according to the emphases provided by the language in which they are described.

Although there are lessons and indeed pleasures to be had from history for anyone with an interest in the subject, it is clear from these passages that the work of the historians was directed at the rulers and the ruling classes, both to record their deeds and to exhort them to act well and justly. This raises the issue of patronage and the context in which the works were written.

Patronage and Audience

If the ruler was the subject and the target of most historical writing, the rulers in the Mongol period were not the only patrons of the historians. We can observe two main categories of patron: rulers and royal princes on the one hand and viziers and senior officials on the other. In both cases, there is a distinction to be made between active patronage and patronage being sought, that is between commissioning a work and being its dedicatee.

Among the rulers are the Ilkhans Ghazan and Oljeitu, who commissioned Rashid-al-Din's history of the Mongols and of the peoples of the Empire respectively; Timur, whose interest in creating a record of his achievements is well known and who ordered Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi to compose the *Zafar-nâme* in 1404, and for whom also Ghiyâth-al-Din Ali Yazdi was requested to write the history of his conquests; the Timurid princes Eskandar-Soltân and Ebrâhim-Soltân, who commissioned Natanzi's *Montakhab-al-tavârikh* and Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nâme* respectively; and Shâhrokh, a major patron of historians, including Tâj-al-Din Salmâni and Hâfez-e Abru, who dedicated his final work, the *Zobdat-al-*

131 Mirkh^{w}ând, *Rowzat-al-safâ*, ed. Abbâs Parviz (Tehran, 1960), I, pp. 9–14; tr. E. Rehatsek (London, 1891), I, pp. 24–28.

tavârikh, to Shâhrokh's son, Bâysonghor Mirzâ. Works of local history were also written for the ruling families, notably in the Caspian region, and in Herat.[132] From the rulers' point of view, the main point of these commissions was to ensure that their glorious deeds were prestigiously recorded for posterity.

Qâshâni's history of Oljeitu was offered to the ruler as a gift, in recognition of his debt of gratitude to the dynasty and to record the events of the Sultan's reign for future generations.[133] Other works were perhaps obliquely dedicated to rulers, but without being presented to them, as might be indicated by the praise for the justice of Shâhrokh at the start of Ja'far b. Mohammad's *Târikh-e Yazd*. The identity of the dedicatee sometimes altered, reflecting the uncertainties of power; apart from the change of dedicatee in the work of Râvandi, the various recensions of Shabânkâre'i's *Majma'-al-ansâb* shift from Abu-Sa'id Bahâdor and his vizier, Ghiyâth-al-Din, to the Chupanid warlord Pir Hoseyn and his vizier Shams-al-Din Sâ'en.[134] These works could be offered to the vizier or other senior official, for presentation at court, in the hope of advancement or reward. This is perhaps the case of Nâser-al-Din Monshi, who dedicated his history of Kerman to the great amir Esen-Qotlogh (d. 1318), and later the satirical 'Afterword' to the local ruler of Kerman, Qotb-al-Din Nikruz. Still in search of a secure haven, in 1330 Nâser-al-Din was back in western Iran, offering a new work, the *Dorrat-al-akhbâr*, to Ghiyâth-al-Din Mohammad, having previously also dedicated his biography of viziers to the Ilkhan Abu-Sa'id, the great amir Chupân and his vizier, Nosrat-al-Din Sâ'en (all three, among other lavish titles, are called the Sâheb-qerân in their respective realms of operation; Abu-Sa'id is in addition the Jamshid of the Time, Chupân is the Faridun of the Age).[135] Abu-Bakr Ahri

132 Melville, "The Caspian provinces," pp. 49–54; Seyfi Haravi, *Târikh-nâme-ye Herât*, ed. M.Z. al-Siddiqi (Calcutta, 1944, repr. Tehran, 1973), p. 636.

133 Qâshâni, pp. 4–5.

134 J. Aubin, "Un chroniqueur méconnu, Šabānkāra'ī," *Studia Iranica* 10 (1981), pp. 218–19.

135 Nâser-al-Din, *Nasâ'em-al-ashâr*, ed. Jalâl-al-Din Ormavi (Tehran, 1985), p. 7; Abbâs Eqbal, intro. to *Semt-al-olâ*, p. vi; see further, Louise Marlow, "The *Way of Viziers and the Lamp of Commanders* … of Ahmad al-Isfahbadhi," in Gruendler and Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers*, esp. p. 186, n. 72.

dedicated his history to the Jalayerid ruler, Sultan Sheykh-Oveys, although it ends abruptly with his accession in 1356.[136]

The viziers are in fact more prominent as patrons and dedicatees than the rulers themselves. In the first place, senior officials such as Joveyni and Rashid-al-Din were not only producing their own histories to royal command, but were patrons and promoters of other writers. Atâ-Malek Joveyni and his brother Shams-al-Din encouraged other historians, such as Ebn-Bibi in Anatolia and Qâzi Beyzâvi in Fars, as well as many of the poets of the time.[137] His work also inspired Vassâf of Shiraz to write a continuation of the *Jahângoshâ*, the first instalment of which was presented to Ghazan Khan at Âna on the Euphrates in 1303 and further completed volumes to Oljeitu at Soltâniyye in 1312, through the good offices of Rashid-al-Din.[138] Rashid-al-Din himself inspired the work of Hamd-Allâh Mostowfi, who refers to his introduction to historical studies in the vizier's circle, and who dedicated his *Târikh-e gozide* to Rashid-al-Din's son, Ghiyâth-al-Din (d. 1336).[139] Rashid-al-Din's historical writings also became the foundation on which the later works of Hâfez-e Abru and through him Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi and Mirkh^{w}ând were built, not to mention the verse chronicles noted above. Mirkh^{w}ând wrote under the patronage of Ali-Shir Navâ'i, the vizier of Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ (reg. 1469–1506), himself not only a major patron but also a significant author in his own right.

Rashid-al-Din's son, Ghiyâth-al-Din Mohammad, vizier under Abu-Sa'id, emerges as the most influential patron of the age, as we have seen. In addition to works already mentioned, he was patron of Hoseyn b. Mohammad Âvi's translation of Mâfarrokhi's *Ketâb Mahâsen Esfahân*, and Hendushâh Nakhjavâni's *Dastur-al-kâteb*.[140] Ahmad Esfahbadhi presented the vizier with a work on statecraft,

136 Ahri, *Târikh-e Sheykh Oveys*, summary tr. van Loon, p. 22 (Persian text not published).

137 G. Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran* (London, 2003), pp. 199–201.

138 Vassâf, *Tajziyat-al-amsâr*, pp. 405–6, 544–51; Âyati, *Tahrir*, pp. 244, 304.

139 *Târikh-e gozide*, pp. 2, 4.

140 Cf. Marlow, "The *Way of Viziers*," p. 176. The *Dastur-al-kâteb*, though commissioned by Ghiyâth-al-Din, was dedicated after his death of the Jalayerid Sultan Sheykh-Oveys.

in the genre of a 'mirror for princes,' containing advice specifically aimed at the office of vizier. As shown by Marlow, this was offered as a gift, with the motive of seeking employment.[141] This was probably a frequent reason for writing, though many authors, such as Fasih Khʷâfi, Esfezâri, and Oqeyli, for example, already held posts in the bureaucracy; the latter two writers dedicated their works, the *Rowzat-al-jannât* and the *Âthâr-al-vozarâ*, to Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ's vizier, Qavâm-al-Din Khʷâfi.[142]

Oqeyli's *Âthâr-al-vozarâ* is the second of three works in the period consisting of biographies of viziers, following Nâser-al-Din Monshi's *Nasâ'em-al-ashâr* (1325) and preceding Khʷândamir's more famous *Dastur-al-vozarâ* (1500).[143] Such collections confirm that viziers, no less than the rulers, were as much the subject of history as they were producers and patrons of historical writing; indeed, the connection between the king and a wise counselor was always held up to be an important partnership for the well-being of the state, as was emphasized in Qâzi Beyzâvi's *Nezâm-al-tavârikh* at the start of the period, reflecting on a long previous tradition in Persian *andarz* literature, the *Shahname*, and early Islamic historiography generally.

The close association of history writing with the court, at various levels of patronage, production, and subject matter, necessarily defines the audience for these works and explains the self-referential nature of the historiography of the period. Whether writing by royal command, official encouragement, or in the hope of reward, all authors were aware of the writings of their peers and predecessors, and sought the approval of their colleagues and superiors. Thus Mahmud Kotobi, a former servant of the Mozaffarids, apparently writing of his own volition, was inspired by the positive example of Mostowfi's *Târikh-e gozide* (1330) and the negative model of Mo'in-al-Din Yazdi's highly rhetorical *Movâheb-e elâhiyye* (ca. 1366) to write his own history of the dynasty in 1420, and hoped that his efforts would be viewed indulgently, that his

141 Marlow, pp. 188–89.

142 Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, pp. 64–70.

143 Khʷândamir, *Dastur-al-vozarâ*, ed. Sa'id Nafisi (Tehran, 1976); the second recension was completed in 1508.

contemporaries would pay heed to the example of those who have passed away, would not entirely "let the reins of affairs drop into the hands of negligence, and recognize that well-doing (*râstkâri*) is the means of salvation (*rastgâri*)."[144]

Such works were also a chance to show off the author's learning and rhetorical skills, almost invariably accompanied by a statement of the author's determination to write in clear and unadorned language, a mission seldom fulfilled, especially in the dedicatory prefaces, which were generally a showcase for hyperbole. Vassâf of Shiraz is unusual in specifically announcing his aim to create an elegantly ornamented model of eloquent style.[145] Many historians take the opportunity to comment as much on the literary abilities or appropriate use of language of previous writers as on their quality as historians. The measure of their success might also depend as much on a judgment of their style of writing as on their merits as historiography. It is surely significant that of the authors of histories devoted to particular dynasties or rulers of the Mongol and Timurid periods, the Aq Qoyunlu historian Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân (ca. 1490) singles out Joveyni, Vassâf, Mo'in-al-Din Yazdi and Ali Yazdi, with epithets such as "pride of the eloquent" (Joveyni); "chief among rhetoricians" (Vassâf); "foundation of belles letters" (Mo'in-al-Din); and "excellent in literary attainments" (Ali Yazdi), not to mention the earlier Arabic historian, Otbi. He then goes on to discuss the literary aims of his own work, very much along the same lines.[146]

5. Conclusions

The courts of the rulers of Iran in the 14th and 15th centuries were probably quite frightening places for members of the Persian bureaucratic families, from which most of the historians of the pe-

144 Mahmud Kotobi, *Târikh-e Âl-e Mozaffar*, ed. A. Navâ'i (2nd ed., Tehran, 1985), pp. 27–29.

145 Vassâf, p. 147; see Pfeiffer, "A turgid history," p. 113, and Chapter 2.

146 Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, pp. 91–92, 94–96; tr. pp. 10–12; ed. Ashiq, pp. 87–89; See further, Chapter 2.

riod were drawn. Among the most notable casualties of intrigue and factionalism were two of the most prominent historians of the Ilkhanid period, Atâ-Malek Joveyni and Rashid-al-Din, both of whom fell from favor and were executed thanks to the schemes of their rivals. Many others witnessed a degradation of political life at court—Joveyni was notoriously dismissive of the upstarts who now sought advancement—and they accompanied rulers on their military expeditions where they witnessed episodes of appalling brutality and violence against their fellow-countrymen. The chroniclers had to find a way to record these events that somehow negated their impact, partly by giving the minimum of detail and partly by using language that spread a gloss of refinement over the roughness beneath.

At the same time, the historians were obliged (if they chose to write histories) to present their rulers or superiors in the bureaucracy in a favorable light, drawing attention to their right to rule whether by virtue of genealogical inheritance or by force of arms and personal achievements. Combining the two, possibly conflicting, necessities to record and to justify could be achieved by setting the record in an ethical context that upheld certain values, notably the time-honored concern for justice and consultation as brakes on the exercise of arbitrary power, and sought constantly to underline the purpose of history to warn and to provide an example. Although the chroniclers were writing ostensibly for the edification of the rulers, in practice they were writing principally for each other, in what could perhaps be seen as a sort of ritualized act of mutual support and solidarity.[147]

While recognizing the Chengisid background of the Mongol chiefs, the historians were at pains to couch their discourse in the moral realm of the ideal Islamic society, and in addition to promote the older and still resilient Iranian imperial traditions that reinvented the idea of Iran, arising from the ashes of the universal Islamic caliphate.

147 See J.S. Meisami, "Rulers and the writing of history," in B. Gruendler and L. Marlow, eds., *Writers and Rulers*, esp. pp. 91–92, as appropriate for the Mongol era as for the Saljuq period with which she is concerned.

Mongol and Timurid rule, based round its twin poles of Azerbaijan in the Northwest and Herat in the East, not only expanded the horizons of the historians, most notably into India, Central Asia and China, but also stimulated the production of Persian local histories in the peripheries, especially Anatolia, southern Iran (Shiraz, Kerman and Yazd) and the Caspian provinces. The physical backdrop of history seems to come into greater focus in the works of the period, whether set in the urban or the natural environment.

The period produced some outstanding historical works, notably the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* of Rashid-al-Din and the numerous compositions of Hâfez-e Abru, which not only synthesized and extended the historiographical legacy of the past, from Bal'ami onwards, but also provided the basis for the later and equally authoritative universal chronicles of Mirkh^{w}ând and Kh^{w}ândamir. These, particularly Mirkh^{w}ând's *Rowzat-al-safâ*, became the standard texts for the historians of the Safavid period that followed. Joining them was Ali Yazdi's biography of Timur, a work admired not least for its language; the *Zafar-nâme* remained greatly in demand throughout 16th century as a work to be copied and illustrated, and was regarded as a source of emulation, for instance, by Ebrâhim Amini Haravi in his history of Shah Esmâ'il.[148] The chroniclers of the Turko-Mongol era, in playing their part in articulating, and to some extent mediating, the Chengisid and Perso-Islamic ideologies that remained in conflict throughout the period, established an influential model for narrating the events of an heroic age. While adding new layers of their own political culture, it was an age to which the Safavids traced back their origins and from which they continued to draw their inspiration.

148 Amini Haravi, *Fotuhât-e shâhi*, ed. M.R. Nasiri (Tehran, 2004), intro. p. xxvi.

CHAPTER 5

SAFAVID HISTORIOGRAPHY

Sholeh Quinn and Charles Melville

1. Introduction

In many respects, Safavid historiography continued and built upon the earlier established tradition of Timurid historiography. The first Safavid chroniclers were familiar with Timurid histories and modeled their compositions on these works. At the same time as the Safavid dynasty established itself, gaining power and territory, historiographical features unique to the Safavids gradually developed. These features reflect the political and religious changes instituted by the Safavids, in particular the establishment of Imami Shi'ism as the official state religion. The Safavids legitimized their power in several ways, including linking themselves through an elaborate genealogy back to the seventh Imam of the Twelver Shi'a, Musâ al-Kâzem, and rewriting their Sufi origins to make their founding fathers appear as practicing Twelver Shi'is. Initially, Safavid legitimacy rested on three main pillars: Safavid kings promoted their right to rule (1) on the basis of descent from Musâ al-Kâzem, (2) as the head of the Safaviyye Sufi order, and (3) as the 'shadow of God on earth' in line with pre-Islamic Persian notions of kingship.[1] These 'pillars' should not be viewed as rigid and inflexible; the last pillar, for example, was not unique to the Safavids; the Timurids also appealed to their followers by presenting themselves as the shadow of God on earth. By the time Shah Abbâs was in power, these three pillars, though very much still in place,

1 Roger Savory, "The Safavid state and polity," *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974), pp. 182–94.

started to erode. After the death of Shah Tahmâsp and the ensuing interregna, Shah Abbâs could no longer effectively claim to be ruling in the name of Hidden Imam simply because of alleged descent from Musâ al-Kâzem, and proclaiming himself head of the Safavid Sufi order in the face of the increasingly powerful Qezelbâsh was equally problematic. Therefore, several chroniclers invoked other forms of legitimacy in order to broaden their appeal. In the post-Shah Abbâs period, Safavid historiography built on many of the conventions established earlier, but at the same time developed new forms and styles that reflected the changes that were taking place in the late Safavid period.

This chapter will outline the main features of Safavid historiography, and offer explanations as to how and why such characteristics developed. An examination of the phenomena of imitative writing will provide insight into not only how Safavid historians composed their chronicles, but how changes in legitimizing notions led to the rewriting of their past and commenting on their present. We will examine chronicles written during the reigns of the Safavid kings from Esmâ'il I (reg. 1501–24) to Shah Soltân-Hoseyn (r. 1694–1722). Although the list of works under discussion here is by no means comprehensive, emphasis will be placed on the most important sources and those that are representative of a particular genre or tradition.[2]

2 See also the list of sources in C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* (3 vols., London, 1927), I, pp. 301–22, rev. and tr. Yu.E. Bregel as *Persidskaya literatura: Bio-bibliograficheskiĭ obzor* (3 vols., Moscow, 1972), II, pp. 850–904; Sholeh Quinn, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography vi. Safavid period, and idem, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah 'Abbas: Ideology, Imitation and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Salt Lake City, 2000), pp. 13–23, 145–48. For a recent detailed analysis of the historiography of the period, see Mohammad Bâgher Ârâm, *Andishe-ye târikh-negâri-ye asr-e Safavi* (Tehran, 2007).

2. The Safavid Chroniclers: A Brief Overview

The First Generation

The origins of Safavid historiography lie in a cluster of three chronicles written in Herat that bridge the Timurid and Safavid dynasties: Mirkh^{w}ând's *Rowzat-al-safâ*, Amini's *Fotuhât-e shâhi*, and Kh^{w}ândamir's *Habib-al-siyar*.[3] Mirkh^{w}ând (d. 1498) himself represents a tradition that has its origin in an eastern Iranian historiography dating back to the Timurid period, with its center in the urban courts of Samarqand and Herat in the 15th century; his chronicle goes down to the death of Sultan Abu-Sa'id in 1469.[4] Mirkh^{w}ând's patron was the vizier Ali-Shir Navâ'i. Sadr-al-Din Soltân Amini Haravi completed his *Fotuhât-e shâhi* in 1531, though his work covers only the period to 1513. Amini initially secured patronage in the Timurid ruling élite and then subsequently formed part of that élite himself; he then apparently found favor when Shah Esmâ'il took over Herat.[5] In addition to writing the final portion (volume seven) of his father's *Rowzat-al-safâ* some time after 1502, Kh^{w}ândamir completed his own *Habib-al-siyar* in 1524, a few months after the death of Shah Esmâ'il.[6] Having survived the turmoil in Herat after the city fell to the Uzbeks and then the

3 Mohammad b. Kh^{w}âvandshâh Mirkh^{w}ând, *Târikh-e rowzat-al-safâ*, ed. Abbâs Parviz (6 vols., [Tehran], 1959), tr. E. Rehatsek as *Rauzat-us-safa or, Garden of Purity*, ed. F.F. Arbuthnot (3 vols., London, 1891); Sadr-al-Din Soltân Ebrâhim Amini Haravi, *Fotuhât-e shâhi*, Ms Dushanbe Institute of Written Heritage, no. 98, and ed. Mohammad-Rezâ Nâsiri (Tehran, 2004); Ghiyâth-al-Din b. Homâm-al-Din Kh^{w}ândamir, *Târikh-e habib-al-siyar*, ed. M. Dabir-Siyâqi, intro. by Jalâl-al-Din Homâ'i (4 vols., [Tehran], 1954); tr. Wheeler M. Thackston as *Habibu's-siyar* (2 vols., Cambridge, MA., 1994).

4 John E. Woods, "The rise of Tīmūrid historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46 (1987), p. 82.

5 Jean Aubin, "Chroniques persanes et relations italiennes: Notes sur les sources narratives du règne de Šâh Esmâ'il I^{er}," *Studia Iranica* 24 (1995), pp. 249–50.

6 H. Beveridge and J.T.P. de Bruijn, *EI*^{2}, s.v. Khwândamir; Aubin, "Chroniques persanes," pp. 248–49.

Safavids, he finally went to India in 1528 and met the Timurid ruler Bâbor. Khʷândamir dedicated his *Homâyun-nâme* to Bâbor's son and successor, Homâyun (1534).

The Second Generation

The *Fotuhât-e shâhi* and the *Habib-al-siyar* were pivotal texts for later chroniclers, who looked to these two sources as they composed their works. The real flourishing of Safavid historiography began during the reign of Shah Tahmâsp (1524–76), as both the backgrounds of those engaged in historical writing and the nature of their narratives diversified and expanded. Although Shi'ism was aggressively imposed on Iran after Shah Esmâ'il declared it the official state religion in 1501, at least one Sunni historian survived long enough to write a history: Yahyâ b. Abd-al-Latif Hoseyni Qazvini composed his *Lobb-al-tavârikh* in 1542 for Shah Tahmâsp's brother, Bahrâm Mirzâ, more than a decade before being denounced by Tahmâsp as the "chief of the Sunnis of Qazvin" and subsequently dying in prison.[7] However, at least two of Qazvini's sons sought refuge in India, writing for the Mughal emperors and achieving high positions within that state. Qâzi Ahmad Ghaffâri Qazvini Kâshâni also served under one of Shah Tahmâsp's brothers, Sâm Mirzâ, before the latter fell from favor and was killed. Ghaffâri wrote his *Nosakh-e jahân-ârâ*, an important source for pre-Safavid history, in 1563 before leaving for Mughal India, probably as a result of his fall from favor with the king.[8]

In addition to the above, at least two other historians wrote their narratives in the city of Qazvin, which served as capital under Shah Tahmâsp. Abdi Beg Shirâzi composed his *Takmelat-al-akhbâr* there in 1570 for yet another member of Tahmâsp's family: his daughter, Pari Khân Khânom. He was certainly familiar with, if

7 Yahyâ b. Abd-al-Latif Hoseyni Qazvini, *Lobb-al-tavârikh*, ed. Jalâl-al-Din Tehrâni ([Tehran], 1937). Storey, *Persian Literature* I, p. 111; tr. Bregel, I, p. 399.

8 Qâzi Ahmad Ghaffâri Qazvini Kâshâni, *Nosakh-e jahân-ârâ*, ed. Hasan Narâqi (Tehran, 1963).

not Ghaffâri himself, then his work, as there are parallels between his chronicle and the *Nosakh-e jahân-ârâ*.[9] Secondly, Hasan Beg Rumlu is somewhat unique in the annals of Safavid historiography for his Qezelbâsh background. Rumlu was a *qorchibâshi*, a senior military official who accompanied Shah Tahmâsp on numerous campaigns. At the same time, he was a prolific writer if we are to believe that there were originally twelve volumes in his chronicle, the *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, written in 1578.[10] Like several other Safavid chroniclers, he uses western Aq Qoyunlu sources and thus brings together the historiographical traditions centered in Herat and in former Aq Qoyunlu territory, though the differences between these eastern and western 'traditions' lie almost entirely in the fact that the respective chroniclers were writing on behalf of different dynastic regimes, rather than with any intrinsically distinct viewpoint or methodology.[11]

Continuing the tradition of the Herat-based historians writing under Shah Esmâ'il, Amir Mahmud, son of Khʷândamir, wrote his continuation (*dheyl*) of his father's work in Herat in 1550.[12] Although ostensibly a supporter of the Safavids, it has been shown that Amir Mahmud still had Timurid sympathies, describing the Mughal rulers in language similar to that of the Safavid kings.[13]

9 Abdi Beg Shirâzi, *Takmelat-al-akhbâr*, ed. Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i (Tehran, 1990), pp. 23–30.

10 Hasan Beg Rumlu, *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, vol. 12, ed. Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i (Tehran, 1970; 2nd ed., 3 vols., Tehran, 2005); ed. and tr. Charles Norman Seddon, *A Chronicle of the Early Safawīs* (2 vols., Baroda, 1931–34).

11 Woods, "The rise;" Quinn, *Historical Writing*, pp. 7–8; Charles Melville, "From Tabriz to Herat: Persian historiography in the 15th century," in M. Ritter, R. Kauz and B. Hoffmann, eds., *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen: Studien zum 65. Geburtstag von Bert G. Fragner* (Wiesbaden, 2008), pp. 28–38.

12 Amir Mahmud b. Khʷândamir, *Irân dar ruzgâr-e Shâh Esmâ'il va Shâh Tahmâsb Safavi*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i (Tehran, 1991).

13 Maria Szuppe, *Entre Timourides, Uzbeks et Safavides: Questions d'histoire politique et sociale de Hérat dans la première moitié du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1992), pp. 147–48.

An important outside source for the Shah Tahmâsp era was Khurshâh b. Qobâd al-Hoseyni's *Târikh-e ilchi-ye Nezâm-Shâh*.[14] The author was an ambassador to Iran on behalf of Borhân Nezâm Shah I, the ruler of Ahmadnegar. This general history was composed in 1562 and provides unique information and valuable personal observations on the reign and the court of Shah Tahmâsp.[15]

The Era of Shah Abbâs

By the time Shah Abbâs came to power, Safavid historiography was firmly established. Ruling the dynasty at its peak, Abbâs's reign (1587–1629) was enshrined in numerous chronicles of even greater variety than the previous generation. Most of his historians, however, were court functionaries of one kind or another. For example, Qâzi Ahmad, the first author to write during Shah Abbâs's reign, was from a Shi'i notable family in Qom. His father had been a secretary (*monshi*) to Shah Tahmâsp, and he himself became the vizier of Qom and was involved in opposing Qezelbâsh rebellions in that city. These anti-Qezelbâsh sentiments come out in the *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*, which was completed in 1592, only a few years into Abbâs's reign.[16]

Qâzi Ahmad had a student who, in historiographical terms, was better known than he was. This was the *monshi* Eskandar Beg Torkmân, who wrote his celebrated *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* in 1629, at the end of Shah Abbâs's reign.[17] Like Qâzi Ahmad, Eskandar Beg was trained as a court secretary and appears to have had access to

14 Khurshâh b. Qobâd al-Hoseyni, *Târikh-e ilchi-ye Nezâm Shâh*, ed. Mohammad-Rezâ Nasiri and Kuichi Haneda (Tehran, 2000).

15 Martin B. Dickson, "Sháh Tahmásb and the Úzbeks: the Duel for Khurásán with 'Ubayd Khán (930–946/1524–1540)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University), 1958, pp. L–LI.

16 Qâzi Ahmad Monshi Qomi, *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*, ed. Ehsân Eshrâqi (2 vols., Tehran, 1984).

17 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (2nd ed., 2 vols., Tehran, 1971); tr. Roger Savory as *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great (Tārīk̲-e 'Ālamārā-ye 'Abbāsī)* (2 vols., Boulder, Colorado, 1978). Vol. 3, index compiled by Renée Bernhard.

official documents, some of which he used in his history. Two more bureaucratic officials also wrote during Shah Abbâs's rule. Siyâqi Nezâm (d. 1602), author of the *Fotuhât-e homâyun*, composed a chronicle covering Shah Abbâs's Khorasan campaign, in which he participated.[18] Like Qâzi Ahmad, he also held a vizierate, in this case for the entire Fars province. He had a background in accounting, which is reflected in his chronicle. Abbâs's royal court astrologer, Jalâl-al-Din Monajjem Yazdi, also composed a *Târikh-e Abbâsi*, in 1610; his son and grandson later wrote under successive Safavid rulers.[19]

Mahmud b. Hedâyat-Allâh Afushte-ye Natanzi (hereafter Natanzi) wrote his *Noqâvat-al-âthâr fi dhekr-al-akhyâr* without, it seems, any particular patron, in 1598.[20] Natanzi must have had some sort of court position because of the information he includes in his chronicle, but he apparently did not hold Shah Abbâs in very high regard, which may also explain his lack of patronage.[21]

Another chronicle of the Safavid dynasty, the *Rowzat-al-safaviyye* of Mirzâ Beg Jonâbadi, covers the period from the accession of Esmâ'il I to the fortieth year of Shah Abbâs. He began to write in 1614 and completed the work in Qâyen in eastern Iran in 1626. This continued the older and ornate style of the early Herat histories; he refers both to Amir Mahmud's continuation of the *Habib-al-siyar*, as well as to Ahmad Ghaffâri's *Jahân-ârâ*.[22] Not much is known about Jonâbadi's life except for the little that emerges from his chronicle. It appears that he was attached to the court, and that in the year 1591 he was in Shiraz studying under Kh^{w}âje Mohammad-Rezâ Qazvini, who was a descendant of the poet Obeyd-e

18 Siyâqi Nezâm, *Fotuhât-i homâyun*, ed., tr., and ann. by Chahryar Adle as "Fotuhat-e homayun: 'Les Victoires augustes,' 1007/1598" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Paris, 1976); see p. 131.

19 Mollâ Jalâl-al-Din Monajjem Yazdi, *Târikh-e Abbâsi yâ ruznâme-ye Mollâ Jalâl*, ed. Seyf-Allâh Vahid-Niyâ ([Tehran], 1987).

20 Mahmud b. Hedâyat-Allâh Afushte-ye Natanzi, *Noqâvat-al-âthâr fi dhekr-al-akhyâr*, ed. Ehsân Eshrâqi (Tehran, 1971).

21 Robert D. McChesney, "Four sources on Shah 'Abbas's building of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988), p. 105.

22 Mirzâ Beg Jonâbadi, *Rowzat-al-safaviyye,* ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i Majd (Tehran, 1999), pp. 902–3.

Zâkâni.[23] It is possible that he was a Sufi adherent of the Safavid order; his piety emerges from his work, the title of which (*rowzat*, 'flower garden'), also has religious connotations.[24]

Finally, a source that has recently received scholarly attention is the *Afzal-al-tavârikh* of Fazli Beg Khuzâni-Esfahâni, a member of a family of longstanding bureaucrats and administrators.[25] Although Fazli Beg put the finishing touches on his chronicle while in India after the death of Shah Abbâs, he apparently intended to continue the narrative into the reign of Shah Safi.[26] While Fazli drew on standard authorities such as Hasan-e Rumlu's *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, he also utilized others that have not survived, and his narrative offers an alternative, Ardabil-based perspective on early Safavid history, as well as a mass of information not found in other sources for the reigns of Tahmâsp and Abbâs.[27]

Late Safavid Chronicles

Late Safavid chroniclers follow patterns established in earlier periods and also develop the tradition in new ways. A number of chroniclers imitate Eskandar Beg Monshi's influential *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*. During Shah Safi's reign (1629–42), in addition to Eskandar Beg's own continuation of the *Âlam-ârâ* down to the year of the author's death in 1632, a work entitled the *Kholâsat-al-siyar*

23 Ibid., p. 730.

24 See the editor's intro., p. 21.

25 Masashi Haneda, "La famille Huzani d'Isfahan (15e–17e siècles)," *Studia Iranica* 18 (1989), pp. 77–91; Simin Abrahams, "A Historiographical Study and Annotated Translation of Volume 2 of the Afżal al-Tawārīkh by Fażlī Khūzānī al-Isfāhānī [sic]" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1999).

26 Charles Melville, "New light on the reign of Shah 'Abbās: Volume III of the *Afżal al-Tavārīkh*," in Andrew J. Newman, ed., *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 63–97; idem, "A lost source for the reign of Shah 'Abbas: the *Afżal al-tawārīkh* of Fazli Khuzani Isfahani," *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998), pp. 263–65.

27 A.H. Morton, "The early years of Shah Isma'il in the *Afżal al-tawārīkh* and elsewhere," in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London, 1996), pp. 27–51.

was composed by Mohammad-Ma'sum Khʷâjegi Esfahâni, which continues to 1641 and acknowledges a debt to Eskandar Beg. The author devotes a section of the work to his own biography, and the reason for his writing the work to help him recover from a serious illness.[28]

Other chroniclers continued the family business of historical writing started earlier. Thus Jalâl-al-Din Monajjem Yazdi's son, Mollâ Kamâl, wrote his *Zobdat-al-tavârikh* in 1652, and a certain "Jalâl," grandson of Jalâl-al-Din Monajjem Yazdi, wrote a history also entitled the *Târikh-e Abbâsi*, which concentrates more on anecdotes of Shah Abbâs's qualities of character, and some of his dreams, than on the events of his reign.[29]

Historical writing during the time of Abbâs II (reg. 1642–66) was relatively sparse in comparison with earlier periods, despite the production of some important texts such as Mohammad-Tâher Vahid's *Târikh-e jahân-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, a history of the dynasty covering the first twenty-two years of Abbâs's reign (to 1663). As the title suggests, this was influenced by Eskandar Beg's work, and indeed his coverage of the first reigns of the dynasty follows closely the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, although presented in a more accessible style. When he comes to the reign of Abbâs II, however, the language becomes rather more convoluted. Mohammad-Tâher was a historiographer (*majles-nevis*) and event recorder (*vâqe'e-nevis*) in the vizierate of Khalife-Soltân, and later became vizier himself, remaining an influential figure into a long old age.[30] This was another prominent family of writers: Mohammad-Tâher's brother,

28 Mohammad-Ma'sum b. Khʷâjegi Esfahâni, *Kholâsat-al-siyar*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, n.d.), intro., pp. 16–19, and pp. 27–29, 311–16.

29 Mollâ Kamâl, *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, MS London, Royal Asiatic Society, Codrington 56; ed. Ebrâhim Dehgân, as *Târikh-e Mollâ Kamâl*, in *Do Ketâb-e nafis* (Arâk, 1955). Ali-Asghar Mossadegh, "La famille Monajjem Yazdi," in Jean Calmard, Ali-Asghar Mossadegh and M. Bastani Parizi, "Notes sur des historiographes de l'époque Safavide," *Studia Iranica* 16 (1987), pp. 128–29. Jalâl Monajjem's work is available in the Central Library of the Documentation Centre, Tehran, microfilm no. 4204.

30 Mirzâ Mohammad-Tâher Vahid Qazvini, *Târikh-e jahân-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, ed. Mir Mohammad Sâdeq (Tehran, 2005), pp. 416–17 for the author's appointment; part. ed. Ebrâhim Dehgân as *Abbâs-nâme* (Arâk, 1951), pp. 72–73.

Mohammad-Yusof Vâleh, was the author of the large-scale 'universal' history, *Khold-e barin*, completed in 1667.[31]

The rule of Shah Soleymân (reg. 1666–94) witnessed a resurgence of historical writing. Interestingly, however, none of these works narrate the reign of Soleymân himself. A brief sampling of historical compositions reflects the diversity of this era: the anonymous *Shâhanshâh-nâme*, a *mathnavi* about Safavid history; several 'historical romances' narrating in partly fictionalized form the heroic exploits of Shah Esmâ'il I; Shaikh Hoseyn b. Shaikh Abdâl Zâhedi's *Selselat-al-nasab-e safaviyye*, a detailed genealogical work devoted to the early Safavid Sufi order; and Vali-Qoli Shâmlu's *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, an ornate history similar to the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*.[32]

This flourishing did not last, however, and during the reign of Shah Soltân-Hoseyn (reg. 1694–1722), historical writing again decreased in volume. There is no chronicle covering the totality of Shah Soltân-Hoseyn's reign and the final years of the Safavids, except works completed later, under the Afshars, or in India and elsewhere.[33] The works of this period present a mixture of contrasting styles.

Among the histories written during the reign of Soltân-Hoseyn itself were Mohammad Ebrâhim b. Zeyn-al-Âbedin Nasiri's *Dastur-e Shahriyârân* and Mir Mohammad Sa'id Mashizi's *Tadhkere-ye Safaviyye-ye Kermân*. The *Dastur-e Shahriyârân* was written on the orders of the Shah by a member of a family of long-serving

31 Mohammad-Yusof Vâleh, *Khold-e barin*. The reigns of all the Safavids, apart from Shah Abbâs, have now been published, ed. Mir Hâshem Mohaddeth (Tehran, 1993, 2001) and Mohammad-Rezâ Nasiri (Tehran, 2001). See also Mohammad Tâher Nasrâbâdi, *Tadhkere-ye Nasrâbâdi*, ed. Mohsen Nâji Nasrâbâdi (2 vols., Tehran, 1999), I, pp. 26–27, 113–15.

32 Shaikh Hoseyn b. Shaikh Abdâl Zâhedi, *Selselat-al-nasab-e Safaviyye*, ed. Iranshahr (Berlin, 1924); Vali-Qoli Shâmlu, *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, ed. Sayyid Hasan Sâdât Nâseri (2 vols., Tehran, 1992–95).

33 Mansur Sefatgol, "Persian historical writing under the last Safavids: The historiographers of decline," in Michele Bernardini, Masashi Haneda, and Maria Szuppe, eds., *Liber Amicorum. Études sur l'Iran médiéval et moderne offertes à Jean Calmard*, in *Eurasian Studies* 5 (2006), pp. 320–21. See further, Chapter 6.

bureaucrats, who had been appointed *majles-nevis* (court historiographer) in 1698, the year with which the chronicle ends. As the end is defective, however, it is not certain when the work was actually completed. Covering only the first few years of the reign, it is written in an extremely verbose style, the six years 1693–98 being covered in 250 folios.[34] By contrast, Mashizi's history of the Safavids in Kerman gives a succinct treatment of the local history of Kerman from 1653 to 1692, in annals using both the animal and hejri years. This is preceded by information arranged by successive administrations from the 1620s onwards, in which only the duodecennial animal calendar is used.[35] The vibrant tradition of local historiography in Kerman is also maintained by a somewhat later author, Mollâ Mohammad Mo'men, whose *Sahifat-al-ershâd* was written at the request of a certain Shâhrokh Khan Afshâr, of a tribe long dominant in the Kerman region. Starting with a brief description of the province, the history continues in annalistic format, covering the years 1693–1717, and after a lacuna, finishes abruptly in 1725. The author, who includes much of his own poetry, as well as some quotations from the *Shahname*, nevertheless adopts a clear and accessible prose style.[36]

Also from the time of Shah Soltân-Hoseyn is the *Târikh-e soltâni*, composed by Hoseyn b. Mortazâ Hoseyn Astarâbâdi in 1703. This is a three-part work, the first on demons (jinns, *sheytâns*) and the creation before the Prophet Mohammad, together with an account of the twelve Imâms and their descendants; the second mentions the rulers of the world, both before and after the coming of Islam and including the rulers of Rum and Hind; and the third is the history of the Safavids down to 1641. Astarâbâdi makes full use of the main sources mentioned above, including the *Safvat-al-safâ*, *Habib-al-siyar*, *Fotuhât-e Amini*, the *Lobb-al-tavârikh*, Ghaffâri's *Jahân-ârâ*, Rumlu's *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, and Eskandar Beg's *Âlam-*

34 Mohammad Ebrâhim b. Zeyn-al-Âbedin Nasiri, *Dastur-e shahriyârân*, ed. Mohammad Nâder Nasiri Moqaddam (Tehran, 1994).

35 Mir Mohammad Sa'id Mashizi Bardesiri, *Tadhkere-ye safaviyye-ye Kermân*, ed. E. Bâstâni-Pârizi (Tehran, 1990). The ms. is defective at the beginning.

36 Mollâ Mohammad Mo'men Kermâni, *Sahifat-al-ershâd*, ed. M. E. Bâstâni-Pârizi (Tehran, 2005).

ârâ-ye Abbâsi—and particularly the latter—to produce a straightforward summary of Safavid history to the reign of Shah Safi, in plain language.[37]

Although this brief overview has provided the basic information about the identities of some Safavid chroniclers, we know surprisingly little about many of them. Unless they were important poets, or composed poetical works, their names seldom appear in, for example, the biographical (*tadhkere*) literature. Occasionally those chroniclers who were attached to the court mentioned each other's presence there. Eskandar Beg Monshi, for example, refers to Jalâl-al-Din Monajjem Yazdi, but he does so in connection with the latter's role as court astrologer, not as historian.[38] In his *Golestân-e honar*, Qâzi Ahmad refers to Eskandar Beg Monshi as his former student.[39] Fazli Beg Khuzâni also refers to Eskandar Beg, with whose patrons he had a family attachment, and whose work he would sometimes read when visiting these relatives.[40] Mashizi refers to Fazli Beg's presence in Kerman in 1625.[41] Vali-Qoli Shâmlu has a very laudatory account of Mirzâ Mohammad-Tâher Vahid, whom he describes among other things as the author of a *Târikh-e jadid*.[42] Such details, however tantalizing, are never comprehensive, and generally we do not know very much about our authors' lives beyond what they tell us in their own histories.

We do know something of the career of Sadr-al-Din Soltân Ebrâhim Amini Haravi (1477–1535), author of the first Safavid chronicle, the *Fotuhât-e shâhi*. Amini, who came from a family of notables, had become minister under Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ and kept his position upon the accession of his son, Mozaffar-Hoseyn Mirzâ. Khʷândamir, Amini's contemporary, states that after the

37 Hoseyn b. Mortazâ Hoseyn Astarâbâdi, *Târikh-e soltâni*, ed. Ehsân Eshrâqi, *Az Sheykh Safi tâ Shâh Safi* (Tehran, 1985), intro., p. 8 and pp. 16, 25, 27, 31.

38 See Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, p. 611; tr. Savory, p. 800.

39 Qâzi Ahmad Monshi Qomi, *Golestân-e honar*, ed. Ahmad Soheyli Khʷânsâri (3rd ed., Tehran, 1987); tr. V. Minorsky as *Calligraphers and Painters* (Washington, 1959), pp. 97–98.

40 Melville, "New light", p. 87.

41 Mashizi, *Tadhkere-ye Safaviyye*, pp. 184, 187.

42 Shâmlu, *Qesas-al-khâqâni* II, pp. 69–71.

death of Mozaffar-Hoseyn, however, when the Uzbek Abu'l-Fath Mohammad Sheybâni Khan took control of Khorasan, the *sadr* Abd-al-Rahim imprisoned Amini and other *sadr*s for a while. After his release, he led a secluded life until Shah Esmâ'il's Khorasan campaign in 1510–11, during which time he came to Herat and was given gratuities (*en'âmât*) and land grants (*soyorghâl*). He remained in Herat until 1519, when he met Shah Esmâ'il and began writing his chronicle.[43] Amini, then, was a member of the Persian élite whose career under the Timurids was interrupted by the Uzbek invasions, but restored by the Safavids along with others who had found themselves in disfavor with the Uzbeks.

Probably the chronicler who says the most about his life and his career is Budâq Monshi Qazvini, author of the *Javâher-al-akhbâr*, which he started composing in 1576. In a remarkable section of his chronicle, Budâq provides a general outline of his own career path, describing his earliest employment at the age of fourteen in the royal secretariat. Although there are known to be problems with the dates he provides, we do know that he worked his way up through the administration, increasing his responsibilities in areas such as writing exchanges at the top of provincial tax deeds, as a result, he tells us, of his good handwriting. Through his uncle's connections, he became the *monshi* of the divan of Arab Iraq, engaging in composing letters (*enshâ'*) in the service of Mohammad-Khan Takkalu Sharaf-al-Din Oghlu. He also served as Bahrâm Mirza's secretary for fourteen years. His career had many ups and downs; he experienced periods of unemployment, worked for pleasant and unpleasant individuals, with a salary that was mostly increasing as time passed, starting at three *tomân*s and eventually reaching its peak at thirty tomâns. Budâq tells us, however, that by the time he started writing his history, he was unemployed and in a sorrowful state, his affairs having taken a turn for the worse.[44]

43 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, pp. 326–28, 515.

44 Budâq Monshi Qazvini, *Javâher-al-akhbâr*, ed. Mohsen Bahrâmnezhâd (Tehran, 1999), pp. 187–91; cf. R.M. Savory, "A secretarial career under Shah Tahmasp I (1524–1576)," *Islamic Studies* 2 (1963), pp. 343–52; Mohammad H. Faghfoory, "*Javahir al-Akhbar*: A rare manuscript on the Safavid period," *Iran-Nameh* 15 (1997), pp. 613–23.

Finally, in a remarkable example of detective work and close historiographical analysis, A.H. Morton has been able to glean information from a late chronicle long considered anonymous and concluded that the author of a popular history of Shah Esmâ'il, the so-called "Ross Anonymous," was a certain Bijan, who had the titles *târikh-e Safavi-kh^{w}ân* ('reciter of Safavid history') and *Qesse-ye Safavi-kh^{w}ân* ('reciter of the Safavid story'), and wrote his *Jahân-goshâ-ye Khâqân* in the 1680s. Morton suggests that Bijan may have been of Georgian background, writing in order to educate eunuchs about the early history of the Safavids.[45]

3. Patronage

It is evident from the above that the chroniclers' motives in writing were usually tied to issues of patronage. In the early Safavid period, many historians either wrote for particular individuals or dedicated their chronicles to them. However, by the period of Shah Abbâs, individuals were more often writing on their own initiative. For example, Qâzi Ahmad went so far as to state that even though he could not find a patron for his work, he decided to complete it anyway.[46] Other authors do dedicate their chronicles to particular individuals, but for some it is uncertain whether they had a patron or not. Eskandar Beg Monshi hints at Shah Abbâs being his patron, expressing the hope that the king would look upon his history with a benevolent eye:

> I dare to hope that my royal patron will find the opportunity to go through this draft, episode by episode, and that, if he finds any error of fact, he will expunge it.[47]

45 A.H. Morton, "The date and attribution of the Ross Anonymous. Notes on a Persian history of Shah Isma'il I," in Charles Melville, ed., *Persian and Islamic Studies in honour of Peter Avery*, *Pembroke Papers* 1 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 201.

46 Qâzi Ahmad, *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh* I, p. 6.

47 Eskandar Beg, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, p. 4; tr. Savory, p. 5.

Fazli Beg Esfahâni, however, tells us about the role that Eskandar Beg played at the court in his position as secretary, and says that

> From that date [Shah Abbâs's pilgrimage on foot in 1601] it was determined that the above-mentioned Sikandar Beg should assemble [details of] the life of the Shah and the events of his conquests and should write a history of them.[48]

But interestingly, most of the known patrons of the historical chronicles mentioned here were princes, not the king himself. In particular, as we have seen, two of Shah Tahmâsp's brothers commissioned histories. Finally, in two cases, the patron was a slave (*gholâm*): The *Fotuhât-e Fariduniyye* was written during the reign of Shah Abbâs I for Faridun Khan Charkas, beglerbegi of Astarabad, Mazandaran and other northern provinces (d. 1620), and Bijan's patron was Âqâ Mohammad-Rezâ Beg, who might have been a court eunuch.[49] Beyond this, questions of audience are extremely difficult to assess. Was there a greater audience beyond the official patron for these histories? If so, who composed that audience? Such questions have hardly been addressed in the secondary scholarship, let alone stated, explicitly or implicitly, in the primary texts. What does seem probable is that nearly all Safavid histories were composed for highly select and small audiences. The scribal classes who largely produced them were affiliated with the court in one way or another, and must have had the king's approval in mind as they chronicled his reign. Other than this, with a few exceptions, such as the late anonymous Shah Esmâ'il romances, they do not appear to have been writing for popular audiences.

48 Melville, "New light," p. 86.

49 Mohammad Tâher Bestâmi, *Fotuhât-e Fariduniyye*, ed. Mir Mohammad Sâdeq and Mohammad Nâder Nasiri Moqaddam (Tehran, 2001); Morton, "Date and attribution," p. 194.

4. Universal and Dynastic Histories

The Aq Qoyunlu historian Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân Khonji-Esfahâni (1456–1517) classified historians into eight distinct groups (*tâyefe*) in his *Âlam-ârâ-ye Amini* (1490). Minorsky suggests that Fazl-Allâh's classifications deviate from those of his teacher, Sakhâwi, partly because he had been traveling and had to rely on his own memory for his account.[50] The groups are as follows: (1) authors of general histories from Adam, (2) writers of the lives of prophets, (3) collectors of reports on the Prophet, (4) authors of lives of the Prophet's followers, (5) annalists who year by year recapitulate events from the hejra down to their own time, (6) alphabetic dictionaries, (7) historians who wrote on classes of doctors of law, and (8) histories devoted to particular dynasties.[51] Within each category Fazl-Allâh provides examples to illustrate the type of history he describes. For example, in the category of general histories he lists al-Tabari, Ebn-al-Jowzi, Hâfez-e Abru, and Rashid-al-Din.[52] Of the narratives discussed in this chapter, we see examples of categories (1), (5), and (8): general histories, annalistic histories, and dynastic accounts, including works devoted to a single king. Although the Safavid period saw the production of texts falling in Khonji-Esfahâni's other categories, such as hadith collections, these fall outside the parameters of our discussion here.

Most of the chronicles produced in the Safavid period before the reign of Shah Abbâs fall in the category of general or universal history. Amini's *Fotuhât-e shâhi* and Khʷândamir's *Habib-al-siyar* both cover the pre-Safavid period, although the *Fotuhât-e shâhi* does not contain an account of pre-Islamic times. Both *Nosakh-e jahân-ârâ* and *Lobb-al-tavârikh* are general histories. Amir Mahmud's *Dheyl-e habib-al-siyar* is the only pre-Abbâs chronicle that can be called a 'dynastic chronicle,' but he considered his work to be a continuation of his father's general history.

50 Fazl-Allâh b. Ruzbehân Khonji-Esfahâni, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, ed. J.E. Woods, abr. Eng. tr. V. Minorsky, rev. and aug. J.E. Woods (London, 1992), p. 7.

51 Khonji-Esfahâni, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Amini*, pp. 86–92; tr., pp. 8–9.

52 Ibid., pp. 87–88; tr., p. 8.

We may be able to explain the prevalence of universal histories in terms of political legitimacy. That is, when Shah Esmâ'il and Shah Tahmâsp were in power, most of the existing chronicles were general histories to which the chronicler added either a final chapter or a separate section on the Safavids, thus portraying them as the latest in a succession of Islamic dynasties. Formative Safavid historiography, with its roots in the Timurid and Mongol traditions, inherited Turko-Mongol legitimizing notions of universal rule. Such notions help explain the composition of earlier works such as Rashid-al-Din's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*.[53]

By the time Shah Abbâs came to power, the Safavids had been in control of Iran for nearly a century. Shah Abbâs initially faced numerous challenges to his rule, including a very powerful group of Qezelbâsh who had reasserted their power before he came to the throne. Once Abbâs consolidated his rule, however, the Safavids became a major force on the international scene, engaging in war and diplomacy with neighboring Ottomans, Mughals, and Uzbeks. At the same time, various European powers had established trading companies in Iran. Eventually, as the dynasty gradually began to appear more secure and unlikely to collapse, its historiography appears to have become less reliant on the pre-Safavid past. It had a well-established history, which had already undergone numerous revisions during the reigns of earlier Safavid kings, in particular Shah Tahmâsp. There was thus enough Safavid history to justify a lengthy volume devoted to the reigns of the Safavid kings alone. Some, such as Shah Tahmâsp, ruled for so long that it became to compile a substantial book solely on his reign.[54] Furthermore, pretensions to universal rule were less effective in an Islamic world divided into Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires. Newer Safavid legitimizing ideas, primarily based on principles of Twelver Shi'ism, become consolidated and gradually replaced Chengisid and Timurid notions of universal rulers.[55] Safavid historiography

53 See Chapter 4.

54 See, for example, volume II of Fazli Beg's *Afzal-al-tavârikh*.

55 John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (2nd ed., Salt Lake City, 1999), pp. 28–29.

reflects this shift, explaining why Eskandar Beg, imitating Amini, included an account of Mohammad and the Twelve Imams but omitted the rest of pre-Safavid Islamic history.

Thus, as time passed, an increasing number of works were dynastic rather than the general/universal histories of the earlier period. Of the major chronicles composed during Shah Abbâs's reign we may consider only one, Qâzi Ahmad Qomi's *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*, a general history, even though the pre-Safavid portions of this work have not survived. It is perhaps significant that this was the first chronicle written during Shah Abbâs's reign: Qâzi Ahmad was keenly aware that he was the first individual to have undertaken history writing in a long time, and this may explain why his text reflects earlier styles of Safavid historiography, and seeks to put Abbâs's reign once more in the larger context, as a reassertion of Safavid power after a prolonged period of disorder.[56] However, a similar perception is found in Jonâbadi's *Rowzat-al-safaviyye*, covering the 127 years from the accession of Shah Esmâ'il, which the author claims was the first historical work to be written since the time of the death of Qazâq Khan Takkalu (in 1565), relying for his knowledge of subsequent reigns on what he had heard from reliable witnesses and seen for himself.[57] Of the rest, Natanzi's *Noqâvat-al-âthâr* and Monajjem Yazdi's *Târikh-e Abbâsi* cover the reigns of Shah Abbâs and his two immediate predecessors (the latter only briefly). Siyâqi Nezâm's *Fotuhât-e homâyun* was conceived as a history of the first twelve years of Shah Abbâs's reign, although only one portion of the chronicle has survived. Eskandar Beg's *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* is a fully-fledged dynastic history with a short account of Mohammad and the Imams. Similarly, Fazli Beg Khuzâni's *Afzal-al-tavârikh* is a dynastic history beginning with Safavid origins through the reign of Shah Abbâs, though some parts have not survived (or were never completed).[58]

56 Qâzi Ahmad, *Kholâsat* I, p. 3.

57 Jonâbadi, *Rowzat-al-safaviyye*, p. 903. If this is not merely a literary topos, it suggests Jonâbadi was writing independently and outside the court circles.

58 The sections between the death of Tahmâsp and the rise of Abbâs are missing in the known manuscripts.

In the post-Shah Abbâs period, although chroniclers wrote general histories, such as Mohammad-Yusof Vâleh Esfahâni Qazvini's *Khold-e barin*, and dynastic histories, such as Mohammad-Tâher Vahid's *Jahân-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* and Vali-Qoli Shâmlu's *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, during the reign of Shah Soleymân we see a preponderance of histories, mostly anonymous, that narrate the reigns of Shah Esmâ'il and Shah Tahmâsp. This may be because after the reign of Shah Abbâs I, princes were increasingly confined to the harem, and as a result, the inner palace became a center of focus and power. Rudi Matthee has outlined the basic features of this harem system, in which Shah Soleymân relied heavily on a "secret council of eunuchs" for advice.[59] It may be that the audience for this particular strand of historical writing was in the palace—quite possibly the inner palace—and consisted chiefly of eunuchs and gholâms. Possibly, too, as the dynasty faced numerous financial and other problems, historians started looking back with some nostalgia to the earliest period of Safavid history. The fact that these popular narratives, unlike the more formal histories, were illustrated also suggests a different audience for them.[60]

5. Organization and Dating Systems

All the Safavid authors organized their histories in a chronological fashion in that they narrated the earliest events first and the most recent events last. Within this general framework, however, we see considerable diversity in specific organizational schemes. The authors of universal histories generally divided their chronicles into separate 'books' or 'chapters' focusing on a particular historical era. Within those broad divisions they further broke down their

59 Rudi Matthee, "Administrative stability and change in late-17th-century Iran: The case of Shaykh 'Ali Zanganah (1669–89)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994), p. 89.

60 Morton, "Date and attribution," pp. 204–6; see also Charles Melville, "The illustration of history in Safavid manuscript painting," in Colin Mitchell, ed., *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran* (Toronto, 2011), pp. 163–97.

narratives into smaller sections and subsections. For example, Khʷândamir organized his history into the following chapters: (1) pre-Islamic history; (2) Islamic history to the end of the Abbasid caliphate; (3) the Mongol and Timurid periods; and (4) the Safavids. Within each of these sections, Khʷândamir divides his history according to themes and subjects.

Other chroniclers organized their histories using a mixed annalistic and thematic scheme. For example, Qâzi Ahmad Qomi divided his pre-Shah Abbâs narrative thematically and then provided a year-by-year account of Abbâs's reign. This might have something to do with the fact that the period contemporary with the chronicler usually received the greatest detail. Mohammad-Ma'sum b. Khʷâjegi has a purely annalistic structure for his continuation of Eskandar Beg's *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, as does Fazli Beg Khuzâni's *Afzal-al-tavârikh*, and Sayyid Hasan's *Târikh-e Soltâni.* Eskandar Beg routinely started each year with a description of the Nowruz celebrations, a practice that was widely followed. He adopted a complicated chronological framework, dividing his narrative into annals defined by the reign-year of the Shah, the Turkish animal year, and the hejri date, a system that created some difficulty for those who followed his model.[61] Within the annalistic section of the chronicle, historians placed the most important information first, and then ended their narratives with sections of lesser consequence, with titles such as 'miscellaneous events.' Hasan Beg Rumlu in his *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, usually lists as the last item for each year the deaths of important individuals, as does Eskandar Beg, In this, the Safavid authors are following a long-established pattern found in the Arab chronicles, such as the works of Ebn-al-Jowzi, Ebn-al-Athir, Dhahabi, and Ebn-Taghribirdi, to name but a few.

In addition to these divisions, the chroniclers sometimes use other principles in organizing their information. Eskandar Beg's chronicle is organized into three 'Treatises' (or Books) (*sahife*). Book one consists of twelve discourses (*maqâle*) and forms the introductory sections of the chronicle. The first discourse of Book

61 See Introduction, p. l, and Chapter 6 for the literary manipulation of the description of Nowruz.

One includes Shah Abbâs's genealogy and a brief account of his ancestors going back to the origins of the Safaviyye Sufi order, through the reigns of preceding Safavid kings, starting with Shah Esmâ'il (1501–24) and ending with the reign of Soltân-Mohammad Khodâbande (1578–87). Discourses two to twelve are each devoted to one kingly virtue of Shah Abbâs, an echo, perhaps, of Rashid-al-Din's account of Ghazan Khan, which ends with forty narratives (*hekâyat*), each relating a virtue or accomplishment of the Mongol ruler. Finally, Books Two and Three contain a chronological narrative of Shah Abbâs's rule. Mohammad-Yusof Vâleh Qazvini divides his *Khold-e barin* into eight '*rowze*' (gardens), with each rowze devoted to one portion of the general history. For example, the first rowze covers the pre-Islamic period, the third rowze focuses on the Umayyads and Abbasids, and so on.

The anonymous 'histories' or popular romances of Shah Esmâ'il and Shah Tahmâsp and Bijan's history differ from the formats described above in that they are organized only thematically without any overarching larger 'books' or sections; they also contain almost no dates for the recounted actions. This may have something to do with the fact that a thematic framework highlighting individual stories or anecdotes better lends itself to these texts being read aloud in public.

6. Content and Themes

Chronicles such as the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* have been characterized by scholars such as E.G. Browne, for example, as "dull and arduous reading to anyone not specially interested in military matters; even from the point of view of military history," and "vitiated by overwhelming masses of trivial details and the absence of any breadth of view or clearness of outline."[62] By translating Eskandar Beg's chronicle into English, Roger Savory played an important role in making Safavid history accessible to those unable to read

62 E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*. Vol. IV, *Modern Times (1500–1924)* (Cambridge, 1924), p. 107.

Persian. Savory offered a counter-assessment, calling the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* a "fascinating and absorbing" work.[63] He criticizes Browne in particular, whose judgments may have led subsequent scholars to ignore the Safavid period altogether:

> Such was the strength and colorfulness of Browne's personality, the eloquence of his tongue and the elegance of his pen, that the history of even such a crucial period of Persian historiography remained under this interdict until after his death.[64]

Savory also cites Marshall G.S. Hodgson, who praises Eskandar Beg's chronicle for its "judicious accuracy, its psychological perceptiveness, and the broad interest it manifests in the ramifications of the events it traces."[65] J.R. Walsh, among many others, also assessed the value of the *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*:

> The production of these two centuries is so dominated by the *Âlam-ârâ* of Iskandar Beg that comparisons among them seem grotesquely disproportionate, the latter being one of the greatest of all Islamic historical works and, indeed, perfect within the limitations of its traditions.[66]

Such a view cannot be substantiated until his history is subjected not only to general comparison, but also close and careful confrontation with the works of other chroniclers whom Hodgson labeled as "more simple-minded," a task yet to be undertaken in detail.

Revived interest in the Safavid period, especially since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has demonstrated the rich potential of the historical sources, allowing scholars to explore a vast array of subjects that had not been previously researched. Apart from the obvious subjects of kingship, legitimacy and the

63 Roger Savory, "'Very dull and arduous reading': A reappraisal of the *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great* by Iskandar Beg Munshi," *Hamdard Islamicus* 111 (1980), p. 23.

64 Ibid.

65 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 3, *The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times* (Chicago, 1974), p. 42.

66 J.R. Walsh, "The historiography of Ottoman-Safavid relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), p. 200, n. 8.

rise of political Shi'ism, contemporary authors have used Safavid chronicles to increase our understanding of such diverse topics as the history of the building of Isfahan, Shah Abbâs's pilgrimages on foot to Mashhad, Safavid popular culture, Safavid religion, and Safavid economic history.[67] This scholarship draws on the chronicles for general information as well as specific details. For example, in his article on the building of Isfahan, Robert D. McChesney uses Afushte-ye Natanzi's chronicle for information about the 'festival of lights' in Isfahan, providing numerous details about the preparations that were made for the festival:

> All the upper and lower surfaces of the walls and buildings (*bar ḥawāshī*) which surrounded the maydan were all smoothed (*past wa buland-i ān rā musāwī sākhtah*). [Then] the painters (*naqqāshān*) of Bihzad-like pen and portraitists of Mani-like line painted pictures on those [walls] of all the wondrous creatures and marvelous creations … Among all these wonder-exciting novelties and mind-boggling creations, twelve wheels were built, and on each were fixed nearly one thousand lamps in such a way that by lighting one lamp and then turning the wheel all the lamps on that wheel could be lit.[68]

This example and many others suggest that the great amount of detail in Safavid chronicles that Browne complained about can actually provide considerable information about many aspects of life, at least in the capital, and enrich our understanding of this important period of Iranian history.

In spite of their diversity, many Safavid histories also share a number of common characteristics. The next sections will analyze and discuss three of the most significant elements in many Safavid chronicles:

67 Robert D. McChesney, "Four sources," pp. 103–34; Charles Melville, "Shah 'Abbas and the pilgrimage to Mashhad," in idem, ed., *Safavid Persia*, pp. 191–229; Jean Calmard, "Shi'i rituals and power II. The consolidation of Safavid Shi'ism: Folklore and popular religion," in Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia*, pp. 139–90; Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, 2002); Rudi Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600–1730* (New York, 1999); Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa, Ca., 2001).

68 Natanzi, *Noqâvat-al-âthâr*, p. 577; tr. McChesney, "Four sources," p. 107.

(1) the Safavid genealogy, whereby the chroniclers sought to portray the current Safavid kings as descendants of Imam Musâ al-Kâzem,
(2) accounts of the early Safavid order, in which the early Sufi shaikhs often appear as practicing Imami Shi'i Muslims,
(3) events focusing on kingship and legitimacy.

All three reflect the important religious transformations that took place with Shah Esmâ'il's declaration of Imami Shi'ism as the official state religion in a country with a Sunni majority. Although providing the dynasty with a new identity, distinguishing it from Ottoman, Mughal, and Uzbek neighbors, it also posed political problems for Iran's rulers, who had to enforce this new religious identity upon the people of Iran.

The Safavid Genealogy

One consistent feature of Safavid historiography is its emphasis on genealogy. Muslim chroniclers over the centuries have used genealogies in order to legitimize the rule of a particular dynasty. The Arabs utilized this technique in the earliest period of Islamic history when the empire was expanding.[69] Persian chroniclers also included genealogies in their chronicles, or even composed works that were entirely genealogies, such as Rashid-al-Din's *Sho'âb-e panjgâne* and the anonymous *Mo'ezz-al-ansâb* (1426), the latter being a Timurid recension and 'update' of the former.[70] Both these works were intent on presenting the genealogy of Chengis Khan and his descendants. The genealogy of Timur himself, which the conqueror promoted in order to legitimize his rule, was reproduced by a number of Timurid chroniclers, including Hâfez-e Abru and Ali Yazdi.[71]

69 Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 50.

70 Sholeh A. Quinn, "The *Mu'izz al-Ansab* and *Shu'ab-i Panjganah* as sources for the Chaghatayid period of history: A comparative analysis," *Central Asiatic Journal* 33 (1990), pp. 229–53.

71 John E. Woods, "Timur's genealogy," in Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen, eds., *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson* (Utah, 1990), pp. 85–125.

Much like their Timurid predecessors, Safavid kings also emphasized genealogy. In promoting their legitimacy, they used a largely fictitious genealogy showing their descent from the seventh Imam of the Twelver Shi'a, Musâ al-Kâzem. With this powerful legitimizing principle, it is not surprising that nearly every Safavid chronicle contains some—usually the same—version of the Safavid family tree. The earliest appears in the *Safvat-al-safâ* written by Ebn-Bazzâz (Tavakkol b. Esmâ'il b. Hâjji al-Ardabili) in approximately 1358, during the lifetime of Shaikh Sadr-al-Din, son and successor to Shaikh Safi. The original version of the genealogy in *Safvat-al-safâ* does not trace the Safavid shaikhs all the way back to Musâ al-Kâzem, but stops at a certain Piruz al-Kordi al-Sanjâni, later known as Firuzshâh 'Zarrin-Kolâh,' as seen in the following:

Firuzshâh Zarrin-Kolâh/Piruz al-Kordi al-Sanjâni
↓
Avâz
↓
Mohammad al-Hâfez le-kelâm-Allâh
↓
Salâh-al-Din Rashid
↓
Qotb-al-Din Abu Bakr
↓
Sâleh
↓
Sheykh Amin-al-Din Jebrâ'il
↓
Sheykh Safi-al-Din [Abu'l-Fath] Eshâq[72]

In 1533, Shah Tahmâsp ordered Abu'l-Fath al-Hoseyni 'to update' the *Safvat-al-safâ*, which he did, rewriting the preface containing the genealogy, adding several generations to trace Firuzshâh back to Musâ al-Kâzem, and the epilogue, thus creating a complex

72 Ebn-Bazzâz, *Safvat-al-safâ*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i Majd (Ardabil, 1994), p. 70.

manuscript tradition of this text.[73] The *Habib-al-siyar* and *Fotuhât-e shâhi*, both completed before this edict, already traced the Safavid genealogy back to Musâ al-Kâzem.

The major differences between the genealogies in the various chronicles have to do with titles. In the two earliest chronicles, the title 'sayyid' does not appear before the names of Shaikh Safi's ancestors, but is found for the first time in the *Lobb-al-tavârikh* (1542) by Hoseyni Qazvini (1481–1555). The genealogy generally appears in the same form and in the same structural position in many Safavid chronicles, including *Nosakh-e jahân-ârâ*, *Takmelat-al-akhbâr*, *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*, *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi, and the Târikh-e soltâni*, as seen in the following example taken from the *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh*:[74]

Ebrâhim Musâ al-Kâzem Imâm al-Ma'sum
↓
Abu'l-Qâsem [Arabi ebn, according to two manuscripts] Hamze
↓
Abu Mohammad
↓
Ahmad Arabi
↓
Sayyid Mohammad
↓
Sayyid Esmâ'il
↓
Sayyid Mohammad
↓

73 Ahmad Kasravi, *Shaykh Safi va tabârash* (Tehran, 1976); A.Z.V. Togan, "Sur l'origine des Safavides," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon III* (3 vols., Damascus, 1957), pp. 345–57; Michel Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids: Šī'ism, Ṣūfism, and the Ġulāt* (Wiesbaden, 1972), pp. 46–51; idem, "A 'New' edition of the *Ṣafvat al-ṣafā*," in Judith Pfeiffer, Sholeh Quinn, and Ernest Tucker, eds., *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 303–10. For a serious critique of the printed edition, see Mansur Sefatgol, "Molâhezâti-ye enteqâdi dar bâre-ye châp-e Safvat al-safâ," *Âyine-ye Pazhuhesh* 7/6 (1997), pp. 14–28.

74 Qâzi Ahmad, *Kholâsat-al-tavârikh* I, p. 8.

Sayyid Ja'far
↓
Sayyid Ebrâhim
↓
Sayyid Hasan
↓
Sayyid Mohammad
↓
Sayyid Sharafshâh
↓
Sayyid Mohammad
↓
Sayyid Firuzshâh Zarrin-Kolâh
↓
Owz al-Khwâz
↓
Mohammad al-Hâfez
↓
Shaikh Salâh-al-Din Rashid
↓
Shaikh Qotb-al-Din
↓
Shaikh Sâleh
↓
Shaikh Amin-al-Din Jebrâ'il
↓
Soltân Shaikh Safi-al-Din Eshâq

Jalâl-al-Din Monajjem Yazdi's *Târikh-e Abbâsi* contains some different and additional information that we do not see in the other chronicles. Specifically, he traces Shah Abbâs's ancestors through his father's and his mother's side, linking Abbâs's mother to Ali b. Abi-Tâleb via the Imams Hoseyn and Zeyn-al-Âbedin. In this way, Yazdi presents Shah Abbâs not only as a Sayyid and an Alid, but also a Hoseynid.[75]

Another text with different genealogical information is the *Selselat-al-nasab*, a work containing many elements of Safavid historiography: history, genealogy, poetry, hagiography, and *enshâ'*. Its

75 Monajjem Yazdi, *Târikh-e Abbâsi*, p. 19.

author, Shaikh Hoseyn b. Shaikh Abdâl Zâhedi, who wrote this work during the reign of Shah Soleymân, was a descendant of Shaikh Zâhed Gilâni, the spiritual director (*pir*, *morshed*) of Shaikh Safi-al-Din. The author writes in order to emphasize two sets of relationships: (1) that between Shaikh Zâhed Gilâni and Shaikh Safi-al-Din, and (2) the relationship between their descendants.[76]

The emphasis on genealogy can be partially explained by rival dynasties making their own legitimizing genealogical claims. Historians such as Abu'l-Fazl, who chronicled the reign of the Mughal Akbar (reg. 1556–1605), presented that emperor as a descendant of Chengis Khan, Timur, and Adam, tracing the line through numerous Biblical figures.[77] Internal rivalries within the Safavid family itself also suggest that the genealogy was, in a sense, contested territory and the monarchs were concerned with preserving an official version, ensuring that certain branches of the family receive primacy in the sources.[78]

Safavid Origins

As noted above, most Safavid chronicles contain accounts of the early Safavid shaikhs and especially Shaikh Safi-al-Din (1252–1334), eponymous founder of the Safaviyye, drawing heavily on the *Safvat-al-safâ*. The Safavid genealogy was not the only instance of historical rewriting that took place in this text, which contains hundreds of anecdotes pertaining to the pious behavior and miraculous events associated with the life and times of Shaikh Safi and his spiritual guide, Shaikh Zâhed. Khʷândamir and Ebrâhim

76 Sholeh A. Quinn, "The *Silsilat al-nasab-i Safaviyyah* and Safavid historiography," in *Irânzamin dar gostare-ye târikh-e safaviyye: hamâyesh-e majmu'e-yi maqâlât* (Tabriz, 2004), pp. 49–65.

77 Abu'l-Fazl Mobârak, *Akbar-nâme*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i Majd (Tehran, 1993), pp. 91–124; tr. H. Beveridge as *The Akbarnama of Abu'l Fazl*, vol. I (Delhi, 1989), pp. 155–203; Quinn, *Historical Writing*, pp. 83–86.

78 Morton, "The early years;" Kathryn Babayan, "Sufis, dervishes and mullas: The controversy over spiritual and temporal dominion in seventeenth-century Iran," in Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia*, pp. 122–24.

Amini chose which among these many anecdotes to include in their chronicles, and these two early histories became part of the Safavid founding mythology. This is not to say, however, that the narrative remained static over time. Later Safavid chroniclers also rewrote the information originally appearing in *Safvat-al-safâ* in order to make Shaikh Safi and his descendants appear as practicing Twelver (Imami) Shi'is. Such changes, although initiated during the reign of Shah Esmâ'il, reached their peak during the reign of Shah Tahmâsp, when Amir Mahmud, son of Khʷândamir, composed his continuation to the *Habib-al-siyar*.

An example of the specific nature of the narrative transformations that took place is in the anecdote originating in the *Safvat-al-safâ*, explaining how the city of Ardabil came to be the center of the Safaviye Sufi order. Ebn-Bazzâz states, on the authority of Shaikh Sadr-al-Din, that one day, Shaikh Zâhed was communing with God. When his followers asked him where he had been, he said that his heart had traveled the quarters and hermitages (*zavâyâ*) of the world in order to choose an appropriate spiritual and physical center for his order. He chose Ardabil because "in this place, except for the *sonna* and *jamâ'a*, there has not been and there is no dispute and diversity of opinion of the schools (*madhâheb*) such as the Ash'ariyye, Mo'tazele, Qadariyye, Moshabbahe, Mojassame, Mo'attale, and others." Shaikh Zâhed then tells Shaikh Safi to build his center there, and admonishes him to guide the people to the true religion and the straight path, and spread the invitation of "Answer God's summoner" throughout the world.[79]

Khʷândamir, while generally imitating the wording of *Safvat-al-safâ*, removes the references to the various schools or sects (*madhhab*). He says that Shaikh Zâhed could find nowhere better than Ardabil for Shaikh Safi's home, but he omits Ebn-Bazzâz's explanation for this.[80]

Amir Mahmud appears to have had Timurid sympathies, but he was also intent on transforming early Safavid history to suit

79 Ebn-Bazzâz, *Safvat-al-safâ*, pp. 177–78; Mazzaoui, *Origins of the Safawids*, p. 49.

80 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, p. 417.

Shah Tahmâsp's agenda. It is unknown whether or not he eventually accompanied his father to India.[81] He uses *Habib-al-siyar* as a model but further changes the narrative in order to make Shaikh Zâhed and Shaikh Safi appear as Shi'is, for according to the *Dheyl-e habib-al-siyar*, Shaikh Zâhed encouraged Shaikh Safi to guide people to the Prophet's religion and the path of the Alid community (*va shâreʿ-e mellat-e Mortazavi*). Mortazâ is a title for Ali, and therefore "Mortazavi" here means Alid.[82] The parallel passages are as follows:

> *Safvat-al-safâ*
> You must invite the people to the right religion and the straight path (*din-e qavim va serât-e mostaqim*) and proclaim the invitation of "answer God's summoner" [Q, 46:31] in the four corners of the world (*sheshjehât*), for God, exalted be his name, has entrusted you to the people and the people to you.[83]

> *Habib-al-siyar*
> You must guide the people in the ways of the right religion and lead them on the path of the rightly guided community (*din-e qavim va serât-e mellat-e mostaqim*) and sound the call of "answer God's summoner" [Q, 46:31] to the four quarters of the seven climes, for God has entrusted you to the people and the people to you; the faces of the people of insight are turned towards you.[84]

> *Dheyl-e habib-al-siyar*
> It behooves and befits you to exert a mighty effort to shepherd and guide those who believe in the seal of the prophets—may God bless him and his kindred and grant them all salvation—in the way of the religion of Mohammad (*din-e mobin-e nabavi*) and in the path of the community of Ali (*va shâreʿ-e mellat-e Mortazavi*). It behooves you to avert people from the path of perdition and open wide the portals of faith in the faces of the wanderers in the vale of denial, for the lord of both worlds has entrusted you to the people and the people to you.[85]

81 Szuppe, *Entre Timourides*, pp. 147–48.
82 Amir Mahmud, *Irân dar ruzgâr*, p. 40.
83 Ebn-Bazzâz, *Safvat-al-safâ*, p. 178.
84 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, p. 416–17; tr. Thackston (slightly modified), p. 558.
85 Amir Mahmud, *Irân dar ruzgâr*, p. 40.

Elsewhere in his account of the Safavid founders, by using the same method of imitative writing, Amir Mahmud again emphasizes that the Safavid founders were practicing Twelver Shi'is. This can best be seen in a story originating in the *Safvat-al-safâ*, of the illness, death, and burial of Shaikh Zâhed. Amir Mahmud transforms a straightforward, non-religiously specific account of Shaikh Zâhed's death in the following manner:

> *Safvat-al-safâ*
> Shaikh Safi performed all of the religious, customary and ceremonial duties that were necessary and if the Shaikh forgot something because of fear, the spirit of Shaikh Zâhed taught him until he did it, and he assisted and helped him in all that he did and did not do until the necessary duties and customs were completely finished. Then he performed a formal burial in his luminous, fragrant sepulcher.[86]
>
> *Habib-al-siyar*
> Shaikh Safi-al-Din proceeded with the necessities of preparing and shrouding [the body], and performed the customs of mourning.[87]
>
> *Dheyl-e habib-al-siyar*
> Shaikh Safi-al-Din commanded that his pure body be washed according to the custom of the Prophet and in conformity with Twelver practice, and shrouded him, and offered prayers at his blessed funeral; and they buried him in a suitable place in that region, and proceeded to build a tomb for that unique one of the age.[88]

The original episode in *Safvat* thus describes how, after Shaikh Zâhed died, Shaikh Safi fulfilled the necessary task of ritual washing of the body and associated duties. After this, they buried Shaikh Zâhed, thus completing the requirements of a formal burial (*dafn-e suri*). Khʷândamir makes two primary alterations to the story. First, he states that Shaikh Safi made the necessary preparations, shrouded the body, and "performed the customs of mourning." Second, he eliminates the section stating that Shaikh Zâhed's spirit assisted Shaikh Safi-al-Din with the ceremony. The most significant revision in the story again occurs in Amir Mahmud's

86 Ebn-Bazzâz, *Safvat-al-safâ*, p. 248.
87 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, p. 417.
88 Amir Mahmud, *Irân dar ruzgâr*, p. 42.

chronicle, where he says that Shaikh Safi washed the body according to the customs of the Prophet (*sonnat-e rasul*) and in conformity with Twelver Shi'i practice. Although Amir Mahmud does not specify the Twelver Shi'i practices of ritual washing, he was probably referring to the fact that Shi'i legal tradition (*feqh*) requires the body to be washed in cold water as opposed to some schools of Sunnism, which specify warm water. Furthermore, Shi'ite requirements about the nature of each of three washings and the perfumes to be used in these washings differ from Sunni specifications.[89]

The Coronation of Shah Esmâ'il

Another example of this shift in Safavid preoccupations from Iran's pre-Islamic and pre-Safavid past to its Twelver Shi'i present can be seen in how chroniclers wrote and then rewrote accounts of Shah Esmâ'il's coronation.[90] By carefully comparing versions of these events, we see how these changes are reflected in the chronicles themselves.

Kh^{w}ândamir's *Habib-al-siyar* contains one of the earliest accounts of Esmâ'il's coronation. In this account, his brother and head of the Safaviyye Sufi order "crowned" him:

> As ordered, Ayba-Sultan went to Ardabil, but the day he arrived in the vicinity, Sultan-Ali Padishah realized through inner enlightenment that it was the will of destiny that Rustam Beg's men put him to the sword of martyrdom that very day, and that a short time later destiny would raise Isma'il's banner in rule. Therefore, he summoned the Sufi amirs to the shrine, informed them of his impending demise, gave them hopes of the increase of royal fortune, and put his turban sash and crown on Isma'il's head.[91]

This crowning may perhaps be considered a 'pre-coronation' event, since his brother gave Esmâ'il the crown shortly before he died,

89 Hamid Algar, *EIr*, s.v., Burial: iv. In Islam.
90 Sholeh A. Quinn, "Coronation narratives in Safavid chronicles," in Judith Pfeiffer *et al.*, eds., *History and Historiography*, pp. 311–31.
91 Kh^{w}ândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, p. 441; tr. Thackston, p. 567.

and before Esmâ'il crowned himself in Tabriz. This symbolic act held political importance, because the headgear that Soltân-Ali Padshâh used must have been the Safavid Sufi *tâj*, or *tâj-e Heydari*. Removing the tâj from one head and placing it on another represented spiritual authority being transferred from one Sufi leader to another.

It was not until later in his narrative, after describing episodes related to the Aq Qoyunlu kings and Esmâ'il's conquests of Shirvân, Baku, and Azerbaijan, that Khʷândamir narrates Shah Esmâ'il's enthronement (*jolus*) proper. Khʷândamir believes that the establishment of the Safavid dynasty was inevitable and destined to succeed because Shah Esmâ'il was the 'renewer' (*mojadded*) of Islam, quoting the hadith that states that at the beginning of every century God chooses someone to renew his religion.[92] He may be drawing from the *Safvat-al-safâ* here, because Ebn-Bazzâz also names Shaikh Safi as the *mojadded* from among those well versed in the esoteric sciences for the 13th century.[93] Khʷândamir then states that Esmâ'il "mounted the [Kayanid] throne (*sarir-e Kayâni*) and placed the crown of the caliphate and world conquest (*afsar-e khelâfat va keshvar-setâni*) on his head." A poem follows, emphasizing several symbols of Esmâ'il's kingship, in particular the crown (*afsar*), the throne (*takht*), the king's justice (*ensâf*) and kingship (*molk*):

> The crown gained its renown from your head, O Shah
> The throne gained its worth from your steps, O Shah
> Your justice maintains the kingdom, O Shah,
> By your kingship the world became whole, O Shah.[94]

According to Khʷândamir, Esmâ'il then chose Imami (Twelver) Shi'ism as the official religion. He states that "a regal decree was issued that all preachers in the realm of Azerbaijan pronounce the *khotba* in the name of the Twelve Imams." Furthermore, the muezzins were ordered to add to the call to prayer the phrase, "And I profess that Ali is the Friend of God." Khʷândamir ends

92 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, p. 468; tr., p. 576.
93 Ebn-Bazzâz, *Safvat-al-safâ*, pp. 55–59.
94 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* IV, p. 467; tr., p. 576.

this portion of his account by explaining how the qualities of the Imams and prayers for the longevity of the king's reign were said at the pulpit. Coins were struck in the name of the Imams and the king, and Shah Esmâ'il granted positions to various individuals. He wintered in Tabriz, "dispensing justice and benevolence (*adl va ehsân*) to the inhabitants and protecting them from injustice and tyranny."[95]

Three important elements of kingship and authority come together in this account: traditional Persian kingship, Islamic kingship, and notions of Shi'ite authority. Among the traditional Persian elements is the crowning itself, since Esmâ'il crowned himself king, as did early Sasanian kings.[96] Khʷândamir's description of Esma'il's 'Kayanid' throne invokes Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, which narrates Iran's mythical past of Kayani kings. Khʷândamir's poem adds the theme of justice to two specific objects or symbols of kingship, the crown and the throne. This complex of symbols and ideas itself could allude to the traditional 'circle of justice,' in which Esmâ'il's role is that of king who maintains justice.

Khʷândamir refers to the crown as the *afsar-e khelâfat*, or 'crown of the caliphate,' which adds an Islamic layer to his account. Here it is important to note that the crown that the Abbasids wore was known as the 'crown of the caliph' (*tâj-al-khalife*). They did this in order to drive distance between themselves and the earlier Umayyad caliphs, and at the same time they reflected traditions that were alive in former Sasanian territory over which they ruled.[97] Finally, striking coins and reciting the *khotba* in the name of the king and the Imams invokes a specifically Shi'i tradition and history.

A close comparison of the *Habib-al-siyar* with Amir Mahmud's *Dheyl-e habib-al-siyar* shows that he imitated his father's work, modifying it in specific ways not too different from the sort of rewriting he did in the account of Shaikh Safi, removing the pre-Islamic ideas of kingship and placing most of his emphasis on the establishment of Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion. He also

95 Khʷândamir, *Habib al-siyar* IV, pp. 468–69; tr., p. 576.
96 A. Shapur Shahbazi, *EIr*, s.v. Coronation.
97 W. Björkman, *EI*², s.v. Tāḏj.

includes the idea of Esmâ'il being the renewer who appears in every century to purify the religion. He does not reproduce Khʷândamir's poem and instead inserts one quatrain focusing on the Shi'i aspect of Esmâ'il's kingship:

> Praise be to God that from the fortune (*dowlat*) of the Safavid king [i.e. Shah Esmâ'il],
> The witness of the Prophet's religion (*shâhed-e din-e nabavi*) has emerged from [behind] the veil;
> From Prophetic providence and from Mortazavid [i.e. Alid] generosity,
> The innovations of the heretics like [the heretics] themselves have become abrogated.[98]

The different emphases in these two related narratives can be explained by examining the historical context. Amir Mahmud had an agenda of rewriting early Safavid history, evidently in order to inflate the Shi'i component in that history, even in portions of the Safavid past where it did not exist. This was consistent with Shah Tahmâsp's own priority, to consolidate the religious changes that Shah Esmâ'il had initiated, which were less clearly established while Khʷândamir was writing.

The account of Esmâ'il's coronation in Eskandar Beg's *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* bears greater similarity to Amir Mahmud's history than any other. The earlier concerns in Khʷândamir's *Habib-al-siyar*, with its allusions to traditional pre-Islamic Persian kingship and general Islamic rule, are no longer part of the Safavid narrative. Instead, the focus firmly rests on Esmâ'il's establishment of Twelver Shi'ism, recitation of the khotba and the minting of coins in the name of the king and the Imams.[99] The *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* is an important history in its own right but its historiographical importance cannot be overemphasized. This chronicle served as a model for numerous later Safavid works, such as Vali-Qoli Shâmlu's *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, and thus ensured the dominance of this particular historiographical strand.[100] By 1629, when Eskandar Beg completed his history, the Safavids

98 Amir Mahmud, *Irân dar ruzgâr*, p. 126.
99 See Eskandar Beg, *Âlam-ârâ*, pp. 48–49; tr., p. 45.
100 See Vali-Qoli Shâmlu, *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, p. 36.

were established in their own historiographical terms as first and foremost a Twelver Shi'i dynasty; this continued to the end of the period. Later works, such as Mohammad Shafi' Tehrâni's *Mer'ât-e Vâredât* or Mohammad Mohsen Mostowfi's *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, surveying Safavid history as a whole, found no need at all to mention the details of Esmâ'il's coronation.[101]

7. Methods of Composition

Safavid Prologues

As to how they were written, Safavid historians employed a number of techniques in writing their chronicles. One of the most prevalent, when narrating their own past, consists of imitative writing, as can usefully be analyzed in the chronicle prefaces (*dibâche*).[102]

Imitative writing was certainly not new with the Safavids. We see examples of this practice in Mongol, Timurid, and Ottoman historical writing. Not least because they had been under Timurid employment, early Safavid historians based their chronicles on Timurid models. Although they did not necessarily draw on these for ideological inspiration, they did adopt the method of organization and conventional elements that we see in Safavid prologues. Sometimes the imitation appears in the form of exact word-for-word reproduction of the earlier text, but more often key words and phrases are altered in order to suit the purpose of the historian.

Khʷândamir, for example, modeled the preface to his *Habib-al-siyar* on Mirkhʷând's *Rowzat-al-safâ*, to the extent that we can detect parallel passages. In the example below, Khʷândamir notes the death of his original patron, Ghiyâth-al-Din Amir Mohammad al-Hoseyni (d. 1520), and then describes the difficulties he endured

101 Mohammad Shafi' Tehrâni, *Mer'ât-e vâredât*, ed. Mansur Sefatgol (Tehran, 2004), p. 80; Mohammad Mohsen Mostowfi, *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, ed. Behruz Gudarzi (Tehran, 1996), p. 48.

102 Sholeh A. Quinn, "The historiography of Safavid prefaces," in Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia*, pp. 1–25; Quinn, *Historical Writing*, pp. 33–61.

until the situation took a drastic change for the better: Shah Esmâ'il appeared on the scene and appointed new court officials in Herat, in particular Durmish Khan. Khʷândamir uses the same phrases to describe this new situation as Mirkhʷând used to outline a change of events during his time, his finding a new patron, Ali-Shir Navâ'i, after a considerable period of difficulty:

> *Rowzat-al-safâ*
> In such manner, for a time this gloomy condition was prevailing when suddenly the breeze of divine favor stirred …[103]

> *Habib-al-siyar*
> Several difficult and dark months passed in such manner; the unveiling of the beauty of the beloved one did not occur at all. Suddenly the sun of divine favor arose from the horizon of infinite fortune.[104]

The historians also depicted meeting their patrons, Ali-Shir Navâ'i and Habib-Allâh Karim-al-Din, respectively, in corresponding passages:

> *Rowzat-al-safâ*
> And when I was honored with the gift of kissing his threshold, verily I saw a spirit fashioned as a man and I found an angel in human form whose excellent essence was distinguished in all disciplines of knowledge above the learned people of the time.[105]

> *Habib-al-siyar*
> And when divine favor led that one secluded in the corner of obscurity to his threshold and he was honored by attaining his holy presence, he saw a spirit fashioned as a man and he found an angel in human form. His mind, adept at unfolding mysteries, was conversant in all disciplines of knowledge.[106]

The late Timurid influence on Safavid prefaces is apparent not only in the paraphrasing and imitative writing of the sentences in the *Habib-al-siyar*, but also in the general themes or elements in the

103 Mirkhʷând, *Rowzat-al-safâ* I, p. 5.
104 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* I, p. 6.
105 Mirkhʷând, *Rowzat-al-safâ* I, p. 6.
106 Khʷândamir, *Habib-al-siyar* I, p. 8.

dibâche. Mirkhʷând's preface contains a number of elements that became largely conventional in Safavid prefaces. These may be divided into two parts: a religious prologue, and an autobiographical section. Within each part, we can identify several more specific sections, as seen in the following schemes:

(1) Religious prologue
   a) praise of God
   b) praise of Mohammad and family, the separation marker *ammâ ba'd* ('now then', or 'to continue …')

(2) Autobiography
   a) author's name
   b) activities of youth
   c) turn of events
   d) patron
   e) reason for composition
   f) training/education

(3) name of work
   a) index
   b) philosophy of history

Most Safavid prefaces contain these same basic components, with occasional deviations. Siyâqi Nezâm's *Fotuhât-e homâyun* contains many of the same conventional elements in *Rowzat-al-safâ* and *Habib-al-siyar*. He originally conceived his history as a twelve-part chronicle covering to the first twelve years of Shah Abbâs's reign. However, the only portions existing today are the introduction and the twelfth chapter, devoted to Shah Abbâs's conquest of Khorasan. Modeling his preface on the *Habib-al-siyar* and several other Safavid-era prefaces, the author perpetuated Mirkhʷând's late Timurid model into 17th-century historiography. His preface includes the following sections:

(1) Religious prologue
   a) praise of God
   b) praise of Mohammad
   c) praise of Ali [*ammâ ba'd*: 'to continue …']

(2) Autobiography
   a) author's name [reason for writing]
   b) activities of youth/life
   c) key turn of events

(3) Information about work
   a) name of work
   b) index
   c) miracles

In this preface, however, the final section entitled 'miracles' (*karâmât*) is new, and reflects concerns specific to the Safavids.[107]

A similar autobiographical statement, including details of the turning points in the historian's career, is found in Ma'sum b. Khʷâjegi's *Kholâsat-al-siyar*, and amplified in an annex at the end of the chronicle (and preceding another on the Ziyâd-oghlu family and the town of Ganja). Ma'sum had devoted his early days to study, and on attending the court (*ordu*) of Shah Abbâs obtained the post of overseer of the stables, which he held till after the death of Shah Safi. After two years of unemployment, he was then sent in his old age to Ganja in the vizierate of Mortazâ-Qoli Khan Ziyâd-Oghlu. He started composing his history as a means of recovering from a serious illness that afflicted him in 1638.[108] Interestingly, this perhaps reflects Mirkhʷând's remarks, at the end of the *Rowzat-al-safâ*, in which he states that he was so ill while working on the reign of Shâhrokh that he couldn't move and sometimes couldn't even sit. He found writing his history a relief, however, and the doctors confirmed it was a good way to soothe his affliction. He also had good dreams after a day's work, and horrifying ones after a day when he couldn't write: a miracle he attributed to the blessing of his patron, Ali-Shir Navâ'i.[109]

Reading Safavid prefaces in light of their models allows for a better understanding of the aims, intentions, and agendas of the chroniclers. Imitative writing does not begin and end with the

107 Quinn, *Historical Writing*, pp. 48–53.
108 Khʷâjegi Esfahâni, pp. 27–28, 314–15, also above, n. 28; cf. *Tadhkere-ye Nasrâbâdi*, p. 109.
109 Mirkhʷând, *Rowzat* VI, pp. 873–75.

prefaces, however. This method of historical writing continued into other portions of the chronicles as well, in particular those passages narrating events before the lifetime of the chronicler.

Imitative Writing: Late Safavid Chronicles

Late Safavid chroniclers continued to write using historiographical conventions that their predecessors established, while at the same time expressing new ideas using new styles. Take, for example, the dreams of Shaikh Safi-al-Din. Accounts of several of Shaikh Safi's dreams appear in Safavid histories going back to the 14th-century hagiographical work, the *Safvat-al-safâ*, by Ebn-Bazzâz. Over time, Safavid chroniclers rewrote these dreams in order to make it seem that Safavid world rule was inevitable and foretold from a very early period. Late Safavid chroniclers narrated Shaikh Safi's dreams in largely similar ways to their predecessors.[110] An examination of the anonymous chronicles, however, illustrates both the unique content in these histories in comparison with earlier texts, and the older techniques used to produce this new content. Of the works falling in this category, two contain narratives of Shaykh Safi's dreams: (1) the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Safavi* (1675), and (2) the *Jahângoshâ-ye khâqân* (1680s).[111] The author of the latter appears to draw on the former.[112]

Both of these histories contain accounts of dynastic origins that include narratives of Shaikh Safi's second dream. The dream accounts in these histories contain a great deal of dialogue, with the entire second half of the dream narrative consisting of Shaikh Safi's conversation with Shaikh Zâhed. In the narrative, Shaikh Safi

110 See Sholeh A. Quinn, "The Dreams of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn in late Safavid chronicles," in Louise Marlow, ed., *Dreaming across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands* (Cambridge, MA., 2008), pp. 221–32.

111 There are at least four, and probably more, anonymous Esmâ'il romances scattered in various manuscript collections. Two have been published and according to Morton, "Date and attribution," pp. 187–88, they should be considered as variants of the same work.

112 Morton, "Date and attribution," p. 183.

dreamt that they had placed a crown on his head and tied a red sword (sheath) to his waist. He lifted the crown and it became a sun that illuminated the entire world. He returned the crown to his head, woke up, and the next day met Shaikh Zâhed. The two then had a conversation about the dream:

> The eyes of the Shaikh fell upon him and he said, 'Oh son, congratulations [for] this fortune which they gave to you from the invisible world.' Shaikh Safi said, 'It is due to your effort.' Shaikh [Zâhed] said, 'Will you tell the dream or should I tell it?' He [Safi] said, 'If it is commanded I will tell it.' He [Zâhed] said, 'Tell the dream.' He [Safi] told it. The disciples became jealous. Shaikh Zâhed said, 'May glad tiding be upon you, for from your children one will become a king, and he will promote the religion of God.'[113]

This dialogue is a unique feature of the late Safavid historical romances. In this case, it conveys several points. First of all, it suggests that Shaikh Zâhed enjoyed the power of prescience, for he asks Shaikh Safi which one of them should recount the dream, thereby implying that he already knew what Shaikh Safi had dreamt. Although as an isolated instance of conversation this may not be particularly significant, it becomes more important when we see that these histories are filled with dialogue, suggesting a certain liveliness that caused Morton to hypothesize they may have been read aloud in public. He cites Membré's statement,

> There are also others [Safavids] with books in their hands, reading of the battles of 'Alī and the combats of the Princes of old, and of Shāh Ismā'īl; and all give money to hear.

Furthermore, in his description of the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Shâh Esmâ'il*, Robert McChesney hypothesizes that this and related histories in this genre have their origins in popular and oral traditions.[114]

113 This version is from the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Safavi*, ed. Yad-Allâh Shokri (2nd ed., Tehran, 1984), p. 13. The version in the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Shâh Esmâ'il*, ed. Asghar Montazer-Sâheb (Tehran, 1970), pp. 10–11, is almost exactly the same, except that it does not contain the phrase "the disciples became jealous."

114 See Morton, "The early years," pp. 44–45. See also Michele Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539–1542)*, tr. and ed. A.H. Morton (London 1993), p. 52. Robert McChesney, *EIr*, s.v. 'Ālamārā-ye Šāh Esmā 'īl.

Although the style of the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Safavi* differs from earlier Safavid chronicles, an examination of Bijan's *Jahân-goshâ-ye khâqân* shows that the technique of imitative writing continued into the late Safavid period, for using the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Safavi* as a model of imitation, Bijan rewrites the dream's interpretation in a significant way. The two parallel passages are as follows:

> *Âlam-ârâ-ye Safavi*
> Shaikh Zâhed said 'May glad tidings be upon you for among your children one will become the king and he will spread the right faith.'[115]

> *Jahân-goshâ-ye khâqân*
> Shaikh Zâhed said, 'May glad tidings be upon you for among your children one will become the king and he will be the promoter of the truly attested faith of Twelver Shi'ism.'[116]

From this example we see how Bijan took a text that explained how a future king would promote the "right faith," without specifying what that religion of God would be, and clarifies it for his readers, stating that it was Twelver Shi'ism. Morton hypothesizes that Bijan's audience were gholâms, and it is possible that such an audience may not have been as familiar with early Safavid history as others, and would therefore possibly need such details clearly spelled out.[117] Furthermore, looking back to the earlier Safavid period and portraying Shah Esmâ'il and his ancestors as heroic figures could serve the purpose of criticizing those in power at the time these sources were written. Finally, it is possible that in relating the particularly Shi'i aspects of Shaikh Safi's dreams, these late chroniclers were reasserting the important position of the king within a religious framework at a time when the religious establishment was becoming increasingly powerful.[118]

115 *Alam-ârâ-ye Safavi*, 13.
116 Bijan, *Jahân-goshâ-ye khâqân: târikh-e Shâh Esmâ'il*, ed. Allâh-Data Muztar (Islamabad, 1984), p. 17.
117 Morton, "Date and attribution," p. 201.
118 See, for example, Jean Calmard, "Popular literature under the Safavids," in Andrew J. Newman, ed., *Studies on the Safavid Period*, pp. 315–39.

Narrating the Present

For periods in which the chroniclers were contemporaries or eyewitnesses, they used other techniques to compose their histories. Most often, they appear to have gathered their information in their capacity as court officials, whether in terms of having access to documentation or to the king himself. Monajjem Yazdi, for instance, as royal court astrologer, was not only aware of the king's whereabouts, but at least some aspects of his job indicate that he was responsible for determining the king's comings and goings. The author of the late Safavid administrative manual, the *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, now identified as Mirzâ Sami'â, brother of a paternal ancestor of Rostam-al-hokamâ, outlines the responsibilities of the court astrologer:

> Similarly to the medical staff, the muqarrab al-khaqan MUNAJJIM-BASHI is daily present at the palace (*dar-i daulat khana*) in order to make his suggestions in case the Sovereign or the muqarrabs should order him to ascertain a felicitous hour (*sa'at-i sa'd*) for the beginning of an affair or for starting on a journey, or for putting on, and cutting out new clothes … Briefly [we may say that] the distribution of [propitiatory] alms to meritorious people, on the occasions of eclipses and the King's birthday, is to some extent connected with the Munajjim-bashi and the Mulla-bashi.[119]

Based on this description, Monajjem Yazdi would have been in a position to relate what the king was doing and when he was doing it. And indeed, we have internal evidence indicating that he did accompany the king on numerous occasions. For example, Yazdi accompanied Shah Abbâs on the pilgrimage he made on foot to Mashhad in 1601, charged with the task of measuring the distance

119 *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, ed. M.S. Dabir-Siyâqi (Tehran, 1989), p. 20; tr. and ed. V. Minorsky, as *A Manual of Safavid Administration* (London, 1943), pp. 57–58; cf. Mirzâ Rafi'â Ansâri, *Dastur-al-moluk*, ed. Iraj Afshâr, *Daftar-e târikh* (Tehran, 2001), pp. 538–39; tr. Willem Floor and Mohammad H. Faghfoory (Costa Mesa, Calif., 2007), pp. 51–52, 244–245; Mirza Naqi Nasiri, *Titles and Emoluments in Safavid Iran: A Third Manual of Safavid Administration*, tr. Willem Floor (Washington DC, 2008), p. 55. For Rostam-al-hokamâ, see Chapters 6 and 7.

the king walked each day. Yazdi reported the details in his *Târikh-e Abbâsi*; his dating and chronology are quite accurate and his calculations were carefully made, correcting the far less precise account by Eskandar Beg, who was more concerned with the ideological importance of the march than its practical details.[120]

Evidence both external and internal to the *Târikh-e Abbâsi* suggests that Yazdi also had access to documentary sources, which he used in his chronicle. Mahmud b. Abd-Allâh, author of a little known work entitled the *Kholâsat-e Abbâsi*, was apparently commissioned "to write the history of his own reign taking the daily court circulars recorded by Mollâ Jalâl Monajjem, duly noting authentic facts."[121] Yazdi, then, was apparently involved in the production of 'daily court circulars' (*vaqâye'-e ruz be-ruz*), and seems to have had access to what are generically referred to as orders (*farmân*) in composing his narrative.[122] From the technical language employed in his chronicle, we may postulate that these various types of orders, as well as records of who delivered them, constituted the raw data which eventually became incorporated into his daily circulars and in turn formed the basis for his narrative. This technical bureaucratic language consisted of formulaic expressions referring to specific types of documents. Some, for example, contained a *toghrâ* with the formula *hokm-e jahân motâ'* written at the top.[123] In his account of the downfall of the Qezelbâsh officer Ya'qub Khan Dhu'l-Qadr, Yazdi records six messages of various types sent by the king, directly or indirectly, to the Khan and three messages sent by Ya'qub Khan back to the court. Yazdi's information is important on two levels—first because it provides a glimpse into how Shah Abbâs chose to deal with Ya'qub Khan and the Qezelbâsh problem, and second because it purports to repeat the actual contents of some of

120 Melville, "Pilgrimage to Mashhad," pp. 200–10.

121 Muhammad Ashraf, comp., *A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Salar Jung Museum and Library*, vol. I, *Concerning (453) Mss. of History* (Hyderabad, 1965), p. 211; Mahmud b. Abd-Allâh, *Kholâsat-e Abbâsi*, MS Salar Jung Museum, Hist. 237, fol. 7a.

122 Ali-Asghar Mossadegh, "La famille Monajjem Yazdi," pp. 125–27.

123 *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, tr. Minorsky, p. 61. Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa, Calif., 2001), pp. 54, 63–64.

this correspondence. For example, Yazdi quotes the final message sent from Shah Abbâs to Ya'qub Khan:

> Because of our contentment with the *amir-al-omarâ* of Fars [i.e. Ya'qub Khan], we are giving twelve thousand dinars. The request that he made not to go to the threshold this time is accepted. I will not rush to Fars. However, when it comes to arranging the arms (equipment) for Khorasan, at the time of summoning, he must head out without hesitation or pretext.[124]

Yazdi precedes this quote with the formulaic expression, "An order (*hokm-e jahân motâ'*) was sent to Ya'qub Khan stating …," thereby indicating the likelihood that Yazdi was quoting from an actual document. Unfortunately, the lack of extensive archival documentation makes it impossible to compare the texts of this passage.

In addition to our astrologer-historians, those chroniclers who were monshis of some sort would also have had access to important court documents. The late Safavid period manual, the *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, written after the Safavid bureaucracy had ceased to function as it previously had done, also outlines the duties of a court secretary or state scribe, perhaps not too unlike Eskandar Beg's job:

> The duty of the muqarrab al-khāqān MUNSHĪ AL-MAMĀLIK … is to draw in red ink and liquid gold (*āb-i ṭalā*) the tughra on all the King's missives (*parvānajāt-i mubārak-i ashraf*) and on [documents referring] to employment, tiyul, hama-sala, amount of salary, as well as on the orders (*ḥukm*) sent by the Dīvān-begi in the following way …[125]

This was an important position, because of a monshi's participation in "royal assemblies" and his responsibility for some of the Shah's correspondence.[126] We have already seen that some of the historians mentioned above had the title of monshi (for example Budâq Qazvini), or were otherwise attached to the secretariat (such as Fazli Beg Khuzâni). Mohammad-Tâher Vahid also reproduces

124 Monajjem Yazdi, *Târikh-e Abbâsi*, p. 90.

125 *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, p. 24, tr. Minorsky, p. 61; Mirzâ Rafi'â, *Dastur-al-moluk*, pp. 544–46; Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, pp. 50–55.

126 *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, tr. Minorsky, p. 132.

several letters exchanged between the Shah (Abbâs II) and the Mughal ruler, and the governor of Qandahar, for example, at the time of the Qandahar expedition, as well as the victory letter that followed the capture of the city.[127]

Mohammad-Tâher Vahid was a *majles-nevis*, an office that came to supplant much of the work of the monshi-al-mamâlek after the reign of Shah Abbâs I; this court position, also referred to as the *vâqe'e-nevis*, as an important bearing on our understanding of the production of history. It is likely that our chroniclers drew on material produced by the *vâqe'e-nevis* even if they did not hold such a position themselves. This job is also described in the *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*:

> The duty of the Recorder (*vāqiʿa-nivīsān*) is to draw up replies to the letters addressed to the Kings of Iran by [other] kings, and raqams concerning ranks and employments (*manāsib-va-mulāzamāt*) … Every order (*raqam*) which the King gives by word of mouth … is transmitted to the Vāqiʿa-nivīs, whether it has been [recorded] in a taʿlīqa of the Grand Vazir, or the amirs and courtiers communicated something in their memoranda with the formula 'by the supreme command.'[128]

8. Discussion

Safavid historiography was extremely rich and diverse, in terms of both style and method. Stylistically, for example, one historiographical strand followed a tradition going back to the Timurid period and beyond. This style featured ornate, florid sentences, often in rhymed prose (*saj'*) and interspersed with poetry. Mirkh^{w}ând's late Timurid *Rowzat-al-safâ* served as a model for Kh^{w}ândamir's *Habib-al-siyar*, and several later Safavid writers drew on this text. Eskandar Beg Monshi modestly states in the introduction to his *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, another important model for later

127 Vahid, *Jahân-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, pp. 450, 484, 492; cf. *Abbâs-nâme*, pp. 98, 119, 125.

128 *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, p. 15, tr. Minorsky, pp. 52–53; Mirzâ Rafi'â, *Dastur-al-moluk*, pp. 523–25; Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, pp. 52–58.

writers, that he has adhered to a simple style, noting that in his process of gathering material from earlier sources,

> I have reported what they have said without wrapping it up, as secretaries do, in obscure and unfamiliar phrases which are tedious and wearisome. In short, I have endeavored to present history and events in their simplest garb.[129]

His chronicle, however, is full of the same sort of ornate 'decoration' as the Herat chronicles, and indeed could be considered to take this a stage further; in general, it can be said that the highly artificial Indian style (or *sabk-e hendi*) that became dominant in poetry in the Safavid period, also had its reflection in the prose writing of the time.

However, the Safavid period also witnessed other more simple styles of historiography. Monajjem Yazdi's *Târikh-e Abbâsi*, for example, reads much more like a collection of notes or compendium of documents around which he built a loose narrative. His chronicle contains very little poetry, and his sentences are often short and direct. Likewise, the anonymous author of a fragmentary text, the *Târikh-e Qezelbâshân*, a genealogical history naming some of the main Qezelbâsh leaders during the Safavid era, uses a similarly simple and unadorned style in his narrative.[130] Hasan Beg Rumlu's *Ahsan-al-tavârikh* is also fairly straightforward in style. However, as noted in Chapter 2, generalizations about literary style are likely to be oversimplistic in the absence of detailed studies of individual works, for many authors utilize a range of style within a single text, depending on the subject matter and the effects desired.

The same diversity that exists in styles of Safavid historical writing can be seen in methods of historiography. Safavid chroniclers narrated their past by using earlier texts as models, which they imitated, modified or supplemented in order to conform to issues that were prevalent during their own present. Thus Amir Mahmud altered his father's account of Shah Esmâ'il's coronation in order to emphasize the Shi'i aspects of that ceremony, reflecting

129 Eskandar Beg, *Âlam-ârâ*, p. 4; tr. Savory, p. 5. See also Chapter 2.

130 *Târikh-e Qezelbâshân*, ed. Mir Hâshem Mohaddeth (Tehran, 1982). For a brief discussion of this text, see Quinn, *Historical Writing*, pp. 20–21.

the dominant concerns of the dynasty at his time of writing. When narrating the present, chroniclers utilized different sources of information, such as documents and communications to which they had access in their roles as court officials of various kinds.

The creative choices available to Safavid chroniclers in composing their chronicles, despite the dictates of form and style, were many. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to ascertain fully our authors' philosophies of history. Rarely do they articulate what they thought they were doing in writing their texts, and in the few cases when they do, they do not reveal the entire story. For example, in his introduction to the *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, Eskandar Beg states that "Many gentle souls are extremely keen on studying works of biography and history, the benefit of which is apparent to all—especially the study of recent history."[131]

By examining the actual content of the histories, however, we may arrive at some understanding of our chroniclers' interest in history. One of their main concerns was to preserve knowledge, an important consideration generally for writers in the manuscript age. By reproducing an earlier account, sometimes verbatim and sometimes with alterations, the historian helped preserve valuable information that earlier historians had recorded. They then added new information to that older text, thereby increasing the total body of knowledge in their world.

The chroniclers were also interested in people. Several Safavid histories, such as the *Habib-al-siyar* and the *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, contain entire sections of notable individuals, such as poets, administrators, clerics, artists, and others. This tendency was continued by Fazli Beg Khuzâni-Esfahâni, whose work contains lists of different office-holders in each of the reigns covered in the surviving portions of the chronicle, and also by Mohammad-Tâher Vahid for the reign of Shah Safi, and by the later *Qesas-al-khâqâni*, the final volume of which has a series of short biographies first of the ulama and dervishes and then of the poets of the reign of Abbâs II. Abd-al-Hoseyn al-Hoseyni Khâtunâbâdi's *Vaqâye'-al-sanin va al-a'vâm*, a late Safavid history, consists entirely of chronological entries list-

131 Eskandar Beg, *Âlam-ârâ*, p. 3; tr., p. 4.

ing notable events, including the births and deaths of prominent individuals such as rulers, ulama, historians, poets, and others. The chronicle goes from the beginning of creation (Adam) to late 1692.[132]

Finally, and most importantly, the Safavid chroniclers were interested in the activities of the king. But focusing on kingly actions did not result in narrow and limited narratives. The Safavid monarchs engaged in a wide variety of activities: they dealt with external enemies, usually in the form of battles and wars; they also handled internal challenges to their authority, such as those attempted by unruly Qezelbâsh leaders and ministers. They made governmental appointments, received ambassadors, and engaged in diplomacy; they built cities and contributed to the upkeep of shrines and other philanthropic and charitable projects. The chroniclers describe all these activities in varying degrees of detail.

In some instances, the narration of a particular event had a moral purpose to it. For example, Natanzi disliked the young Shah Abbâs and, as Robert McChesney has noted, described his winter journeys to Isfahan in a humorous manner.[133] Nevertheless, Natanzi told the story of the Qezelbâsh Ya'qub Khan's fall from power and subsequent execution as an example of what happens when powerful people oppress others.[134] In short, the chroniclers narrated life under the Safavids, albeit only the life of certain classes of people. Safavid writers expressed political agendas, most often tied to legitimizing the dynasty in various ways, but they wove into the fabric of their accounts a great deal more. Whether in art, architecture, religion, popular culture, biography, or dozens of other areas, Safavid historians have left us unique accounts of what they saw, heard, or experienced. This rich and still incompletely studied historical literature provided an authoritative model for the authors who followed, who looked back on the Safavid period as a source for inspiration and style in their own works, in which they were obliged to chronicle very different times.

132 Yahyâ b. Abd-al-Hoseyn al-Hoseyni Khâtunâbâdi, *Vaqâye'-al-sanin va al-a'vâm*, ed. Mohammad-Bâqer Behbudi (Tehran, 1973). The chronology is continued to 1780 by a later hand.

133 McChesney, "Four sources," p. 105.

134 Natanzi, *Noqâvat-al-âthâr*, p. 344.

CHAPTER 6

PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY

Ernest Tucker

1. Introduction

During the 18th and early 19th century, court chronicles remained the most important genre in Persian historiography. Court histories composed during the prolonged military and political turmoil that followed the collapse of Safavid rule in 1722 bore great resemblance to earlier works. Their authors chronicled the rapid succession of the Afshars, Zands, and Qajars using language and literary techniques reminiscent of their Safavid antecedents. Although the fall of the Safavids fragmented political authority and dealt severe blows to long-established traditions of royal legitimacy in Iran, royal chronicles maintained the same literary style over the next 150 years.

There were, however, subtle shifts in emphasis that reflected the changing times. Persian historians in the post-Safavid era gradually paid greater attention to decoration and less to the basic narrative of events: a trend reminiscent of the increasingly ornate poems of the *sabk-e hendi* ('Indian style') that had become popular in Iran by the 17th century. In poetry, a reaction against such ornamentation started as early as the mid-18th century with the 'literary return' movement (*bâzgasht-e adabi*): an attempt by a group of poets to reclaim a simpler, more direct literary idiom. In historiography, though, analogous attempts at simplification did not really take place until the latter part of the reign of Nâser-al-Din Shah (reg. 1848–96). The histories of that time began to follow a new aesthetic

that stressed prosaic description and narrative clarity over poetic depictions of cosmic harmony and martial prowess, marking the eclipse of the chronicle genre that had become so well established two centuries earlier.[1]

Royal chronicles from Nâser-al-Din Shah's time are thus among the last examples of a medieval Persian chronicle style whose beginning and evolution have been traced in previous chapters of this volume. The increased importance of other genres of historical writing such as diaries during the 18th and 19th centuries will be noted, but this chapter will focus on how, despite much political upheaval, most court histories remained stylistically similar to Safavid models for a century and a half after the demise of that ruling house.

2. The Main Chronicles of the Afsharid Era

The collapse of Safavid power following the 1722 Afghan conquest of Isfahan impeded the production of court histories for a considerable period of time.[2] The reigning Safavid monarch of the 1720s, Shah Tahmâsp II, was more focused on maintaining his royal power and status as sole legitimate ruler than commemorating it. His authority was continually undermined by the rise and fall of a number of Safavid pretenders in various parts of Iran. In addition, there were challenges to the entire paradigm of Safavid legitimacy posed by local upstart warlords like Malek Mahmud Sistâni, who tried to establish a new dynastic dispensation based entirely on his purported connections with the ancient mythical Kayanid and the early Islamic Saffarid monarchs.

1 See further, Chapters 2 and 7.

2 For the historiography of the period, see Mansur Sefatgol, "Persian historical writing under the last Safavids: the historiographers of decline," in Michele Bernardini, Masashi Haneda and Maria Szuppe, eds., Liber Amicorum. Études sur l'Iran médiéval et moderne offertes à Jean Calmard, *Eurasian Studies* 5/1–2 (2006), pp. 319–31.

The works of Mohammad Shafi'-ye Tehrâni "Vâred," who chronicled Sistâni's career, exemplify the effects of political upheaval on chronicle writing just after the fall of the Safavids. Vâred began his *Mer'ât-e Vâredât* to commemorate Sistâni's rise but completed it after that ruler's demise, the narrative breaking off in 1730. Another section of this work, conceived as a universal history in four sections (*tabaqe*), ultimately focused on Nâder Shah's career but was not apparently composed under his patronage.[3] Another important source for the period of the Safavid collapse and the rise of Nâder was Mohammad Mohsen Mostowfi's *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*. He presented the work to Rezâ-Qoli Mirzâ, the son of Nâder, in Mashhad in 1739. Despite the author's training as a monshi and mostowfi (accountant), his chronicle is written in a clear and simple style, concentrating on the momentous events surrounding the last years of the reign of Shah Soltân-Hoseyn (from 1706 onwards), the fall of Isfahan and subsequent events in Khorasan. This text was also conceived as a universal history. For the earlier Safavid period (the only part published), he relies largely on Hasan-e Rumlu and Eskandar Beg, but without the latter's literary or propagandistic characteristics.[4] Thus, neither work was structured as the narrative of a successful ruler whose deeds were in harmony with the cosmic order: a longstanding literary goal for Persian chronicles since the early Safavid era.

In contrast, the two most important chronicles of the reign of Nâder Shah (reg. 1736–47), Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi's *Târikh-e Nâderi* (also known as the *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi)* and Mohammad Kâzem Marvi's *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi,* did adhere in large measure to Safavid historiographical conventions as they recounted the life of the first post-Safavid ruler to establish himself as Iran's monarch. Aspects of both works,

3 See Mohammad Shafi'-ye Tehrâni, *Mer'ât-e Vâredât*, ed. Mansur Sefatgol (Tehran, 2004) and idem, *Târikh-e Nâdershâhi, 'Nâder-nâme*,' ed. Rezâ Sha'bâni (Tehran, 1970; repr. 1990). See Sefatgol, "Persian historical writing," pp. 323–36.

4 Mohammad Mohsen, *Zobdat-al-tavârikh*, ed. Behruz Gudarzi (Tehran, 1996).

however, diverged in revealing ways from earlier models, because although the two authors had served as officials in Nâder's bureaucracy, neither put his work into its final form under his patronage. Both were ultimately finished during the chaotic period that ensued upon his assassination.

Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi's *Târikh-e Nâderi*

Astarâbâdi's *Târikh-e Nâderi* appeared in its finished form in the 1750s, some three decades after the Afghan invasion of Iran. It was based on Nâder's official court history as recorded by Astarâbâdi, who had served as his main scribe. This work later became known as the *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi*, but here it will be called simply the *Târikh-e Nâderi*. It is somewhat misleading that the term *jahân-goshâ* ('world-conquering') was later added to its title, because comparison of Astarâbâdi's text with Joveyni's *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ* does not reveal obvious stylistic or structural parallels between the two works.[5] Moreover, Astarâbâdi did not use this phrase to describe his own text.

Astarâbâdi's work was divided into two sections. He began with a general overview of the chaotic situation in Iran after the 1722 Afghan invasion, followed by a detailed account of Nâder's own career. He labeled this second part of his work a *ruznâmche-ye zafar* ('diary of victory').[6] Anvâr believes that this description alluded to the *Zafar-nâmes* of Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi and Sharaf-al-Din Ali Yazdi about Timur.[7] Mahdi Khan's stylistic debt to Yazdi and Shâmi as well as to early Safavid-era works like Khʷândamir's *Habib-al-siyar* is easy to recognize. The similarities of his text to these earlier works are particularly evident in his use of florid language as well as in his stylized accounts of battles.

5 *Târikh-e Nâderi* is the main title used for it in Storey/Bregel's *Persian Literature*. See Charles Storey/Yuri Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura* (Moscow, 1972), II, p. 905.

6 Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi*, ed. Abd-Allâh Anvâr (2nd ed., Tehran, 1998), p. 29.

7 Ibid., p. xii.

Astarâbâdi's other major literary work was a verse history of Nâder, the *Dorre-ye Nâdere (The Rare Pearl)*, which he modeled on the extremely ornamental mid 14th-century history by Vassâf.[8] He also composed a Chaghatay Turkish-Persian dictionary, the *Sanglakh*, and a Chaghatay Turkish grammar, the *Mabân-al-loghât*, as tools for reading the works of Mir Ali Shir Navâ'i and other medieval Central Asian Turkish writers.[9] By the 19th century, Astarâbâdi had developed enough of a reputation as a literary stylist that his *enshâ'* collection and his histories became widely imitated and regarded as models.[10]

The *Târikh-e Nâderi* in the Safavid Historiographical Tradition

The *Târikh-e Nâderi* displayed greatest overall structural similarity to Eskandar Beg Monshi's chronicle of Abbâs I, the *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*. Astarâbâdi mimicked Eskandar Beg's annalistic division into Turko-Mongol years almost exactly. He offered similarly detailed, flowery descriptions of spring, in his case always immediately followed by accounts of courtly Nowruz festivities.

In depicting the era of Abbâs I, Eskandar Beg had shifted chronological focus from lunar *hejri* to Persian solar regnal years.[11] He organized these sections by solar years to highlight the appearance of spring (called in his text *nowruz-e soltâni*) and to depict the royal festival that celebrated it as a regular confirmation of the monarch's high standing. Although Eskandar Beg's focus on Nowruz celebrations was not a radical departure from Persian literary tradition, he tied the poetic description of each new spring much more directly than his literary predecessors to the monarch's

8 Astarâbâdi, *Dorre-ye Nâdere*, ed. Ja'far Shahidi (2nd ed., Tehran, 1987), p. 688. Idem, *Târikh*, pp. xii, 29. For Vassâf, see Chapters 2 and 4.

9 Astarâbâdi, *Sanglakh, a Persian Guide to the Turkish Language*, ed. Gerard Clauson (London, 1960).

10 See, Astarâbâdi, *Ketâb-e enshâ'* (lith. ed. Bombay, 1921).

11 R.D. McChesney, "A note on Iskandar Beg's chronology," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39 (1980), pp. 53–63; cf. Introduction, p. l.

role as the continual renewer of the realm's prosperity.[12] In addition, its descriptions included more astrological information than earlier works, paying greater attention to the cycle of seasons and sun signs.[13] Eskandar Beg provided a model attractive to future chroniclers such as Astarâbâdi through his graceful linkage of the celebration of royal legitimacy in the Nowruz festival with the symbols of rebirth inherent in spring and the progression of time marked by changing sun signs and the Turko-Mongol year cycle.

In Astarâbâdi's work though, these descriptions became almost as important as the actual narrative of events themselves. The chronicle's role as a decorative celebration of the ruler's charisma and royal glory (*farr*) now began to overshadow its function as a record of his actual accomplishments. Astarâbâdi went beyond merely imitating this well-established chronicle style. His descriptions of spring did not merely evoke the natural process of change; they mirrored the very historical events he was describing. He thus described the spring of 1729:

> The lord of spring used the tools of correction [*yâsâq*] on the rose garden, and raised up the proud roses with their helmets of bud and flower … He made this flowery force the vanguard of April's army … The strong and heroic branches grew … becoming arrows and sharp spears … The agitated clouds, as leopard-cloaked riflemen, poured bullet drops on the rose petals. The artillerymen of lightning dragged their cannons of thunder on the gun carriage of the celestial sphere. The troops of spring aroused the swift zephyr to combat the army of winter, which cleared the territory of the rose garden that … had become the place of the Afghan ravens … and made it the place of the singing of doves and nightingales. The cultivated spot of grass again became the capital of the sultan of spring and the Qezelbâsh's place of roses …[14]

Astarâbâdi offered not just decorative embellishments here, but fairly exact poetic parallels to the events of 1729: Nâder's rise to military leadership and his decisive defeat of the Afghans at the

12 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1971), pp. 439, 532, 763.

13 Eskandar Beg, *Târikh*, pp. 429, 439, 459, 652, 713.

14 Astarâbâdi, *Târikh*, p. 87.

battle of Mehmândust. Although such stylistic embellishments were a time-honored Persian literary tradition, the degree to which this chronicle tied them to accounts of actual events was notable.

Each description of spring unfolded in a similar vein, containing detailed references to the events that would occur during the following year. Astarâbâdi portrayed the spring of 1732, for example, in these floral terms:

> In accordance with the royal *nowruz*, the victorious forces of the wind conquered the inner citadel of the bud and the closed fortress of the flowers … The Afghan nightingale from the … mountain thicket sang an agitated song and the plundering army of winter and cold was uprooted from the city of the grass … The dejected ruler of winter, who had caused disorder in the affairs of the garden, was removed from his duties by order of the champion of nature and the new young [male] rose, fruit of the forces of growth … Abbâsi dirham and dinar tulips with the illustrious name of the ruler were circulated. The dove and nightingale preachers … in the menbars of their branches wet their tongues with the murmuring of prayers for the monarch of the age …[15]

This alluded to the campaign against the Abdâli Afghans, the deposition of Shah Tahmâsp II, and his replacement by the infant Abbâs III. Astarâbâdi tied this particular spring to the traditional signs of a new sovereign's legitimacy: the circulation of new coinage bearing his name and the mentioning of him in the sermon after the Friday noon prayer. The text compared the transfer of the throne to a new young monarch with the natural forces of growth and transformation unleashed in spring. Astarâbâdi's descriptions of Nowruz moved beyond mere decoration and began to serve as aesthetic confirmations of legitimacy. Nâder's own eventual rise to the throne also became linked poetically in this chronicle to natural forces of renewal.

Ties between Nowruz imagery and specific events in the years that followed them can be found throughout the work. Describing the beginning of a year in which Nâder began a campaign against the Ottomans in western Iran in 1729, Astarâbâdi spoke of "the

15 Ibid., p. 178.

rash Ottomans of winter, who had set down the roots of control over the land of grass" and "the chaos-seeking Janissaries of winter and their armies of discord."[16] His account of the spring of 1736 that immediately preceded Nâder's accession to the throne was replete with royal imagery:

> The lord of the celestial throne … was seated on the world-adorning throne … By imperial order of the royal divan, the mainstays of the heavenly throne bow their heads on the celestial firmament to the magnificence of the countenance of the Pleiades-stationed monarch.[17]

Similarly, discussion about the spring of 1747, the year Nâder was assassinated, depicted how the turbulence in the political realm was replicated in nature:

> The iris had gone crazy … Strong trees were uprooted, shoulder-to-shoulder in the flower garden. The red flowers of Hindus were burned, the tuberoses of Christians were dragged by the throat like the special kerchief [for Christians and Jews], the garden became the fire-temple of spring for the Damascus roses of the Muslims … the zephyr's cap of green was robbed from his head …[18]

In all cases, Astarâbâdi connected the vagaries of Nâder's fortunes with the ebbs and flows of the natural order, preserving a convention that had become established in Safavid times and expanding how it was used.

Astarâbâdi's Works as Epitomes of the Ornate Style

In general, the structure and Nowruz descriptions of the *Târikh-e Nâderi* generally adhered to Safavid chronicle conventions. Astarâbâdi outdid his models by substantially increasing the amount of poetic comparisons and metaphors in his work. Use of a florid style was nothing new in Persian chronicles, but the literary

16 Ibid., p. 115.
17 Ibid., p. 274.
18 Ibid., pp. 419–20.

boundary between the poetic and the historical had now become far more ambiguous.

Jan Rypka asserts that "under the later Safavids a baroque phraseology was required to counteract the deadly dullness of these times."[19] Use of this ornate technique persisted, though, in chronicles produced through the 18th century: a time of cataclysmic change that saw a long struggle to redefine Iran's social, political, and religious boundaries and conventions. Astarâbâdi relied on flowery language less to create literary excitement than to gloss over the harsh realities of upheaval and conflict in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

His work became a stylistic model for numerous historians through the early Qajar period. Within a few years of its appearance, Astarâbâdi's prose history of Nâder was among the first early modern Persian histories to be translated into European languages and Ottoman Turkish and to become widely distributed through the Persian-speaking world in subsequent decades. A French translation of this work made for the King of Denmark in 1770 was one of the first published works of Sir William Jones, who later achieved fame as a translator and scholar of Sanskrit and other Indian languages.[20] It became regarded as a standard text because it epitomized important elements of the chronicle style that had evolved since the time of Abbâs I.

The Last Section of Astarâbâdi's Work and Uncertainties in its Patronage

Despite the typical encomia to Nâder that he included at the beginning of his work, Astarâbâdi did not finish the Târikh-e Nâderi until after Nâder's death. The succession struggles that erupted in Iran after his assassination created uncertainty about how to memorialize him. Some versions of Astarâbâdi's work ended with a short passage explaining that the author's goal was to record the

19 Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht, 1968), p. 315.

20 See Astarâbâdi, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ*, tr. William Jones as *Histoire de Nader Chah* (2 vols., London, 1770).

events of Nâder's life, not to discuss the chaos that had arisen after his death.[21] A few copies of this text, however, such as the one employed by Jones for his translation, included a brief tribute at the end to a non-Afsharid patron who ruled over an area near the Caspian coast in the 1750s: Mohammad-Hasan Khan Qâjâr. Mohammad-Hasan Khan was both the son of Fath-Ali Khan Qâjâr, Nâder's main early rival, as well as the father of Âqâ-Mohammad Shah, later regarded as the first true monarch of the Qajar dynasty.[22] Despite the ambiguities of the circumstances in which it was completed, the continuity of structure and style in Astarâbâdi's history with its Safavid precedents indicates that the established rules of the genre continued to apply.

Mohammad Kâzem Marvi's Portrait of Nâder's Errors

As his official court historian, Astarâbâdi glossed over Nâder's difficulties in securing his right to rule, but issues associated with Nâder's legitimacy helped shape the other important contemporary history of his reign: Mohammad Kâzem Marvi's *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*. Marvi's chronicle is now regarded as one of the most important sources about Nâder Shah, written by a man who had accompanied the ruler during his Indian campaign and served him as a financial official in Marv. There remains only one known manuscript of it, dated ca. 1752, suggesting that it did not become widely circulated in its time.[23]

In terms of content, Marvi relied substantially for basic information on Astarâbâdi, but, as indicated by his title, Marvi borrowed

21 Astarâbâdi, *Târikh*, p. 433.

22 See Astarâbâdi, tr. Jones, *Histoire* II, p. 136. For a discussion of Mohammad-Hasan Khan's time as a ruler, see John Perry, *Karim Khan Zand* (Chicago, 1979), pp. 62–78.

23 This text can be found in St. Petersburg, see Storey/Bregel, II, pp. 914–17. Facsimile edition: Mohammad Kâzem Marvi, *Nâme-ye âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi* (3 vols., Moscow, 1960–66). Printed edition (based on this facsimile), *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Nâderi*, ed. Mohammad Amin Riyâhi (3 vols., Tehran, 1985).

some aspects of organization and style from Eskandar Beg as well.[24] Marvi divided his text into three parts, with the division between his first and second volumes roughly analogous to the distinction Eskandar Beg made between the two sections of his work. Marvi clearly borrowed many Safavid literary devices as well. His account, for example, of the dream of Nâder's father, Emâm-Qoli Beg, about Nâder's conquests and the long rule of Nâder's grandson Shâhrokh, shows clear parallels to dream narratives in Safavid works. Sholeh Quinn has noted how similar it is to the dreams of Shaikh Safi described by Eskandar Beg.[25]

However, despite Marvi's reliance on Safavid models for the general structure and style of his work, he did not organize any of the parts of his chronicle as annals. Eskandar Beg had used an annalistic format for the second part of his work when describing the actual regnal years of Abbâs: a literary way to highlight Abbâs's legitimacy. Marvi, though, did not adopt such a style to depict Nâder's reign, since he was not trying to defend Nâder's seizure of the throne. His ultimately negative depiction of Nâder's reign turned the rules of Safavid chronicle writing upside down.

In place of a simple panegyric, Marvi's work in fact provided a detailed explanation of how Nâder's disloyalty to the Safavids resulted in his downfall. Marvi paradoxically disparaged Nâder to support the right of Nâder's grandson Shâhrokh to rule, championing the latter's combined Safavid–Afsharid lineage. Although complimentary towards Nâder's role as Iran's savior from foreign conquest, Marvi criticized his usurpation of the Safavids. He believed that Nâder's subsequent seizure of the throne for himself, followed by the execution of Tahmâsp II and his family at the behest of Nâder's son, Rezâ-Qoli Mirzâ, brought bad fortune to Iran, because this constituted an attack on the divinely-sanctioned ruling house.

Marvi used another royal dream to reinforce this point. He mentioned that just before his murder, Tahmâsp had seen Safi-al-

24 See Riyâhi's analysis of the relationship between the two works in Marvi, *Târikh*, pp. xxix-xxxiv.

25 Quinn, *Historical Writing*, p. 138. See also Ernest Tucker, "Explaining Nadir Shah: Kingship and royal legitimacy in Muhammad Kazim Marvi's *Tārīkh-i ālam'ārā-ye Nādirī*," *Iranian Studies* 26 (1993), p. 103.

Din and all of his Safavid ancestors, as well as the Seventh Imam, in a dream in which Safi-al-Din told him that "his infallible family" would soon be joining their ancestors.[26] As depicted by Marvi, the murder of the Safavid family sealed Nâder's own fate, since the restoration of cosmic order became linked to his downfall. In addition, he portrayed Rezâ-Qoli's subsequent blinding upon Nâder's command as the retribution of fate (*qesâs namudan-e ruzgâr*) for this killing.[27]

The third volume of this work chronicled how Nâder's reign began to decline swiftly after this, because no military success could bring Tahmâsp and his family back to life. After he was blinded, Rezâ-Qoli asked Nâder to protect his son, Nâder's grandson Shâhrokh, from harm.[28] As depicted in Marvi, Rezâ-Qoli performed penance for killing the Safavids by securing the future of Shâhrokh: an heir who could claim both Safavid and Afsharid descent. Although there is no explicit evidence that Marvi wrote his chronicle under Shâhrokh's patronage, his entire work served as a sort of 'reverse' panegyric to explain how Nâder's military skill had saved Iran, but that his lack of loyalty was a direct attack on the royal glory (*farr)* of the Safavid dispensation (*dowlat)*. Ultimately, though, balance might now be restored under the aegis of Shâhrokh, with his combined Afsharid–Safavid lineage. Astarâbâdi, in contrast, did not mention Rezâ-Qoli's blinding, much less describe it as retribution for his role in the deaths of the remaining Safavid pretenders.

The Long Twilight of Safavid Historiography

The depth of pro-Safavid sentiment manifested by an Afsharid chronicler like Marvi also appeared in several late 18th-century works that more openly promoted the dynasty's restoration. One was the *Majma'-al-tavârikh* by Mirzâ Mohammad-Khalil

26 Ibid.
27 Marvi, p. 851.
28 Ibid., p. 853.

Mar'ashi Safavi, a grandson of Shah Soleymân II of combined Safavid-Afsharid descent (like Shâhrokh), who had briefly taken the throne in 1750.[29] This work made a case for why this pretender and his family should rule. Another similar text, the *Zabur-e Âl-e Dâvud* of Soltân-Hâshem Mirzâ, the youngest son of the same Soleymân II, was an even more nostalgic apologia, including an appendix that enumerated the lost estates of the Mar'ashi sayyids and Safavid family and their title deeds.[30] A more informational example of this genre is Abu'l-Hasan Qazvini's *Favâ'ed-al-safaviyye*, completed in the early Qajar era.[31] Qazvini had served as a secretary to a Safavid 'shadow shah,' Esmâ'il III, a pretender retained on the throne by Karim Khan Zand. Qazvini's work provided a historical summary account of various Safavid pretenders who had briefly held the throne. All such pro-Safavid works were essentially nostalgic retrospectives, some of the last literary defenses of a dynasty whose chance to rule had long since passed. Their concise styles, shorn of decorative embellishments, offered little beyond providing summaries of information generally available in other works.

3. Chronicles of the Zand Interlude

The chaotic succession of rulers in various parts of Iran immediately following Nâder's assassination in 1747 severely challenged existing paradigms of royal authority, but the Safavid chronicle style that shaped the works of Marvi and Astarâbâdi continued to influence the work of the principal historians of the Zands, such as Nâmi-Esfahâni and Ghaffâri-Kâshâni. John Perry has explored how the Zand ruler Karim Khan provided a stable, intermittently secure refuge in his capital city, Shiraz, for Iranian culture to survive and

29 Mirzâ Mohammad-Khalil Mar'ashi Safavi, *Majma'-al-tavârikh,* ed. Abbâs Eqbâl (Tehran, 1983).

30 Soltân-Hâshem Mirzâ, *Zabur-e Âl-e Dâvud*, ed. A. Navâ'i (Tehran, 2000).

31 Abu'l-Hasan Qazvini, *Favâ'ed-al-safaviyye*, ed. Maryam Mirahmadi (Tehran, 1988).

even revive after the tumult of the previous decades.[32] Karim Khan styled himself as the *vakil-e ra'âyâ* or 'people's deputy' to avoid being regarded formally as 'shah.' Karim kept Esmâ'il III on the throne from 1752 to 1773. There was no attempt to find a successor for him when he died, leaving only Karim Khan as the *vakil*.

As the basis of their right to rule, the Safavids had asserted an ancestral connection to the Seventh Imam. Nâder focused on his Turkic ancestry and connections to various Mongol and Timurid legitimating traditions.[33] Zand rulers could rely on no such legitimating devices, so their chroniclers focused on depicting them more generically as just rulers.[34]

One of the most important Zand-era chronicles, the *Târikh-e giti-goshâ* of Mirzâ Mohammad Nâmi-Esfahâni, completed in the 1780s, employed some implicitly monarchical titles, but omitted specific references to kingship. For example, the work used *zell-Allâh* ('shadow of God') as a title for Karim Khan throughout his work, but never called him or other Zand rulers 'shâh' or 'pâdshâh.'[35] Although it referred to Karim Khan as the *vakil* numerous times, the chronicle did not apply even this modest title, for example, to Karim Khan's successors. It also included no other evocations of monarchy such as accounts of the *jolus* (coronation) ceremonies that had been such key episodes depicted in Safavid and Afsharid chronicles.

In contrast, a later Zand chronicle, Abu'l-Hasan Ghaffâri-Kâshâni's *Golshan-e morâd*, did make more conventional references to Karim Khan as the *pâdshâh-e Irân* and to Sayyid Morâd Khan as being seated on the "throne of the sultanate."[36] Although the *Golshan-e morâd* recorded at least one jolus, it was the enthronement of Ja'far Khan Zand, who had assumed actual power

32 Perry, pp. 214–17.

33 Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville, 2006), pp. 10–11, 36–7

34 Abu'l-Hasan Ghaffâri-Kâshâni, *Golshan-e morâd*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i (Tehran, 1990), p. 33.

35 Mohammad-Sâdeq Nâmi-Esfahâni, *Târikh-e giti-goshâ*, ed. Sa'id Nafisi (Tehran, 1987), p. 31.

36 Ghaffâri-Kâshâni, pp. 107, 111, 760.

several years before his formal coronation. In any case, the paths of various Zand rulers to power bore little resemblance to any linear concept of royal succession.[37] Based on the projected three-part structure of his work, of which only two parts now exist, Ghaffâri-Kâshâni appears to have aspired to return to the chronicle style begun in Safavid times. He was stymied, though, by the swift collapse of Zand rule and the rise of Âqâ-Mohammad Khan Qâjâr.

From a stylistic perspective, both of these historians tried to imitate Astarâbâdi, preserving structural and linguistic conventions as he had established them. Their poetic descriptions of the arrivals of spring and the new years that followed were much like his, although more forced, stylized, and less vivid. The very structures of their works, though, conveyed a pervasive uncertainty about legitimacy, since both chronicles completely omitted an integral component of Astarâbâdi's new years' accounts: the depiction of court Nowruz festivities. They only provided brief poetic descriptions of how the advent of each new year was manifested naturally, reverting back to how Nowruz depictions had been used before Eskandar Beg, primarily as literary embellishments. In addition, Nâmi-Esfahâni confined the annalistic portions of his work to the years 1751–66 and 1784–94, roughly corresponding to the first part of the reign of the Safavid pretender Esmâ'il III (reg. 1752–73), followed by the reigns of Ja'far Khan and Lotf-Ali Khan Zand (1785–94).[38]

Zand chronicles certainly tried to show how Karim Khan and other Zand rulers exemplified traditional Persian kingly roles in many instances. However, these works focused on portraying them as good *de facto* rulers, not on defending their rights to rule as *de jure* monarchs. Nevertheless, Ghaffâri-Kâshâni's reintroduction of royal titles does suggest that mere *de facto* assertions of monarchical authority still did not seem adequate stylistically by the end of this tumultuous era.

37 Ibid., p. 693.

38 The question of which ruler was believed to possess *farr* was complicated here by Karim Khan Zand's refusal to assume the title of shah during his reign. See Nâmi-Esfahâni, pp. 20–160, 261–385. See also Perry, p. 303.

4. Non-Chronicle Genres of Historiography during the 18th Century

Despite the changes that were taking place, the basic conventions of the established chronicle style continued to define the structure and format of many histories produced during the prolonged period of political and social upheaval in post-Safavid Iran. In addition, other genres of historical writing that did not rely on steady court patronage, such as diaries and memoirs, again became important. Valuable examples of these can be found in such works as the diaries of Mirzâ Mohammad, the *kalântar* of Fars, who left a record of events in his province in the mid-18th century that provided a unique glimpse of life in a principal Iranian provincial town at an important historical juncture.[39] Two other memoirs of that time, Mohammad-Ali Hazin's travel account and the *Bayân-e vâqe'* of Abd-al-Karim Kashmiri, stand out as interesting windows on the lives of authors whose stories were shaped by Nâder's conquests. Kashmiri joined Nâder's army on its return from India and then set out to perform the *hajj* and tour the Middle East, while Hazin, a Persian poet of some note, went into permanent exile in India, having decided to flee his native Shiraz following Nâder's rise to power.[40] The connection that both authors had with India testifies to the persisting cultural importance of the Indian subcontinent in the Persianate world in this period.[41]

39 Mirza Mohammad Kalântar-e Fârs, *Ruznâme-ye Mirzâ Mohammad Kalântar-e Fârs,* ed. Abbâs Eqbâl (Tehran, 1984).

40 Mohammad-Ali Hazin, *Târikh va Safar-nâme-ye Hazin*, ed. Ali Dâvâni (Tehran, 1996); and Khʷâje Abd-al-Karim Kashmiri, *Bayân-e vâqe',* ed. K.B. Nasim (Lahore, 1970).

41 See Juan R.I. Cole, "Iranian culture and South Asia, 1500–1900," in Nikki Keddie and Rudolph Matthee, eds., *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle, 2002), pp. 15–35. The migration of Persian notables to India in the Safavid period is also discussed by Masashi Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian elites to India during the 16th–18th centuries," in Maria Szuppe, ed., L'héritage timouride. Iran—Asie centrale—Inde, XVe–XVIIIe siècles, *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 3–4 (1997), pp. 129–43, and Benedek Péri, "The ethnic composition of the 'Iranian' nobility at Akbar's court (1574–1605)," in Éva J. Jeremiás, ed., *Irano-Turkic Cultural Contacts in the 11th–17th Centuries* (Piliscsaba, 2003), pp. 177–201.

The rediscovery of historiographical styles beyond the annalistic court chronicle, a trend fueled in part by the instability of court patronage at this time, foreshadowed an even more eclectic expansion of literary genres during the Qajar era.

5. Qajar Historiography after the Turn of the 19th Century

The *Târikh-e Mohammadi* of Mohammad-Taqi Sâru'i

Following a relatively brief interlude of stable government under the Zand rulers, which provided an uncommon respite from the general upheaval of the 18th century in Iran, the Qajars established a more enduring dynasty that initially sought to preserve longstanding cultural traditions, but ultimately reshaped them. This paradox was epitomized in Qajar historiography by one of the dynasty's major early chronicles: the *Târikh-e Mohammadi* of Mohammad-Taqi Sâru'i, which appeared just after the turn of the 19th century. Sâru'i tried to outdo his models, principally Astarâbâdi, in bombastic description and annalistic structure in order to create a stylistic culmination of the Persian chronicle tradition, but produced a work so grotesquely ornamental that it foreshadowed the abandonment of the annalistic style as it had developed in Iran over the previous three centuries.

The *Târikh-e Mohammadi* combined the heavy descriptive style of Astarâbâdi's panegyric epic *Dorre-ye Nâdere* with the narrative chronicle style of his prose *Târikh-e Nâderi*. Sâru'i so transcended Astarâbâdi stylistically that by the end of the work, the people and events depicted *had actually become* the natural metaphors to which they were being compared. Such a work transcended the established court chronicle convention, because its main purpose was no longer to link the monarch's actual deeds to the cosmic order in a symbolic way, but only to create a beautiful portrait of how the ruler ought to appear from an aesthetic perspective. In his wake, Sâru'i's Qajar-era successors either chose to write in much simpler styles, or to move even farther into the realm of pure panegyric poetry.

The *Târikh-e Mohammadi* in its Historiographical Context

Sâru'i's *Târikh-e Mohammadi* was a firsthand account of the reign of Âqâ-Mohammad Khan (reg. 1779–97) and one of the earliest Qajar-era historical works. Although it is hard to specify the precise relationship between their authors, the *Târikh-e Mohammadi* displays important parallels with the *Târikh-e Nâderi*. Since at least one of the extant versions of Astarâbâdi's *Târikh* was finished under the patronage of Mohammad-Hasan Khan Qâjâr, Âqâ-Mohammad's father, Astarâbâdi might have been living near Mohammad Sâru'i at least during the latter's early years. Sâru'i clearly acknowledged his debt to Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi in the introduction to his work, where he cited three of Astarâbâdi's works by name and called him "the unique one of the century and the near one of the era."[42] He referred the reader directly to Astarâbâdi's text for details about the death of Fath-Ali Khan, Âqâ-Mohammad Khan's grandfather.[43] He also mentioned earlier chroniclers whom he shared with Astarâbâdi as important influences: Joveyni, Vassâf and Sharaf-al-Din Ali Yazdi, all three noted for their elegant style.[44]

Sâru'i, the Afsharid Legacy, and Questions of Royal Legitimacy

Astarâbâdi and Sâru'i both focused on establishing their patrons' legitimacy. They portrayed Nâder and Âqâ-Mohammad in similar ways as rulers with obvious military virtue and sound lineage, while heavily defending them from accusations of usurpation. Astarâbâdi downplayed Nâder's seizure of the throne from the Safavids and did not even mention the execution of the remaining Safavid princes that had taken place during his reign.

42 Mohammad-Taqi Sâru'i, *Târikh-e Mohammadi*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i (Tehran, 1992), p. 22.
43 Ibid., p. 30.
44 Ibid., p. 22. Cf. Chapters 2 and 4.

Sâru'i, by contrast, tried to show how the Qajars remained loyal to the Safavids, while suppressing any discussion of tension or conflict between the Afshars and Qajars. He depicted Fath-Ali Khan Qâjâr, Âqâ-Mohammad Khan's grandfather, as a strong and capable leader who had fought valiantly against the Afghans at Isfahan in the 1720s and had supported Shah Tahmâsp II after he had taken power soon after the fall of the capital.

> Fath-Ali Khan continued his devotion and attachment and glorified him [Tahmâsp]. He brought the eminent Shah to Astarabad and in a few days restored his battered stature.[45]

The chronicle notes that he then assembled a

> bloodthirsty army that headed towards Khorasan and conquered the holy shrine [Mashhad] there. He was mentioned as brave and courageous in his campaigns throughout the countries of Iran, Turan and India. Until the time when Nâder Shah became prominent, he had a high station and was keeper of the [royal] tents and pavilions.[46]

However, Sâru'i omitted any discussion of how Fath-Ali Khan had fallen victim to Nâder's intrigues, and was executed by Tahmâsp.

He explicitly referred the reader to how Mahdi Khan's discussion of this event had completely exculpated Nâder from any responsibility for Fath-Ali's execution, which it blamed on other officers. Nâder was mentioned by name only twice more in Sâru'i's work, suggesting an attempt to keep the memory of the Afsharids somewhat at a distance. By contrast, the later Qajar-era *Fârs-nâme-ye Nâseri*, directly implicated Nâder in Fath-Ali Khan's death.[47]

This later work described how Âqâ-Mohammad Shah attempted to expunge the memory of Nâder Shah by destroying his sepulcher that stood next to the shrine of Imam Rezâ in Mashhad and reburying his body in Najaf.[48] Other sources also indicate that Âqâ-Mohammad was obsessed with collecting the treasure that Nâder

45 Sâru'i, *Târikh-e Mohammadi*, p. 30.

46 Ibid.

47 See Hasan Fasâ'i, *Fârs-nâme-ye Nâseri,* ed. Mansur Rastgâr Fasâ'i (Tehran, 1998), p. 508; tr. Heribert Busse as *History of Persia under Qajar Rule* (New York, 1972), p. 2.

48 Fasâ'i, *Fârs-nâme*, p. 663; tr. Busse, *History of Persia*, p. 70.

had seized in India and had been dispersed after his death, taking some of it from Lotf-Ali Khan Zand and torturing Shâhrokh to get some more, which apparently resulted in the latter's death.[49]

In Sâru'i's version, Shâhrokh and his court came out from Mashhad to receive Âqâ-Mohammad Khan, who treated them with appropriate dignity. Âqâ-Mohammad seated Shâhrokh at the foot of his throne, at "the place of royalty opposite the presence shown to the world [Âqâ-Mohammad]."[50] He noted that Âqâ-Mohammad's entry into Mashhad took place in a way appropriate for a ruler, describing how he paid requisite homage to the shrine of Imam Rezâ. He stated,

> Shâhrokh presented several sun-like jewels and expensive pieces of brocade as tribute to his most noble presence. His royal majesty [Âqâ-Mohammad] stayed twenty-three days in that heavenly place and sent the family and baggage of Shâhrokh together with his sons and grandsons to Mâzandarân.[51]

The omission of any discussion of Shâhrokh's death was not surprising, since the *Târikh-e Mohammadi* depicted Shâhrokh's voluntary presentation of Nâder's jewels to Âqâ-Mohammad Shah as a symbol of transfer of royal authority to the new sovereign. Sâru'i, like Astarâbâdi, tried to make a case for how Âqâ-Mohammad had acquired the throne and all that went with it legitimately. In order to defend him from charges of usurpation, Sâru'i suppressed information relating to Âqâ-Mohammad's attempts to erase the memory of his predecessors.

This is very evident in the description of an episode in which Âqâ-Mohammad defeated an Afsharid pretender, Amirgune Khan, in 1781 near Tehran:

> When, by the order of the drummer of fate, the last drum was beaten in the name of Mohammad Karim Khan Zand who had possessed the drums, chaos and discord appeared in Iran. Everyone sought the crown and throne … Every misbegotten, witless Tajik poured the

49 See e.g. Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time* (2 vols., London, 1815), II, pp. 290–91.

50 Sâru'i, p. 287.

51 Ibid., p. 288.

> wine of Turkish distinction in his cup and factional kings appeared… Amirgune Khan Afshâr, who was from the bottom of the banquet table of the Nâderi emperor and had ruled around Tehran … due to his Afsharid lineage, pretended to exercise true leadership over the expanse of Iran like cream rising to the top. His Imperial Majesty [Âqâ-Mohammad] filled the air of the country of Mâzandarân with the rush of the sweet basil of the blessings of his fortunate, heaven-sent arrival.[52]

Sâru'i then described in fairly conventional terms how Âqâ-Mohammad's forces overwhelmed those of a pretender like Amirgune Khan.

The main contrast Sâru'i drew between Âqâ-Mohammad and the two greatest challenges to his legitimacy—Zand and Afsharid pretenders—was to depict how he was militarily successful against them. With this focus, Sâru'i echoed the opening sections of Astarâbâdi's *Târikh-e Nâderi* that described how Nâder's military prowess gave him legitimacy because he was able to restore order and subdue the numerous pretenders to the throne who had proliferated after the fall of the Safavid dynasty.[53]

There are many other thematic similarities between the two authors. Like Mahdi Khan, Sâru'i devoted considerable space to discussing various events that bolstered royal legitimacy, such as royal weddings, pilgrimages to religious shrines, and contributions to those shrines. In particular, Sâru'i's account of Fath-Ali Khan's 1782 wedding resembled Mahdi Khan's depiction in the *Dorre-ye Nâdere* of the marriage of Nâder's son, Rezâ-Qoli Mirzâ, to a Safavid princess in the early 1730s, although Sâru'i's account was considerably shorter.[54] Another parallel can be found between Mahdi Khan's account of Nâder gilding the dome of Ali's shrine in Najaf and Sâru'i's depiction of Âqâ-Mohammad gilding the dome of

52 Ibid., p. 95.

53 For discussion of Astarâbâdi on this issue, see Ernest Tucker, "Religion and Politics in The Era of Nadir Shah: The Views of Six Contemporary Sources" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of. Chicago, 1992), pp. 143–46; cf. ibid., *Nadir Shah's Quest*, pp. 12–13.

54 Astarâbâdi, *Dorre*, pp. 254–73, Sâru'i, pp. 118–21.

Hoseyn's shrine in Karbalâ.[55] In general terms, Sâru'i relied upon many of the same themes Mahdi Khan had used to praise Nâder, depicting Âqâ-Mohammad as destined to rule due to his prowess and good fortune.

The *Târikh-e Mohammadi* also closely resembled the *Târikh-e Nâderi* in structure. Many of Sâru'i's descriptions of spring closely paralleled the actual events described in particular yearly sections, as in his discussion of the suppression of a rebellion in Lârejân.[56] As in previous works, the imagery of spring was associated with specific campaigns, and served as a cosmic natural analog of the process of royal legitimation through military mobilization and conquest. However, many other sections go beyond even the intricate paralleling of descriptions of spring with events. In some cases the naturalistic descriptions actually overwhelmed the events they were supposed to describe. This is particularly noticeable in Sâru'i's account of Âqâ-Mohammad's coronation in 1796:

> The cupbearers of the wind watered the happy palace of the expanses of grass with rosewater and the arrack of spring … The gold-crowned emperor rose sat ever so perfectly on the attractive rosebush branch throne with color and majesty. The *qollâr-âghâsi* (slave soldier commander) cypress, distinguished from head to toe, for whom the turtledove and pheasant had brought from his moon-faced, sun-clothed Turkish servant a jet-black lock of hair, wearing a foreign-style velvet caftan of green, stood with the gold-belted cedar servants and boxwood royal *gholâms* (royal slave soldiers), who were arranged in rows in the front of the garden. The *ishik-âghâsi* (royal cavalry commander) of the plane tree with a group of hyacinth and narcissus cavalry was ordered to present gifts to the eminent ones of the territories of the garden and to perform the appropriate customs and services with a walking stick.[57]

This passage provided the only discussion of the coronation ceremony in the work. Here, the parallel garden world that had grown up in the annual descriptions of spring in chronicles beginning in the Safavid era had now completely subsumed the historical

55 Astarâbâdi, *Dorre*, pp. 539–42, Sâru'i, pp. 203–6.
56 Sâru'i, p. 72.
57 Ibid., pp. 283–84.

narrative of events. It has been noted that Astarâbâdi's increasing use of decorative language may have reflected his desire to cloak the less attractive realities of what was happening with beautiful words. Sâru'i's effort to outdo this model produced a work whose content had been so expurgated of mundane information and whose style had become so bombastic that it came close to losing any narrative dimension whatsoever, retreating into pure metaphors in what might be called a process of 'bustanification' (if a new term may be used to describe how chronicle style became overladen with garden and floral imagery).[58]

6. Historiographical Trends during the Early Qajar Period (1797–1848)

The Qajar era has come under intense scrutiny in recent decades as a time of tumultuous transformation. It is now regarded by many scholars as the initial phase of Iran's encounter with modernity, however one defines 'modern.' As this debate has been applied to political legitimacy, much discussion has swirled around the question of precisely when to locate Iran's pivotal moment of change, after which traditional Persian concepts of royal authority began to unravel. Abbas Amanat notes that, "the Constitutional Revolution shattered the sense of universal order that was traditionally symbolized by the monarchy."[59] Already a century before this last major political event of the Qajar era, however, changes in the use of literary symbols of royal legitimacy such as chronicles were beginning to occur.

The *Târikh-e Mohammadi* can be seen as one of the last examples of the particular genre of court chronicle writing that had been particularly developed under the Safavids, because subsequent Qajar

58 Abbas Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography viii. Qajar period, nevertheless regards Sâru'i's work as a "factual and minimalist account, mostly devoid of elaborate flatteries," p. 370.

59 Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe. Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–1896* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 445. See also Chapter 7.

chroniclers began to adopt different literary strategies.[60] Parallel to the *Târikh-e Mohammadi* as a culmination of many trends in prose historical writing, Fath-Ali Khan Sabâ's *Shâhanshâh-nâme*, written around 1810 as a poetic description of Fath-Ali Shah's reign, was regarded at the time by some contemporaries as the culmination in traditional Persian literature of *Shahname* calques and imitations.[61] In the opinion of Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat for example, no poet equal to Sabâ had appeared in Iran for many centuries.[62] Fâzel Garrûsî held Sabâ's work in higher regard than Ferdowsi's original itself.[63] The same had also been said, incidentally, of the author of a little-known verse epic of Nâder Shah, who was given the title the 'Second Ferdowsi.'[64] Sabâ's work is the epitome of a process in which the court chronicle, as an embellished record of the ruler's deeds, was matched and possibly rivaled by epic poetry, the goal of which was to imitate literary classics so beautifully that royal patrons would be more and more closely associated with their enduring aesthetic values. The fact that Fath-Ali Shah commissioned handsomely illustrated copies of the poem for distribution to the royal heads of Europe clearly indicates the propaganda role that was conceived for Sabâ's work, in portraying an ideal image of the new monarch.[65]

Although the chronicle form was not completely abandoned by Persian historians after this, it slowly became outmoded. This was partly because it became harder and harder for new writers to compete with their predecessors without going beyond the accepted limits of the genre. This had already occurred, both by converting a panegyric into an indictment, as in Mohammad Kâzem's work, and by blurring distinctions too far between metaphor and reality

60 For an excellent survey of Qajar historiography, see Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography viii; and Chapter 7.

61 Fath-Ali Khan Sabâ, *Divân-e âthâr*, ed. M. A. Nejâti (Tehran, 1962).

62 Munibur Rahman, *EI²*, s.v. Ṣabā, Fatḥ ʿAlī Khān.

63 Iraj Afshar, *EIr*, s.v. Fāżel Khan Garrusi.

64 Mollâ Mohammad-Ali Tusi, *Shâh-nâme-ye Nâderi*, ed. Ahmad Soheyli Khʷânsâri (Tehran, 1950).

65 Layla S. Diba, "Introducing Fath ʿAli Shah: Production and dispersal of the *Shahanshahnama* manuscripts," in Charles Melville, ed., *Shahnama Studies* I (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 239–58.

in the narrative, as in the case of Sâru'i. In abandoning the constraints imposed by the key conventions of the genre, they ushered in the end of a long era of Persian historiography. The relative return of stability to Iran during the reigns of Fath-Ali Shah and Mohammad Shah, following several decades of Qajar rule, saw the emergence of larger historical projects, such as Tabrizi's *Zinat-al-tavârikh* of 1806 and Qatrah's *Shams-al-tavârikh* (ca. 1840).[66] These broader works of more general history, while integrating the Qajar dynasty into the roll call of Iranian dynasties, departed from the concept that a key function for any chronicle was to bolster royal legitimacy.[67]

After all, the world in which historians were writing was changing. Persian histories after the early Qajar period focused less and less on establishing the monarch's deeds as part of a larger cosmic order. They came to try to show how rulers followed general precepts of good government, a subtle shift in style that paralleled a steady decrease in the importance of sacral kingship in defining royal legitimacy in Iran through the 19th century. The Qajar era witnessed the emergence of a growing conflict between two distinct concepts of monarchy. The first was based on a tribal system in which Qajar leaders would exercise collective sovereignty with the shah as an arbiter. The second depended on acceptance of the shah's omnipotence and absolute power, but in a way that relied less on traditional Persian ideas about monarchy as sacral and more on modern European concepts of absolutism.[68]

66 See Storey/Bregel, I, pp. 467–68, 475.

67 It is revealing that anecdotes abound from soon after this time in the Qajar period in which the absurdity of Sabâ's attempt to rival Ferdowsi was mocked. For further discussion of this trend, see Chapter 7.

68 Hormoz Ebrahimnejad, *Pouvoir et succession en Iran: les premiers Qajar, 1726–1834* (Paris, 1999), p. 307.

7. Nâser-al-Din Shah and the Twilight of the Court Chronicle Tradition

Nevertheless, one of the first chronicles to be commissioned in the reign of Nâser-al-Din Shah (reg. 1848–96) was Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat's updating of the Timurid-era classic, Mirkh^{w}ând's *Rowzat-al-safâ*, clearly designed to establish the connection between Nâser-al-Din and the intervening dynasties that had ruled Iran since the Safavid take-over.[69]

The wave of European influence that washed over Persian poetry and prose beginning in the 1830s inevitably affected historical writing styles. While poets continued to imitate well-established literary forms, they also expanded in new directions. The poet Qâ'âni (1830–76) exemplified this trend. He certainly wrote many couplets of verse in classic literary style, but was also responsible for one of the first Persian translations of a European work on botany.[70] At the same time, prose histories began to emphasize an empirical positivism that, in its simplicity, was reminiscent of the simplifications in poetic style promoted by the *bâzgasht* ('return') movement. The push towards simplicity in poetry did not affect historical prose as profoundly, but chronicles that still retained the annalistic style began to adopt a simpler, more empirical approach after this time. One example is Fasâ'i's *Fârs-nâme-ye Nâseri* (1887), which contains two parts: a traditional annals section, which chronicled Persian history from the rise of the Qajar dynasty, and a geographical description of Fars province. The annals begin with March 21, 1783 and continue to the spring of 1881. The first Nowruz mentioned in the work marked the beginning of the final two years of Âqâ-Mohammad Qâjâr's struggle to become shah. In this light, the most important Nowruz in the entire work occurred in March 1786, around the time of Âqâ-Mohammad's entry into Tehran and his coronation. "When the sun entered the sign of Aries, Âqâ-Mohammad Khan ascended the throne of the empire of

69 *Rowzat-al-safâ-ye Nâseri* (lith. Tehran, 1853–57; printed ed., 10 vols., Tehran, 1960); see Storey/Bregel, I, p. 479.

70 Rypka, p. 330.

the world."[71] All the Nowruz accounts of this work are far simpler than those of previous chronicles; Fasâ'i simply reported the *hejri* date at the start of each new solar year.[72]

As with other Persian literary genres, the trend by the middle of the 19th century was to favor a new aesthetic that gave priority to economy, simplicity, and clarity. Chronicles of the later Qajar era no longer unfolded like a series of miniature paintings to provide evidence of the monarch's *farr* (charisma) in a yearly cycle. Instead, the focus shifted to chronicling events with precision and brevity. The establishment of the Dâr-al-fonun (Technical College) and other cultural innovations reflected a sudden attraction to European culture at the beginning of Nâser-al-Din Shah's reign, and changes in chronicle style reflected the emergence at that time of an historiography more in line with the German positivist belief in the need to record history *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* ('as it actually happened'). Late 19th-century Persian histories were produced by intellectuals who played key roles in the translation of recent European books and the introduction of newspapers and lithography: developments that fostered the rapid growth of a modern print culture in Iran.[73] The continued proliferation of different genres, reflected most dramatically in the rise of newspapers alongside more traditional chronicles, reveals how this conflict affected historiography.

Two works in particular, Lesân-al-Molk Sepehr's *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh* and Fasâ'i's *Fârs-nâme,* reveal how much less important the aesthetic components of historical writing in Persian had become. A particular characteristic of Sepehr's text can be found in how he condensed the discussion of events. He frequently used short phrases (*ma'l-qesse* and *be'l-jomle*, 'in short') to convey that

71 Fasâ'i, p. 634; tr. Busse, *History of Persia*, p. 23.

72 For some examples, see Fasâ'i, pp. 699, 702, 743, 821; tr. Bussse, *History of Persia*, pp. 128, 132, 199, 341.

73 P.W. Avery, "Printing, the Press and Literature in Modern Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran* VII (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 820–37. For discussion of early print culture, see Shiva Balaghi, "Print culture in late Qajar Iran: The cartoons of 'Kashkūl'," *Iranian Studies* 34 (2001), pp. 165–81, and Chapter 7.

he was summarizing accounts in clear contrast to the aesthetic of embellishment and expansion that had guided traditional chroniclers.[74] These texts are strikingly devoid of embellishments, retaining only the barest remnants of classical chronicle structure and style; this entailed the virtual removal of most poetic language from the text, including the omission of the decorative rhymed couplets that chroniclers had traditionally included. Historians relied less on demonstrating *how* the monarch embodied traditional Persian ideals of kingship and more on recording *what* he had done to rule effectively.

With regard to style, there are two obvious changes. First, the language and expressions used conveyed the sense that they were contracting instead of expanding their discussions. Secondly, the increasing influence of the European empirical approach is easy to detect in the greater enumeration of specific dates and quantities. In late Qajar historical works, there are virtually none of the extended accounts of kingly martial prowess so typical of earlier histories. The depiction of celebrations performed to mark the passage of time and the process of dynastic succession was reduced to a series of minute textual punctuations, evident in how miniscule the Nowruz accounts had become. Endless commemorations of parties or ceremonies (*bazm*) and warfare (*razm*) were giving way to *wissenschaftliche geschichte* as Iran began its encounter with 'modernity.'

These changes can be discerned through comparisons of these works with their Safavid and Afsharid precursors. One device common in earlier works was to have the protagonist accidentally discover buried treasure and inscriptions as portents of his coming triumphs. Marvi, for example, related that Nâder once woke up in the middle of the night while camped near Kalât and discovered a rock inscription placed there by Timur, predicting Nâder's military victories, near which he found a treasure hoard. The inscription next to this hoard read, "He who arrives here shall become

74 See, for example, Mohammad-Taqi Sepehr, *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh (Târikh-e Qâjâriyye)*, ed. Jamshid Kiyânfar (Tehran, 1998), pp. 26, 46, 54, 143, 287, 443, 718, 850, 860. For a different view of Sepehr's monshi-style of writing, see A. Navâ'i, *Motun-e târikhi be zabân-e fârsi* (Tehran, 1997), p. 232.

the rarity of the age and lord of the conjunction … they called me Timur-e Gurkân … I conquered … [many] countries."[75] The chronicler foreshadowed Nâder's career by using this device, giving him a literary way to associate Nâder with Timur, the conqueror upon whom he modeled himself.

Fasâ'i's work also included an episode that began in a superficially similar way, but had a substantially different context and outcome. A peasant shepherd working for a lord near Soltâniyye found a treasure, which turned out to have belonged to the 13th-century Ilkhanid ruler Arghun Khan. He brought this treasure to his local lord, a man named Karbalâ'i Fath-Ali Shâhsevan, and asked for his daughter in marriage as compensation. Fath-Ali refused, so the shepherd complained to Abd-Allâh Khan, the provincial governor of Khamse. In reaction, the governor seized the treasure himself and sent it to Tehran, where it became absorbed into the imperial coffers.

When news of this discovery circulated, Hoseyn-Ali Mirzâ, Fath-Ali Shah's son and then governor of Fars province, became inspired to go on his own treasure hunt. He ordered that the lids of the Kayanid kings' coffins at Takht-e Jamshid (Persepolis) be opened. However, "they did not find anything except a handful of fine dust of the bodies of Jamshid, Kâvus, and Qobâd."[76] The comparison between the way the two stories were used shows how chronicles had shifted in focus from recording discoveries of treasure as a kind of mystical confirmation and portent of future royal success, to concentrating on the bureaucratic issues raised by such finds.[77] Another instance of the shift in focus from the exalted to the everyday can be found in the increasing use of specific quantities and numbers. In discussing the treasures of Arghun mentioned above, for example, Fasâ'i noted that they included "some golden

75 Marvi, *Târikh*, pp. 15–16.

76 Fasâ'i, p. 708; tr. Busse, p. 142.

77 See also the *Diaries* of E'temâd-al-Saltane where, in a somewhat despairing tone, the author refers time and time again to Nâser-al-Din Shah's almost comical search within Iran for mines containing precious gems; E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Ruznâme khâterât*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1977); several references in the index, s.v. "ma'dan-bâzi (shâh)," p. 1106.

nails, the weight of each being twenty-five *methqâl*."[78] In general, far more specific amounts of various types were specified in these texts from Nâser-al-Din Shah's era than in works from previous times. This was true, even in comparison with works from the early Qajar period. For example, a rough comparison between Donboli's *Ma'âther-al-soltâniyye* (composed in the 1810s) and the chronicle of Fasâ'i reveals that in chronicles of approximately similar length, Fasâ'i's text contains about seven times as many specific numerical quantities as Donboli's.[79] It would be misleading to suggest that this indicates some greater level of actual precision, but it does convey a sense of how quantification had become viewed as more important.[80]

It is revealing also to compare the accounts of Abd-al-Razzâq Maftun Donboli, a Qajar historian of the era of Fath-Ali Shah, and Fasâ'i of a particular battle: the encounter between Fath-Ali Shah and the Russians near Yerevan in April 1804. Donboli's description flowed like many other battle accounts in similar works.

> The neighing of horses, the sound of the war-trumpet and the din of the fire-scattering camel guns hurled confusion into the celestial sphere.[81]

Fasâ'i's account was still embellished, but noticeably more prosaic and technical:

> When he arrived like wind and lightning at the river Araxes, he crossed the ocean-like river, trusting in God, with the whole army directly, making use of rafts and boats and put up his quarters in the camp of the crown prince, three *parsangs* (ca. 18 km) from Erevan.[82]

78 Fasâ'i, p. 708; tr. Busse, p. 141.

79 See Fasâ'i and Abd-al-Razzâq Maftun Donboli, *Ma'âther-al-soltâniyye*, ed. Gholâm-Hoseyn Sadri Afshâr (Tehran, 1972), tr. by H.J. Brydges as *The Dynasty of the Kajars* (London, 1833)—from an early recension of Donboli's work.

80 For a discussion of the issue of quantitative precision in connection with an earlier author, see Mahdi Farhani Monfared, "Sharaf al-Din 'Ali Yazdi: Historian and mathematician," *Iranian Studies* 41 (2008), pp. 537–47, and Chapter 4.

81 Donboli, p. 116; tr. Brydges, *Dynasty of the Kajars,* p. 201.

82 Fasâ'i, p. 687; tr. Busse, p. 108.

When battle was joined in Donboli's account, "from the thunder of their artillery and guns, the uproar of [the Day of] the Resurrection was provoked in this world."[83] Fasâ'i's total discussion of the combat consisted of the following: "Taking the camp in the middle 4,000 Russians were either taken prisoner or killed."[84] The meaning of the same events had been transformed in the later work. For Fasâ'i, this campaign was mentioned to permit an assessment of its logistical difficulties and successes, while for Donboli, it had served primarily as a vehicle to display the ruler's military skill. In contrast, there was no comparable stylistic difference between Donboli and chroniclers writing seventy years before *him*, such as Astarâbâdi.

The same contrast appears when accounts of another event are compared: the Wahhabi attack on Karbalâ in 1806. Both Donboli and Fasâ'i depicted Sa'ud b. Abd-al-Aziz's raid on Karbalâ in similar terms but with very different points of emphasis. According to Donboli, the principal violation was the disturbance of the sacred space in Karbalâ of Hoseyn's tomb, so that

> That holy personage's mirror-like breast, which was truly a casket of divine mystery, was broken by arrows; the chains around the tomb of his argent face, beaming with a portion of celestial light, were rent asunder by the hands of wanton tyranny. Apparently, therefore, that event is much more deserving of religious doubt than the capture of [the town of] Karbalâ, where they slew, in his vicinity, sinners and criminals; bore away ill-acquired riches; and broke up a wooden coffin and an iron tomb. Notwithstanding that the attack on the tomb of this holy person [Imam Hoseyn] was apparently a crime, yet, in reality it proved the source of countless good and advantage to his people.[85]

Donboli noted that because of the sudden death of the Ottoman governor of Baghdad, Soleymân Pasha, the Ottomans had "no opportunity … of correcting the atrocious conduct of these Arabs."[86] He then recorded the Ottoman failure to quell the Wahhabi on-

83 Donboli, p. 115; tr. Brydges, p. 200.
84 Fasâ'i, p. 688; tr. Busse, p. 109.
85 Donboli, p. 86; tr. Brydges, p. 153.
86 Donboli, p. 87; tr. Brydges, p. 155.

slaught, due to the sudden death of Soleymân Pasha, their governor in Baghdad. The way Donboli discussed this episode implicitly presented the Ottomans' failure to manage the Wahhabi problem as evidence of their inability to defend their legitimacy through military victory, a major failure for any traditional Muslim ruler. Donboli also noted that they had rejected any military assistance from Iran to cope with the Wahhabis, fulfilling a prediction made in a letter from Fath-Ali Shah to Soleymân. The Shah had cautioned,

> As …[the Wahhabis'] power is not yet consolidated, so the remedy is easily applied; but an affair now easily accomplished will, through negligence, terminate in difficulties.[87]

Thus implicitly, through his conduct during this episode, Fath-Ali Shah was revealed as a better ruler than the Ottoman Sultan. The Shah's offer of assistance was also quoted here to add a gentle reminder that while southern Iraq might not be territorially within the purview of Fath-Ali Shah's "well-protected domains," Karbalâ and its shrines most certainly came within the precinct of sacred Shi'ite sites in whose protection he was obliged to assist.

Contrast this with Fasâ'i's prosaic discussion of the same incident:

> The unfortunate Sa'ud, son of the low-born Abd-al-Aziz, marched with several thousand Arabs to conquer Karbalâ. He arrived on 18th Dhu'l-Hejje, the holy day of Ghadir Khomm, and they occupied the town. They killed 5,000 people within six hours after daybreak. Plundering everything the found … They destroyed the blessed sepulcher … After six hours they left the town and marched off to Dar'iyye, their camels laden with the booty.[88]

Fasâ'i omitted any allusions to questions of legitimacy and kingship implicit in traditional chronicles like the work of Donboli, as well as forgoing any explicit assessments of the military success or failure of various rulers. His account seems primarily guided by the desire to convey a straightforward, descriptive version of the events.

87 Donboli, p. 86; tr. Brydges, p. 154.
88 Fasâ'i, p. 683; tr. Busse, p. 103.

Thus, the later Qajar chroniclers no longer sought to portray incidents that could capture the elusive qualities of a successful monarch. Their focus had shifted to presenting the empirical evidence of royal activities as clearly as possible. Compared with earlier histories, they no longer paid more than perfunctory attention to the annual confirmation of the king's authority symbolized in the Nowruz festivities. In the introduction to his translation, Heribert Busse calls Fasâ'i's work "one of … the last Annals written in Persia."[89] However, despite retaining the bare framework of an annalistic structure, Fasâ'i's work, like Sepehr's before him, omitted almost all the old conventions of this genre.

The chronicle section of Fasâ'i's work was only its first part. The second half was a comprehensive geographical gazetteer of Fars province, which followed in the paths of earlier 19th-century works that eclectically combined historiography with various other well-established styles, such as geographical literature. The most notable early Qajar-era example of this mixture was the *Rostam-al-tavârikh*, a unique conglomeration of geographical and anecdotal history that appeared in the 1830s, partly based on the author's own recollections and those of his forefathers.[90] The popularity of memoirs rose steadily through the Qajar era, culminating in the diaries of Nâser-al-Din Shah's trips to Europe in 1873 and 1878.[91] These travel diaries also played an important role in legitimizing alternatives to the language and structure of prose works containing historical material or information about the activities of the ruler and the court.

89 Ibid., p. xix.

90 Mohammad Hâshem Âsaf 'Rostam-al-Hokamâ,' *Rostam-al-tavârikh*, ed. by Mohammad Moshiri (Tehran, 1969); trans and ed. by Birgitt Hoffmann as *Persische Geschichte 1694–1835 erlebt, erinnert und erfunden* (Bamberg, 1986). Cf. A. K. S. Lambton, "Some new trends in Islamic political thought in late 18th and early 19th century Persia," *Studia Islamica* 39 (1974), pp. 95–128; Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography vii. Qajar period (p. 373), and Chapter 7.

91 Nâser-al-Din Shah's diaries of foreign and domestic trips were published in Tehran very soon after each trip, beginning in 1869, and his accounts of Europe were immediately translated into English and published in Britain; Storey/Bregel, II, pp. 966–69. Cf. Jean Calmard, "*The Diary of H.M. Shah of Persia during His Tour through Europe in A.D. 1873* [review]," *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998), pp. 274–76.

8. Conclusions

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century Iranian historians used embellishment as a way to increase the aesthetic distance between their works, as celebrations of royal glory (*farr*), and the less majestic aspects of mundane political events in a time of swift and violent change. By the late 19th century, the impetus to beautify chronicles finally diminished with the advent of positivist historiography under the influence of European models then being translated into Persian for the first time. Persian court chronicles were in fact produced after the fall of the Qajar dynasty. The chronicles and *shâhnâmes* of Abd-Allâh Amir Tahmâsp, Nowbakht, and Ja'far Sayyâh, among several examples, perpetuated this genre well into the Pahlavi era.[92] However, these works no longer had the same symbolic importance in confirming monarchical legitimacy that their predecessors did. Changes in the late Qajar period suggest it was no longer desirable to employ the same traditional structures, styles, and language to assert a particular ruler's connections as a sacral king to divine sources of authority. Examination of such changes provides one small but revealing window on larger processes of political transformation that Iran had was experiencing during the late 19th century.

92 See, for example, Abd-Allâh Amir Tahmâsp, *Târikh-e shâhanshâhi-ye A'lâhazrat Rezâ Shâh-e kabir* (Tehran, 1976); Habib-Allâh Nowbakht, *Shâhanshâh-e Pahlavi* (Tehran, 1924); and Ja'far Sayyâh, *Pahlavi-nâme* (Tehran, 1934).

CHAPTER 7

LEGEND, LEGITIMACY AND MAKING A NATIONAL NARRATIVE IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF QAJAR IRAN (1785–1925)

Abbas Amanat

The emergence of a grand narrative covering the history of Iran from an ancient past to the modern era has often been seen as a product of the Pahlavi period and closely associated with the nationalist agenda and quest for political legitimacy under Rezâ Shah (1921–41). It is often dismissed as state-sponsored propaganda, a somewhat inauthentic history, manufactured by a compliant cultural élite alien to the true sentiments and loyalties of the people of Iran; an imagined past devoid of any Islamic roots, collective memory and popular receptivity. Such was particularly evident in the nativist counter-narrative that was critical of Iran's course of Westernization (such as Jalâl Âl-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi*) and instead searched for an *authentic* past. Later the rhetoric of authenticity in the post-Pahlavi era was employed to debunk the Pahlavi nationalist narrative and replace it with an alternative Islamicized past—and for reasons of its own legitimacy. Yet the Persian nationalist narrative persisted, even thrived, as it found seemingly a new audience among the generations of younger Iranians.

Whatever the goals of the Pahlavi nationalist agenda may have been, and in whichever way it used and abused the past for its own sake, it is an exaggeration to suggest that such an historical narrative—and the Persian identity that it aspired to create—were instantaneous products of that time and a mere instrument of the Pahlavi state, with no precedents in earlier decades and unconnected to

Iranians' collective memory of earlier centuries. The task of this chapter is to demonstrate how such sentiments—what can be called proto-nationalist historiography—gradually evolved from the late 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, from the traditional production of chronicles into a systematic narrative of the Iranian past with diverse sources, improved method, an accessible style and a greater appeal beyond the state élite.[1]

In the century and a half that constituted the Qajar period (1786–1925), writing of history evolved from production of annalistic court chronicles and other traditional genres into the earliest articulation of a national history. Seeking to fashion a new historical identity, the mainstream historiography of the period fused the familiar dynastic history of the Qajar period both with the Shi'i 'sacred history' and with collective memories of pre-Islamic Iran. The foundation for a new grand narrative was based on such classics as the *Shahname,* medieval chronicles such as Mirkhʷând's 15th-century *Rowzat-al-safâ* and Khʷândamir's *Habib-al-siyar*, and the neo-Zoroastrian imaginary histories of the 16th to 19th centuries. With a greater national awareness fermenting throughout the 19th century, and culminating in the Constitutional Revolution (1906–11), the new history consciously moved away from parallel histories of prophets and kings (*rosol wa'l-moluk*)—the mainstream of classic Perso-Islamic historiography—and gravitated towards a narrative eager to show continuity with the ancient Iranian past.

This narrative laid the foundation of historiography throughout the 20th century, first by reclaiming mythologized history and later utilizing archaeological evidence, Greco-Roman texts and works of Western scholars that became accessible for the first time in late 19th century. While earlier genres of dynastic chronicles, local histories and biographical dictionaries were patronized by the Qajar court, by Shi'i scholarship, and by the provincial élite, the new national

1 Little scholarly work has been done on Persian historiography and the emergence of national history in modern times. For a general survey see E. Yarshater, "Iranian national history," in E. Yarshater, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran* III (1) (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 359–477 and *EIr*, s.v. Historiography viii. Qajar period (A. Amanat) and ix. Pahlavi period (A. Amanat) and cited sources.

history often wrote into the dissident intellectual discourse of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Only later was this reclaimed and promoted by Pahlavi cultural nationalism and its educational institutions, in contrast with the narrative of the Qajar *ancien régime*.

With the new narrative, the historical craft also evolved in the Qajar period in method and style. Historians adopted a simpler Persian prose and a more direct approach to their subject matter, distinct from the ornate style of the late Safavid and Afsharid eras. Even though in the early part of the 19th century, Qajar chroniclers largely abided by the familiar courtly tradition, from the middle of the century experimentation in historical writing was not rare among such popularizing historians as the enigmatic author of *Rostam-al-tavârikh* in the 1840s and 50s, and more distinctly among dissident intellectuals such as Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ in his *Nâme-ye Khosrovân* in the 1860s, Âqâ Khan Kermâni in his *Â'ine-ye Sekandari* in the 1890s, and Nâzem-al-Eslâm Kermâni in his *Târikh-e bidâri-ye Irâniyân* at the turn of the 20th century.

Despite some innovation in form and content, there were glaring historiographical gaps in the Qajar period, most notably in developing a modern historical discipline that would be grounded in causality, contingency and human agency. Deficiencies were also evident in the attempts to adopt modern methods of research, and primary sources and archival material were not utilized in an organized manner. Compared with Ottoman and Egyptian historiographies of the period, Qajar Iran nevertheless held its ground in sheer scope and quantity and barely fell behind in method and style. The historians exhibited a comparable range of erudition and historiographical skills in recording the events of their own time, and often their detailed recording of events compensated to an extent for the absence of a systematic archive.

Moreover, the Qajar period left behind copious documentation, larger than any earlier epoch in Iranian history, to include official records, government-generated reports, commercial documents, deeds, registers and legal opinions, as well as extensive memoirs, informal correspondence, and other personal narratives. Yet the whole period suffered from an endemic disrespect for classifying and preserving documents and maintaining a systematic archive;

an irreparable loss perpetrated by the Qajar state's disregard for keeping records for the ongoing use of the bureaucracy as well as for future reference. The anti-Qajar sentiments of the early Pahlavi era further hastened the scattering and destroying of earlier correspondence and state records. Descendants and heirs to some old and well-established families with Qajar connections also contributed to the loss of historical records. For sundry reasons: fear of state authorities, the need to suppress what they considered as embarrassing family secrets, grudges towards oppressive family patriarchs, sheer ignorance of the importance of historical documentation coupled with an endemic sense of cultural alienation perpetrated by a shallow utilitarian view of modernity, the succeeding generations often indiscriminately destroyed papers, correspondence, manuscripts, account books (often produced in the specialized *siyâq*) and legal *fatwas* that had survived unmolested for decades in basements and attics of the old Qajar houses.

With few exceptions, the absence of a neutral environment conducive to critical research hindered the growth of historical studies; an impediment that continued even after the establishment of modern higher education in the post-Constitutional period. The use and abuse of history as an instrument of political and religious legitimacy continued to cover up failures of the state and the élite in its domestic and foreign endeavors, and to conceal the flaring of public resentment towards the repressive state and the clerical establishment. A few historians aside, the chroniclers of the period never strove to mirror the full scope of political realities, let alone their social, cultural and economic ramifications. At least before the end of the century, the task of articulating the discourse of decline and renewal fell upon the authors of reformist treatises with insufficient historical insight. Mainstream history, before the end of the century, continued recording dynastic accessions, wars of succession and contestation of power, pacification of the nomadic periphery. The state's ability to maneuver around the glaring threat of European territorial and economic expansion was a new concern of these histories. As a tool for glorifying the rulers and the élite—and despite military defeats and political setbacks—chroniclers continued to display the customary flattery and adulation of the sources of power.

The first steps in representing the past are evident in dynastic chronicles and their treatment of current events. Chroniclers learned to treat the present more realistically, albeit subtly so as not to offend their royal patrons. Three prevailing genres of official historiography roughly correspond to the three turning points in the political history of the Qajar period. Distortions and sheer biases aside, a tangible progression through time is visible through the century. First, the chronicles of conquest (or presumed conquest) that were produced from the beginning of the Qajar dynasty through the first decade of Nâser-al-Din Shah's reign portrayed a volatile period between 1779 and 1857 of tribal pacification as well as adjustment to painful realities in the encounter with the West. Second, the chronicles of the Nâseri era (1848–96), which were still framed in the annalistic format of the earlier epochs but were somewhat influenced by European almanacs and other Western accounts such as newspapers and journals. They mostly appeared in print and continued to be produced through to the end of the Mozaffar-al-Din Shah era (1896–1906). They largely aimed to enhance in the eye of the public the status of the Qajar state and legitimize its sovereignty by placing it in a broader international context. Third are the narratives of the Constitutional and post-Constitutional periods (1906–25); accounts of momentary vitality and optimism for a national reawakening. They nevertheless were soon to be followed by a period of diminishing hopes and loss of confidence in the national renewal. This historical outlook was perceived through a dual vision of Iran's decay as well as a yearning for an almost messianic renewal. The emergence of a nationalist historiography in the early Pahlavi period was rooted particularly in these latter sentiments.

1. Reshaping Court Chronicles and Universal Histories

The Qajar chroniclers active in the late 18th and early 19th centuries at the outset followed with little deviation the Afsharid and the Zand accounts of conquest, such as Mirzâ Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi's

highly popular *Jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi.* That Astarâbâdi's account of Nâder's conquests and exploits reached at least fourteen editions in the Qajar period may be explained in part by the public's search for a success story in the face of Qajar infirmity.[2] The *Jahân-goshâ* was modeled on Eskandar Beg Monshi's *Âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi* of the Safavid era, which in turn was modeled on Atâ-Malek Joveyni's renowned *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ* of the Mongol period. The conscious simulating of the earlier chronicles thus aimed at portraying the Qajar ruler as legitimate heir to the Safavid throne, against the Afsharid, Zand and other domestic contenders, and later in the face of an ominous European threat.

The first important account in this group is Mohammad-Taqi (Fath-Allâh) Sâru'i's *Târikh-e Mohammadi* (also known as *Ahsan-al-tavârikh*, named no doubt after Hasan-e Rumlu's famous Safavid universal history).[3] Commissioned by Fath-Ali Mirzâ, just before his accession to the Qajar throne as Fath-Ali Shah, and completed in 1797, it narrates from the Qajar perspective the rise to power of Âqâ-Mohammad Khan (1786–97), the founder of the dynasty, and his eighteen-year struggle to establish the Qajar dynasty ending with his assassination in 1797. A native of eastern Mazandaran and an assistant to Mirzâ Mahdi Astarâbâdi, Sâru'i also served as chief officer of religious affairs (*mollâ-bâshi*) to Âqâ-Mohammad Khan. His factual and minimalist account, mostly devoid of elaborate flatteries, to a large extent follows Astarâbâdi's style in the *Jahân-goshâ*. By acknowledging in prolegomena to his volume such classical works as Joveyni's *Jahân-goshâ*, Abd-Allâh Shirâzi's *Târikh-e Vassâf,* Sharaf-al-Din Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nâme-ye Timuri,* Edris-e Bidlisi's *Hasht behesht* and above all Mohammad Mahdi Astarâbâdi, Sâru'i establishes a historiographical genealogy that stretches from the Ilkhanid to the Afsharid and Qajar periods.[4]

Sâru'i is the first among the Qajar historians to preface his dynastic history with a short description of the Qajar tribe, to be followed

2 See Kh. Moshâr, *Fehrest-e ketâbhâ-ye châpi-ye fârsi* (3 vols., Tehran, 1973), I, p. 694. Furthermore, his highly ornate *Dorre-ye Nâderi* was published 17 times in the 19th century in Iran, India and Britain (ibid., I, pp. 1404–5).

3 Ed. M. Tabâtabâ'i Majd (Tehran, 1992).

4 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

by an account of the scion of the clan Fath-Ali Khan Qâjâr and his bid for power in the last days of Safavid rule. This is followed by the exploits of Mohammad-Hasan Khan Qâjâr, Âqâ-Mohammad Shah's father, and the struggles of his brother Hoseyn-Qoli Khan against the Zands. The first twenty chapters of Sâru'i's ancestral history were meant to augment the Qajar's Turko-Persian Qezelbâsh pedigree as a vindication of their bid to capture the throne of Iran.[5] The author thus explains Âqâ-Mohammad Shah's attempt to reconstitute the Safavid Empire based on the Qajar's membership in the Qezelbâsh confederacy. The emphasis on this presumed uninterrupted link with the Safavids was to negate the earlier claims of the Afsharid conqueror, Nâder Shah (1736–47), whose rise to power came at the expense of eliminating Âqâ-Mohammad Khan's ancestor (and whose accession was also in part legitimized because of his tribe's membership of the Qezelbâsh). Similarly, the implied continuity was intended to nullify the claim of the Zand ruler, Karim Khan (1760–79), who viewed his office as the "deputy of the (Safavid) state" (*vakil-al-dowle*). Sâru'i's historiographical strategy anticipated the format and style of many of the court chronicles that followed, during Fath-Ali Shah's reign and after.

To soften the image of his patron as a judicious ruler compatible with the Safavids, Sâru'i predictably toned down instances of cruelty committed by the founder of the Qajar dynasty. Discussing the siege of Kerman in 1794, for instance, Sâru'i largely avoids instances of mass killing, rape, mutilation and urban destruction, by employing a rhetorical strategy. The events were fudged behind excessive literary techniques, abstruse terminology, and even eroticized wit. The subsequent capture and brutal execution of the last of the Zand rulers, Lotf-Ali Khan, is also reported with the greatest brevity, despite the fact that it had a great symbolic place in the Qajar's claim to sovereignty. That Sâru'i and his successors under Fath-Ali Shah were invariably nurtured in the Afsharid and Zand courts added to the complexity of their narratives, as they tried to thin down past loyalties almost beyond recognition. The same rhetorical strategy is visible in the accounts of the siege of Tiflis

5 Ibid., chapters 1 through 20 (pp. 22–86).

(Tbilisi) and the subsequent killing and rape of the population by the Qajar army, the massacre of the priesthood and destruction of the churches in 1795.[6]

The *Ma'âther-e soltâniyye* of Abd-al-Razzâq Donboli (with the pen name, Maftun), the foremost among the histories of the Fath-Ali Shah era (1798–1834), also follows Sâru'i's discussion of the Qajars' ancestral history, linking the Qajars to the Safavids. Published in 1825, the *Ma'âther* was one of the earliest books to be produced by the printing press established around 1817 in Tabriz by Abbâs Mirzâ (1789–1833), the modernizing crown prince of Fath-Ali Shah, under the directorship of Molla Mohammad-Bâqer Tabrizi. Thanks to its early publication, the *Ma'âther* had a much wider readership than other works of the period and stood out as the leading history of the early Qajars.

A historian of some erudition with links with the earlier dynasties, Donboli too served as a medium for introducing the Safavid-Zand high culture and literary tradition to the nascent Qajar milieu. Under the aegis of Mirzâ Isâ (Mirzâ Bozorg) Farahâni, the first Qâ'em-maqâm—who served as Abbâs Mirzâ's tutor and influential minister—and his son, Mirzâ Abu'l-Qâsem Farahâni the second Qâ'em-maqâm (and the celebrated literary figure of the next generation), Donboli and likeminded figures were responsible for the formation of the *Anjoman-e Khâqân.* This was the royal literary society devoted to reviving the 'neoclassical' style and themes of the early Persian courts of the Samanid and Ghaznavid eras: what became known as the 'school of return' (*maktab-e bâzgasht*).[7] The movement left a lasting impact on the style and presentation of historical texts of the early Qajar era, for instance through the incorporation of legendary and heroic themes of such works as Ferdowsi's *Shahname.* Mostly from the landed nobility of the Zand period and among the ranking officials serving that dynasty, the Qâ'em-maqâms and their associates were to transmit the court culture of Fars province and the sense of Persian historical

6 Sâru'i, *Târikh-e Mohammadi*, pp. 253–57, 272–80.

7 For the Society and its members see Fâzel Khan Garrusi, *Tadhkere-ye anjoman-e Khâqân* (Tehran, 1820–21), 2nd ed. T. Sobhâni (Tehran, 1997). Donboli's entry appears on pp. 296–98.

continuity to the Qajar cultural environment. Under their aegis, Tabriz witnessed in the early decades of the 19th century a cultural revival that to a large extent set the tone for the historiographical style of the rest of the Qajar era.

Born in Khoy in 1754, Abd-al-Razzâq Donboli was typical of this new class of literati. Son of the chief of a tribe of the same name who served as the governor of Tabriz, Abd-al-Razzâq was dispatched to Shiraz at the age of ten as a tribal hostage, where he spent fourteen years in the Zand capital and three more in Isfahan. Studying in the literary centers of the time, he entered the Qajar secretarial service in Tabriz at a time when the capture of Azerbaijan by his fellow captive of the Shiraz days, Âqâ-Mohammad Khan, appeared inevitable. Author of a number of literary works in Persian and Arabic in prose and poetry, he also was the translator from Turkish of the famous account of the Polish Jesuit Padre J.T. Krusinski, *The History of the Revolution of Persia.* This perhaps was the first European work ever to be translated into Persian in modern times.[8] Donboli was a natural choice for producing a history of the new dynasty during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah; a ruler himself brought up in Shiraz during the transition from Zand to Qajar rule. Donboli's *Negârestân-e Dârâ,* a biographical dictionary of poets and cultural figures of the Fath-Ali Shah era (titled in honor of the monarch's son, Dârâ Mirzâ), was a literary history of his own time. His verse epic, *Mokhtâr-nâme,* in praise of the Shi'i hero Mokhtâr Thaqafi, on the other hand, demonstrated renewed interest in Shi'i hagiography.[9]

Donboli's historical endeavor, cloaked in a precious style, glorified Fath-Ali Shah and his house, from the perspective of the Tabriz

8 First published in London in 1728, the Turkish translation was published simultaneously in Istanbul. A lithograph of the Persian translation was published in Tehran (n.d.) and also as a part of the Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane's *Montazam-e Nâseri,* vol. II (see below).

9 For Donboli's biography see H. Nakhjavâni, *Chehel maqâle* (Tabriz, 1964), pp. 221–32 and J. Perry, *EIr*, s.v. Donboli, and the cited sources. For the Shiraz years of the second ruler of the Qajar dynasty, see A. Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. Fath-'Ali Shah. Donboli also co-authored a universal history with Mohammad-Razi Aliâbâdi, entitled *Zinat-al-tavârikh*, covering from the dawn of creation in the *Shahname* to the Qajar period (see below).

court, the seat of Abbâs Mirzâ. His conscious agenda is to present the ruling dynasty as a force for stability and peace that ended decades of chaos and civil war. Yet dynastic continuity and revival of the Persian royal tradition came at a time when Qajar Iran, and Azerbaijan in particular, was under a potent foreign threat. The *Ma'âther* was published just before the start of the second round of wars with Russia in 1826. This was an upheaval whose impact was not entirely missed by Donboli, judging from many chapters in his work devoted not only to the conflict but also to the history of the new Russian nemesis.

To its readership, extending beyond the court circle, the *Ma'âther* was a new experiment in style and appearance. The typographic printing was in *naskh* movable type—rather than the conventional *nast'aliq* of the Persian manuscripts—with universal margins and clear headings and subheadings conveying coherence in format and substance.

Covering the years 1722 to 1825, the *Ma'âther*'s chronology also implied continuity from the Safavid to the Qajar period. The majority of the entries, contained in 363 short chapters, deal with the frontier province of Azerbaijan under Abbâs Mirzâ and its military and diplomatic relations with the neighboring Russia, during the first round of the wars with Iran. Clashes with the Ottomans and diplomatic missions from Britain and France also receive due attention.

Chronicling events in an annalistic format, Donboli also devoted fair space to the domestic conflicts at the outset of Qajar rule. In his account of the Fath-Ali Shah's victory over his contenders—ironically written by a former Zand official whose Donboli tribe was subdued by the Qajars—there are traces of a new awareness of the urgent need to counter European aggression. Donboli shows this by his praise not only for the new dynasty's success in pacifying and centralizing the country, but for its creation of the 'New Army' (*nezâm-e jadid*) and other Western-style reform measures essential for preserving Iran's territorial integrity. He also devotes sections to historical descriptions of Iran's new European neighbors, Russia and the British Empire, stressing their strengths and weaknesses. He is awed by the rise of Russia to a world power under Peter the

Great and Empress Catherine but at the same time does not shy away from details about Russian court scandals, which he probably learned through European visitors to Tabirz. His account of the British Empire in the final version, however, is not adulatory. He gives a brief factual account of the ruling dynasty and highlights British colonial ambitions in India.[10]

The *Ma'âther*'s style is ornate by today's standards despite the author's desire to make his account accessible to the ordinary reader. At the outset, he promises to remain "free from secretarial hyperboles, literary embellishments, longwinded tedium, and baffling brevity." Indeed he avoids such literary techniques as rhymed prose (*saj'*), and Arabic and Arabicized interjections, which are evident in the work of his predecessors, and rampant even in Donboli's own semi-autobiographical *Tajrebat-al-ahrâr va tasliyat-al-abrâr.*[11]

An earlier version of the *Ma'âther*, as we know from the introduction to its masterful English translation by Harford Jones Brydges, was put together just before 1811 from the "state record" by a chronicler (*vaqâye'-nevis,* the 'writer of the [daily] events') and was sent to Jones by Mirzâ Bozorg Qâ'em-maqâm at the request of the eager British envoy.[12] Though nowhere in Jones' translation is the *vaqâye'-nevis* identified, it is very probable, judging by the organization and treatment of the events, that the author is either Donboli or someone who collaborated with him.[13] The discrepancies between this English translation and the published Persian edition reveal revisions in the Persian printed version, especially with respect to foreign affairs. It appears that defeat in war with Russia

10 Donboli, *Ma'ather*, For the change of attitude toward Britain see below.

11 Ed. H. Qâzi Tabâtabâ'i (2 vols., Tabriz, 1971).

12 *The Dynasty of the Kajars translated from the original Persian manuscript presented by His Majesty Faty Aly Shâh to Sir Harford Jones Brydges* (London, 1838), p. iii.

13 If not Donboli, the reference to *vaqâye'-nevis* may be identified as Mohammad-Razi Tabrizi, the author of the *Zinat-al-tavârikh*, or alternatively Mohammad-Sâdeq Marvazi, who in 1810 completed the first volume of his *Jahân-ârâ* on the events of the first ten years of Fath-Ali Shah's reign. Close examination of Jones' Persian manuscript, presumably preserved among his papers, may reveal further details. The manuscript, as Jones states (pp. i–iii), was water damaged on crossing to England and lost some details.

on the one hand and the spread of the British colonial empire on the other, made Donboli revise his earlier enthusiasm for an altruistic friendship with neighboring British India. While Harford Jones' English translation includes a lengthy passage praising the just and noble English nation and their mighty imperial state—no doubt in a wishful hope of British support for Iran during the first round of wars with Russia (1805–13)—the Persian printed version of 1825 omits the passage entirely, even though it makes at least forty references to Britain and its diplomatic dealings with Iran.[14]

At least two other contemporaries of Donboli produced similar dynastic chronicles, with subtle differences in style and approach. Mohammad-Sâdeq Marvazi, the official court chronicler (*vaqâye'-negâr*) produced his two-volume *Jahân-ârâ* ('World embellisher') covering the first twenty years of Fath-Ali Shah's reign between 1797 and 1817. Still in manuscript, his account also followed the state-centered annalistic format.[15] Fazl-Allâh Shirâzi, better known by his pen name Khâvari, on the other hand, covered at greater length the history of Qajar rule from the end of the Safavids up to 1836, the first year of Mohammad Shah's reign. Writing from the perspective of a mid-rank official based in the capital (rather than the seat of the crown prince in Tabriz), the theme of his *Târikh-e Dhu'l-qarneyn* ('History of two centuries') was primarily concerned with domestic pacification and recovery from the 18th-century civil war.[16]

Khâvari is moreover subtly bound up in his narrative with the felicitous growth of the Qajar royal progeny, an influential theme in the later Qajar chronicles, which used Khâvari's extensive supplement on that subject as their source. The accurate recording of

14 E.g. Harford Jones Brydges, *Dynasty of the Kajars*, pp. 100–2, 107–15.

15 C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature*, vol. I, part 1 (London, 1970), pp. 335–36; A. Monzavi, *Fehrest-e noskhehâ-ye khatti-ye fârsi*, vol. VI (Tehran, 1974), pp. 4304–6, and Y. Âryanpur, *Az Sabâ tâ Nimâ* (2 vols., Tehran, 1971), I, pp. 75–77.

16 Ed. N. Afshâr-far (2 vols., Tehran, 2001). The title *Dhu'l-qarneyn* is a reference to two fifty-year cycles (*qarn*) of the Qajar rule from the fall of the Safavids to the end of the Fath-Ali Shah era. It also implies the felicitous age of the long-reigning monarch. The title may also contain a flattering allusion to Fath-Ali Shah as a second Alexander, a prophet-king of his time.

Fath-Ali Shah's enormous progeny in the prologue (*khâteme-ye ruznâmche-ye homâyun*)—consisting of three parts and seventy chapters—required all his genealogical skills to document the complex rationale governing the Qajar princely hierarchy, and the subtle balance of maternal blood, seniority and personal aptitude. Khâvari's record was made in the late 1830s, by which time not only was the Qajar tribal aristocracy almost fully replaced by Fath-Ali Shah's senior sons, but the sons themselves and their offspring were in turn supplanted by the progeny of the crown prince Abbâs Mirzâ; a silent revolution of a sort facilitated by the Turkmanchây peace treaty of 1828, which determined the future of succession in the Qajar house.[17]

Khâvari combined a sophisticated historical prose with accurate recording of events in a strictly annalistic format, at times with professional honesty unflattering to his Qajar patrons. The massive chronicle was organized round the customary Persian solar calendar with an innovative prologue about the geography of Iran and its boundaries and provinces, to be followed by a history of the origins of the Qajar tribe, now a set feature of the Qajar chronicles. The rise of the Qajar dynasty was then followed by a systematic year-by-year coverage of events between 1798 and 1836. In his introduction describing the circumstances leading to the writing of his history, Khâvari notes that in an audience with Fath-Ali Shah, the king remarked that:

> The aim of recording events (*vaqâye-negâri;* i.e. writing history) is to inform the élite and the public of the affairs of the country and not florid compositions and literary boasting. The history of the state should be concise, lucid and informative and not longwinded, hyperbolic and useless. It is imperative on the historian (*târikh-negâr*) to adopt truthfulness and avoid false statements. He neither dismisses some events of state as insignificant nor engages in such meaningless elaboration that causes boredom and dismay, nor turns the writing of history into a means of personal gain or of praising people for

17 For circumstances leading to this transition and its outcome, see A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and Iranian Monarchy, 1831–1896* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997; 2nd ed. London and New York, 2008), pp. 18–24.

> what they don't deserve.... He leaves aside personal enmities—which are contingent on (mankind's) animalistic essence—and does not lift his pen except in truthfulness and accurate recording.[18]

Even if Khâvari presented a lofty rendering of Fath-Ali Shah's view of history, it still shows a critical reading of the historical craft distinct from the conventional style and objectives of historians of his time. Reviewing the historical literature of earlier centuries, Khâvari also exercises a critical judgment. He criticizes for instance the 15th-century historian Mirkh^{w}ând, author of the universal history *Rowzat-al-safâ,* for lifting verbatim from Abd-al-Razzâq Samarqandi's *Matla'-e sa'deyn va majma'-e bahreyn*. "Even though the great Amir Ali-Shir Navâ'i spent many savings on the production of this work," Khâvari sarcastically comments, "the end result was nothing but lifting a few words and letters from one source or another."[19]

To avoid Mirkh^{w}ând's pitfall, Khâvari acknowledges the help he received from historians of his own time: Mirzâ Mohammad-Razi Tabrizi, author of the *Zinat-al-tavârikh*, and Mohammad-Sâdeq Marvazi, author of *Jahân-nâme*, both members of the Anjoman-e Khâqân.[20] The merit of his own work, however, rests on including all the events of state:

> I neither omitted any story, nor engaged in useless elaborations. I shortened the vernal preambles (*bahâriyye*) to a couple of lines pertinent to the events of that year and avoided irrelevant descriptions. In depicting the hunting and shooting trips, the gardens and meadows, and the ornate majestic feasts, I sufficed with an allusion.[21]

In an effort to rationalize his narrative, Khâvari tries hard to remain loyal to his set standards; and no doubt he should be acknowledged for his accuracy, firsthand record of events and eyewitness description of the personalities of his own time, and occasionally his acute observations. Yet he ultimately carries out the wishes of his royal patron by claiming legitimacy through noble birth, conquest and

18 Khâvari, *Dhu'l-qarneyn,* I, p. 7.
19 Ibid., p. 8.
20 Garrusi, *Tadhkere*, pp. 88–91, 441–48
21 Khâvari, *Dhu'l-qarneyn*, pp. 8–9. Cf. Chapter 6.

the restoration of peace and stability. Accordingly, the second round of Russo-Persian wars of 1826–27 and the subsequent conclusion of the 1828 Treaty of Turkmanchây receive due descriptive attention. Yet his account is almost devoid of any sense of historical causality, let alone detecting faults in the conduct of the war, the behavior of the Shah and the princes of the royal family, and the foolhardy attitude of the pressure groups such as the senior mojtaheds and their *divani* allies in calling for jihad against Russia. One gets the sense that in this instance, as in other sensitive episodes, such as the undue power of the senior princes of the royal family and their constant infighting, Khâvari is inclined to tread a cautious path, mindful of many enemies at court and in the provinces.[22] In adopting such a circumspect attitude he was not, of course, alone. Yet his history ranks among a handful of reliable accounts for the first five decades of the Qajar era and a source for chronicles of later generations.

Even more than official histories, semi-historical narratives of the period downplayed the setbacks of the Qajars in encountering Russia. Fath-Ali Khan Sabâ Kâshâni and the praise he reserved for his royal patron in his semi-legendary epic *Shahanshâh-nâme* is but one example.[23] On the brink of a defeat in the hands of the Russians, Sabâ, the poet laureate, still felt confident enough to praise Fath-Ali Shah's chivalry and political savvy in the style of Ferdowsi's *Shahname*.[24] Yet placing the Qajar ruler in a *Shahname* genre no doubt meant to assert a continuity in the Persian institution of kingship and like other expressions of the period—painting, rock reliefs, regalia and royal investiture, mostly vestiges of the Zand court culture—it too contributed to transform the Qajar tribal notion of power into one of imperial rule. This was essential not only

22 For the Russo-Persian wars see ibid., I, pp. 612–30, II, pp. 637–92.

23 Malek-al-Sho'arâ Fath-Ali Khân Sabâ, *Divân-e Ash'âr*, ed. M.A. Nejâti (Tehran, 1962).

24 For excerpts see Âryanpur, *Az Sabâ* I, pp. 23–26. Neither Khâvari's history nor Sabâ's epic poem were published at the time and their impact does not seem to have extended beyond court circles. Yet illustrated copies of the *Shahanshâh-nâme* were bequeathed by the Shah to foreign envoys; see Layla Diba, "Introducing Fath 'Ali Shah: Production and dispersal of the *Shahanshahnama* manuscripts," in Ch. Melville, ed., *Shahnama Studies* I (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 239–58.

for the greater centralization of the state and its legitimacy as a rightful dynasty, but also to acquire prestige and durability in the face of foreign powers. Drawing comparisons in style and in substance with the mythical Kayanid kings of the *Shahname* threw an aura of Persian legitimacy upon the Qajar king. The process of Persianization of the dynasty thus gave the Qajar ruler credit beyond reconstituting the Qezelbâsh and beyond their Turko-Mongolian tribal lineage, of which they continued to remain proud.[25]

To the same effect, the production of universal histories aimed to incorporate the Qajar dynasty into the imperial Persian narrative by looking back into Iran's ancient past. A typical example in this genre was the *Zinat-al-tavârikh* ('Adornment of histories') by the aforementioned Mohammad-Razi Mostowfi Tabrizi Vaqâye'-nevis, with the pen name *bande (*died 1808), produced in collaboration with a certain Abd-al-Karim Shahâvari (or Eshtehardi), and possibly in association with Donboli. Attached to the Tabriz court (though his family was from Mazandaran), he produced a general history of Iran from the dawn of creation to the reign of Fath-Ali Shah, who commissioned his work. Compiled between 1803 and 1806, the history was organized in two volumes. The first was devoted in the style of classical universal historians to the prophets (*rosol*) and philosophers (*hokamâ*), starting with the Abrahamic prophets and the ancient Greek philosophers, and continuing in the second part with Mohammad and his family, followed by biographies of major ulama and mystics in the Shi'i-Sufi tradition up to the Safavid era. The second volume covered pre-Islamic Iranian dynasties based on the *Shahname* and classical Arabic and Persian histories, and continued in part two with the Iranian dynasties of the Islamic era down to the Qajars, with a final section devoted to the reign of Fath-Ali Shah, the author's patron. The epilogue covered the literary and cultural history of the contemporary period. In the section on the Islamic period, Tabrizi includes sixteen dynasties starting with the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates,

25 For the representation of mytho-historical ties to ancient Iran in the Qajar crown, see A. Amanat, "The Kayanid crown and Qajar reclaiming of royal authority," ed. Layla S. Diba, *Iranian Studies*, special issue on Qajar Art and Society, 34 (2001), pp. 17–31.

and continuing with the Samanids and Buyids, Ismailis, Saljuqs, Atabegates, Khʷârazmshâhs, Mongols and Il-Khans, Timurids, Turkmen dynasties, Safavids, Afshars, Zands and finally the Qajars, covering in the latter section the conflicts with Turkmen and the Uzbek khanates of Central Asia.

The significance of the *Zinat-al-tavârikh,* needless to say, was not in its originality and use of new sources. For centuries, and as late as the Afshar and Zand periods, such universal histories were often compiled with royal patronage. What singles out this history, however, was that it helped to perpetuate a time-honored historiographical tradition. For more than a millennium, Persian historians threaded dynastic accounts into a linear narrative connecting the Pishdadid and Kayanid legends of the *Shahname* to the contemporary dynasties, often regardless of the rulers' ethnicity and creed. The *Zinat-al-tavârikh* thus may be seen as the latest example, and the first in the Qajar era, of such histories serving as indigenous prototypes for a national history long before Iranians learn of Western ideologies.[26]

2. Towards Greater National Awareness

From the late 1820s onwards, after final defeat in the war with Russia, there was a decline in the production of court chronicles, whether dynastic or general histories, a reflection perhaps of the gloomy mood of the time. The death of Abbâs Mirzâ in 1833, followed by the demise of his father a year later, further reduced generous royal patronage. As a result, the old style historical production suffered significantly under Fath-Ali Shah's grandson and successor, the unassuming Mohammad Shah (1834–48) and his eccentric Sufi minister and spiritual guide, Hâjji Mirzâ Âqâsi. The long

26 See Storey, *Persian Literaure* I, p. 147 and Monzavi, *Fehrest* VI, pp. 4175–76, who identifies twelve manuscript copies of this unpublished history; an indication of its limited readership. For other examples of Persian universal histories produced in Iran, India and Central Asia from the last quarter of the 18th to the end of the 19th century see Storey, I, pp. 141–55.

shadow of military threats and diplomatic pressure from imperial neighbors, Russia after the implementation of the Turkmanchây Treaty of 1828, and Britain during the first Herat crisis of 1837–38, left little room for the articulation of royal grandeur. Domestic setbacks further added to the gloom. The Turkmen incursions in the northeast, numerous urban uprisings in the provinces, wars of succession, the state's near insolvency, and the beginning of the Bâbi messianic revolt were but few examples. The paucity of court chronicles and grand historical narratives, moreover, was due to Âqâsi's policy of systematic emasculation of the Qajar nobility, a natural constituency for old school histories.

The *Shams-al-tavârikh* ('Sun of histories') by Abd-al-Wahhâb Chahârmahâli Esfahâni, a general history compiled in the name of Mohammad Shah, thus was a rare example. It is a rendering of the above-mentioned *Zinat-al-tavârikh*, with a similar chronological lineage and predictable format. That only two copies of this work are extant—an indication of its limited circulation.[27] More telling of the shift in the political culture of Mohammad Shah's court is the incomplete *Shamâ'el-e khâqân* (Profile of the emperor), a royal biography written by Mirzâ Abu'l-Qâsem Farâhâni Qâ'em-mâqâm II, the ill-fated chief minster and a major literary figure of the early Qajar period. It was designed to present the ruler and his Qajar ancestry in the image of his predecessor, Fath-Ali Shah. Qâ'em-maqâm's work was never finished, for he was strangled in secret in 1835, ironically by the order of the same ruler whom he intended to glorify.

After a long and ornate prologue with a mystical undertone, Qâ'em-maqâm offers an elaborate outline which meant to cover Mohammad Shah's conquests, diplomatic relations, his personality, and his "extraordinary fits," as well as biographies of personalities of his time: princes, chiefs, ministers, literary figures and religious leaders. Yet the prime purpose of this work (at least the extant portion) was the familiar task of locating the Qajar dynasty in the religio-mythical memory of the Iranian past, a formidable feat given that the Qajar Turks could only be identified with the Turanians,

27 Monzavi, *Fehrest* VI, pp. 4179–80, and Storey, *Persian Literature* I, p. 150.

the ultimate non-Iranian (*anirân*) enemies in the *Shahname*. To do so, Qâ'em-maqâm traces back the Turkic ancestors of the Qajars to the Biblical Japheth son of Noah, hence seeking a parallel chronology to the history of the Pishdadid kings of the *Shahname*, though without mentioning the Turanian association. Nor does he express any ethnic bias against the Turkic tribal element, since most of the details concerning the historical Turko-Mongolian tribes and their entry into the Iranian world were taken from Rashid-al-Din's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* and followed its racially detached approach. The chief minister's devotion to the genre of historiography follows the long-established task of the secretarial class (*ahl-e divân*) to find a coherent place for the ruling dynasty in the Iranian historical narrative.[28]

A different approach from beyond the circle of high officials may be observed in the works of the Sufi geographer and traveler, Hâjj Zeyn-al-Âbedin Shirvâni, a Ne'mat-Allâhi Sufi leader of some fame, and author of three geographical encyclopedic works produced between the 1820s and 1840s. Rooted in the Sufi tradition of travel—the 'tour of the horizons and souls' (*siyar-e âfâq va anfos*)—these works, presenting a fresh departure for the historical geography of Iran and the neighboring lands. They provided a systematic coverage of the geography of various regions, towns and villages visited by the author and with useful historical data, dynastic and literary history and biographical details. They demonstrate a fresh interest in Iranian provinces and its neighboring

28 Mirzâ Abu'l-Qâsem Qâ'em-maqâm, *Monshâ'ât-e Qâ'em-maqâm,* ed. Farhâd Mirzâ with intro. by Mahmud Khan Malek-al-sho'arâ (Tehran, 1863), pp. 378–450. Farhâd Mirzâ, who found a ms. copy in the library of his brother Tahmâsb Mirzâ Mo'ayyed-al-Dowle, identified it as a single work. The editors of two later editions, J. Qâ'em-maqâmi (Tehran, 1958) and B. Yaghmâ'i (Tehran, 1994), also treat it as such. It is, however, possible that the published version consisted of two independent works: the *Resâle-ye shamâ'el-e khâqân* on Mohammad Shah's life, which never passed the prologue, and another treatise on the origins of the Qajar tribe. J. Qâ'em-maqâmi (*Monshâ'ât*, 31, no.1) states that he has found another manuscript of the *Resâla* in the Meshkât collection in Tehran University library. A collection of essays on the celebrated minister (*Qâ'em-maqâm-nâme*, ed. R. Daryâgasht [Tehran, 1998]) makes no reference to Qâ'em-maqâm's historical work.

lands rather than chronicling the deeds of the central authority and the associated elites.

In the first of these works, *Riyâz-al-siyâhe* ('Meadows of traveling'), written in 1822, itself the first part of a much larger work that meant to cover the Islamic heartlands from Egypt to India (presumably lost), Shirvâni locates Iran both within the seven climes and within the division of the world into three kingdoms (as in the story of the Faridun in the *Shahname*). The division of pre-Islamic and Islamic chronology then begins with the Pishdadids and Kayanids and is followed by the Ashkhanids (Parthians) and Sasanids, who are discussed at some length within their appropriate provinces. Similarly, the history of Islamic Iran is discussed throughout his work, beginning with the rise of Islam and the caliphate and continuing with the Mongols, Timurids, Turkmen dynasties, the Safavids and the post Safavid dynasties up to the Qajar era. He concludes his introduction by stating:

> Let it be known that felicitous princes and proud kings ruled over the country of Iran (*keshvar-e Irân)* from the time of the Persian kings (*moluk-e ajam*) to the rise of the Qajar state.... In short, the land of Iran, which was always home to kings of Jamshid-like glory and khans of Faridun-like splendor, was praised by the Imams of [our] faith and the trusted ulama and it was always adorned by the presence of great mystics, noble philosophers, and great men of learning.[29]

The proto-nationalist sentiments evident in Shirvâni's works, a refreshing contrast to the Shi'i ulama's general detachment from the Persian past and the Iranian land, accompanied a sense of toleration for peoples and cultures within and outside Iran; a homage no doubt to the Sufi heritage of religious latitude (*vos'at-e mashrab*).

That Shirvâni gives primacy to geography and ties it up with Iran's dynastic and cultural history over a long stretch of time denotes a notable shift. No longer is the dynastic history the sole organizing principle behind Iran's narrative, but it is the permanency of the land over which they ruled and shared experiences with

29 Zeyn-al-Âbedin Shirvâni, *Riyâz-al-siyâhe,* ed. A. Hâmed 'Rabbani' (Tehran, 1960), pp. 24–25.

prophets and saints, mystics, poets, men of religion, and occasionally even the ordinary people from diverse ethnic and linguistic origins. There are considerable passages not only on Zarathustra and his religion, but also on two other Iranian prophets: the 6th-century Mazdak and the 9th-century Bâbak Khorramdin, often treated in official historiography as heretics. Their accounts in part rely on classical chronicles such as Mirkhʷând's *Rowzat-al-safâ*, as well as on works such as the 18th-century *Dabestân-e madhâheb*, some late Zoroastrian literature and Shirvâni's own inquiries from the Parsis of India and Zoroastrian communities of Iran.[30]

A more conscious historiography of Iran as a country rather than a kingdom had to wait at least another half a century. Yet even the familiar chronicling of the events of the period began to evolve after 1840s into a more coherent narrative with emphasis on the actual course of events. Jahângir Mirzâ Qâjâr's 'new' history, *Târikh-e now* (also known as *Târikh-e Jahângiri*), completed in 1851, contrasted with the floral style of Donboli's *Ma'âther-e soltâniyye* to which it provided an addendum (*dheyl*).[31] Written during the early years of Nâser-al-Din Shah (r. 1848–96) and the premiership of his celebrated minister, Mirzâ Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, *Târikh-e now* viewed the past from the perspective of an accomplished prince of royal blood—son of Abbâs Mirzâ and a brother to Mohammad Shah—who himself suffered during the 1835 war of succession, when he was blinded on a charge of treason but later rehabilitated under Amir Kabir. His narrative therefore was in some ways the story of a victim of a power struggle, which he retold with some sincerity.

Jahângir's account of the period between 1824 and 1850 thus was a notable development. Covering the consequences of war

30 For outline of *Riyâz-al-siyâhe*, see ibid., pp. 9–18 and the Table of Contents, pp. 887–900. None of Shirvâni's works was published in his own time. The print culture in Qajar Iran remained underdeveloped up to the end of the century, making such works only accessible to élite circles. The earliest printed edition of his *Bustân-al-siyâhe*, a work of encyclopedic format and breadth, first appeared in 1897 (ed. A. Mostowfi, Tehran). *Hadâ'eq-al-siyâhe* was published in Tehran in 1970.

31 Ed. A. Eqbâl (Tehran, 1948).

with Russia, the troubles of Âqâsi's premiership and the civil disturbances of that period, the early career of Amir Kabir, and one of the earliest accounts of the rise of the Bâbi movement, he relied on his own recollections and utilized a range of oral and written accounts. Starting with a succinct analysis of the causes of the second round of war with Russia, with an unusual candor for a Qajar prince, he defends his father's cautious conduct toward Russia while criticizing the bellicose khans of the Caucasian frontiers, the devious officials of Fath-Ali Shah's court, and the easily-excitable senior ulama who endorsed the renewed hostilities with the mighty northern neighbor.

Writing just after the death of Mohammad Shah, Jahângir Mirzâ is critical of Qâ'em-maqâm's shortsighted policies during his premiership (and of his cruelty). He is also unsympathetic toward Hâjji Mirzâ Âqâsi and his term of office, accusing him of manipulating the Shah like "a corpse in the hand of a washer" and for bringing chaos to the affairs of government. Evidently siding with the young ruler Nâser-al-Din and his chief minister Amir Kabir, on the question of the Bâbis he adamantly calls for a speedy end to the growing heresy. He is writing at a time when government forces were in the midst of fighting the Bâbi resistance in Mazandaran and later in Zanjan. That his account ends in late 1850, coinciding with the downfall of Amir Kabir, may not be entirely fortuitous. Though never explicit, Amir Kabir may have been the patron who commissioned Jahângir Mirzâ's history, presumably to contrast the chaos of the Âqâsi era with the new order under his premiership. It may have been, on the other hand, a cautionary move to refrain from commenting on the premiership of his contemporary, Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Nuri.[32]

32 Ibid., pp. 297–303, 343–44. Evidence of his geographical interest is that while in exile in Malâyer, he translated the well-known geographical work *Âthâr-al-belâd* by Zakariyâ Qazvini from Arabic into Persian (ibid., Eqbâl's intro., p. *dâl*).

3. The Publication of State-Sponsored Histories

The early years of Nâser-al-Din Shah's reign, especially after 1851, witnessed the publication of chronicles under the royal aegis, but with agendas and strategies somewhat different from the old chronicles or from histories akin to Jahângir Mirzâ's. Regular publication of the government gazette, *Ruznâme-ye vaqâye'-e ettefâqiyye*, which first appeared in 1851, essentially supplanted court chronicles in their most basic function as annals of state events. Yet the chronicles' wider purpose of legitimizing the throne and locating Qajar rule on the broader canvas of Iranian historical memory remained unchanged. The growth of the lithographic press, a cheaper method than typesetting and easier to produce, also opened the door to new possibilities for the historians and their patrons.

The most significant among these chronicles were *Rowzat-al-safâ-ye Nâseri* by the literary scholar and royal tutor, Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat, and *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye* by the court official and poet Mohammad-Taqi Sepehr Kâshâni Lesân-al-Molk. Both chroniclers followed the conventional annalistic format, beginning each year with a set piece on the celebration of Nowruz, followed by reports of royal campaigns, frontier skirmishes and civil unrest, diplomatic exchanges and treaties, a register of royal and official births and deaths, as well as popular uprisings, heresies, natural calamities and oddities.[33] Occasionally they included background sections to important geographical locations, foreign lands, religious upheavals, regional insurrections, and noted personalities. Both histories relied on earlier chronicles, at times to the point of plagiarizing them. For near contemporary and contemporary events, roughly from the late Fath-Ali Shah era onwards, they used eyewitness accounts, official correspondence and reports, as well as their own recollections.

33 In addition to the Persian solar festival that commenced the annual royal calendar, all time keeping was in the Islamic lunar calendar, even though both chronicles also observed the Sino-Turkish twelve-year cyclical animal calendar customary at the Qajar court.

Beyond sheer chronicling, the main thrust of both projects was to elevate Qajar rule to the level of the great dynasties of the past, especially Nâser-al-Din Shah's reign and the premiership of Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Nuri, in the wake of Amir Kabir's downfall and secret execution. Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat's *Rowzat-al-safâ-ye Nâseri* was indeed a 'Nâserian' supplement in three volumes to Mirkh^{w}ând's popular universal history, which, on the familiar model of prophets and kings, covered from the dawn of creation and the beginning of Persian kingship to the late Timurid period. In the first of the three supplemental volumes (volume eight) Hedâyat covered the Safavid, Afshâr and Zand periods. The second, volume nine, covered the origins of the Qajars and their rise to power up to 1831, corresponding to the birth of Nâser-al-Din Shah, and the third, volume ten, came up to 1857. All ten volumes, edited by Hedâyat himself, appeared in an excellent lithographic edition between 1853 and 1857.[34]

Hedâyat's portrayal of the Qajar shahs, Fath-Ali Shah in particular, as legitimate successors to Safavid rule and true supporters of the Shi'i faith, highlighted not only his valor and statesmanship but religiosity and ties to the clerical establishment: values the author hoped to detect in his own patron, Nâser-al-Din Shah. Beyond factual narrative, Hedâyat's account was almost entirely devoid of substantive analysis, a characteristic he shared with Sepehr and other chroniclers of the period. Mirzâ Fath-Ali Akhundzâde's humorous critique of *Rowzat-al-safâ-ye Nâseri*, written in the format of a conversation between the author and his critic (perhaps the first modern book review in Persian), emphasized oddly enough Hedâyat's elaborate style and overuse of literary techniques, but not his world view and objectivity.[35]

In the epilogue to the last volume, completed in 1857, Hedâyat states that in compiling the additional volumes he followed the

34 In his Introduction to vol. 9 (p. 3), Hedâyat informs us of the print run of 1000 for each volume. Oddly enough this edition lacks page numbers. References here are to the most recent edition (Tehran, 1960).

35 Fath-Ali Akhundzâde, *Eserleri*, ed. H. Memmedzada (3 vols., Baku, 1958–62), I, pp. 378–92. See also F. Adamiyat, *Andishe-hâ-ye Mirzâ Fath-Ali Akhundzâde* (Tehran, 1970), pp. 238–46.

royal command and wrote economically while preserving the style and manner of Mirkh^{w}ând's original. Yet, he points out, the Shah's desire for the volumes to be completed precipitously to mark the first decade of his reign prevented him from personal attention to the publication of the final volume and especially correcting the proofs.[36] This disclaimer, however, did not prevent Hedâyat from extolling his royal patron, covering up his failings and glorifying his deeds (and deeds of the Qajar élite). His rushed production of the *Rowzat-al-safâ*'s supplemental volumes is also evident in his casual uses of the sources for the Safavid, Afshâr and the Zand periods. His partisan coverage of the events of his own time is also notable, for instance in the treatment of the Bâbi movement. In describing the "calamitous rise of the villainous rebels of the Bâbi sect," Hedâyat does not hesitate to shower abuse on the heretical Sayyid Ali-Mohammad the Bâb and his rebellious followers, or to describe with some relish the gruesome details of the Bâbi mass executions after the assassination attempt against Nâser-al-Din Shah in 1852. That he devotes thirteen entries to the rise of the movement and its confrontation with the Qajar state illustrates, nevertheless, the importance he had attached to the messianic movement and its threat to the religious establishment and the Qajar state, of which he was a part.[37]

Hedâyat's defense of the Qajars, however, did not entirely prevent him from recording, at least in passing, glaring cruelties committed earlier in the history of the dynasty. He prefaces his account of Âqâ-Mohammad Khan Qâjâr's conquest of Kerman in 1793, by saying:

36 Hedâyat, *Rowzat* X, pp. 819–20. He goes on to say that he did not comply with the elaborate literary techniques of official chronicles—such as the one composed by Mirzâ Ebrahim Badâye'-negâr Râzi—and since he was pressed for time he employed a number of calligraphers to prepare the final draft for the lithographic press; a fact that, he confesses apologetically, had induced numerous errors to creep into the text. His duties as managing director of the Dâr-al-fonun added to his burden.

37 For entries on the Bâbis see the index and E.G. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bâb* (Cambridge, 1891), pp. 188–92.

> While recording the events [of the past], if the vigilant historian (*târikh-negâr-e dânâ*) does not search for the truth and [instead] conceals the realities of the land, what then is the difference between his history and the imaginary [legends] of *Romuz-e Hamza* (Mysteries of Hamza) and *Eskandar-nâme* (Book of Alexander)? In describing the lands and expounding their related [historical] issues, therefore, one must at least offer a summary of the facts, but also refer to earlier books (i.e. to the sources) for more extensive details, so that history will not be devoid of realities that are conducive to reason.[38]

Wrapped in abstruse language, Hedâyat then describes the Qajar attack on the city as

> renewing Chengis's massacre (*qatl-e âmm-e Changiz*) and reviving the killing practices of Hulagu; as if the city of Kerman was the province of Khorasan attacked by the Mongols and the Tartars or if it was the Baghdad of the (Caliph) Mosta'sem razed to the ground by Hulagu's armies.[39]

Such moments of truth, probably aroused by his concealed sympathies for his slain Ne'mat-Allâhi cohorts among the Sufis of Kerman, were nevertheless rare.

Among Hedâyat's other scholarly works at least three are noteworthy from a historiographical viewpoint. His outline of Iranian history entitled *Fehres-al-tavârikh*, produced in 1851, appears to be the first textbook in the Qajar era probably intended for the newly-established *Dâr-al-fonun* (Technical College). The year by year list from the rise of Islam to the present—and with greater emphasis on the post-Safavid history—was intended to record

> the events of religion, state, land and people (*molk va mellat*) of the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Deylams, Romans and the Indians and others … so that the history of all who ruled together with their contemporary princes, learned men (*dâneshmandân*), and poets are recorded.

Being a disciple of the aforementioned Zeyn-al-Âbedin Shirvâni, one can detect a certain continuity in the depiction of an inclusive

38 Hedâyat, *Rowzat-al-safâ* IX, p. 254.
39 Ibid., p. 258.

cultural history of the world beyond Iran along with dynastic chronology.[40]

Much as Hedâyat's *Rowzat-al-safâ* aimed to place the Qajar dynasty at the pinnacle of a chronological line that went back to ancient Persian kingship, Hedâyat's other major work, *Majma'-al-fosahâ* ('Conference of the eloquent'), attempts to graft the literary production of the Qajar era onto the Persian poetic tradition of more than a millennium.[41] Completed in 1867, the *Majma'* is the last and the most comprehensive *tadhkera* in the long tradition of Persian biographical dictionaries, covering hundreds of poets and literary figures. Divided into four parts, it gave prominence to the poetry of the rulers and the aristocracy, followed by the poets of the classical period up to 1500, poets of the middle period up to the rise of the Qajar dynasty, and Qajar contemporaries. Initially commissioned by Mohammad Shah and later re-commissioned by Nâser-al-Din Shah, the *Majma'* meant to demonstrate the literary revival of the author's own time in the style of the classical Khorasan poets of the 10th and 11th centuries and away from the 'decadence' of the so called 'Indian' style of the Safavid era. Suffering from the typical inaccuracies and distortions characteristic of Hedâyat's *Rowzat-al-safâ* and his other works, the *Majma'* nonetheless reaffirmed the continuity of Iran's literary tradition while underscoring pride in the Qajar cultural renewal and especially the much-revered art of poetry. Like *Rowzat-al-safâ,* too, its publication was a step forward in enriching the Qajar print culture and forging a sense of Persian collective identity beyond the state. That Hedâyat set up the *Dâr-al-hedâya* (House of guidance), a private publishing house in Tehran, in order to make available his own works and works of others in history and literature, highlights the

40 *Fehres-al-tavârikh* is partly published (Tabriz, 1863). See Monzavi, *Fehrest* VI, pp. 4184–85 and Storey, *Persian* I (pt. 1), p. 342. His biographies of Shirvâni and another of his Sufi masters, Mollâ Mohammad-Rezâ Kowthar-Ali Shâh Hamadâni, appears as *Dalil-al-Tâlebin fi dhekr-al-ârefin dar ahvâl-e hâjj Zeyn-al-Âbedin Shirvâni va Kowthar-Ali Shâh,* and remains unpublished. See also Paul E. Losensky, *EIr,* s.v., Hedayat, Rezaqoli Khan.

41 Hedâyat, *Majma'* (2 vols., Tehran, 1878; 2nd ed., Mazâher Musaffâ, 6 vols., Tehran, 1957–61).

importance the Qajar literati placed in publication as early as the mid-19th century.

In his introduction to the *Majma'*, Hedâyat indeed traces back the origin of Persian metrical verse (*sokhan-e mowzun*) to Hushang, the second of the Pishdadid kings, and links poetry to Zoroastrian sacred text of *Avesta* and to the *Dasâter* (about the latter he learned through *Dabestân-e madhâheb*). He further laments the loss of the ancient Persian literary corpus after the repressive Arab conquest. "How could it be possible," Hedâyat asks rhetorically,

> that the Arabs could produce metrical verse in their own language but the Persians could not? It is clear that the ancient poetry of Persians has been lost because of the Arab conquest and it is a well known fact that the Arabs burnt all the books and histories of the Persians.

To restate his case, Hedâyat then cites an Arab governor of Khorasan, Abd-Allâh b. Tâher, who upon receiving as a gift a Sasanid poetic work expressed his contempt for ancient Persian language and literature. "We people (only) read the Qor'an," Tâher reportedly said, "and these are Zoroastrian books and of no use to us. We ought not to read any books but the Qor'an." He then ordered the burning of the Persian books and, as Hedâyat reports, Tâher's "ignorant agents" enforced his order. Thus

> they wiped out the ancient texts except for a few that remained hidden. And since the people were strictly forbidden [to own them], the tradition of (ancient) Persian language and poetry was abandoned.[42]

The revival nevertheless came soon, Hedâyat affirms, when from the first Persian poem composed for the Abbasid Caliph Ma'mun, for over eleven hundred years Persian poetry thrived, as witnessed by the long list of the *tadhkere*s that he cites as sources and the thirty years that he has been engaged in producing his encyclopedic dictionary.[43] As a product of the Zand school of poetry, where the Qajar literary revival first took shape, Hedâyat takes pride in the poets and literary figures of his country in the same fashion

42 Ibid., 2nd ed., Introduction, pp. *shesh-haft.*
43 Ibid., pp. *haft-panzdah.*

that his Sufi teacher, Shirvâni, praised Iran for its long cultural heritage.[44] Such awareness no doubt displayed the endurance of Persian endogenous nationalism in a familiar format.

Royal patronage also produced *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh* ('Abrogation of [all] histories'), perhaps the most popular work of history in the Qajar period. Authored by Sepehr Kâshâni and published in *Dâr-al-hedâye*, it was initially commissioned by Mohammad Shah's minister, Hâjji Mirzâ Âqâsi, as an innovative universal history to be produced in several volumes. The first volume presented an encyclopedic survey of world geography, cultures and religions, in addition to the history of ancient kings of Iran and the Biblical prophets. After completing the first volume, however, Sepehr was commissioned by the young Nâser-al-Din Shah—and possibly with the approval of Amir Kabir and later of Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Nuri—to produce a new history of the Qajar dynasty. Commemorating the anniversary of the first decade of Nâser-al-Din Shah's rule, the *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye,* as it was entitled, like the *Rowzat-al-safâ-ye Nâseri*, served as the official history of the Qajar period, covering events from the outset of the dynasty to 1857.[45] Even though Sepehr's *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye* is at times called *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh,* it is to all intents and purposes an independent work. The confusion may in part have to do with the author's own mixing of the titles in order to present some coherence between the two projects.

The Shah further instructed Sepehr to compose a history that "cannot be matched by histories in any other era" and to implement the "craft of history" (*fann-e târikh*) through "proper research" and "critical" compilation; a concern no doubt motivated by the Shah's own interest in history and the inadequacies he must have

44 The *Majma'* indeed should be seen as a continuation of an earlier work by Hedâyat, *Riyâz-al-ârefin, tadhkerat-al-mohaqqeqin* ('Meadow of the mystics, biography of the scholars'); a biographical dictionary of mostly mystic poets (Tehran, 1887). This was inspired by *Riyâz-al-siyâhe* and other works of his teacher, Shirvâni. Hedâyat's lexicographical work, *Farhang-e anjoman-ârâ-ye Nâseri* (ed. Abd-Allâh Monshi, Tehran, 1871), likewise confirms his cultural pride in Persian heritage.

45 Mohammad-Taqi Kâshâni Lesân-al-Molk Sepehr, *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye* (*Nâsekh-al-tavârikh*) (Tehran, 1857–59; 4th ed., 2 vols., ed. J. Kiyânfar, Tehran, 1998), p. 2.

felt in comparing the Persian historiography of his own time with earlier Persian works of history, and more likely also with modern European historical works.[46]

The first two volumes of *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye*, dealing with the pre-Nâseri period, relied on the existing compilations, but the third volume, covering Nâser-al-Din's reign, utilized state records, contemporary sources, and eyewitness accounts. Sepehr's coverage of the tumultuous events of the 1840s and 50s, including diplomatic discords; the Qajar tribe's internecine conflict culminating in the Sâlâr revolt; tribal uprisings and urban riots in the provinces; the inner politics of the court, leading to rise and fall of ministers; and the rise of the Bâbi movement, including the Bâb's interrogation, his chief disciples, and the state's military operations against the Bâbi resistance, are among the most valuable sources of the period. Yet, like *Rowzat-al-safâ*, Sepehr's history, written from the vantage point of the state, served a propaganda purpose all the more effective for its wide readership. The predictable pro-Qajar partisanship and calculated distortions were designed not only to smear the oppositional forces to the state, such as the Bâbis—who were depicted as dangerous heretics—but to demonstrate, especially to the ulama, the indispensability of the Qajar state in sustaining the social order.[47]

Likewise, Sepher's accounts of Amir Kabir and his fate suffered some distortion. Amir Kabir's political career and conduct in office is undervalued, often in favor of Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Nuri. Yet he must still have remained to some extent faithful to an accurate appraisal of the events in holding the Shah and Nuri responsible for Amir Kabir's removal from office and secret murder. To cover up the embarrassing revelation the Shah, therefore, even after Nuri's dismissal in 1858, ordered all printed copies of *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye* to be withdrawn and the section beyond 1851 physically removed. In the "revised" version that came out as a supplement, covering 1852–57 (ending just before Nuri's dismissal), Sepehr was obliged to make Amir Kabir's

46 Ibid., ed. Kiyânfar, p. 2. For Nâser-al-Din's early interest in history see Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, pp. 58–77.

47 Sepehr's coverage became a source for numerous later accounts, both in Persian and European, including Grant Watson's *A History of Persia* and Comte de Gobineau's *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*.

death appear as the result of medical complication.[48] Despite the emphasis on proper research and a critical approach, in dealing with other events of the period Sepehr predictably rendered a pro-Qajar view uncritical of his royal masters. Like Hedâyat, he adopted just the right grandiose tone: an exercise primarily designed to disguise the Qajar state's loss of territory, and credit in the eyes of its subjects, and in dealing with the neighboring imperial powers.

After the completion of *Târikh-e Qâjâriyye,* Sepehr resumed his initial project, an ambitious universal history that took the remaining years of his life but was never completed. The multi-volume *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh,* beyond the history of pre-Islamic era, chiefly intended to substantiate the Shi'i claim to sacred authority in early Islamic history. Without entirely ignoring the Sunni sources, it tried to offer a highbrow alternative to popular Shi'i mourning narratives (*marâthi*) prevalent in Iran since late Timurid period. Loyal to the traditional approach of its classical sources, such as Tabari's *T'arikh-al-rosol wa'l-moluk* and Ebn-Athir's *al-Kâmel*, the three books (in ten volumes) of *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh*, published between 1856 and 1889, covered from Adam's Fall to the birth of Jesus and thence to the Hejra of Mohammad and the martyrdom of the third Shi'i Imam, Hoseyn b. Ali in 680. Sepehr's accessible style and systematic coverage made these volumes one of the most frequently published and widely read in Qajar Iran. The later volumes on the lives of fourth, fifth and sixth Shi'i Imams were written and published by his son Abbâs-Qoli Khan Sepehr. That Sepehr embarked on such a massive enterprise demonstrates that in the middle decades of the 19th century, Shi'i interpretation of history was a crucial ingredient of the Iranian identity. Yet the large readership in Sepehr's time and later may also suggest the need for a more dispassionate and objective approach to early Islamic history, contrasting with the highly emotional portrayal of martyrdom presented in the *ta'ziye* and other visual and oral mourning rituals.

The coverage of early Islamic caliphate, from the death of the Prophet to the end of Othmân's era (632–56), is a case in point. Relying on an impressive array of early sources and with some pro-

48 Sepehr, *Târikh,* ed. Kiyânfar, I, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.

clivity to source criticism, Sepehr's systematic and well-constructed account is largely free from the contentious anti-Caliphate Shi'i biases. The two major concerns in this part are the legitimacy of Ali's claim to succession of the Prophet and the Arab conquest of the Sasanid Empire. While Sepehr allows ample space to both these themes, his true interest remains with the question of Ali's legitimacy, his moral authority and the circumstances leading to his unjust exclusion at every turn in favor of the first three Rightly-Guided caliphs. On the other hand, despite discussing at length the circumstances leading to the defeat of the Iranian armies and the collapse of the Sasanid Empire, Sepehr does not display any sense of moral attachment to the ancient empire, or sorrow for the detrimental impact of the Arab invasion.[49]

Nâser-al-Din Shah's patronage and his lifetime interest in studying history and geography were essential for the production of these works though they did not encourage a school of historiography devoted to objectivity and methodological integrity. Yet there were occasional surprises, for example Mohammad-Ja'far Khurmuji's *Haqâyeq-al-akhbâr-e Nâseri*, completed in 1867.[50] Commissioned by the Shah to produce a concise history of the period, Khurmuji presented a realistic picture of Amir Kabir's term of office, including the circumstances leading to his execution by the order of the Shah and even hinting at a conspiracy by the courtiers. Moreover, he gave a balanced treatment of the premiership of Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Nuri, even after he was dismissed and sent to exile. Though this last example of the chronicles of the early Nâseri period seems to have received the Shah's initial approval, it was soon removed from circulation and Khurmuji himself was forced to seek exile in Iraq. His intellectual audacity, being the first to portray Amir Kabir in a more positive light, taught others the high cost of preserving historical integrity. Yet the open secret of Amir Kabir's execution soon became part of the anti-Qajar narrative of the late Nâseri period and beyond.

49 Lesân-al-molk Sepehr, *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh,* vol. 2, pt 2: *Târikh-e kholafâ*, (Tehran, 1863).

50 Mohammad-Ja'far Khormuji, *Haqâyeq-al-akhbâr-e Nâseri* (Tehran, 1867; 2nd ed., H. Khadiv-Jam, Tehran, 1965).

4. The Decline of Chronicles and New Approaches to History

Lithographic publication of the *Rowzat-al-safâ* and *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh* helped enhance the image of the Qajar dynasty and place it in a broader context of Perso-Shi'i history. Yet they cultivated few historiographical innovations. Sepehr's style, reminiscent of early Persian histories such as *Târikh-e Bal'ami* and *Târikh-e Beyhaqi*, avoided the ornate diction of earlier chroniclers. Despite the relative success of these grand projects, however, the production of the official chronicles declined in the following decades, as they were replaced by the state official gazette and by annual government almanacs published by the Ministry of Publication (Vezârat-e Entebâ'ât). Chronicling court and government events as well as provincial and international news thus brought about a crisis of a sort in Qajar historiography that may explain at least in part the dearth of serious historical studies.

By the third quarter of the 19th century, such works as *Montazam-e Nâseri* compiled by Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane were little more than a revamping of the official gazettes.[51] As the official historian of the Qajar court, as well as being the minister of publication, the newsreader to Nâser-al-Din Shah, and his confidant, the author of the *Montazam* was bound to follow the familiar format of annals, but with equal attention to the events of the outside world. Every year, in a parallel chronology, the domestic and international events were placed side by side, beginning with the dawn of Islam, becoming more elaborate toward contemporary times, and ending in 1882.

Throughout, European and American political history received some attention in the *Montazam*, even though they were blended with entries on mundane curiosities evidently taken from European tabloids. Domestic affairs were reduced to the most facile if not trivial, to include royal trips and excursions, state appointments

51 Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Montazam-e Nâseri* (3 vols., Tehran, 1880–82; 2nd ed. M.I. Rezvâni, 3 vols., Tehran, 1984–88). For further details see A. Amanat, *EIr.* s.v. E'temād-al-Salṭana.

and administrative reorganizations. The author's hurried brevity added to the tedium of his work, of which he may not have been the sole author. Compared even with earlier chronicles, the *Montazam* registered a new low point, even though in presenting a pro-Qajar façade it matched its predecessors. One redeeming aspect, however, was the inclusion of contemporary Iranian history under the rubric of the Asian continent, in the broader vista of world history at a time when the Western world—and imperial Europe in particular—posed an image of imperial power, colonial domination, and technological advancement. In the minds of the *Montazam's* readers, if not explicitly on its pages, such an image stood in sharp contrast to the Iranian's inherent ethnocentricity, and may conceivably have contributed in due course to perceptions of decline in the reform literature and in the historiography of the following decades.

Even though up to the end of the Qajar period annalistic histories were not entirely extinct, they no longer served their official purpose as the institutional memory. Yet by the same token, they hardly ever developed a coherent historical idea, around which an historical process could be demonstrated. The *Montakhab-al-tavârikh-e Mozaffari* by Ebrâhim Khan Sadiq-al-Mamâlek Sheybâni was a late example covering from the legendary Pishdadid kings of the *Shahname* up the end of Mozaffar-al-Din Shah. Of little historical value for the events before 1896, Sheybâni's history was published after the death of its royal patron and during testing days when the very existence of the Qajar dynasty was in question.[52] Mahdi-Qoli Khan Hedâyat's *Gozâresh-e Irân*, also covering Persian history from the rise of Islam to the present, was published just after the demise of the Qajar dynasty, eventually abandoning the old dynastic format of his own grandfather, Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat, in favor of a more critical, yet overtly succinct, format.[53]

52 Tehran, 1908. It was completed in 1905 but, as the author pointed out, could not be published for three years because of "some obstacles". Once published, even the dedication page at the end of the book was ambiguous and did not specify Mohammad-Ali Shah by name.

53 Mahdi-Qoli Mokber-al-Saltane Hedâyat, *Gozâresh-e Irân* (4 vols., Tehran, 1925).

E'temâd-al-Saltane also returned to the theme of the Qajar chronicles but in different contexts. In his *al-Ma'âther va'l-âthâr*, an almanac commemorating the history and achievements of four decades of Nâser-al-Din Shah's rule (1848–86), his royal patron is applauded among other achievements of the period for the "improvement in the science of history."[54] The author claimed that incorporating ancient and modern European accounts with numismatics and archeological evidence, and utilizing histories of other civilizations on a comparative basis, produced historical compilations (chief among them his own) that corrected past errors and mended the omissions of the traditional pre-Islamic histories, accounts that the author believed were tainted with exaggerations and superstitions.[55]

Written by a sophisticated court historian, such a remark may seem cynical given E'temâd-al-Saltane's almost confessional counter-narrative in his own secret memoirs, *Ruznâme-ye khâterât*, in defiance of the official historiography of the period.[56] Yet *al-Ma'âther* contained a wealth of details about the material and cultural history of the late 19th century, complemented with a valuable who's who of the Qajar cultural world, compiled by a group of scholars whose contributions remained unacknowledged. Distinct from earlier chronicles, here the authors viewed the achievements of four decades of Nâser-al-Din's reign not merely in relation to the wars and conquests of the ruler (and there were few of them), but in his patronage of a larger cultural élite and the advances in sciences, technology and institutions. Modest though it may seem, this is to be seen almost as raw material for the self-image of a modern national community.

Among historical projects under E'temâd-al-Saltane's supervision was *Sadr-al-tavârikh*, a history of eleven Qajar premiers written by Mohammad-Hoseyn Forughi and Gholâm-Hoseyn Adib,

54 Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane, *al-Ma'âther va'l-âthâr* (Tehran, 1888; 2nd ed. I. Afshâr as *Chehel sâl-e pâdeshâhi-ye Nâser-al-Din Shâh,* 3 vols., Tehran, 1984–88).

55 Ibid., 1st ed., p. 95.

56 Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Ruznâme-ye khâterât*, ed. I. Afshâr (Tehran, 1966).

which promoted the crucial service rendered by successive premiers to the Qajar throne.[57] The book's laudatory tone toward the *sadr-e a'zam* in office, Ali-Asghar Khan Amin-al-Soltân, is colored by E'temâd-al-Saltane's secret envy toward his perennial rival, which in turn may explain the overcritical assessment of this premier's career in a semi-fictional history, *Khalse mashhur be khʷâb-nâme*.[58] Presumably penned by E'temâd-al-Saltane in the old genre of 'dream-books,' it aimed to reveal the true achievements as well as abject failures of the Qajar premiers through a series of imaginary interrogations by great rulers of Iran's past.[59]

5. In Search of Ancient Iran

Throughout the second decade of the 19th century, a clearer narrative of Iranian historical identity began to emerge, emphasizing Iran's political continuity from ancient to modern times, and occasionally in a "pure" Persian style (*pârsi-ye sare*). An unpublished work of Hedâyat, *Nezhâd-nâme-ye pâdshâhân-e Irâni-nezhâd* ('A Genealogical account of the kings of Iranian descent'), written in 1860, is perhaps the earliest example. Reflecting a budding nationalist awareness, it was written at the behest of the influential Parsi representative Manekji Limji Hushang Hateria, whose patronage during his years of residence in Iran as the representative of the Parsi community of India generated a number of valuable works on history and geography. In the introduction Hedâyat notes:

> A friend persuaded me to write something fresh in order to answer (the question) whether, when the time of the Iranian kings (of the pre-Islamic period) came to an end, anyone from their progeny and race again ascended to kingship and the throne.

57 Ed. M. Moshiri (Tehran, 1970).
58 Ed. M. Ketirâ'i (Tehran, 1969).
59 For further details on his historical works see A. Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. E'temād-al-Salṭana.

Dividing the rulers of pre-Islamic Iran into five and rulers of Islamic Iran into eighteen dynasties, the author's aim, perhaps at Manekji's urging, is to demonstrate the "beneficial deeds" (*kârhâ-ye sudmand*) of these rulers rather than, we may assume, listing their wars and conquests. What distinguished this work, moreover, was Hedâyat's use of a 'pure' Persian style devoid of words of Arabic origin. Influenced perhaps by the neo-Zoroastrian literature of earlier centuries (and perhaps by the contemporary poet Yaghmâ Jandaqi), Hedâyat was the first to use pure Persian in the writing of history and was a model for later proto-nationalists dabbling in history.[60]

Not long after, a general history of Iran by the Qajar prince Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ (d. 1872) marked a new departure in the proto-nationalist historiography. *Nâme-ye khosrovân* (Book of the Khosrows, i.e. Sasanid kings) was the first history textbook published in Persian for elementary level students of the Dâr-al-fonun, as the author indicated.[61] Written in a simple Persian purged of Arabic words, it was published in clear *nast'aliq* with many illustrations of the ancient Persian kings, presumably inspired by European publications of Sasanid (and Parthian) numismatics. Tracing Persian dynastic history from the time of the Iranian original man, it continued with the fictional Mahabadids and afterwards with the legendary dynasties of the *Shahname* and beyond through the Sasanid period to early Islamic dynasties of Iran and further to the Safavid and post-Safavid era (though only the first two volumes were published by the author himself).[62]

Jalâl-al-Din's sources included the 17th-century neo-Zoroastrian (Âzar-Kayâni) mythologized histories, such as the famous *Dasâter-e âsemâni*, compiled and edited by the Zoroastrian Parsi Mollâ Firuz

60 See Storey, *Persian Literature* I, pt. 1, p. 239 and Monzavi, *Fehrest* VI, pp. 4395–96. See below for later use of pure Persian by Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ, Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni (and in the 20th century by Ahmad Kasravi).

61 Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ Qâjâr, *Nâme-ye khosravân*, vol. I (Tehran, 1868 and Vienna, 1879); vol. II (Tehran, 1870) and vol. III (Tehran, 1871).

62 For full discussion of Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ and his history see Abbas Amanat, "Pur-e khâqân va andishe-ye bâzyâbi-ye târikh-e melli-ye Irân," *Iran Nameh* 17 (1999), pp. 5–54 and A. Amanat and F. Vejdani, *EIr*, s.v. Jalāl-al-Din Mirza.

ebn Mollâ Kâvus,[63] Bahrâm ebn Farhâd's *Sharestân-e chahâr-chaman*,[64] and the widely-circulated *Dabestân-e madhâheb,* a Perso-Indian work on the history of religions and creeds written in the late Mughal era, as well as Ferdowsi's *Shahname,* Persian universal histories, and to a lesser extent modern Western studies on the Parthian and Sasanid periods.

Yet clearly the author's objective is to offer a succinct dynastic history of Iran, starting with the glories of the pre-Islamic past and continuing with the subsequent decline and destruction that in the author's view began with the Arab conquest, and later with the invasions of the Turks and Mongols. *Nâme-ye khosrovân* should be seen as an early example of juxtaposition of a romantic pre-Islamic past with the presumed degradation of the Islamic past; a text that still negotiated between mythical narrative and historical evidence. Contrary to the Islamic universal histories with parallel lines of Abrahamic prophets and Iranian kings, here the Biblical/Qor'anic narrative was substituted by the mythologized pre-Zoroastrian king-prophets of the Mahabad dynasty (as in the *Dasâter*) and then continued with the *Shahname* mythical dynasties. As might be expected, at the outset of the second volume Jalâl-al-Din portrays the Arab invasion as an aberration from Iran's religious and dynastic continuity; a perspective opposed to Sepehr's *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh*.

Jalâl-al-Din underscored his nationalist message not only by the use of pure Persian, but by envisioning an Iranian cultural renaissance in the making, as evident in his correspondence with like-minded intellectuals, such as the above-mentioned Manekji, the celebrated dramatist and cultural critic Fath-Ali Akhundzâde, and the reformist Mirzâ Malkom Khan. Only by discarding the alien Islamic past and embracing the civilization of Europe, the Francophile prince proposed, could Iran shift the course of decline, escape degradation and once more rise to its ancient prominence. Yet despite Jalâl-al-Din's novel style and message, his history followed a facile dynastic narrative, serving as a model for early school history

63 *The Desatir; or, Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets, in the Original Tongue, together with the Ancient Persian Version and Commentary of the Fifth Sasan,* ed. and tr. Mulla Firuz bin Kaus (Bombay, 1818).

64 Bombay, 1854.

texts around the time of the Constitutional Revolution and later. The illustrations in *Nâme-ye khosrovân*, on the other hand, became a source of inspiration for *Shahname* scenes in popular paintings of the Qajar era, as well as in a reprint of Fazl-Allâh Qazvini's highly floral *Târikh-e mo'jam*.[65]

Nearly two decades after Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ, a new attempt by Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane and his colleagues elevated the proto-nationalist discourse to a new level. In *Dorar-al-tijân fi târikh bani-Ashkhân* ('Jewels on the crowns of the history of the house of Ashkhan,' i.e. Parthians), he stretched the origins of the Qajars back to Parthian times; a connection no doubt reflective of a desire to trace the ruling dynasty back to Iran's pre-Islamic past rather than to the ferocious hordes that destroyed Iran.[66] E'temâd-al-Saltane's dabbling in the Persian ancient past, compiled in unacknowledged collaboration with the learned scholars Mohammad-Hoseyn Forughi Dhokâ-al-Molk and Âref Effendi, an Ottoman scholar in the service of the Qajar state, confirmed the preoccupation with the pre-Islamic past in Iran's national consciousness. In addition to these scholars, the Ministry of Publication employed a distinguished group of scholars and translators, who were first brought to service under prince Ali-Qoli Mirzâ E'tezâd-al-Saltane, Minister of Sciences, from the early 1860s.[67] Already under his supervision a number of projects were initiated, including the massive encyclopedia of the men of learning, entitled *Nâme-ye dâneshvarân*.[68] The prince himself also produced a number of scientific and historical works including *Motanabbe'in* ('The Pseudo-prophets') covering the claimants to prophethood from the rise of Islam to contemporary times. The rise of the Bâbi

65 Tehran, 1900.

66 3 vols. (Tehran, 1890–93; 2nd ed. N. Ahmadi, Tehran, 1992).

67 For his life and cultural production see A. Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. E'tezād-al-Saltana.

68 7 vols. (Tehran, 1879–1906). Among the four authors of this work were Mirzâ Hasan Adib Tâleqâni, who may have initiated the project, but later was dismissed because of his Bâbi-Bahâ'i affiliation, and Shams-al-Olamâ Abdalrabâbâdi (father of the well-known scholar Mohammad Qazvini). This biographical encyclopedia remained incomplete, covering only up to the letter *shin*.

movement was a motivation for the prince to trace a line of Perso-Islamic prophetic claimants.[69]

In his introduction to *Dorar*, E'temâd-al-Saltane draws the attention of "the children of my dear homeland" (*abnâ-ye vatan-e aziz-e man*) to the fact that in the historical sources available in Arabic and Persian, the place of Iranian history is missing. He laments that,

> of the dynasties of ancient Iran: the Pishdadids, the Kayanids, the Parthians and the Sasanids, who before the Islamic era held the title and the tradition of kingship (*Shâhanshâhi*) in this country, now there is no mention whatsoever. And yet among the rulers of the world in those epochs, they held precedence and priority and for this reason they were praised by foreign authors (*nevisandehâ-ye khâreje*).[70]

He then adds that whatever the Arabic and Persian sources recorded of these dynasties, is either close to myth (*afsâne*) and therefore alien to historical reality, or incomplete and distorted. Moved by the paucity of information about this glorious past, E'temâd-al-Saltane then exclaims that,

> for any civilized nation and renowned community, no greater weakness can be imagined than ignorance of its own country's history and lack of knowledge of its ancient past, or not learning from the experiences and wisdom of one's own ancestors (*gozashtegân*) and drawing lessons (*ebrat*) from their losses and gains.[71]

In an attempt to present a systematic, factual and critical history of the Parthian period, the authors utilized Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Armenian sources and modern European studies.[72] Divided

69 The full manuscript remains unpublished. The Bâbi section appeared with distortions and hostile commentary as *Fitne-ye Bâb*, ed. A. Navâ'i (2nd ed., Tehran, 1971).

70 E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Dorar* I, p. 3.

71 Ibid., p. 4

72 George Rawlinson's the *Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy or the Geography, History and Antiquities of Parthia* (London, 1873), for instance, offered a wealth of new information based on Greek and Latin sources. In his earlier work, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World; or, The History, Geography, and Antiquities of Chaldaea, Assyria, Babylon, Media, and Persia* (4 vols., London, 1862–67) George Rawlinson, Henry

into three parts, volume one of *Dorar-al-tijân* was devoted to the fall of the Seleucids and the rise of the Parthian empire; volume two, the middle period coinciding with the life of Jesus; and volume three the later period of the Parthian empire and its downfall in the hands of the Zoroastrian Ardashir I, the founder of the Sasanid empire. In the introduction, the division of the ancient Iranian history into three epochs (*tabaqât*) for the first time clearly identifies the *Achaemenid* (in the original European rendering of their name) as the first great Persian Empire. *Dorar* identifies the Achaemenids as being of Aryan origin (from which it notes the name Iran is derived), and identical with the Pishdadids and the Kayanids of the Persian sources. It also gives 330 BC as the end of their empire, when they were vanquished by Alexander. Since the 1840s, when Henry Rawlinson presented the deciphered text of the Behestun royal inscriptions to the Qajar court, no clear mention of the Achaemenids has appeared in the Qajar sources. Even though *Dorar* too regards Kurosh (Cyrus), the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, as one and the same as Kay Khosrow of the *Shahname*, there is a conscious effort to place the Achaemenids in a historical context.

By way of introduction, also for the first time in the Qajar sources, the *Dorar-al-tijân* alludes to the earth's geological epochs; the prehistoric era in human development; the rise of early civilizations and their uneven state of advancement. Such a departure from the traditional narrative of Creation in the Islamic sources apparently required official approval. It is not without reason, therefore, that at the outset of the preface to the first volume, Nâser-al-Din Shah's autograph note of 1891 endorses the publication of *Dorar-al-tijân* (a year after the date of the publication on the title page), and praises the author for unraveling the mystery of the Qajar origins; something that seemingly amused the royal mind.

> Rawlinson's brother and a prolific historian of ancient world, provided a succinct history of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia, which may have also been used in the writing of *Dorar-al-tijân*. In the preface, E'temâd-al-Saltane confirms that he engaged in the study of the Parthian history after Nâser-al-Din Shah's return from his third European tour in 1889. As an attendee, he may have collected European histories such as Rawlinson's; his study of the Sasanid Empire was published a few years later (see below).

The *Dorar* also contained as a supplement to its last volume the *Tabaqât-e loghât-e joghrâfiyâ'i-ye qadim va jadid* ('Periodization of the old and new geographical place names'), an etymological nomenclature that preceded in its novelty works of European philologists such as Ferdinand Justi and later Joseph Marquart. With the clear aim of linking contemporary Iran to the ancient Persian Empire, E'temâd-al-Saltane's emphasis on the ancient heritage of the "dear homeland" and the Iranians' duty to learn about their ancient history were new to his readers. Efforts to disentangle myth from history and a systematic use of diverse sources also presented a serious departure in the direction of modern historiography; a grand narrative in the making that was informed in part by archeology and Western sources and their critical analysis.

6. Translations and the Rediscovery of the Past

Translations of Western histories and historical fiction also had a tangible impact on the historical thinking of the period. Earlier in the century, Mirzâ Rezâ Mohandes-bâshi rendered an incomplete translation of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* as *Târikh-e tanazzol va kharâbi-ye dowlat-e Rum*, commissioned by Abbâs Mirzâ.[73] Voltaire's *Peter the Great* and *Charles XII* were among the earliest published, both translated by Musâ Jebre'il as *Târikh-e Petr-e kabir* and *Shârl-e davâzdahom*.[74] John Malcom's two-volume *History of Persia*, covering the whole gamut from ancient to modern, also was translated by Mohammad Esmâ'il Hayrat and may have influenced later Persian historiography.[75] Malcolm's history followed the Persian traditional periodization into pre-Islamic and Islamic eras and based itself, as he states in the outset, largely on Persian sources, even for the description of the mythological past.

73 Tehran, n.d.
74 Tehran, 1847.
75 Bombay, 1870.

Later in the century, the government bureau of translation and publication under E'tezâd-al-Saltane and then E'temâd-al-Saltane also produced a number of historical translations from Arabic, Turkish and European languages. As with most other translations, however, histories of Western Europe, Russia and America primarily served Nâser-al-Din Shah and were confined to the royal library. Among them was Voltaire's *Louis XIV*, translated by Mirzâ Ali-Qoli Khan Zarrâbi Kâshâni in 1872 and E'temâd-al-Saltane's *Târikh-e enkeshâf-e Yangi donyâ* ('History of the discovery of the New World'). Several biographies of Napoleon were also rendered into Persian, including one translated by Jules Richard.[76]

Among the most notable adaptations under the general editorship of E'temâd-al-Saltane is *Kheyrâton hesan* ('Virtuous women'), a massive three-volume biographical dictionary of celebrated women of Islamic history, perhaps the most comprehensive work of its kind.[77] It was based on the less ambitious *Mashâher-al-nesâ*, a biographical dictionary in Turkish by Mohammad Zehni Effendi, a contemporary Ottoman scholar, and consisted mostly of entries on famous women of the early Islamic era. E'temâd-al-Saltane and his team added to the Turkish original a vast number of new entries on Shi'i religious figures, women of the royal family and the Qajar aristocracy, poets, musicians and others.[78]

Though the dictionary included entries on women heretics and sectarians, it carefully avoided references to contemporaries such the Bâbi leader Fâteme Baraghâni, Qorrat-al-eyn, one of the most remarkable women of the Qajar era. Defending the compilation of his biographical dictionary and in response to "narrow-minded" misogynic critics, E'temâd-al-Saltane underscores in the preface to the second volume the importance of studying lives of celebrated

76 For further details on the historical publications of the Ministry of Publication and other cultural production of E'temâd-al-Saltane and his collaborating team see *EIr,* s.v. E'temād-al-Salṭana.

77 Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Kheyrâtun hesan* (3 vols., Tehran, 1886–89).

78 The author identifies Ahmad Mirzâ Qâjâr Azod-al-Dowle as a source for the women of the Qajar royal family. Ahmad Mirzâ is the author of *Târikh-e azodi,* ed. A. Navâ'i (2nd ed., Tehran, 1976); a valuable source for history of the Qajar courts under Fath-Ali Shah.

women and considers it as an important branch of biographical studies. He further notes that not only Muslim scholars of the past, such as Abu'l-Faraj Esfahâni in his *al-Aghâni* and *Emâ'-al-shawâ'er*, included numerous entries on women musicians and poets, but in Europe too the lives of "*femmes célèbres*" and "*femmes illustres*" have been the subject of many works. In short, he points out, those who appreciated the significance of knowledge and sagacity have long strived to render a service to the world by demonstrating the great struggle women underwent in the area of science and art and their other achievements. In truth, by such encouragement of the female gender (*jens-e onâth*) they (i.e. Westerners) have gained for themselves new partners in the struggle.[79] Such a recognition of women's achievements is rare and an indication of changing attitudes at least among the cultural élite of the late 19th century.

More refreshing insight within the same scholarly circle may be seen in Âvânes Khan Mosâ'ed-al-Saltane's succinct introduction to his translation of the Sherley brothers' travel account.[80] An enlightened Armenian member of E'temâd-al-Saltane's Translation Bureau (Dâr-al-tarjome), Âvânes Khan saw writing history not as a moral lesson (*ebrat)* or as means of idealizing the past, but as an objective search for unfolding historical facts and differentiating them from fiction, with the aim of observing the long-term progression or decline of a nation through successive epochs. He continues,

> The chief purpose of the founders of modern history (*târikh-e jadid*) is to seek and scrutinize the reality of events and it is because of this criterion that they laid the foundation of history on new grounds. In fact the rise and fall of any nation consist of consecutive events that occurred one after the other. The events that took place earlier are in effect the backbone (*ostokhân-bandi*) of the events of our time and any given contemporary situation is the continuum and the consequence of the events of the past. … As such, in order for history to be of any use, it has to corroborate with reality … Any event that

79 E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Kheyrâton hesan* II (1887), p. 205.

80 Published as *Safar-nâme-ye barâdarân-e Sherli*, ed. A. Moshir-hozur (Tehran, 1910; 2nd repr. by Mohabat-Â'in, Tehran, 1978), pp. 1–8.

> happens in the history of a nation is like a link in the life chain of that nation and once that one link is distorted, the whole course of events will fall apart and the main purpose of history vanishes. Thus the prime condition for the historian is to search for reality; leave out eloquence and elegance, and to become immersed in research and examination hence to seek the meaning of present conditions in past events.[81]

During his years of education in Europe, he states, Âvânes had become familiar with Voltaire, Thierry, Michelet, Macaulay, Carlyle, and others. Comparing the state of historiography in his own country with European studies he notes:

> In fact founders of the new school of historiography (*sabk-e jadid-e târikh-nevisi*) have made a rule for themselves not to pay attention, as much as possible, to any report unless it is an eyewitness account … These historians unearth authentic historical documents from under the dust of library shelves and critically examine every word. With much toil and great acumen they were thus able to reconstruct the events of the past epochs, and it is for this reason that in the view of the people of Europe who appreciate the value of history, these works are as precious as if they were priceless treasures. Yet the history of Iran (*Târikh-e Irân*), which spans a few thousand years, has not yet found a historian who could write a history of that glorious nation (*mellat-e bâ showkat*) in the style of the above historians, and the documentation for such a history has not yet been put together.[82]

It is in pursuit of this task that Âvânes Khan sought new sources, including close to fifty tomes of "very rare travel accounts" in Paris and London libraries. He made hand copies of some accounts and purchased others in order to translate them into Persian. "In fact these are the preliminary groundwork for the future historian who may wish to write the history of Iran."[83]

In addition to his translation of the memoirs of the Sherley brothers, which he had found in the Library of the British Museum (now the British Library), Âvânes Khan also produced two notable works that are still unpublished. In his long introduction

81 Ibid., pp. 4–5.
82 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
83 Ibid., p. 7.

to the translation of a 1862 study of the Eastern Question, entitled *Madkhaliyat-e Irân dar mas'ale-ye sharqi* ('Iran's relevance to the Eastern Question') by Felix Wichersky, Âvânes Khan, who had been "fascinated with the might and glory of the Iranian past" in part one of his book on ancient Iran, complains of imperialist foreign interventions and proposes to Nâser-al-Din Shah a series of remedies for the ills and drawbacks of his country.[84] His translation of an account of the Indian revolt of 1857, as *Shuresh-e Hendustân (Balvâ-ye Hend)*, also reflected Âvânes' awareness of the significance of the event and of oppressive British colonial rule over Iran's neighbor.[85]

7. Discourse of Decline and Renewal

Independent of the historical production in the Ministry of Publication, a more pronounced national awareness began to emerge among dissident intellectuals in later Qajar society. Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni's *Â'ine-ye Sekandari* ('Alexandrian mirror') was an exercise in that direction.[86] Aiming to contrast Iran's glorious past with the plight of its present, it was typical of the historical production of cultures with an ancient heritage and often in the grip of Western imperial powers. Completed in three volumes ca. 1894 in

84 A. Monzavi, *Fehrestvarâ-ye ketâbhâ-ye Fârsi* (2 vols., Tehran, 1996), I, pp. 1075–76. The original work by the Russian author could not be identified.

85 Ibid., p. 1289.

86 Âqâ Khan Kermâni, *Â'ine-ye Sekandari* (Tehran (?), 1909). The book was obviously in preparation for the press before 1909, since on the title page Mirzâ Jahângir Khan Sur-e Esrâfil, the renowned revolutionary journalist, had been acknowledged for his copyediting. He states (note to p. 7) that he converted the transcriptions of ancient Greek and other foreign proper names to their correct ancient Persian equivalent as they appear in the Behestun inscription (presumably Henry Rawlinson's reading) in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.* This is probably the first usage of such proper names as *Hakhâmaneshi* instead of Achaemenids in modern Persian sources. Jahângir Khan, who like Kermâni was of Bâbi background, was executed by the order of Mohammad-Ali Shah in July 1908.

Istanbul, where the author was long in exile, it consisted of twelve parts, covering Iran's history from its mythological origins to the Qajar period, and more specifically, as the author stated, to the rise of the Bâbi movement. The conclusion touched on the causes of Iran's present waning (*virâni-ye Irân*). Yet only volume one (parts one to four), on the pre-Islamic period with a short epilogue on the rise of Islam and miscellaneous issues, was published in 1909, just after the civil war that ended the Minor Despotism during the Constitutional Revolution.

Like the author of *Dorar-al-tijân,* Kermâni relied not only on Persian sources but also substantially on European translations of Greek and Latin classics, as well as a few works of modern scholarship. Such access greatly expanded his historical horizon and is well evident in expressions of pride in the Achaemenid and Sasanid eras. Like Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ half a century earlier, Kermâni, too, strived to reconcile the information in European sources about ancient Iran with the Persian mythological past. In the introduction, he classified pre-Islamic sources into four groups and acknowledged the difficulties of reconciling archeological evidence and the Greek sources (such as Xenophon and Ctesias) with the Persian national history and its literary sources, such as the *Shahname* or the much-revered *Dasâter* (which at the time was viewed as an ancient text). Citing the British Orientalist John Richardson on the formidability of such an undertaking, Kermâni claims that he has been able to overcome the obstacles. In the manner of Ferdowsi, he boasted, he had "revived Persians through such factual veracity" (*ajam zende kardam be-din râsti*).[87] The title of Kermâni's book, taken from a verse by Hâfez, also denoted the author's attempt to read his own ancient history through the mirror of the other: "The wine cup is an Alexandrian mirror/ Look how it reveals to you the affairs of Dârâ's kingdom." In effect he is trying to recover the history of the vanquished Achaemenid Dârâ (Darius) in the textual mirror of the Greek vanquisher.[88]

87 Ibid., p. 35. Reference to John Richardson is presumably to his *A Dissertation on the Languages … of Eastern Nations* (London, 1774).

88 Ibid., p. 9. Hâfez's reference is to the Pharos of Alexandria, a stock image in Persian poetry.

Kermâni's conceptual notion of history was barely matched by the Iranians of his time; a framework acutely attuned to nationalist story. He considered "true" history as one that "consists of essential events and self-evident issues (*vaqâye'-e jowhari va omur-e nafs-al-amri*), able to inspire honor (*gheyrat*), provoke progress (*taraqqi*), and facilitate national education, with the effect that reading its pages would elevate the reader from the world of ignorance and the realm of unawareness."[89] He also believed in a general purpose of history as demonstrating the role of "the great men, the rise and fall of nations, and manifestations of human brilliance (*showkat-hâ-ye bashariyye*) at every age," but also "investigating and examining the habits and morals that cause the decline and fall of states," and finally recounting "whatever in bygone times was of value in rendering (moral) awareness (*ebrat-bakhsh*)." History was thus in his eyes a "mirror reflecting the world (*â'ine-ye giti-namây*);" one that opens the human mind "to understanding the rise of powers, their glory and their downfall," and as such makes humanity (*âlam-e ensâniyat*) "accomplish great deeds, so as to eliminate existing plights and remove evident menaces from the path of human societies (*jam'iyat-e bashariyye*)."[90]

The influences on Kermâni's philosophy of history of Gibbon's narration of the rise and fall of empires, Carlyle's "great men" as agents of national destiny and global transformation, and August Comte's positivist philosophy of progress are unmistakable. This is evident also in defining the "specific benefits" of history for every nation (*mellat*). Prime among them is to know one's ancestors (*niyâkân*) and the causes behind their ascent and decline "as practiced in the West especially among the French and the English nations." Without such awareness, he insists, no "love, pride, honor, and aspiration for progress and advancement" can emerge within any given society; a knowledge that can be acquired only through "authentic facts and philosophical discourses (*mohâkemât-e falsafiyye*)." Otherwise, he asks, "What is the purpose and outcome of spurious narratives and unfounded myths that are contrary to reality?" History for Kermâni

89 Ibid., p. 8.
90 Ibid., p. 11.

is thus "the proof of nobility and deeds that prove dignity, honor and authenticity (*esâlat*) of any nation (*qowm*)." The mythology of each nation: Hindus, Chinese, Jews, and Greeks, he is anxious to affirm, serves as the very foundation of its survival. Had it not been for the *Shahname*, he argues, the Iranian nation too would have become Arabicized in their language and ethnicity, and Iranians, like the people of Syria (al-Shâm) Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algiers, would have been converted from their nationality (*melliyat*) and hence would have strongly denounced their own ethnicity.[91]

Kermâni's Bâbi connection also left its traces in his historical perspective—especially in secularizing the metaphor of the tree of progressive revelation evident in the writings of Sayyid Ali Mohammad the Bâb. The rise and fall of nations are here seen by Kermâni as organically inevitable as a tree growing through the four seasons. But if awareness of the past is rooted deeply in people's hearts, the tree of their nationality grows stronger, and withstands longer the calamities of the time.

> How fortunate is a nation among which powerful kings, great philosophers, noble prophets, renowned military leaders, scientists and artists appear … Such a nation, no matter how humiliated and enchained, still has not departed in essence from its hope for greatness and desire for domination and power, and its misfortune and enslavement is temporary.[92]

In this respect, history, in Kermâni's opinion, is the headspring of poetry, as poetry is the inspiration for philosophy and philosophy is the guide to a nation's happiness and superiority. In contrast to the fatalistic view of the past, which people of Asia have adopted for so long, the philosophy of history (*hekmat-e târikhi*), as developed by Europeans over the centuries, regards

> the course of events as invariably subordinate to a covert law, and in this field they have advanced to a degree that they can identify through great scrutiny the causes behind the rise and fall of nations.[93]

91 Ibid., p. 14.
92 Ibid., pp. 15–16.
93 Ibid., p. 17.

Lack of such qualities prompted Kermâni to attack, predictably, the traditional Persian historiography of his own time in the strongest terms. He does not shy from criticizing chroniclers for their obsequiousness and reversal of historical truth, for subservience to tyrannical powers, and for sheer ignorance. "It is a source of great pride for our scholars of literature and men of learning," he sarcastically remarks alluding to the Shi'i ulama, "to know the spot where the hoof of Ya'rab b. Qahtân's horse touched the ground … but investigating lives of such Persian figures as … Jâmâsb, Bozorgmehr and the great Hushang is a sign of heresy and disbelief." Scornful of Persian historians for their "useless exaggerations, tasteless hyperboles, inopportune flatteries, and showy exhibition of [literary] skill completely devoid of any historical consequences," he further laments that even though some attempted to write in a simple style, their work "entirely lacks critical reasoning (*mohâkemât va dalâ'el*) and cannot be considered as the history of a nation's life and times, since it is solely engaged with the lives of the kings and their private affairs."

Kermâni goes to great lengths not only to denounce all such histories as hypocrisy and sheer lies, but to scorn their authors for bestowing grandiose titles devoid of any meaning on their often unworthy royal patron, "even if, as was often the case, that world-conquering Khâqân (*Khâqân-e giti-setân*) out of sheer stupidity and weakness had already lost half his kingdom."[94] The reference to Fath-Ali Shah Qâjâr is unmistakable; one of many such titles that Kermâni accuses the historians of heaping on their royal masters. Yet despite his disparaging criticism of the Persian chroniclers for their dishonesty, ignorance, and sycophancy, oddly enough Kermâni himself almost immediately afterwards praises the Qajar chief minister—presumably Mirzâ Ali Asghar Amin-al-Soltân—for commissioning his own work with money and encouragement, in no less grandiose terms than those he mocked court chroniclers for employing. Not only the chief minister but also Nâser-al-Din Shah received respectful treatment, even though the praise is short and precise. His book, he informs us, is to end with

94 Ibid., p. 18.

> an account of the everlasting Qajar state; that which will be the grand finale (*beyt-al-qaside*, lit. the concluding verse of the panegyric) and the jewel of the crown (*dorrat-al-eklil*) of this book.[95]

Such a seemingly hypocritical discrepancy may in part be explained by the ambivalence that Kermâni had felt toward the Qajar state nearly up to the end of his tragic life (he was executed in Tabriz in 1896 on the charge of collusion in the assassination of Nâser-al-Din Shah). In effect, such an attitude may be attributed to the inescapable framework within which Iranian historians operated for centuries in relation to the sources of power, as did most historians everywhere before the rise of modern academic historiography. The praise can, on the other hand, be interpreted as a clever wordplay that backhandedly mocked the Qajar state, the account of which ends a history devoted to the glories of the past and the decadence of the present.

Kermâni's own endeavor, however, does not stand the test of his own high standards. Despite his effort to present a documented and critical account of ancient Iran, his history suffers from a fair degree of confusion in names and chronology in its narration. Yet beyond its limited value as a reliable source, the *Â'ine* demonstrates a nationalistic awareness, passionate, idealistic and politically charged; a prototype for the shaping of the 20th-century Iranian grand narrative. This is evident in Kermâni's glorification of the ancient past, his distaste for the Arab domination (which even in the heady days of 1909 may have made the publication of the rest of his work impossible), his rampant usage of fictitious etymology to prove Iranian originality, and a touch of ethnic chauvinism.

Kermâni's other works show a similar preoccupation with decline. In *Seh maktub* he views history not merely as a narrative of conflict and conquest but as means of reflecting and learning (*ebrat*), an idea rooted in Persian historical thinking. He is anxious to distinguish "true" history from myth; to discard flattery and adulation of the powerful; and to discover the causes behind the rise and fall of nations. Most of all, he is in search of the root causes of the decline of his country and the means to remedy it. As in

95 Ibid., p. 22.

other nationalist histories of the time, he holds the corrupt and incompetent political élite and the conservative clerical establishment responsible.[96] In his *Nâme-ye bâstân* (the Book of Ancient Times), a long poem composed in Trabzon in 1896—while Âqâ Khan was in the custody of the Ottoman Government (and shortly before his execution in Tabriz)—he is more open in criticizing Qajar rule and the person of Nâser-al-Din Shah, while at the same time preserving the decorum required when addressing the ruler. Composing in the style of the *Shahname,* he romanticizes the glories of ancient Iran and contrasts them with the evils arising from the Arab invasion; a catastrophe that in Kermâni's view set the stage for Iran's long decay and moral corrosion. In the epilogue he indicts Nâser-al-Din Shah in the strongest terms for the corruption and decrepitude of his state vis-à-vis the foreign powers and goes as far as to predict, prophetically, that soon the provocative words of the poet will bring down the Qajar throne. He alerts the Iranian nation that unless the course of events are dramatically reversed and people become aware of the depth of their plight, foreign domination and material calamities will devastate the country and bring it to total extinction.[97]

It is not a coincidence that during the Constitutional Revolution (1906–11), *Â'ine* drew the attention of the revolutionary nationalists, and was published just after the civil war that defeated the royalists and put an effective end to Qajar rule. Its editor, Jahângir Khan Sur-e Esrâfil, a hero of the nationalist intellectuals and martyr of that cause, and Nâzem-al-Eslâm Kermâni, who chronicled the Constitutional Revolution, shared with Kermâni not only his background of dissent but also his desire for national reawakening.

96 For glimpse of his historical thinking, see for instance his *Sad khatâba*, ed. M.J. Mahjub (Los Angeles, 2006) and *Seh maktub*, ed. B. Chubineh (Frankfurt, 2005). See also F. Adamiyat, *Andishehâ-ye Mirzâ Âqâ Khân Kermâni* (Tehran, 1978), pp. 149–211, and M. Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse, 1982), pp. 133–75.

97 Partially cited in Mohammad Nâzem-al-Eslâm Kermâni, *Târikh-e bidâri-ye Irâniyân* ed. A.A. Sa'idi Sirjâni (3rd ed., 3 vols., Tehran, 1967–70), I, pp. 175–88, cf. pp. 11–12.

8. History as Awakening

The discourse of decline and renewal articulated by Kermâni was influential within a circle of like-minded revolutionary intellectuals in the next generation. This is evident in the portrayal of the Constitutional Revolution as a turning point from decadent despotism to Iranian rebirth. Among other historical publications, the chronicle of the revolution, *Târikh-e bidâri-ye Irâniyân* (The History of Iranians' awakening) by another dissident with heterodox leanings, Mohammad Nâzem-al-Eslâm Kermâni, conveyed a similar message. A student of Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni, Nâzem-al-Eslâm and other like-minded dissidents from Kerman came from a diverse milieu with Zoroastrian, Ne'mat-Allâhi Sufi, Sheykhi, Bâbi-Azali and Bahâ'i elements. Such a fusion influenced the intellectual making of both Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni (who himself was from the Ahl-e Haqq and of Zoroastrian descent) and Nâzem-al-Eslâm, and was evident in their enthusiasm for the glories of ancient Iran in contrast to the realities of decay and infirmity and their call for national revival.[98]

Starting as a journal of the "rebellion" (*shuresh*) that became the Constitutional Revolution, *Târikh-e bidâri*, which first appeared in 1907 in installments in the newspaper *Kowkab-e dorri*, portrayed a national reawakening with a messianic undertone.[99] Later, Nâzem-al-Eslâm articulated a coherent narrative that was important not only for its remarkable details and documentation but for tracing the origins of the Constitutional Revolution back to the political dissent of the Nâseri era. In this and other respects, he was informed by E.G. Browne's *The Persian Revolution* (London, 1910), which itself was a work based on a series of pamphlets

98 The first bound edition of *Târikh-e bidâri* was published by the author in two vols. (Tehran, 1910–12; 2nd ed., Tehran, 1945–53). The 3rd ed. is cited above.

99 Browne in turn benefited in his *Persian Revolution* from Nâzem-al-Eslâm's coverage of the events in *Kowkab-e dorri*; see A. Amanat, "Memory and amnesia in the historiography of the Constitutional Revolution," in T. Atabaki, ed., *Iran in the Twentieth Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London and New York, 2009), chap. 3.

Browne produced before 1910 in support of the Iranian Constitutionalists. Highlighting such figures as Jamâl-al-Din Asadâbâdi (better known as al-Afghâni) and his disciple, Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni, as forerunners of the revolution, the early printing of *Târikh-e bidâri* helped define the Constitutional Revolution by offering a coherent narrative that inspired its growing readership of likeminded urban revolutionaries.

Closely reiterating Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni's diatribe on traditional Iranian historiography—and with a hint of criticism of Shi'i hagiographies—Nâzem-al-Eslâm goes on to say in the preface to his Introductory volume (the *moqaddema* was added in later years as a prologue) that while he was "contemplating writing a history of Iran in the style of the European historians" he was exhilarated to come across contemporary works that undertook the same task more ably than he could have ever done. He cites in particular *Â'ine-ye Sekandari*, as well as the epic *Nâme-ye bâstân* by Âqâ Khan, of which he cited a pertinent portion.[100]

Nâzem-al-Eslâm was thus persuaded to shift his attention to the events of his own time and record "whatever strange events I witnessed and reliable reports I heard about the great happenings (*havâdeth-e bozorg*) of this age of civilization and awakening of the Iranians," and put down the "remarkable services of those great men who strived for the awakening of the slumbering Iranians." He decided to publish these diaries (*ruz-nâme*) "in a plain language, in contrast to the unseemly approach and style of the sycophantic hypocrites and free from poetic exaggerations and clerical elaborations." Tellingly, he says "I began my historical survey with the beginning of my own life."[101]

True to the revolutionary spirit, another chronicler with a Bâbi affiliation, Mohammad-Mahdi Sharif Kâshâni, author of *Târikh-e Sharif,* offered another documentary history of the Constitutional Revolution, though unlike Nâzem-al-Eslâm's, his remained

100 This was the portion that, as Nâzem-al-Eslâm informs us, was deleted from the published version, *Târikh*, 3rd ed., I, pp. 11–12.

101 Nâzem, *Târikh* I, p. 8.

unpublished.[102] Aiming to document the contemporary revolutionary events and record the lives of the ordinary people who acted as historical players, both as heroes and villains, Sharif's history lacked a narrative and did not consciously try to depict a revolutionary process. In contrast, Nâzem-al-Eslâm's *Bidâri* constituted almost a messianic narrative of a "nation" (*mellat*) "awakened" to remove sources of oppression and decay, and to materialize a utopian aspiration for justice and prosperity. The shift in such a direction came both in contrast to the traditional narrative of power, which chronicled the kings and their conquests, and went beyond the romantic narrative of ancient glories and present decadence. Here, arguably, lay the making of modern historiography with a national narrative, which in effect may be seen as secularization of the Shi'i millennial hopes, often composed by 'subaltern' authors rooted in a heterodox milieu and hence alien to court culture or to the mainstream Shi'i establishment.[103]

9. Shaping a Nationalist Discourse

Retelling the Constitutional Revolution in newspapers, journals or pamphlets, and eventually in histories, the search for a more inclusive historical narrative of Iran grounded in diverse sources and modern methodology continued through the period and up to the rise of the Pahlavi order. The press revolution from the turn of the century greatly accelerated this process and made new readings of the ancient Iranian past available to the growing readership educated in the newly-established schools. Complementing the earlier Nâseri translations, a growing number of historical works were translated and adapted through the liberalizing era of Mozaffar-

102 The *Târikh-e Sharif* was published seven decades later as *Vâqe'ât-e ettefâqiye dar ruzgâr*, ed. M. Ettehâdiyye and S. Sa'dvandiyân (3 vols., Tehran, 1983). Memoirs of such constitutional activists as Yahyâ Dowlatâbâdi, *Hayât-e Yahyâ* (4 vols., Tehran, 1957) and Ahmad Kasravi's history of the Constitutional Revolution were written decades later.

103 See further Amanat, "Memory and amnesia."

al-Din Shah's reign and up to the end of the Constitutional period. Above all, they underscored the fascination with ancient times and late antiquity.

Instrumental in this process was a series of publications by Mohammad-Hoseyn Forughi in collaboration with his son Mohammad-Ali Forughi, both being products of an erudite cultural environment, and continuing to operate under the umbrella of the Ministry of Publications. Writing with greater liberty, and in a more accessible language developed by the revolutionary press, they represented a cultural élite that served as a crucial link between the nationalist spirit of the Constitutional era and the institutionalization of historical narrative in the early Pahlavi period.

Among Forughi's publications was a history of the ancient Near East by Charles Seignobos as *Târikh-e melal-e qadime-ye mashreq,* which came to serve as the basis not only for the school textbooks of the Mozaffarid and the Constitutional period but of the first that appeared in the Pahlavi times.[104] At least three histories of ancient Greece appeared in the 1900s.[105] In addition, a selection of Herodotus' *Histories* was published at around the same time.[106] Two histories of Alexander the Great written in the late 19th century were also complemented by a history of ancient Rome.[107]

104 Tr. Mohammad-Hoseyn Forughi, Dhokâ'-al-Molk (possibly in collaboration with Mohammad-Ali Forughi) (Tehran, 1900). There is some discrepancy in the publication date, since the original French *Histoire ancienne narrative et descriptive de l'Orient et de la Grèce* by Charles Seignobos (Paris, 1902) postdates the Persian work. It is possible the Forughis used Seignobos' earlier history of Greece and then completed it in a later edition (Tehran, 1909).

105 *Târikh-e mokhtasar-e Yunân*, tr. of Victore Duruy, *Histoire de la Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1862) by Nosrat-al-Soltân Lavâ'i (Tehran, 1901); *Târikh-e mokhtasar-e Yunân*, tr. Ali-Rezâ Amir-Tumân Motarjem-al-Saltane (Tehran, 1909); and *Târikh-e Yunân,* tr. Sayyid Ali Khan Nasr (Tehran, 1910).

106 Tr. Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane (Tehran, n.d.).

107 *Târikh-e Eskandar*, tr. Rezâ Mohandes-bâshi, and ed. Rezâ-Qoli Shaqâqi (Tehran, 1897) and *Târikh-e Eskandar-e kabir*, tr. Mohammad-Hoseyn and Mohammad-Ali Forughi (Tehran, 1898). The *Târikh-e mokhtasar-e dowlat-e Rum,* tr. Mohammad-Ali Forughi (Tehran, 1909) is apparently the earliest on Roman history.

Three other translations also contributed to a new understanding of pre-Islamic past: a history of Babylon and Nineveh,[108] George Rawlinson's *The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy* as *Târikh-e salâtin-e sâsâni*,[109] and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* as *Târikh-e sargozasht-e bozorgtarin salâtin-e hakhâmaneshi-ye Irân, Sirus-e kabir yâ Korosh-e kabir.*[110]

Compared with enthusiasm for works on the ancient world—as a window onto Iran's past—there was relatively little interest in Islamic history beyond what classical Persian sources had already provided. Jirji Zaydân's *Ta'rikh-al-tamaddon-al-eslâmiyye* was among the few published in the period that offered a new approach to Islam as a civilization rather than sacred history.[111] Similarly, early modern Iranian history received little attention. Only a few European travelers of the Safavid period were translated and James Fraser's *The History of Nadir Shah* was among a handful on the post-Safavid era.[112] The latter translation may have given the first glimmer of praise to Nâder Shah as a heroic savior of Iran in a different light from the hostile treatment in the Qajar chronicles.

Interestingly, Nâder's portrayal as a national hero coincides with the publication of a number of biographies of Napoleon and general French histories in this period. They reiterated an earlier fascination with Napoleon detectable in Persian accounts that praised him as a world conqueror who challenged the British and

108 Tr. Mohammad-Hasan E'temâd-al-Saltane as *Târikh-e Bâbel va Nineve* (Tehran, 1894).

109 Tr. Mohammad-Hoseyn and Mohammad-Ali Forughi (2 vols., Tehran, 1897–99).

110 Tr. Ziyâ'-al-Din Monshi and commissioned by Sardar As'ad Baktiyâri (Tehran, 1914). As a history buff Sardâr As'ad also commissioned, translated and authored a number of histories and historical novels.

111 *Târikh-e tamaddon-e Eslâmi,* tr. Abd-al-Hoseyn Mirzâ Qâjâr (2 vols., Tehran, 1911, 1924).

112 *Târikh-e Nâder Shâh-e Afshâr*, tr. Abu'l-Qâsem Qaragozlu Nâser-al-Molk (Tehran, 1903). The translator, the celebrated Oxford-educated aristocrat and later the Regent to Ahmad Shah Qâjâr, undertook the translation at the turn of the century at a time when he was still optimistic about the course of reforms under Mozaffar-al-Din Shah.

the Russian colonial empires.[113] Whether Nâder Shah's new image that appeared in the period from the Constitutional Revolution to the Pahlavi era is informed by the Napoleonic enterprise remains to be further explored. What is certain, however, is that anti-Qajar sentiments greatly contributed to reversing his earlier portrayal as a usurper—albeit a valiant one—in the Qajar texts, to one of a defender of the homeland and national hero, who put an end to alien occupation and reconstituted the shattered Iranian state. Disinterest in his ruinous campaigns and violent rule may be explained by the Iranians' bitter experience of the threat of imperial neighbors, territorial disintegration and foreign occupation during the Constitutional Revolution, and later in the course of the First World War. Already by the late 1900s one can sense in the image of Nâder in the press of the Constitutional and post-Constitutional era a yearning for a man of destiny who could set in order the country's chaotic state; an urge that materialized a decade later with the rise of Rezâ Khan Sardâr Sepah.

Closer to contemporary times, international upheavals also drew some attention to the plight of non-Western nations in the face of menacing imperial powers, often as points of comparison with the ongoing Iranian situation. They accentuated the despair that prevailed after the Revolution and the need for resisting imperial threats. At least two accounts of the 1905 Russo-Japanese war became available to Persian readers.[114] Also published in the same vein were a number of histories of China, including one on the 1900 Boxer Rebellion.[115] Similarly, a history of the 1905 Russian Revolution by Khalil Sa'âda was translated from Arabic as *Târikh-e*

113 *Târikh-e mokhtaṣar-e Napel'on-e avval* (Tehran, 1869) and *Târikh-e St. Helen*, tr. Mirzâ Rezâ Mohandes-bâshi and Jules Richard (1861), also reprinted in several editions. The first general history of France was a translation by E'temâd-al-Saltane's team as *Târikh-e Farânse* (Tehran, 1895).

114 *Târikh-e aqsâ-ye sharq yâ mohârabe-ye Rus va Zhâpon,* tr. Mohammad-Bâqer Manteqi Tabrizi (2 vols., Tehran, 1905–6) and soon after *Târikh-e mohârebât-e Rus va Zhâpon* (3 vols., Kabul, 1906–7). Extensive press coverage also highlighted the defeat of the mighty Russia by an Asian nation.

115 *Târikh-e jang-e Chin bâ doval-e mottahede-ye Orup dar sâl-e 1318 qamari,* tr. Ali Hoseyni Sharifi Dhahabi Shirâzi, vol. I (Tehran, 1911). Also *Târikh-e Chin va Mâchin,* tr. Mohammad-Khalil Shirâzi (Tehran, 1906).

shuresh-e Rusiyâ.[116] The publication by E'temâd-al-Saltane in 1871 of a history of discovery of the Americas was followed in the early 20th century by a history of the United States of America.[117] Wide coverage of the New World (Yangi donyâ) as early as 1850s in the Persian newspapers articulated for literate Iranians the fascinating story of European explorations in the new continent. The history of the birth of a nation from a British colony into a mighty power by means of a constitutional revolution and war of independence, on the other hand, resonated with the Iranian reader of the Constitutional period.

Published translations thus helped to refashion the emerging national narrative, as it allowed Iranians to see their history in the broader span of time, and within a global perspective. It is therefore predictable that the Forughi team also became instrumental in the adaptation and compilation of new general histories of Iran with a nationalist undertone. A general history published in 1900 stretching from the ancient era to the Qajar period was a seminal breakthrough.[118] That the time span covered from before the birth of Christ to the present implied an important shift in periodization, for (like Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ's *Nâme-ye khosrovân*) it bypassed the rise of Islam, the classical dividing line in Persian memory, as a mere aberration. Perhaps the most systematic up to that time, this work may have served as the progenitor for a number of shorter textbooks in the following years.[119] Although it did not entirely break away from the *Shahname* mytho-history, it did differentiate (unlike *Â'ine-ye Sekandari*) between archeological and ancient Greco-Roman evidence, on the one hand, and the pre-Islamic

116 Tr. Abd-al-Hoseyn Râvari Kermâni (Tehran, 1909) from *Asrâr-al-thowrat-al-Rusiya* (Mesr [Cairo], 1905).

117 Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane, *Târikh-e enkeshâf-e Yangi donyâ* (Tehran, 1871); *Târikh-e jomhuri-ye mamâlek-e mottahede-ye Amrikâ,* tr. Najaf-Qoli Mirzâ Âqâ Sardâr (Tehran, n.d.). It is not clear whether the latter was published during the 1910s or later.

118 *Târikh-e Irân az qabl az milâd tâ zamân-e Qâjâriyye (*Tehran, 1900).

119 Its account appeared with further revisions in two later editions. Textbook byproducts appeared as *Târikh-e mokhtasar-e Irân* (Tehran, 1905) and several later editions. See Moshâr, *Fehrest kotob-e châpi-ye Fârsi* (3 vols., Tehran, 1973), I, p. 674.

past according to the Persian legends. Such a distinction may have served as a model for later publication of Hasan Pirniyâ's *Târikh-e Irân-e bâstâni* and similar texts in the early Pahlavi era.[120]

10. Forgotten Narratives

Independent of the above historiography, during the Qajar period a vast body of other histories was barely incorporated into the political narrative. Some opted to remain outside the state-based sphere of historiography and others were intentionally excluded or marginalized. The Shi'i biographical dictionaries, sectarian histories, local histories, popular histories and literary histories cover areas often ignored or underrepresented. Keeping up with the long tradition of producing works of *rejâl*, imperative for the study of *hadith*, Shi'i ulama of the Qajar period composed biographical dictionaries not unlike what they had been producing for centuries. A typical entry in these dictionaries included lineage and birthplace, teachers, permits (*ejâzât*), works of scholarship and significant *fatvâ*s, notable students and occasionally extraordinary feats (*karâmât*).

Increasingly in the Qajar period, these works also highlighted the Osuli mojtaheds' influential standing in the community and their dealings with the government authorities. Among the most comprehensive in this category was Mohammad Bâqer Khʷânsâri's Arabic *Rowzat-al-jannât fi ahvâl-al-olamâ' va'l-sâdât*, containing a vast number of entries on mostly Shi'i figures from the early Islamic period to the time of the author.[121] A model for several generations of Shi'i authors, the *Rowzat* lacked the format and the ambition of demonstrating a process of change in the ulama community, a weakness it shared with nearly all later works in

120 Hasan Pirniyâ, *Irân-e bâstâni* (Tehran, 1927) is the first version of his famous history of ancient Iran; see also Chapter 7. Forughi's *Târikh-e Irân-e qadim*, reissued in Tehran in 1937, may have been a rendering of his abovementioned *Târikh-e melal-e qadima.*

121 Tehran, 1888.

this genre.[122] One exception, from the historical point of view at least, was Mirzâ Mohammad Tonakâboni's *Qesas-al-olamâ* on the lives of mostly contemporary or near contemporary Shi'i jurists of Iran and Iraq. Written at a critical juncture when the mojtaheds of the early Qajar era had begun to enjoy great power and prestige, Tonâkaboni's hagiography was essentially faithful to *rejâl* format yet offered intimate details on the public and private lives of several generations. With a predictable pro-Osuli bias, but unhindered by the formulaic limitations of *rejâl* biographies, he produced an inside view of the madrasa world, tensions within the ulama community and relations with the state.

Beside the *Qesas,* no change of any note is evident in these dictionaries almost up to the end of the 20th century. Their exclusion from the emerging national narrative of the late Qajar period was almost inevitable, even though in the above-mentioned *al-Ma'âther va'l-âthâr*, E'temâd-al-Saltane and his colleague Shams-al-Olamâ Abd-al-Rabbâbâdi included an extensive list of the ulama of the Nâseri period. The modernist intellectuals, however, who articulated the national narrative, reserved an ambivalent attitude toward the Shi'i clerical element. Later in the course of the Constitutional Revolution, the mojtaheds were to some extent incorporated into the national story. The pro-constitutionalists were venerated and the opponents of the *mashrute* were vilified. Yet their inclusion or exclusion was ephemeral, and largely determined by their reception of secular values, rather than in their own terms as religious scholars or leaders of the community.

The jurist culture had been and remained all through the 19th and 20th centuries essentially alien to Iran's pre-Islamic past and unsympathetic, if not hostile, toward the rediscovery of what they saw as an age of paganism incompatible with true Islamic values. Nor were they interested in fashioning their own national script outside the domain of the secularized intellectuals, who often themselves were products of the Shi'i madrasa. The negative portrayal of cleri-

122 They included Modarres Khiyâbâni, *Reyhânat-al-adab* (3 vols., Tehran and Tabriz, 1947–54); Mo'allem Habibâbâdi, *Makârem-al-âthâr* (5 vols., Isfahan, 1958–76) and Âqâ Bozorg Tehrâni, *Tabaqât a'lam-al-Shi'a: Noqabâ'-al-bashar fi'l-qarn-al-thâleth ba'd al-ashara* (2 vols., Najaf, 1954–68).

cal Shi'ism as an obscurantist force was to be seen as a betrayal to their own cultural roots. More importantly, criticism ran the risk of the ulama's rage and condemnation. Some, like Nâzem-al-Eslâm and Sharif Kâshâni, who were clerics but came from a heterodox milieu, were even more careful in concealing their disapproval of the conservative ulama and their shari'a-minded culture.

Somewhat different, the parallel genre of Shi'i biographical dictionaries produced by Sufi scholars of the period was less alien to Iranian sentiments. Beyond the aforementioned Zeyn-al-Âbedin Shirvâni and his three geographical dictionaries, a later work of substance, *Tarâyeq-al-haqâyeq*, was more inclusive in its coverage and in tune with the Persian cultural setting especially in the Fars province, where the author resided. This was a three-volume biographical dictionary by Mohammad Ma'sum Shirâzi (Ma'sum-Ali Shâh), which offered, especially in volume three, biographies of Sufis and Sufi sympathizers of the Ne'mat-Allâhi, Dhahabi, and other orders, as well as many literary and cultural figures.[123] Even works of Ne'mat-Allâhi missionaries in the earlier part of the century, such as Mozaffar-Ali Shâh Kermâni's *Divân-e Moshtâqiyye* in verse, were useful in detecting a Persianized Islam more attuned to its environment.[124] So were some of the Osulis' anti-Sufi refutations of Abu'l-Qâsem Qomi's *Jâme'-al-shetat* and Mohammad-Ali Behbahâni's *Kheyratiyye.*[125] Yet the Sufi authors of the period, despite their welcoming attitude toward secular modernity, contributed as little as the ulama to the emerging national narrative, even though many modernist scholars were inclined toward speculative Sufism.

A different class of narratives produced by the Bâbi and later Bahâ'i writers, often eyewitnesses to the unfolding of the new religion that emerged in the Qajar era, was left out of the grand narrative. They offered, it may be argued, an alternative modernity through a prism of Persianized messianic renewal, and hence

123 3 vols. (Tehran, 1899–1901).

124 Tehran, 1968.

125 Abu'l-Qâsem Qomi, *Jâme'-al-shetat* (Tehran, 1893); Mohammad-Ali Behbahâni, *Kheyratiyye dar ebtâl-e tariqe-ye sufiyye* (2 vols., n.p. [Qom?], n.d.).

presented more than a flicker of proto-nationalist idealism. While loyal to the Shi'i apocalyptic vision, all through the latter Qajar era and to the end of the first phase of the Constitutional Revolution, the Bâbis posed almost as the only source of socio-religious dissent in Iranian society. Like the Sufis, their accounts therefore hold a special place for recording the alternatives to the official state or religious authorities; historical stories from below that have yet to be fully incorporated into a coherent narrative.[126]

Best known, and one of the earliest in this category, is Hâjji Mirzâ Jâni's *Noqtat-al-kâf*, an apologia in support of Sayyid Ali Mohammad the Bâb, a young merchant from Shiraz, and his new Bâbi cause. Covering the early history of the movement up to the time of his own execution in 1852, Mirzâ Jâni's account reflected the mentality of a literate merchant who saw history as the unfolding of a messianic script. Appalled by what he viewed as the hypocrisy and ignorance of the religious establishment, and the ineptitude of the Qajar state, his salvation history may be read as the voice of the discontented mercantile class troubled by sharp turns in the economy and trade of the period. His work has been the subject of great scrutiny first by Edward Browne, who published a translation of some of its excerpts in the 1890s and subsequently the entire Persian text.[127] Later the Bahâ'i apologists tried to challenge the authenticity of the text and prove later interpolations.[128] The core of the controversy lies in the question of the Bâb's succession, which according to a reading of *Noqtat-al-kâf* was arrogated to Mirzâ Yahyâ Nuri, Sobh-e Azal. Yet beyond this controversy, and the possible tampering, this text offered an insight into the early Bâbi community and the motivations for early converts who accepted the claims made by a young merchant from Shiraz. Of

126 For the significance of the early Bâbi episode in the context of the mid-19th century Iran and development of Shi'ism, see A. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: the Making of the Babi Movement in Qajar Iran* (Ithaca, 1989; 2nd ed. Los Angeles, 2005).

127 *Kitab-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf being the Earliest History of the Bâbis compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the Years A.D. 1850 and 1852,* ed. E. G. Browne (Leiden and London, 1910).

128 See Abu'l-Fazâ'el Golpâyegâni and Mahdi Golpâyegâni, *Kashf-al-ghetâ'* (Tashkent, 1919 [?]).

special value are descriptions of the Bâdasht gathering, the Bâbi resistance in the makeshift fortress of Tabarsi (originally the mausoleum of Shaikh Tabarsi) in Mazandaran between 1848 and 1849 and the crisis in leadership after the Bâb's execution in 1850. Like the movement itself, Jâni's account is important for its inclusion of ordinary people from different ethnicities, professions, and geographical regions of Iran in a nationwide common cause countering the established order.

At a subaltern level, other Bâbi authors narrated personal and communal stories rare in Persian autobiographical and historical literature. Among them are the still unpublished Mahjur Zavâra'i's *Târikh-e Mimiyye,* the incomplete journal of Mirzâ Lotf-Ali Shirâzi of the events of the Tabarsi resistance and the recollections of Mirzâ Hoseyn Zanjâni of the Bâbi resistance in Zanjan.[129] These personal accounts continued to be produced up to the 20th century, revealing intricate details of desperation, poverty, hope and despair of the laborers, artisans, smalltime merchants, shop-keepers, village mollâs, madrasa seminarians and women from both privileged and humble origins. The Bâbi-Bahâ'i martyr narratives, such as Mohammad-Tâher Mâlmiri's *Târikh-e shohadâ-ye Yazd*,[130] narrate in great detail the gruesome lynching, raping and enslavement of the Bâbi victims and the mass hysteria that swept Yazd and its vicinity (and other Iranian cities), shortly before the Constitutional Revolution. This Bâbi-Bahâ'i martyrology resonated with and yet contested the Shi'i Karbalâ martyr narratives (such as the *rowzekhʷâni* and *ta'ziye* mourning ceremonies) by means of indigenizing suffering and contemporizing sacrifice. These were greatly unnerving to the Shi'i culture of the privileged exclusion and uniqueness of its sacred history.

The narrative of Shaikh Mohammad Nabil Zarandi written in its final draft in the late 1880s, on the other hand, was aimed to forge a coherent narrative of Bahâ'i legitimacy. It is therefore of

129 The latter tr. by E. G. Browne as "Personal reminiscences of the Babi insurrection," *JRAS* 29 [1897], pp. 761–827.

130 Cairo, 1923.

historiographical significance as much as of hagiographical value.[131] The author, a steadfast supporter of Mirzâ Hoseyn-Ali Nuri, Bahâ'ullâh, the articulator of what became the Bahâ'i faith, composed at his behest an overarching account incorporating a number of early oral and written sources, as well as the author's own eyewitness, recollections a few decades after the events. The implicit theme of Nabil's narrative was to magnify Bahâ'ullâh's place in the early history of the Bâbi movement and hence give historical weight to his communal leadership and prophetic claim, at the time when both were contested. In the process, Zarandi, in addition to predictable errors and mystifications, injected elements of the supernatural not unlike descriptions of magical feats and holy dreams in Sufi biographical dictionaries. His narrative, only available so far in an incomplete English translation that omits the events after 1852, was viewed as the official version of the birth of the Baha'i faith. Curiously devoid of elements of modernity imbedded in the message of the Baha'i faith, Nabil's outlook and method are more compatible with the Shi'i hagiographies, with one major distinction, that his narrative is fused with a notion of historical progression with a beginning and an end.

Even before the production of Nabil's history we may see a sense of historical progression with a greater affinity to modern needs in Mirzâ Abbâs Nuri Abd-al-Bahâ's *Maqâle-ye shakhsi sayyâh keh dar qâziyye-ye Bâb neveshte bud* ('An essay written by a certain traveler pertaining to the story of the Bab'). It was written anonymously in ca. 1886 to produce a succinct and coherent narrative of the new religion. Here too, legitimizing Bahâ'ullâh's claim to a millennial prophecy and defense of his disputed leadership of the Bâbis is present, but in contrast to Nabil's narrative, it adopts a modernist discourse in tune with the reformist vision of decline and awakening. It was first published in 1890 in Bombay, and a year later was translated with Persian text and copious notes by E. G. Browne, as *A Traveller's Narrative of the Bab.*[132] Begin-

131 Published only in abridged translation by Shoghi Effendi as *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation* (Wilmette, Ill. 1932). The full Persian text remains unpublished.

132 1st ed. Bombay, 1890; 2nd ed. 2 vols. Cambridge, 1891.

ning with the birth of the Bâbi movement and continuing to the Bahâ'ullâh era, it was loosely based on the available Bâbi and non-Bâbi oral and written sources. From the viewpoint of style and approach, seeing through the eyes of a traveler, an 'Other,' it aims to avoid the charged language of a believer. The latter part of the account turns more into a familiar genre of 'counsel for kings' as it pleads with Nâser-al-Din Shah for greater tolerance and criticizes the Shi'i establishment for its obscurantism and violation of modern norms of civility and justice.

Similarly in the early decades of the 20th century, another Baha'i historical account by Mohammad-Hasan Avâre (Âyati Tâfti), entitled *al-Kawâkeb-al-dorriye fi ma'âther-al-Bahâ'iyye*, was an attempt to fuse the Bâbi movement into the emergence of the Baha'i faith in a systematic fashion, and with greater facility in utilizing primary sources. Yet the resulting narrative, though coherent and well written, remained a communal history and even less interested than Abd-al-Bahâ's *Maqâle* in incorporating the movement into a broader Iranian narrative. As is the common characteristic of most Baha'i histories in the 20th century, the theme of suffering and martyrdom was seen as the sacred drive behind the course of human history and toward an ultimate salvation, a vision closely compatible with the Shi'i martyrdom narrative, but with a major distinction of seeking salvation in this world as well as in the hereafter.[133]

11. Local Histories and a National Narrative

Much as the Shi'i biographical dictionaries, the subaltern voices of dissent and communal sacred histories remained outside the state-sponsored historiography, a substantial body of local and provincial histories too was not entirely integrated. An example of differentiating between center and periphery, for instance, appeared in Rezâ-Qoli Khan Hedâyat's account of his embassy to Khiva, the

133 For an assessment of the early Bâbi sources and their historical direction, see Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal,* "Note on the Sources," pp. 422–40.

capital of Khʷârazm, as *Safar-nâme-ye Khʷârazm*.[134] A description of the Sunni Uzbek periphery, Hedâyat's account—though not published in his time—accentuated the contrast with Iran proper in religious and cultural terms. It further demarcated the historical boundaries that separated the two worlds and the insecurities that had arisen from Turkmen raids and enslavement of the Khorasani Shi'i subjects of the Qajar state.

A few decades later, from the 1870s onwards, a range of local histories began to highlight the local and regional diversity of Iran. They provide a refreshing view from the periphery, yet still remain within the conceptual framework of the "Guarded Domains of Iran" (*Mamâlek-e mahruse-ye Irân*). A certain degree of provincial autonomy and pride of place can be detected in these histories, while remaining mindful of their relation to the Iranian center. They often combined geographical, ethnographical, urban and other valuable details in the form of monographs either commissioned by the central government or local authorities, or written at the initiative of the authors. Mostly focused on individual cities and the surrounding provinces, and produced by informed urban notables and local officials, they were different in tone as they reflected mostly the outlook of the urban notables and their associated provincial groups.

Chief in this group is perhaps *Fârs-nâme-ye Nâseri* of Mirzâ Hasan Fasâ'i, where the intricate push and pull between the center and periphery is well evident in volume one of his narrative.[135] Weaving an annalistic history of Fars province into the general history of Qajar rule, he illustrates the state's difficulties in imposing a steady control over the cities and the hinterlands of Fars as well as over the Persian Gulf littoral. In the second volume he shows even more vividly the intricate network of urban notables and their means of exerting control or inciting chaos over the provincial cap-

134 Ed. and tr. C. Schefer as *Relation de l'ambassade au Kharezm (Khiva) de Riza Qouly Khân* (Paris, 1876–79).

135 2 vols. (in one), Tehran, 1894–95; 2nd ed. M. Rastegâr Fasâ'i (2 vols., Tehran, 1988). The latter part of vol. I was translated by H. Busse as *History of Persia under Qajar Rule* (New York and London, 1972). Cf. Chapter 6.

ital and the hinterlands, often to the despair of the Qajar state and its provincial representatives.

The claim for the cultural autonomy of the Fars province and its significance as the heartland of Persian identity is even more evident in *Âthâr-al-Ajam* ('The Persian heritage') by the innovative poet, artist and historian, Mohammad-Nasir Hoseyni Shirâzi Forsat-al-Dowle.[136] The massive geographical history of Fars, organized on an encyclopedic model, includes histories of the ruling dynasties of Fars from ancient to modern times, and important events associated with their rule. It also covers biographies of the companions of the Prophet, mystics, philosophers (both Persian and Arab), a summary of their speculative and scientific achievements, important mojtaheds and jurists, and an extensive list of poets and literary figures, together with specimens of their works. Forsat's acute awareness of Fars's historical continuity includes numerous sketches of Persepolis and other Achaemenid and Sasanid archeological reliefs, inscriptions and ruins in Fars and elsewhere, diagrams and maps of towns and villages, mosques and Islamic sites.

First commissioned by a British official through the aforementioned Manekji to survey towns, regions and archeological sties of Fars, Forsat was later persuaded by the premier Mirzâ Ali-Asghar Khan Amin-al-Soltân and the governor of Fars, Rezâ-Qoli Khan Mâfi Nezâm-al-Saltane, to turn his data into a book. Still operating within the familiar genre of historical geography produced in Iran since the early Islamic period (including the 12th-century *Fârs-nâme* of Ebn-Balkhi), the *Âthâr-al-Ajam's* ambition to reclaim the province's entire political and cultural heritage and its material remains exudes a deep sense of national belonging and cultural pride.

A similar sense of regional identity as a building block for a conglomerate Iranian identity is evident in Abd-al-Rahim Kalântar Zarrâbi's *Mer'ât-al-Qâshân* (*Târikh-e Kâshân*), a history of the city of Kashan and its environs.[137] Nâder Mirzâ Qâjâr's *Târikh va*

136 Tehran, 1897.
137 Ed. I. Afshâr (Tehran, 1962).

Joghrâfi-ye dâr-al-Saltane-ye Tabriz, a general geographical history of the city, is another example.[138] Ahmad-Ali Vaziri Kermâni's two-volume *Târikh-e Kermân (Sâlâriyye) and Joghrâfiyâ-ye Kermân* also provides a remarkable treatment of the city of Kerman and its notables and their functional interaction with the city's hinterland.[139]

Among his geographical works, Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane and his team created an incomplete geographical encyclopedia entitled *Mer'ât-al-boldân-e Nâseri*, with ample historical details about locales, individuals, and events.[140] Also of the same group is *Matla'-al-shams*, a massive monographic study of Khorasan and more specifically the holy city of Mashhad, one of the most comprehensive provincial histories to date.[141] Ali-Qoli Bakhtiyâri Sardâr As'ad's *Târikh-e Bakhtiyâri*, which as the name suggests is the first published account of the history of the Baktiyari confederacy and its territory, was suffused with a mix of tribal and patriotic pride, having been produced a few year after the conquest of Tehran by the pro-Constitutionalist Bakhtiyaris.[142]

With the exception of the last title, all of the above were part of a greater project of compiling Iran's historical geography under Nâser-al-Din Shah and they were mostly composed during 1880s and 1890s. Generally known as the Nâseri Collection (*majmu'e-ye Nâseri*), the project was supervised by Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane and presumably in collaboration with Mânakji, possibly as part of a British colonial survey of Iran. Most monographs in this collection remain unpublished, but E'temâd-

138 Tehran, 1905; new ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i Majd (Tabriz, 1994). See Christoph Werner, "The Amazon, the sources of the Nile, and Tabriz: Nadir Mirza's *Tārīkh va jughrāfī-yi dār al-salṭana-yi Tabrīz* and the local historiography of Tabriz and Azerbaijan," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 165–84.

139 *Târikh-e Kermân (Sâlâriyye)*, ed. E. Bâstâni-Pârizi (Tehran, 1961) and *Joghrâfiyâ-ye Kermân* (Tehran, 1974).

140 4 vols. (Tehran, 1877–80).

141 3 vols. (Tehran, 1883–85).

142 Tehran, 1914 (?). It was produced in collaboration with Abbâs-Qoli Khan Movârekh-al-Dowle Sepehr and employed both Persian sources and European travel accounts.

al-Saltane's comprehensive yet incomplete historical geography, *Mer'ât-al-boldân-e Nâseri*, is in great part based on the data in this collection. As a cross between traditional Persian and modern European geographical encyclopedias, *Mer'ât-al-boldân* aimed to survey the entire 'Guarded Domains' in the same fashion that the ongoing but unfinished project of *Nâme-ye dâneshvarân* ('Book of the Men of Learning') meant to demonstrate the vast expanse of Iran's multi-lingual Islamic culture. As in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman worlds, publication of encyclopedic histories greatly elevated a sense of national identity in the Nâseri era and through to the Constitutional Revolution.

12. Popular Histories and Memoirs

As in any other historiographical tradition, Persian popular accounts and personal narratives revealed intimate aspects of the past that were not the concern of the official histories, or were deliberately left out for reasons of state or prevailing religious or cultural mores. In the Safavid and post-Safavid era, lack of consistent archival material made reliance on the personal accounts even greater, be it memoirs that reconstructed the past in the light of the present, diaries and journals with instantaneous impressions, or supplementary material—at times essential—ranging from poetics and works of literature to subaltern accounts of heretics, eccentrics, storytellers, and the semi-literate.

Already at the turn of the 19th century, the autobiographical memoirs of the mayor of Shiraz, Mirzâ Mohammad Kalântar, revealed remarkable details in an unusually sincere tone, surveying the period from 1722 to 1785, the collapse of the Safavid Empire to the rise of Qajar dynasty. It was written toward the end of his life while in the captivity of Âqâ Mohammad Khan Qâjâr.[143] His regional and family loyalties, experiences with short-lived conquerors, incompetent governors and gracious rulers, bloody warlords,

143 *Ruznâme-ye Mirzâ Mohammad Kalântar-e Fârs*, ed. A. Eqbâl (Tehran, 1946).

self-serving local dignitaries, and numerous family foes in a particularly turbulent period, reveal a great deal about the violence, calamities, and fickleness of fate even for urban notables, who were increasingly at the mercy of tribal tyrants. Narrated in a sardonic tone that mixes satire, blunt language and literary sophistication, Mirzâ Mohammad is as much conscious of his Fars loyalties as he is aware of his Iranian identity forged through a common experience of suffering.

A similar personal account, hovering between history and fiction, was produced early in the Qajar period by another writer of Shirazi ancestry, though of obscure origins, Mohammad-Hâshem, with the self-assumed titles of *Rostam-al-hokamâ* and pen name *Âsaf*. His *Rostam-al-tavârikh* saw its last revision in the hand of the author apparently in 1835, rendering a somewhat personal narrative of the events of the preceding century, based on his father's and grandfather's accounts stretching back to the end of the Safavid period and, like the Kalântar, bearing the rude shock that came with the downfall of the Safavid order.[144] Rostam's account is continued by his own recollections up until the reign of Fath-Ali Shah. A curious mix of fact and fiction, this is an example of popular history in the genre of books of marvels (*ajâ'eb*), narrated in the engaging style and the humorous tone of the storytellers (*naqqâl*s).

Despite its fictional dimension, *Rostam-al-tavârikh* contains a fair amount of useful data for the socio-economic history of the period. What makes it unique, however, is its indigenous proto-modernity pronounced in his messianic yearning for change. He shares with the Kalântar his patriotic anxieties about the external and internal dangers that threaten his homeland. Witnessing the state's vulnerability and inner decay since the late 18th century, the author is concerned with the European powers' encroachment on a country weakened by corruption and misrule. Even though he aspired to find in the rise of the Qajar dynasty the prosperity and

144 Ed. M. Moshiri (Tehran, 1969). See also Birgitt Hoffmann, *Persische Geschichte 1694–1835 erlebt, erinnert und erfunden: Das* Rustam at-Tawarih *in deutscher Bearbeitung* (Bamberg, 1986).

security of the Safavid and Zand eras, he is nonetheless concerned by the loss of Iranian prestige, the rise of English colonial power in neighboring India and the Persian Gulf, the ominous influence of the conservative religious establishment, and by economic decline and insecurity.[145]

The greater presence of the individual as an observer of events and the desire to narrate autobiographical stories, characteristic of cultural modernity, is detectable with increasing frequency from the middle of the Nâseri period. A large number of memoirs, diaries, journals, travelogues and other personal accounts were produced, predominantly by the Qajar élite and their associates. Though they are mostly concerned with contemporary events, domestic and foreign travel, and everyday activities, they are of some value in assessing the shift towards greater communal and national awareness in ways more sincere than official accounts. They reveal the historical outlook of men of privilege and their perception of the past and the present. Foremost among them is the extensive secret diaries of Mohammad-Hasan Khan E'temâd-al-Saltane, the *Ruznâme-ye khâterât*, with valuable details on the Qajar royalty and elite of his time, the process of decision-making, court politics and the Shah's personality.[146]

Likewise, memoirs of Mirzâ Ali Khan Amin-al-Dowle, the influential minister of the Nâseri era who entertained reformist ideas, also offer a critical insight into the inner working of the Qajar court and government.[147] Penned by an experienced insider, Amin-al-Dowle detects the root causes of Iran's malaise—what made his county a devastated land (*Irân-e virân*)—above all in the corrupt politics of the court and the capricious character of the ruler himself. The *Târikh-e sargozasht-e Mas'udi* by Mas'ud

145 Like other works of the author, only a few manuscript copies of *Rostam-al-tavârikh* languished in libraries with virtually no visible influence on his contemporaries. See A.K.S. Lambton, "Some new trends in Islamic political thought in late 18th and early 19th century Persia," *Studia Islamica* 39 (1974), pp. 95–128 and Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal,* pp. 89–93.

146 Ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1966).

147 *Khâterât-e siyâsi-ye Mirzâ Ali Khân Amin-al-Dowle*, ed. H. Farmânfarmâ'iyân (Tehran, 1962).

Mirzâ Zell-al-Soltân, the longtime prince governor of Isfahan (and other southern and western provinces) and almost a partner to his father's rule, offers little beyond an investigation into the origins of his tribe and royal family and some vignettes about the inner working of the provincial court at Isfahan.[148] The rest is confined to descriptions of the prince's frequent hunting sorties at the expense of commenting on his own involvement in the domestic politics of his country, his extensive diplomacy and his political ambitions.

Later in the century, the journal diaries of Qahramân Mirzâ Eyn-al-Saltane, a half-brother of Nâser-al-Din Shah, preserve a remarkable coverage of a long period between 1882 and 1945: perhaps the most extensive ever produced in Persian.[149] A unique source of intimate details, they reveal the evolving life and mentality of a relatively impoverished prince in the capital and in the countryside, at the critical juncture when the demise of the Qajar dynasty and the rise of Rezâ Khan confronted him with painful but inevitable realities.

13. Conclusions

Persian historiography in the period under consideration—from the late 18th to the first quarter of the 20th century—evolved into a more country-bound and socially inclusive narrative in focus and purpose, as well as in method and style. Yet the use of official history for securing legitimacy and dynastic glory to all intents and purposes kept historians in the service of the state and the élite, at least before the Constitutional Revolution. Though the shift in format from court chronicles and biographical dictionaries to modern national histories denoted a tangible advance, historiography remained predominantly political in content and dynastic in organization. Yet thanks to a mini print revolution toward the very end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the readership for

148 Tehran, 1907.

149 *Ruznâme-ye khâterât-e Eyn-al-saltana,* ed. M. Sâlur and I. Afshâr (10 vols., Tehran, 1996–2001).

history grew substantially to involve a wider sector of the urban population and students in the modern schools. Memories of the pre-Islamic past, as they evolved from myth to history, became a source of national pride and forged a sense of identity among a new generation of secularizing Iranians during and after the Constitutional Revolution.

Three stages in Qajar cultural history contributed to this evolving historiography. The neoclassicism embedded in the revival (*bâzgasht*) movement in the early 19th century produced histories with a simpler style, less verbosity and greater interest in historical continuity as transmitted through *Shahname* legends and Perso-Islamic universal histories. New challenges to Iran's territorial integrity, both from European imperial powers and domestic sources, made such an endeavor evermore crucial for its patrons. Legitimizing the Qajar crown and locating it within the Persian kingship tradition became an imperative for the historians of the period. The more military and political setbacks in the face of Western powers imbued a sense of despair and material decline, the more historians became aware of sanctifying the Qajar state as heir to a rich kingship tradition, but also as defender of Iran's Shi'i identity.

During the Nâseri era, a new layer of complexity was added to the state's search for legitimacy, largely through the historical productions of the Ministry of Publications and scholars in its service. Awareness of archeological findings about Iran's pre-Islamic past and some knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin texts generated a new sense of proto-nationalist pride in Iran's assumed continuity and its place in human civilization. It also presented new challenges as to how to reconcile this rediscovered past with Iran's Islamic heritage. More importantly, historical awareness of Iran as a country, and its nascent nationalist narrative, began to be rarified beyond Persian legends by Western sources and the Orientalist scholarship that often contrasted the glories of the distant past with the presumed decay and infirmity of Iran's present.

The new chronology from ancient to modern times, once systematized and rationalized, created a new conceptualization of historical time that became particularly attractive to dissident intellectuals and their discourse of national rebirth. Depicting Iran's

Islamic transformation—and later conversion to Shi'ism—as more of an aberration than an accomplishment, it silently rejected the conservative religious forces associated with this Islamic past as backward, and the state's close association with it as apprehensive. The Arab conquest and Turko-Mongolian invasions were portrayed as disruptive to Iran's political continuity and disastrous to its cultural heritage. In turn, such a narrative accentuated the paradigm of decline and its corollary, the need for renewal, a set feature of the reform discourse of the 19th-century non-Western world. Like Egypt and China, Iran rediscovered and reclaimed its ancient civilization—and more than the others viewed it as a powerful nemesis to Greece, Rome and Byzantium—in order to contrast it with the realities of the present.

By the time of the Constitutional Revolution, the idea of awakening was no longer viewed solely together with the revival of the state, but rather was seen as a mass movement by the Iranian nation to rid itself of material decrepitude, tyranny, and religious superstition in order to recapture the splendor of the bygone age. It can be argued that the sequence of glory, decline, and reawakening was deeply embedded in Shi'i messianic consciousness, albeit with a tragic overtone. The dissident intellectuals-cum-chroniclers of the Constitutional period, one can suggest, transposed this messianic awareness into a secular narrative of national salvation. The resonances and ramifications of this vision of reawakening continued through to the Pahlavi era and into contemporary Iran.

CHAPTER 8

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE PAHLAVI ERA*

Fakhreddin Azimi

> The progress of knowledge, in the case of social science, supposes a progress in the knowledge of the conditions of knowledge. (Pierre Bourdieu)
>
> It would be a grievous error, indeed, to think that the order which historians adopt for their inquiries must necessarily correspond to the sequence of events. (Marc Bloch)
>
> The variety of historical evidence is nearly infinite. (Marc Bloch)
>
> Great research worker, no historian. (G.M. Trevelyan on Lewis Namier)

1. Introduction

This chapter primarily explores the main trends in the writing of history during the Pahlavi era. I first consider the contributions of four leading historians: Hasan Pirniyâ and Abbâs Eqbâl, who were close to the literary/cultural establishment, and Ahmad Kasravi and Fereydun Âdamiyat, who could be regarded as outsiders. I then survey the legacy of men of letters and Persian "Iranologists", and discuss the broader issues of the institutional and cultural setting for historical

* I would like to thank Mohsen Ashtiany, John Gurney and Ehsan Yarshater—who also invited me to write this chapter—for their helpful comments on an earlier draft. As on many other occasions in the past, I also benefitted from my conversations and correspondence with the late Iraj Afshar to whose memory this volume is dedicated.

scholarship, including the circumstances that helped or hindered it. I conclude by underlining the resilience of conventional approaches to the study of history. Beyond cursory hints, we cannot here engage in a discussion of the politics and culture of the Pahlavi era, knowledge of which is taken for granted on the part of the reader.

Modern historians generally consider the cognitive status of historical judgments to be provisional. Any judgment about the historians of the Pahlavi era or their work is also tentative and requires more thorough research and analysis. It is a commonplace of modern historical thinking that historical scholarship, the approaches attempted, the questions posed, and answers sought, are situation-specific; they are themselves situated within the purview of history and determined by specific temporal conditions. Each generation in every era poses its own historical questions and seeks its own answers. Moreover, in every society historians are subject to an existential-cognitive predicament; they are themselves products of their historically constituted milieu; they are affected by what they study, by the existing body of historical knowledge and sources, and by the local criteria of what counts as historical scholarship. They can rarely or only partially transcend these constraints.

Pre-modern Persian historians were primarily chroniclers; they enjoyed court or princely patronage, which usually determined the content and contours of their work. Some of them went beyond merely descriptive narrative and revealed considerable interest in explanation, but they generally tended to believe in or invoke destiny, fate, fortune, or the impact of inexorable supernatural forces in the affairs of Man. They maintained that history's primary function was didactic: it entailed, and served to teach, a moral lesson (*ebrat*). The process of the disengagement of history from chronicle, myth, rhetoric, and panegyric was slow, intermittent and partial. With the onset of modernity in the 19th century, attitudes to the past and to its study gradually began to change. The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 signified and intensified the process of socio-political and cultural change in Iranian society. It expedited the rise of a print culture, the expansion of literacy and the emergence of a growing public sphere interested in reading and the acquisition of reliable information and knowledge.

Understanding and writing history was affected by the growing necessity of teaching it in schools and institutions of higher education. Libraries and bookshops were established; affordable printed editions of historical sources and texts on history became available, and the works of foreign scholars became more easily accessible through translation or in the original. The rise of nationalism also had a tremendous impact on boosting historical scholarship and interest in the past. Many historians supported constitutionalism and probed its origins, the process of its unfolding, and its consequences. A corollary to this was a keen interest in unfettered scholarly pursuit. Familiarity with modern approaches, whether in the sciences or the humanities, together with the emergence of the study of social sciences, would have a transforming impact on the meaning of history, its philosophy and methodology, notions of historical evidence, causation, demonstration and explanation.

The writing of history became concerned with the search for and exploration of existing and new sources. There was a growing awareness of the need to pay attention to a variety of factors, and for analysis and explanation, implicit or explicit. Consciously or subconsciously, the spirit of Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), and his assertion that real historical research involves writing about the past "as it had really been" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) informed or influenced Iranian historians. The role of agency—individual and collective—in bringing about change, received particular attention. Structural constraints were less explicitly appreciated, and historical focus rarely transcended the political. Although impartiality was valued as a principle, historians were unmistakably animated by current concerns, particularly nationalism and constitutionalism. Inevitably, the country's past civilizational achievements, the causes of its decline, and the factors militating against national solidarity, development, progress, and liberal-constitutionalist governance were among the primary subjects of historical enquiry.

Examples of new ways of thinking and writing about the past can be found in the 19th century, when several translations of works of history also became available. As noted in the previous chapter, Mohammad Hasan Khân E'temâd-al-Saltane, Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ, and Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni have been mentioned as the

forerunners of new trends in approaching Iranian history. Jalâl-al-Din Mirzâ, although distinctly informed by nationalist attachments, was still writing in the old framework of dynastic narrative. Kermâni was not only more decidedly nationalistic, but also more modern-minded and politically engaged, although the value of his contribution as reliable history was limited.[1] He would, however, be considered by some later historians as a pioneer who clearly broke away from old approaches to the past, revealed considerable understanding of the philosophy of history, and showed an acute interest in probing the causes of the decline and advancement of societies.[2] However, a distinctly new orientation in historical approach, particularly in collecting, classifying, exploring and utilizing new sources, and constructing a balanced and evidence-based narrative, starts with Pirniyâ.

2. Hasan Pirniyâ

Hasan Pirniyâ (Moshir-al-Dowle, 1873–1935), son of a prominent Qajar statesman, was educated in Moscow, primarily in law. He had no training in history but as a late practitioner of this craft revealed himself to be methodically minded, scrupulous and judicious. These qualities, together with his liberal temperament, and perhaps more significantly his legal training, were indispensable to the development of his careful approach to historical investigation and interest in proceeding on the basis of evidence and logical inferences. Spanning some thirty years, his political life and experience—several times minister, four times prime minister, the key figure in the founding of the School of Political Science, and a respected parliamentarian, among other things—enhanced his mental capacity for the scholarly venture he embarked upon after leaving public service. Concomitantly, his interest in history was heightened by his nationalism, attachment to constitutionalism, active

1 *EIr*, s.v. Historiography, viii. Qajar Period (A. Amanat).
2 Fereydun Âdamiyat, *Andishe-hâ-ye Mirzâ Âqâ Khân Kermâni* (Tehran, 1967), p. 13.

involvement in legal reform, interest in the rule of law, and his experience of the inadequacies of Iranian administrative and political structures which paved the way for Rezâ Khan's ascendancy and later absolutist rule as shah. Pahlavi rule did not prove congenial to Pirniyâ's continued service as a parliamentarian, precipitating his abandonment of politics in favor of historical research. Yet its nationalist ethos was broadly in tune with his sensibilities. It also provided him with the opportunity and the incentive to contemplate the past, ponder the revival of consciousness of the ebbs and flows of ancient Iranian history, and contribute to the development of a nationalist spirit and pride. He seemed convinced, and wished to reiterate, that a nation with a great past could not but play a vital role in the future.

Pirniyâ first published *Irân-e bâstâni*—the subtitle of which was "The history of Iran from very ancient times to the dissolution of the Sasanid state"—in 1928. This work contained the germ of his historical thinking and approach, later developed in *Târikh-e Irân-e bâstân*. In the prologue to *Irân-e bâstâni* (dated March 1928), he wrote that almost half the book deals with introducing ancient Iranian civilization, comparing various periods, and discussing subjects that are not directly linked to "pure history." The reason for adopting this approach, he argued, was that for the past fifty years a belief had gained ascendancy among scholars of history that

> chronicling historical events and mentioning the names of kings and persons of prominence (*rejâl*) is not on its own sufficient for understanding the past of a country and the spiritual (*ruhi*) condition of its people. Instead, in order to understand a nation, its civilizational circumstances (*owzâ'-e madani*) must be understood; and in order to achieve this one must understand the elements which make up the civilization of a nation, or indicate the degree of its civilization.[3]

Some writers, Pirniyâ argued, have considered the discussion of civilization so significant that, in their historical writings, they have placed it before the narrative of events, the names of kings and statesmen or "pure history." Pirniyâ did not deny that this

3 Hasan Pirniyâ, *Irân-e bâstâni* (Tehran, 1928), prologue, no page number.

approach "may have its advantages," but in the interest of facilitating understanding he opted for "the opposite"—giving precedence to "pure history" over a history of civilization. For him

> institutions, and industries, and many other things are the product of the thoughts of individuals and are accomplished by them. Even if we take it entirely for granted that individuals are the product of their own environment and have acted according to the exigencies of that the environment, it is still necessary initially to get to know them and to understand in what circumstances they have become important, and what events have impelled them to act or accomplish something.[4]

This statement, although curiously paradoxical or equivocal, was meant to convey Pirniyâ's heuristic belief in the primacy of individuals, their deeds and thoughts. Pirniyâ's history was, of course, not merely a detailed account of exceptional individuals, or of the deeds of rulers, but was also a broader chronicle of dynasties, and of war and peace, outlining events from the rise of the Elamites to the fall of the Sasanids. He paid particular attention to the Aryans; for him, although the contributions of the ancient Aryans to human civilization may not in terms of quality have been as important as that of the ancient Greeks, in terms of quantity they were no less significant, and according to some, were more so. It is for this reason that "scholars have called the ancient Aryans a historic nation (*mellat-e târikhi*)."[5] Drawing on German sources, *Irân-e bâstâni* furnished, among other things, valuable geographic information about ancient Iran; it also provided a useful list of dynasties and kings.

This book was followed a year later by *Dâstânhâ-ye Irân-e qadim.* In this important short work Pirniyâ concentrated on the mythological and legendary history of ancient Iran, explored its legends (*dâstânhâ*) and mythical figures, and compared the mythological with the conventional history. He expressed regret that "so far we have done little to explore our country's ancient history" and are beholden to the efforts of European Orientalists. Irani-

4 Ibid.

5 Pirniyâ, *Irân-e bâstâni*, p. 511.

ans, he maintained, must make their own contribution to the study of their past. This was a requirement of "national self-esteem" (*ezzat-e nafs-e melli*); moreover, "it is necessary for every nation to remember its past because this strengthens the spirit of nationalism and stimulates patriotism in the hearts of the people. Given our glorious past, we must not lag behind other nations in this regard." Pirniyâ then proceeded to underline the significance of archeological excavations and the creation of museums. The more that is done by way of the excavation and exploration of the past, the more historically significant the Persian Aryans would prove to be. In the future, Pirniyâ asserted, Iran would shoulder significant tasks in the community of nations, as it has done in the past.

For Pirniyâ, one of the country's chief challenges was "to preserve and protect its nationalism and not to forfeit negligently what it has achieved in its 2,500 years of recorded history, and more than 4,000 years of mythological history." One of the most important steps in this regard was "the knowledge of history, and the excavation, preservation and protection of national sites …; nothing bonds a nation together like its past." There are nations with many languages,

> but there is no nation that has several histories. If a nation has several histories it will inevitably splinter into smaller nations. Therefore, historical unity is one of the most solid and reliable guarantors of national unity, and it must be preserved and constantly remembered, not just through books, but through organizing [historical] exhibitions, the construction of museums and whatever else may have a greater imprint on memory.[6]

Five years after the publication of *Irân-e bâstâni*, Pirniyâ published the first volume of *Târikh-e Irân-e bâstân*, which was soon followed by the second (1932–33). In the prologue to volume one he stated that his preferred practice was "referring to sources directly and collecting data scattered in a variety of sources." He classified these sources as documents and evidence that have been uncovered in the past two hundreds years, or have been obtained through archeological excavations, and the works of early authors

6 Pirniyâ, *Dâstânhâ-ye Irân-e qadim* (Tehran, 1929), pp. 163–64.

(*motaqaddemin).* Pirniyâ's ambition was "to get to know the actual history (*târikh-e vâqe'i*) of ancient Iran, with all the details that have been recorded."[7] Not unusual for his time and the sources on which he relied, "race" was a key explanatory category in his approach. He stated that scholars of the ancient east have considered its inhabitants to be divided into six races. With the ascendancy of the Aryans in West Asia,

> all of the ancient East came to be united under a single state, spearheaded by the Medes, and through the Persians; thus, the Achaemenid state was the apogee of the ancient East. Some representatives of the black race also had a small part in this civilization.[8]

Pirniyâ maintained that the historical era in Iran began roughly from late 8th century BC, and by the 9th century BC, three ethnic Aryan groups occupied certain territories and formed feudal (*moluk-al-tavâyef*) states: the Medes in the West, the Bactrians in the East, and Persians in the South.[9] Pirniyâ relied heavily on and recounted the views of western scholars but sought his own conclusions, which were perhaps colored by the political circumstances of his time. Describing most Achaemenid kings as "magnanimous and compassionate" (*bâ-ra'fat*), he considered the behavior of Cyrus to have been due to his moral sensibilities, which were not, however, "entirely due to personal characteristics," but were influenced by "the religious beliefs of the ancient Persians."[10] Pirniyâ viewed Cyrus as

> a consummate commander and a great statesman … strong willed and unflinching in his resolution. However, his prudence matched his resolve. He appealed more to reason than to the sword. Cyrus's treatment of the vanquished opened a new chapter in the history of the ancient East.[11]

Pirniyâ's judgments were usually measured. Modern historians, he maintained, "have unanimously considered him [Cyrus] to be a

7 Pirniyâ, *Târikh-e Irân-e bâstân,* vol. 1 (Tehran 1932), prologue, p. 162.
8 Ibid., prologue, p. 40.
9 Ibid., prologue, p. 163.
10 Ibid., p. 476.
11 Ibid., pp. 476–77.

historic leader and a great monarch." No doubt Cyrus was a ruler of whom Pirniyâ unhesitatingly approved, and yet he did not condone Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau's "exaggerated account of him."[12] Pirniyâ's appraisal of Alexander was also fair-minded:

> Alexander was a great man, possessed of a variety of characteristics, both good and bad; his conquests caused untold pain and suffering for the nations and peoples of his time, and therefore, when we look at him from the perspective of the good of humanity, he took much and gave little. Nevertheless, his conquests opened up a new era in the ancient East, which in Iran lasted until the assumption of power by the Ashkanians, and in Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt, until the ascendancy of the Romans.[13]

In August 1933, Pirniyâ suffered a stroke and his writing was disrupted. The third volume was, nevertheless, published in 1934, but he was not able to complete his work, dealing with the Sasanians; nor was Sa'id Nafisi, to whom he turned to complete the project.[14] It seems that through extreme perseverance, inexhaustible energy, and an act of sheer will, Pirniyâ had taken up a challenge that few of his contemporaries could match. He knew Russian and French fluently and had a good knowledge of English and Arabic; he had also begun to learn German in order to make use of important studies in that language. In addition to studies in modern European languages, he made use of Armenian, Jewish, Babylonian, Assyrian, Arabic and pre- and post-Islamic Persian sources. Besides textual sources, he made use of archeological and numismatic evidence; he sought to collect the most up to date information and consulted other scholars. Undeterred by the dearth or inaccessibility of sources, he tried to overcome whatever biases he perceived or detected in his mostly Greek and Roman sources by employing common sense, as well as the modern principles of historical scrutiny with which he was adequately familiar. He harbored no strong illusions about the inevitably uneven and heterogeneous sources

12 Ibid., p. 477.
13 Ibid., vol. II, p. 1947.
14 The Sasanian section would eventually be taken up by Mohammad-Javâd Mashkur.

available to him. He has been, however, plausibly criticized for his insufficiently critical attitude to sources, for over reliance on certain sources such as inscriptions, for treating the Old Testament as though it were a work of history, for having been selective in the choice of sources he has relied on, and for not drawing on all the information contained in them.[15] Although showing little penchant for analytical interjections and sometimes for the broader implications of his account, Pirniyâ also generally avoided implausible assumptions and unwarranted or exaggerated statements, and revealed a keen awareness of the intricacies of ancient Iranian history and culture. In terms of ambition, range, sources, dedication, and vision, as well as its encyclopedic quality, Pirniyâ's accomplishment was remarkable. He not only worked tirelessly to be faithful to the sources available to him, but was also fastidiously concerned with ensuring that his work was free of typographical errors.[16]

It is highly likely that Pirniyâ's reading of European, particularly German sources, resulted in the direct influence of Ranke. Among other things, Pirniyâ's assertion that he intended "to represent ancient Iran as it actually was" (*Irân-e bâstâni*, prologue), unmistakably echoes the spirit of Ranke. Pirniyâ's explanation of the rise and particularly the fall of various dynasties such as the Medes also clearly resembles the views of Ebn-Khaldun. Unlike Ebn-Khaldun, however, Pirniyâ appeared to pay little attention to the loss of *esprit de corps*, but like him he invoked the corrosive impact on rulers of wealth, idle indulgences, and corruption. The Medes, he maintained, were not able to resist their rivals, the Persians, who were untainted by luxury and lived a simple and harsh life in the mountains. The Persians, in their turn, yielded to the temptations that had affected their predecessors and became vulnerable to the onslaught of Alexander, whose successors eventually succumbed to corruption and lethargy. This situation Pirniyâ considered to be the condition of every era and society.[17]

15 Abd-al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub, 'Shive-ye târikh-negâri dar ketâb-e Irân-e bâstân-e Moshir-al-Dowle', *Râhnemâ-ye ketâb* 15 (1973), pp. 751–54.

16 Mohammad-Ebrâhim Bâstâni-Pârizi, *Mohit-e siyâsi va zendegâni-ye Moshir-al-Dowle (Hasan Pirniyâ)* (Tehran, 1965), p. 138.

17 Pirniyâ, *Târikh-e Irân-e bâstân* I, pp. 206–7.

Pirniyâ attempted to provide a single grand narrative of the pre-Islamic past of Iran, a narrative the details of which could be disputed or revised, and in the light of new findings improved and completed, but he envisaged little discussion of its general contours. Emphasizing the long-lasting achievements of the past and the historical awareness of them was meant to help the nationalist self-consciousness and cohesion of the nation. Inspired by its distant past, Pirniyâ hoped, Iran could play a significant role in the future. Providing Iranian nationalism with a repository of solid historical narrative had been a predominant incentive motivating Pirniyâ to embark on his monumental work. He sought to highlight any positive statement he encountered regarding the spiritual and moral qualities of the ancient Persians; he did not however, consciously attempt to hide unpalatable facts or avoid critical observations.[18] His nationalist sensibilities were fundamentally at odds with the flamboyant and rigid chauvinism of less learned writers who, for instance, denied the historical existence of Alexander.

3. Abbâs Eqbâl-Âshtiyâni

One of the main scholars expected to continue the work of Pirniyâ beyond the pre-Islamic era was Abbâs Eqbâl-Âshtiyâni. Born in 1897 into a poor family in the provincial town of Âshtiyân, Eqbâl worked as a carpenter's apprentice until he was fourteen when, encouraged by his mother, he began attending a traditional primary school (*maktab*). He subsequently attended Dâr-al-fonun in Tehran. Following a few years as a schoolteacher, in 1924 he was sent to France as secretary to the Persian military delegation in Paris, where he stayed for five years. During this period he attended the Sorbonne, and became a devoted disciple and friend of the renowned Iranian scholar Mohammad Qazvini, who resided in Paris. Upon returning to Iran, he devoted himself to research and writing. In 1935, he received a scholarship to spend a year

18 Bâstâni-Pârizi, *Mohit-e siyâsi*, p. 139.

studying in Europe, and upon his return began teaching history at Tehran University; he was also appointed to the Iranian Academy (*Farhangestân-e Irân*). As a member of a circle of prominent men of letters in the early Pahlavi era, Eqbâl's initial interest was in literary and textual studies, with history as an auxiliary component. Although gradually moving more specifically to historical scholarship, his earlier interests persisted as integral components of his historical approach. Among his important contributions was the preparation of critical editions of classics of history and literature, which itself contributed to historical and literary research.

In the late summer of 1944, Eqbâl founded and edited the journal *Yâdegâr*, which he described as a literary, scientific and historical monthly. He would publish ten issues per year for the following five years. The journal, which had no comparable predecessor, became a venue for the scholarly and educational works of Eqbâl and others; he would also have a chance through his editorials or commentaries to expound on his political-intellectual preoccupations. His mastery of an effective, succinct, and at times moving prose, facilitated his impact and the reach of his writing. With the closure of the journal in 1949 due to financial problems,[19] the embittered Eqbâl sought a way to leave the country; with this in mind he accepted the post of Iran's cultural attaché in Turkey and Italy—a position he retained until his death in Rome in February 1956, at the age of 59. Various accounts of his character concur in portraying him as a generous and candid person, a loyal friend, and a scholar ready to acknowledge what he had learnt from others and keen to base his contentions on evidence. These accounts, and his own letters, also indicate that he was overly sensitive; despite apparent vivacity, he appears to have suffered from depression and a persecution complex, but this does not seem to have affected his immense energy, perseverance and hard work. He remained unmarried, led a simple and frugal life, refused to accept high office, and blamed those among his peers who did.

Eqbâl's first important scholarly book was *Khândân-e Nowbakhti*, which was prepared in French in Paris, as a BA disserta-

19 Yahyâ Âriyanpur, *Az Nimâ tâ ruzgâr-e mâ* (Tehran, 1995), p. 86.

tion, and then completed and published in Persian in 1932.[20] Although largely descriptive, in terms of details and the diversity of its sources, in particular manuscripts, it was a notable work of research. The book chronicled the lives and contributions of the prominent members of the Nowbakhtis—an old and distinguished Persian Zoroastrian family. Within two centuries after the emergence of Islam, the Nowbakhtis embraced Shi'ism and joined the service of the Abbasids as bureaucrats, astrologers, and translators of Pahlavi texts. Some of them became learned exponents of *kalâm* and advocates of Shi'ism. He praised the Nowbakhtis for striving to maintain "Persian independence" and resisting the complete absorption of the country by Sunnism.[21] The book highlighted Persian contributions to the development of Islamic civilization, and also shed light on the religious, sectarian and theological history of medieval Persia.

This book was soon followed by a work that was to cover Iranian history from the Mongol invasion to the Constitutional Revolution, but only the first volume was published.[22] In writing this book, Eqbâl relied on a variety of not easily accessible original sources. Although mainly a general political history, this wide-ranging work discussed cultural, and to some extent socio-economic topics - industries, architectural monuments, roads and communication, commercial ties, the expansion of trade. It also dealt with religious and communal conflicts, for instance between the Hanafis and Shâfe'is in Isfahan, which did much to mar the city's public life, facilitating its eventual sack by the Mongols. Up to the end of the Safavid era, Eqbâl argued, Iran was directly involved in world politics and economics, but it was gradually encircled by the Russian and Ottoman empires. Cut off from the outside world, the country

20 Abbâs Eqbâl, *Khândân-e Nowbakhti* (Tehran, 1932, reprinted with corrections in 1966); another notable product of Eqbâl's scholarly interest in early Islamic-Iranian history was an incisive study entitled *Sharh-e hâl-e Abd-Allâh ebn-Moqaffa'* (Berlin, 1927).

21 Eqbâl, *Khândân-e Nowbakhti*, introduction, p. 14.

22 Eqbâl, *Târikh-e mofassal-e Irân az estilâ-ye moghol tâ e'lân-e mashrutiyat*, vol. 1: *Az hamle-ye Changiz tâ tashkil-e dowlat-e Teymuri* (Tehran, 1933).

experienced a chronic decline, as its sheltered inhabitants remained unaware of developments in the modern world.[23]

Some of the topics broached in this volume, particularly the theme of Iran's "decline," which was one of Eqbâl's chief preoccupations, and his interest in exploring the factors militating against the spread of modern civilization to the country, were taken up in a general book on modern civilization.[24] This book was devised in two parts, the first dealing with the era of modern European civilization, and the second covering Persian scientific and literary history in the same period. In discussing the causes of the decline of Iran since the Safavids, he paid particular attention to the adverse consequences of the Mongol and Timurid invasions, the deterioration of cultural and literary standards, the growth of the life-renouncing creed of wandering dervishes (*qalandarmaneshi*), the rise of religious fanaticism, and the ascendancy of myopic mollas capable of exerting considerable influence over the Safavid rulers. When Iranians in later centuries "woke up," thanks to the significant efforts of reformers like Amir Kabir,[25] it was too late to compensate for the prolonged ignorance of advances in Europe and to catch up with them. Moreover, there were many who, according to Eqbâl, benefited from promoting backwardness and defeating reformist measures. He also considered the broader context, particularly the disruption of trade with Europe due to the opening up of new sea routes.[26]

These and other works, whether textbooks,[27] or an array of articles published in his own journal and elsewhere, and an important posthumously published study of chief ministers during the Saljuq era,[28] revealed the breadth of Eqbâl's knowledge and interests. In

23 Ibid., pp. 572–75.
24 Eqbâl, *Kolliyât-e târikh-e tamaddon-e jadid* (Tehran 1941).
25 Eqbâl also prepared a separate work on Amir Kabir based on new sources, which was posthumously published; see *Mirzâ Taqi Khân Amir Kabir*, ed. Iraj Afshâr (Tehran, 1961).
26 Eqbâl, *Kolliyât*, pp. 32–33.
27 See for instance Eqbâl's two-volume textbook, *Târikh-e Irân-e ba'd az Eslâm* (Tehran, 1939).
28 Eqbâl, *Vezârat dar ahd-e salâtin-e bozorg-e saljuqi*, ed. Mohammad-Taqi Dâneshpazhuh and Yahyâ Dhokâ (Tehran, 1959).

the first issue of *Yâdegâr*, Eqbâl wrote that "investigating the historical problems pertaining to Iran, and chronicling the lives of great figures (*bozorgân*) associated with this land, are among the most important purposes of this journal." At this stage, he added, exploration of the history of the last 150 years, and the story of persons of distinction in this period, is given preference over any other historical discussion or accounts of the lives of exemplary individuals.[29] As this statement reveals, Eqbâl's interest had shifted to more recent history and he continued to perceive history as primarily about outstanding men. His emphasis on individuals gave his work a distinctly traditional flavor, not vitiated but in some sense reinforced by concern with "decline," which he used in a generic and undifferentiated sense.

With a quasi-positivist understanding of the role of preconceived assumptions in historical enquiry, he did not consider it possible to write an adequate contemporary history free from presupposition and the desire to find evidence in order to prove or vindicate a preconceived position. People of a particular era, he maintained, could not write its history, which should be left to future generations.[30] Contemporary concerns did, however, affect most of Eqbâl's works. For him, ignorance of the past was at the root of contemporary indifference to the interests of the country, and shortcomings and errors in dealing with the problems it faced. Nationalism was a major theme profoundly informing Eqbâl's life and work. He opposed the 1919 Agreement, which would have enabled Britain to formalize its subjugation of Iran; he also opposed the Soviet supported "autonomy movement" in Azarbaijan in the mid-1940s. His nationalist sensibilities led him to enquire into the native but defunct language of Azarbaijan; he took offence at works such as James Morier's *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*,[31] which he considered as clearly intended to ridicule and belittle the Persians; he wrote about the contribution of the Iranians to human

29 *Yâdegâr* 1/1 (1944), p. 5.

30 Eqbâl, "Neveshtan-e târikh-e mo'âser," *Yâdegâr* 4/3 (October–November 1947), pp. 1–8.

31 Eqbâl, "Ketâb-e Hâji Bâbâ," *Yâdegâr* 1/5 (December 1944–January 1945), pp. 28–50.

civilization; regretted and probed the causes of the country's decline; feared the inadequacy or erosion of national unity; and was alert to the factors militating against such unity. He did not, however, romanticize the past; his candid account of the callous brutality of Nâder Shah Afshâr, a ruler lionized by chauvinist writers, is a case in point.[32]

In many of his articles, and particularly his editorials in *Yâdegâr*, Eqbâl also directly or indirectly dealt with crucial socio-political issues of the day.[33] He advocated freedom of conscience and expression, while regretting the diminution of civility and decency, and the growing appeal of invective among journalists and their readers. He opposed excess in the adoption of European civilization, and dismissed what he viewed as its vulgar components while at the same time emphasizing the need to understand and acquire European scientific methods, spirit and organization.[34] Viewing the pro-western reforms of the Rezâ Shah era as largely superficial and imitative, he regarded them as unconcerned with scientific, spiritual and moral developments or with what had accounted for the mastery of Europeans.[35] For him individual freedom and a sense of responsibility among the Iranians had been stifled as a result of the deleterious impact of widespread and chronic royal and clerical domination.[36] Opposed to any dictatorship, whether of an individual or a class, he regarded it as detrimental not only to liberty and human rights but also to rational thinking. He considered it essential that culture and education should be free from creed and ideology.[37] As an elected but reluctant member of the Iranian academy, Eqbâl opposed the coinage of new words, regarding this

32 Eqbâl, "Âqebat-e Nâder Shâh," *Yâdegâr* 2/2 (September–October 1945), pp. 31–43.

33 Eqbâl's articles have been collected in: Mohammad Dabir-Siyâqi, ed. *Majmu'e-ye maqâlât-e Abbâs Eqbâl-Âshtiyâni* (5 vols., Tehran, 2003).

34 Eqbâl, letter to Hoseyn Raf'ati-Afshâr, March 1933, in *Râhnemâ-ye ketâb* 13/1–2 (March–April 1970), pp. 118–19; Eqbâl, "Mâ va tamaddon-e orupâ'i," *Yâdegâr* 4/5 (January–February 1947), pp. 1–6.

35 Eqbâl, letter to Mohammad-Ali Jamâlzâde, 1935, quoted in Hasan Shâyegân, *Eqbâl va târikhnegâri* (Tehran, 2004), p. 80.

36 Eqbâl, editorial, *Yâdegâr* 2/7 (February–March 1946), p. 2.

37 Eqbâl, *Yâdegâr* 3/6–7 (February–March 1947), p. 4.

as an illegitimate "tampering" with language; for him language and literature should be free from ideological and political interference of any kind.[38]

The Constitutional Revolution, in Eqbâl's view, was a key moment in the lives of Iranians, but it had not achieved its objectives, a setback he blamed on the élite. He regretted the continuation in office after the revolution of men who had been the key functionaries of despotism—a theme also strongly emphasized by Kasravi. Eqbâl abhorred the prevalence among the political élite of sycophancy, cowardice, meanness of spirit, lack of moral courage or a sense of self-worth. He favored a moral revolution and a movement of civil disobedience or resistance against the ruling class who perpetrated corruption, oppression, and ignorance. He would approve of efforts to undermine the plundering ruling class.[39] Although he wrote about élites, his sympathies were mostly for the downtrodden; at least one colleague considered him to be a socialist.[40]

For Eqbâl, historical inquiry had a purpose; history, he asserted, teaches us the laws and principles governing society, as well as the reasons for and processes of social progress and decline; it is a guide for future generations.[41] He understood the necessity of seeking causes, evolving a methodical approach, and grasping the logic of historical inquiry. The mere recounting of names and dates he considered pointless. What was needed was the investigation of causes and effects, an awareness of the multiplicity of causes and how they were interrelated, and the recognition of the significance of local history as a prerequisite for developing a more comprehensive picture of a society. Yet, aware of the tentative nature of historical inquiry, he noted that arriving at general principles was not easy in history.[42]

38 Ibid., pp. 1–4.

39 Eqbâl, *Yâdegâr* 4/1–2 (September–October 1947), pp. 1–8.

40 Shâyegân's interview with Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i, August 1997, quoted in Shâyegân, *Eqbâl va târikhnegâri*, p. 30.

41 Eqbâl, *Sharh-e hâl-e Abd-Allâh ebn-Moqaffa'*, introduction.

42 Eqbâl, "Mowzu'-e elm-e târikh," *Yâdegâr* 5/1–2 (September–October 1948), pp. 36–40; this article is a translation of a piece by the French medievalist Louis Halphen (1880–1950), but can be viewed as representing Eqbâl's own understanding of the craft of history.

Eqbâl has been described as the greatest Iranian historian since the Constitutional Revolution.[43] Irrespective of the merits of this assessment, there is little doubt that he was a major historian who combined the wide-ranging erudition of a traditional man of letters with the exacting and critical acumen of a scholar familiar with the modern norms and demands of scholarship. He remained justifiably convinced of the significance of unearthing and researching manuscripts, critically editing and annotating them, and making use of them as the primary sources for the Iranian past. For him, the preservation of these texts was also the safeguarding of the national heritage. Eqbâl took the task of historical research seriously and his assumptions, judgments and explanations were generally measured and persuasive. He reflected not only on the cultural and political significance of history but also on the ways in which historical inquiry in Iran could best be conducted and carried forward. His analytical, conceptual, and explanatory contributions were less than innovative, but he was probing and dexterous in the use of sources, and solid in the task of historical reconstruction.

4. Ahmad Kasravi

In terms of impact, immediacy and relevance of concerns, as well as the range of topics that attracted his interest, Ahmad Kasravi—a largely self-taught man of modest clerical origins and a virtuoso scholar of immense talent and inquisitiveness—had no rival. A scholar of language, history, and religion, with a prodigious aptitude for learning languages (Arabic, English, Pahlavi, Armenian, and Esperanto), he brought an innovative approach to sources and revealed sound historical perception. Kasravi's life has been usefully divided into three periods:

a) the formative years from his birth in Tabriz in 1890 to his departure for Tehran in 1920;

43 Shâyegân, *Eqbâl va târikhnegâri*, p. 2.

b) the period from 1920 to 1930, a decade of intellectual growth, knowledge and public recognition, devoted to original works in philology and history;
c) the final phase, from 1930 to his assassination in the Palace of Justice (*Kâkh-e dâdgostari*) on 9 March 1946 (20 Esfand 1324) by members of the Fedâ'iyân-e Eslâm, as he was being interrogated by a judge.[44]

Kasravi's early years in his native Tabriz—as a seminarian, a prayer leader by the age of twenty, and a preacher who knew the Qor'an by heart—played a significant role in the development of his character and interests. Attraction to new ideas, and acquaintance with those influenced by modernity and advocating change, soon soured his relations with the traditional clerics. Deeply affected by the religious and sectarian conflicts current in Tabriz during this period, he became both a critic and an explorer of blind religious faith. Although readily recognizing the positive role of certain leading clerics, he adopted an increasingly anti-clerical tone in his writings. A critical admirer who knew him describes him as "a man of inflexible, impatient, domineering, and contrarian disposition," and maintains that, although Kasravi spent most of his life at loggerheads with theologians, his own cast of mind remained theological.[45] Kasravi's intellectual inflexibility and legalistic approach were in all likelihood accentuated by his vocation as a judge. He declined an educational career in favor of a legal one,[46] an option more congenial to his love of argumentation and his skill in refutation.

Kasravi's background and experiences, and the opportunity that his position as a judge provided for traveling and working in various parts of the country, also furnished him with a unique window into the lives of people from various walks of life. He was able to acquire a first hand understanding of poverty, backwardness,

44 Mohammad-Ali Movahhed, "Kasravi va târikh-e mashrute-ye u", *Negâh-e now*, special issue, no. 1 (August 2006), p. 54.
45 Ibid., pp. 54–55. For a useful introduction to Kasravi's writings on religion, see M.R. Ghanoonparvar, tr., *Ahmad Kasravi On Islam and Shi'ism*, with intro. essay and bibliographical note by M.A. Jazayery (Costa Mesa, 1990).
46 Ahmad Kasravi, *Zendegâni-ye man* (Tehran, 1945), pp. 279–80.

socio-religious and communal rifts, languages and dialects, religious and ritual practices, the dominance of local notables and mollas. Some fifteen months spent in Khuzestan, working as the head of the judiciary, gave him the opportunity to study the area and to begin collecting material for his history of the region.[47] Later completed and published in Tehran, the book covered a span of five hundred years; it was a work of immense scholarly value, revealing the impressive range of Kasravi's historical knowledge.[48] Although primarily a history of politics, dominant clans, and religious movements, it also covered geography and urban life. This book, together with his remarkable research on the "unknown rulers" (*Shahryârân-e gomnâm*) of Iran, published between 1928 and 1930,[49] indicated originality, scholarly meticulousness, and an unusual power of historical reconstruction. Moreover, a problem oriented approach—looking for instance at the origins of the Azeri language and the genealogy of the Safavids[50]—and exploration of barely touched topics,[51] characterized an important component of Kasravi's work. His impact was enhanced by a distinct, effective, and laconic prose style, which contrasted with the longwinded and artificially ornate language of the bureaucrats, and the turgid, Arabized writings of the clerics. He was a pioneer in the use of a simple, pure and often austere Persian, although his usage of neologisms and defunct or unfamiliar words sometimes hindered understanding of his writing.[52]

47 Ibid., p. 205.

48 Kasravi, *Târikh-e pânsad sâle-ye Khuzestân* (Tehran, 1934, 1954).

49 Kasravi, *Shahryârân-e gomnâm* (Tehran, 1928, 2nd ed. 1956); in the introduction to this work, Kasravi criticized the deeply rooted tendency in Iran to reduce history to the story of rulers and kings, and the accounts of their deeds and wars.

50 Kasravi, *Âzari yâ zabân-e bâstân-e Âzarbâyjân* (Tehran, 1925); idem, *Sheykh Safi va tabârash* (Tehran, 1943).

51 See for instance, Kasravi's *Târikhche-ye shir-o-khorshid* (Tehran, 1930), *Mosha'sha'iyân* (Tehran, 1943), and *Târikhche-ye chopoq va qelyân* (Tehran, 1944).

52 For a collection of less familiar words employed by him see: Yahyâ Dhokâ, *Farhang-e Kasravi* (Tehran, 1957).

Kasravi's audacity in overcoming the prevailing sense of Iranian inferiority vis-à-vis Europeans in general and European scholars in particular, was remarkable.[53] He may not have been unique in mustering the confidence to examine and find fault with the works of Orientalist scholars of Iran, as it has been claimed.[54] He was, however, unhesitant in his critique of those scholars' careless reading of texts and was confident enough to take issue with his contemporaries, such as Qazvini, whose words many regarded as unquestionable. Kasravi started many pioneering projects that, unfortunately, he did not complete, as he was overwhelmed by the fervor of initiating a new "religion of purity" (*pâkdini*). This experience of an inner spiritual convulsion adversely affected his scholarly pursuits. His prophetic impulses and determination to propagate his new religion generated a sense of passion and engagement that permeated much of his work, but also vitiated his not inconsiderable sense of irony and wit. In Kasravi, the scholar and historian became intermingled with, and was in many respects eclipsed by the impatient sage, visionary social reformer, uncompromising sociocultural critic, and, as some have argued, obstinate rebel.[55] Kasravi's personal odyssey, and the courage of his convictions, revealed him to be a passionate moralist who valued truthfulness, courage, and patriotism. Although rarely financially secure, he refused to compromise his principles. His fearlessness, sense of dignity, and pride were matched by his sensitivity and self-confidence. He admired magnanimity of spirit and gallantry as much as he detested ingratiation with the powerful, sycophancy and exaggeration. His denunciation of what he considered to be the cultural facilitators of a life of sloth and superstition, or of what he unabashedly regarded as "ignorance" and "erroneous beliefs," made him a com-

53 See for example, Lloyd Ridgeon, "Ahmad Kasravi's criticisms of Edward Granville Browne," *Iran* 42 (2004), pp. 219–33.

54 Sa'id Nafisi, *Sepid-o-siyâh* 3, no. 28 (11 February 1956), p. 12.

55 Ârmân Nehchiri, "Ahmad Kasravi, âsi yâ mosleh?," *Negâh-e now,* 26 (October–November 1995), pp. 52–79; for a discussion of Kasravi's political ideas see: Hojat-Allâh Asil, *Seyri dar andishe-ye siyâsi-ye Kasravi* (Tehran, 1977). See also Asghar Fathi, "Kasravi's views of writers and journalists: a study in the sociology of modernization," *Iranian Studies* 19/2 (1986), pp. 167–82.

bative intellectual. He also became a harbinger, albeit reluctant, of modernity, despite his own sometimes anti-modern sentiments. His work can read as an uncompromising *kulturkritik*, a critique both of unthinking infatuation with Europe (*orupâ'i-gari*) and of domestic beliefs and practices constraining an active life guided by the principles of reason and virtue.

Inevitably his harsh criticism of many great literary figures, and of a whole range of topics including fiction, poetry, mysticism, philosophy, Shi'ism and Islam, provoked much animosity. He became unpopular not only with the clerics but also with the cultural élite. Nor did his exacting notions of legal impartiality and the vital authority of judges fit the Pahlavist political milieu, resulting in the loss of his position as a judge in 1930.[56] Subsequently he worked primarily as an attorney, and in late 1933 began publishing the journal *Peymân*, in which much of his own work would appear. He taught history at a number of higher education institutions but when in 1934 a law qualified him for professorship at Tehran University, which was at the time being established, he was denied a position, as he refused to disown what he had written on poetry and poets in *Peymân*.[57] Not surprisingly, ostracism by the cultural establishment aggravated his sense of besiegement and self-righteousness.

Kasravi's seminal work on the Constitutional Movement—a revolutionary process that had a profound and lasting impact on him—was the product of the last phase of his life, when he no longer perceived himself to be primarily engaged in scholarship.[58] Drawing on a host of richly diverse documents, the accounts of eyewitnesses, oral histories he had conducted, the memoirs not only of leaders but also of little-known activists, as well as his personal observations and recollections, he chronicled the conflict between supporters and opponents of constitutionalism with unusual dexterity and perceptiveness. Since it was first published some seventy years ago, new documents have become available, the authentic-

56 Kasravi, *Zendegâni*, pp. 317–43.
57 Yahyâ Dhokâ, ed., *Chehel maqâle [of Kasravi]* (Tehran, 1956), p. 4.
58 Kasravi, *Târikh-e mashrute-ye Irân* (Tehran, 1940–43).

ity of certain sources he utilized have been questioned or rejected, and many other works dealing with various aspects of the Constitutional Movement have appeared. Yet, as a comprehensive and passionate record of crucial events that he followed personally and closely, and of people whom he knew or studied, it remains unsurpassed. Kasravi was not awed by élitist historians or foreign writers; his work, unlike many others on the subject, did not merely compile documents or recount the work of others, but integrated them in the texture of his carefully constructed narrative; he analyzed and highlighted their significance and utilized them to advance his argument.

In making sense of the Constitutional Movement Kasravi, perhaps influenced by Nâzem-al-Eslâm Kermâni,[59] was hesitantly drawn to the process of an Iranian "awakening" as his explanatory locus. Yet this could not be easily reconciled with his critique of both the leaders and the led, whom he rarely considered adequately awakened. In view of the constraints on his time and his insufficient knowledge of modern historical and sociological theories, it is not surprising that he did not pay adequate attention to structural socio-economic factors. Yet elements of modern approaches, ranging from history from below to social history, are fully present in his study of the Constitutional Movement. He did not neglect the lower classes, including the peasantry; his anti-élitist, radical, sometimes populist tone and sentiments gave the work a popular character but did not detract from its scholarly significance.

Most of the book consisted of a narrative of unfolding, often dramatic events in Azarbaijan, with which he was most familiar. His near-romantic fascination with the pro- constitutionalist fighters (*mojâhedân*) of Tabriz, and his sometimes lyrical descriptions of their struggles, sacrifices and dedication in unraveling royal absolutism following its onslaught against the parliament, are among the engaging and salient features of the book. For Kasravi, the Tabriz fighters constituted the idealized representation of the

59 Mohammad Nâzem-al-Eslâm Kermâni, *Târikh-e bidâri-ye Irâniyân* (Tehran, 1910–11), new edition, ed. by Ali-Akbar Sa'idi-Sirjâni (3 vols., Tehran, 1967–70).

Iranian people, the embodiment of virtues he keenly applauded.[60] He described Sattâr Khan, one of the fighters' key leaders, as the unrivaled champion of Iranian liberty.[61] Unlike élitist historians, Kasravi viewed the peoples' activism with favor, did not readily deride their acts of vengeance, and did not consider violence unusual for a revolutionary situation. Kasravi's history of the Constitutional Movement was a work with the widest impact. It became, according to one scholar, the most popular work on Iranian history ever published, going into numerous reprints, and acquiring the status of a classic; perhaps no work in the humanities has had such a reach in Iran.[62]

Another notable work from the last phase of Kasravi's life was his autobiography, *Zendegâni-ye man,* which is a concise, vivid, and remarkably illuminating account of his own life and character, his sensibilities, passions and phobias. It also sheds much light on Iranian society, urban and rural life, particularly in the 1920s, and the country's administrative, legal and social history.

Kasravi's historical thinking embodied many antinomies, which became more pronounced in the last phase of his life. His polemical style and the situationally specific nature of many of his writings and pamphlets make it easy to detect paradoxical or contradictory statements in them. It is also possible to arrive at differing accounts of his intellectual output and of his purposes and judgments. There are, however, problems that are intrinsic to his perspective. Oddly for a historian, he showed little appreciation for the context, place or function of many of those cultural phenomena that he sought to debunk and combat. In his sweeping critique of the existing religious creeds in Iran, he did not probe the circumstances which gave rise to them or rendered them appealing, and nor did he consider the historic significance of Shi'ism in the greater demarcation of the Persian identity. Clearly, the prophet and the historian in him could not be reconciled. The historian, mindful of time and context and inclined to ethical and cultural relativity, was overshadowed

60 Sohrâb Yazdâni, *Kasravi va târikh-e mashrute-ye Irân* (Tehran, 1997), p. 159.

61 Kasravi, *Târikh-e mashrute*, pp. 691–94; Yazdâni, pp. 90–91.

62 Yazdâni, pp. 163–64.

by the prophet, who espoused moral absolutism, maintaining that whatever is good, or evil, is always so, and for everyone.[63]

Kasravi was both a reformer and an affirmer of the values and traditions of a pre-modern era. Yearning simultaneously for change and for preservation, he was wholeheartedly drawn to constitutionalist struggles but also revealed a nostalgia for the past and historically rooted native mores. He sometimes referred fondly to the modes of life in the pre-1906 era and only excoriated the ruler's despotism; yet he overlooked the links between those modes of life and the factors generating and sustaining despotism. He provided no elaboration, justification, or workable yardstick for what was to be preserved and what discarded. His sympathies for pre-modern values paled, however, in contrast to his commitment to constitutionalism, which he regarded, inter alia, as a multifaceted project aimed at eradicating the ignorance—religious, sectarian or communal—that lay at the root of unreasoned and fanatical belief and conduct.

Kasravi often spoke about the failure of the Constitutional Movement, but qualified his verdict by noting the relative decline of communal and religious conflict since 1906. In his view, the greatest long-term achievement of constitutionalism was to render Iranians less vulnerable to "ignorance."[64] Constitutionalism had helped to end national lethargy and abasement (*sar-afkandegi*); nurture hope in the county's future; promote dignified courage (*gardanfarâzi*); moral nobility (*âzâdegi*); and other commendable qualities of character. He celebrated constitutionalism as the movement of the people, the story of their brave struggles and lofty aspirations, the narrative of their transition from the margins of history to its mainstream. For him, "since the beginning of Iranian history, no event as significant as the Constitutional Movement had occurred."[65]

63 Kasravi, *Dar pirâmun-e ravân* (Tehran, 1945), pp. 17–18.
64 Kasravi, *Zendegâni*, p.11.
65 Kasravi, "Tishe-hâ-ye siyâsat," *Peymân* 1/14 (June–July 1934), p. 24, quoted in Yazdâni, p. 157.

Kasravi was uncompromising in his critique of what was subsequently presented as constitutional government.[66] He did not, however, adequately dwell on the meaning of such a government, the rule of law, popular sovereignty, or democracy; nor did he develop an elaborate understanding of democracy's institutional prerequisites. He favored a constitutional order but not a liberal democratic one, as he considered unfettered freedom of belief detrimental to social homogeneity, particularly since illusions, the uncontrolled diversity of modes of belief (*kish*), and misguided assumptions, could threaten social cohesion and the order (*sâmân*) of life. It was the pursuit of reason and a superstition-averse, "correct" system of belief—something he aspired to develop—that promoted social solidarity and a real sense of national community. In addition to the barely disguised authoritarian tenor of his thought, Kasravi's characterization of religious, linguistic, and cultural pluralism as pathological indicated that his conception of society was anthropologically skewed. Equally significantly, his understanding of the modern state, society, and economy was problematic.

Kasravi's critique, or denigration, of European modes of thinking, knowledge, values, mores, and conduct indicated an informed aversion to predatory European imperialism and war mongering. It could not, however, be easily reconciled with his pro-constitutionalist reformism; nor did it reflect an adequate knowledge of European civilization. He had, in his historical and linguistic research, shown himself committed to an essentially modern spirit; the tone of many of his writings and the use of the catechistic method in some of his pamphlets, revealed his belief in the power of reasoned persuasion. He was also fully aware of the significance of criticism in the growth of knowledge. Yet he did not reveal a sufficient grasp of modernity and its structural-institutional and intellectual foundations. Although advocating "reason" (*kherad*), he remained unable to distance himself from many customs and traditions that could not be reconciled with the dictates of reason. His patronizing, or traditionalist, views regarding gender and women's proper

66 Kasravi, *Dar râh-e siyâsat* (Tehran, 1945), p. 28.

conduct and role in society are a case in point.[67] Like all prophets, he considered himself alone to be a worthy judge of what was reasonable or wise.

In his treatment of constitutionalism, Kasravi blamed the clerics for failing to support it steadily, while at the same time believing that they were incapable of doing so by their very religiosity or vocation. He reproached the people for being susceptible to manipulation, exploitation and demagogy; for lacking the capacity for rational thinking and hence and for having failed to live up to the expectation to make themselves worthy of constitutional self-government. At the same time, he celebrated their zest, vigor, sense of honor, and fearlessness in the face of a multitude of challenges. He was deeply affected and moved by their poverty and misfortunes;[68] he also recounted many instances of how his integrity and efficiency as a judge had inspired public recognition and support, indicating to him that common people were more than capable of discerning and appreciating honesty and fairness. His treatment of the common man, although tempered by reservations, was refreshingly unusual and original, compared with his strident critique of the élite. His denunciation of the élite's speciousness, lack of principle, duplicity and cowardice, in contrast to the dedication and heroism of the common people, could be seen as a condemnation of the chronic opportunism of the upper classes. Kasravi's approach sharply contravened the prevailing arrogant elitism. Contrary to its élitist detractors, he did not believe that constitutionalism had come too early; for him it had begun too late.

Kasravi denounced the leaders for their failings while remaining cognizant of what made them behave the way they did. He sometimes inexplicably revised his opinions of public figures, often readily allowing his own personal likes and dislikes to color his judgment; he was sometimes too indiscriminately dismissive of public figures, even of those whom he had previously praised. In writing about constitutionalism, Kasravi was unable to overcome a key paradox: how could the common people, whom he viewed

67 Kasravi, *Khᵛâharân va dokhtarân-e mâ* (Tehran, 1944).
68 Kasravi, *Zendegâni*, pp. 263–64.

as predominantly gullible, appreciate and sustain a constitutional government, which they could not adequately understand? Concomitantly, his barely qualified excoriation of the élite meant that, in his eyes, they could not meaningfully act as credible leaders. Therefore, considering the inescapable unreliability of both the leaders and the led, what chance did constitutionalism have in Iran? Was it not bound to be a chronicle of pre-destined failure? Kasravi had no adequately coherent answer.

In explaining the frustration of constitutionalist aspirations, Kasravi emphasized agency, personal responsibility, and the role of those men of power or authority—the notables and clerics—who only pursued their own vested interests. He considered the persistence in office of a royalist pre-constitutionalist élite, Anglo-Russian policies, and social fragmentation to be primarily responsible for thwarting constitutionalist objectives. For Kasravi, agency meant that the élite were always in a position to act differently, hence his exacting and relentless critique of their conduct. He reproached them for failing to guide and educate the public,[69] and faulted them for a litany of failings: lack of courage, resolve, and principle, and an absence of attachment to liberty and nobility of spirit (*mardânegi*). He detested their willingness to submit to despotism, their helplessness vis-à-vis foreign powers, and the brutal treatment of their subordinates; he abhorred their hypocrisy, lack of patriotism and sense of civic responsibility, their administrative incompetence, and complicity in the process of their own subjugation. Thus, although he did criticize the common people, he censured the élite in immeasurably harsher terms, ultimately blaming them for the unraveling of constitutionalism.

Kasravi frequently and characteristically invoked "ignorance" and "misguided beliefs" as accounting for the failure of the Iranians, whether vis-à-vis the Mongols or regarding their commitment to constitutionalism. His more considered judgments were, however, less reductionist. Constitutionalism was not, he argued, merely about devising a constitution and setting up a parliament: its success required political understanding and the commitment of

69 Kasravi, *Târikh-e mashrute*, pp. 259–62.

a people determined to render itself deserving and capable of self-government. It required all, regardless of class, gender, generation or locale, to consider themselves responsible for safeguarding the country and promoting its development.[70] But how were the people to develop such a level of political understanding and dedication? They would, he believed, only be able to do so if they attained a strong sense of national solidarity, which required eradication of the existing multiplicity of religious creeds—a chimerical goal he took upon himself by enunciating a new religion. His argument ultimately assumed a circular character: the people would attain national cohesion if they overcame ignorance, which they would overcome by attaining national cohesion.

Kasravi regarded history as a branch of knowledge that "should not be mixed with religious superstition."[71] For him, history's purpose was to enhance political consciousness and nurture national solidarity and pride. Knowing about the sacrifices and struggles of its past would help sustain a people's sense of collective purpose and self-worth. To his credit, he transcended the prevailing proclivities to explain developments in terms of foreign conspiracies or hidden agendas. Yet, despite his undeniable knowledge, intelligence, integrity and sense of fairness, his historical judgments were sometimes thinly one-dimensional and moralistic. His approach to analyzing events and explaining developments did not sufficiently reveal their complexity; nor did it adequately reflect a measured examination of the evidence. His explanations were rarely multifaceted or sociologically informed, and his classificatory categories were less than conceptually precise. He sometimes relied heavily on personal impressions or sources that vindicated his presuppositions, and privileged his own intuitive assumptions at the expense of critical-analytical use of corroborated sources, and the impartial inferences drawn from them.

In an essay on historiography, Kasravi identified three approaches in what he regarded to be history for the public: firstly, studying stories and events for entertainment; secondly, exploring the lives

70 Kasravi, *Farhang chist?* (Tehran, 1957), p. 34.
71 Kasravi, *Zendegâni*, p. 108.

of historic figures for the purpose of edification; thirdly, and most importantly, studying history in order to learn about social and political life, assess events properly, and recognize their links and their outcome. For him

> … the affairs of the world are interconnected; what happens today results from what occurred yesterday; victories and good fortune, calamities and misfortune—none of them happen without a reason.[72]

Kasravi also referred to "political history," which for him was basically about what rulers do, including "clandestine endeavors," in order to keep themselves in power.

Exploring this kind of history, he maintained, requires either the actual involvement of the historian himself in what took place, or sufficient access to relevant documents. The historian is otherwise obliged to "rely on guesses and assumptions, and to fabricate." Nonetheless, by analyzing events, and with the help of good judgment, an intelligent historian is able to unravel certain mysteries. The historian in this field must, in any event, be prudent, transparent in the documents he has accessed, and honest.[73] Historians must not be deterred by the thought of what cannot as yet be discovered; "they must start with straightforward history and retrieve what is known; what is concealed will be known in due course."[74]

Kasravi reiterated his view that the Constitutional Movement, "regardless of the causes or reasons (*angize-hâ*) involved," was "one of the noblest" episodes in Iranian history. In a manner reminiscent of Marc Bloch's treatment of "the idol of origins," Kasravi was less interested in scrutinizing the underlying origins of the Constitutional Movement than how it had unfolded and who had made it possible. He had no patience for the cynical denigrators of constitutionalism, those who doubted its authenticity or sought to disparage it origins. For him what was at the movement's roots was, in any event, irrelevant to its significance; the chronicle of the sacrifices of its advocates and the treacheries of those who tried to

72 Kasravi, "Târikh va târikhnegâr," reprinted in Dhokâ, *Chehel maqâle*, p. 315.
73 Ibid., pp. 316–17.
74 Ibid., pp. 317–18.

derail it, was in itself of intrinsic value, to be carefully recorded and studied by historians.[75]

Being a historian, Kasravi maintained, was not only a craft but also an intellectual capacity, requiring specific cognitive qualities and a particular ethic. Historians, he argued, harbor their own agendas and intentions without which their works would be dull. They must, however, be truthful, and fair-minded, and avoid falsification, exaggeration, and sycophancy. Of the pre-modern historians, he admired Abu'l-Fazl Mohammad Beyhaqi (author of *Târikh-e Beyhaqi*), who did not "falsify or exaggerate," and Eskandar Beg Monshi (author of *Târikh-e âlam-ârâ-ye Abbâsi*), who remained "committed to the truth, did not conceal what occurred, or slander the enemies of the Safavids." In Kasravi's eyes, material need or lack of choice do not exonerate those who deviate from the norms of historical scholarship. Historians need not refrain from "denouncing the perpetrators of evil, abhorring the oppressors, or criticizing mistakes", but they must not employ abusive language. When writing about the misfortune or defeat of someone, historians must avoid expressing pleasure or reproach. It was morally reprehensible, Kasravi believed, for a historian to give free rein to his emotions, and in particular to rejoice in the plight of others. "Even if in the wrong, the vanquished must not be vilified."[76]

Although temperamentally unconcerned about either offending or appeasing his opponents, Kasravi generally abided by the normative standards he set. Yet, his moral consequentialism and overly evaluative judgments about the beneficial or harmful results of individual actions colored his analysis or were conflated with it. Kasravi did not adequately situate his investigation of the reasons for individual behavior in specific historical contexts. He was not sufficiently or explicitly mindful of broader historical developments and structural factors. Nor did he pay sufficient attention to the context of individual or collective action, or seek to develop a rich explanatory or interpretive understanding of

75 Ibid., p. 318
76 Ibid., p. 324.

movements.[77] His theory of action led him to explain conduct primarily in terms of beliefs, illusions and errors, and less frequently in terms of collective or individual interests and concerns. He was often too easily given to certitude to concede the tentative nature of his findings or refine his verdicts.

In some of Kasravi's historical works, the task of scholarly enquiry, relying on an impartial and non-selective attitude to available sources, was overshadowed by his interest in denouncing or unmasking. On the other hand, merging the activity of historical investigation or narration with his own personal observations, experiences, and intuition was a vital component of his strength as a historian. What he lacked in tact, and sometimes in patient, impartial and probing analysis, was compensated by scrupulous candor and passionate sincerity. The constraints of the intellectual milieu and the sense of prophetic mission that had come to permeate Kasravi's life and work militated against mere scholarly pursuits and reflective composure. His unremitting critique of internalized and, in his judgment, wrongly held beliefs indicated that the intensity of his attachments easily rivaled those of his ideological adversaries. In an ironic instance of overlapping sensibilities, his critique of the enchantment with Europe—and his occasional expression of support for the kind of constitutionalism which could preserve the old modes of life while doing away with political despotism—was not unlike the understanding or hopes of some clerical advocates of constitutionalism. In a different and stronger sense, nostalgia for the pre-constitutional era pervaded the work of a less cultivated historian, Mahmud Mahmud. Traces of Kasravi's tone can also be detected in the writings of Âdamiyat, the other major historian of constitutionalism.

77 The inadequacies of his analysis of the Khiyâbâni movement in a short work entitled *Qiyâm-e Khiyâbâni*—later corrected and modified in *Târikh-e hejdah sâle-ye Âzarbâyjân* (Tehran, 1937)—have been pointed out by Nehchiri in *Negâh-e now* 71 (October–November 2006); Nehchiri observes that in Kasravi's analysis of Khiyâbâni's movement, little positive role is ascribed to the people. See also Kasravi, *Târikh-e hejdah sâle,* p. 893; for another notable exploration of constitutionalism in Azarbaijan see: Karim Taherzâde-Behzâd, *Qiyâm-e Âzarbâyjân dar enqelâb-e mashrutiyat-e Irân* (Tehran, 1954).

5. Fereydun Âdamiyat

Fereydun Âdamiyat (1920–2008) was born into a family of Qajar intelligentsia. His father, Abbâs-Qoli Khan (d. 1939), a Qajar civil servant and political activist, had in the 1880s founded an influential political society, comprised of leading political figures and dedicated to promoting liberal ideas. He influenced his son's intellectual trajectory and remained a source of inspiration throughout his life. Âdamiyat studied at Dâr-al-fonun and the School of Law and Political Science, Tehran University, graduating in 1942, and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). In 1940, while still an undergraduate, he joined the Iranian Foreign Ministry, where he would serve in several positions, including an eight-year attachment to the Iranian delegation at the U.N. From 1961 to 1965, he served as an ambassador, first to the Netherlands and later to India. Soon after, disapproving of the change in leadership of the Foreign Ministry, he retired from the diplomatic service to devote himself exclusively to historical scholarship.

Âdamiyat was politically and intellectually close to the civic-nationalist academic, Gholâm-Hoseyn Sadiqi, and briefly taught at Tehran University at his invitation. When, in late 1978, the Shah unsuccessfully sought to persuade Sadiqi to accept the premiership, the latter had considered selecting Âdamiyat as a cabinet colleague. Âdamiyat lent his support to the cause of democracy through various activities; from 1977 to 1978, he was a member the Iranian Writers' Association, which had reemerged in 1977. Following the consolidation of clerical rule he took refuge in his scholarly pursuits. Harassment and intimidation by agents of the regime forced him to leave the country in 1993, but he returned less than two years later, troubled by the prospect of a life of exile.

Amir Kabir and Iran, his first and perhaps most influential work, originated as an undergraduate thesis at the University of Tehran. Written during the Allied occupation of the country, it reflected the imprint of its milieu, as it admiringly chronicled the efforts of a champion of the country's rejuvenation. Its first edition, in three slim volumes, was published in 1943–44, when Âdamiyat was

twenty-three years old and a Foreign Ministry employee. An updated and revised version appeared in one volume in 1955; its third and fourth editions incorporated much new material. Âdamiyat made use of many primary sources, including Amir Kabir's private letters, the archives of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, and foreign archives.

In the introduction to the third edition of *Amir Kabir* (1969), Âdamiyat summarized his aim and achievements as follows:

> I have analyzed the personality of Amir Kabir in the context of developments of the era. I was concerned with trends of history and the factors constituting them, particularly social institutions in Iran. I have tried to give an account of Amir's links with society and his impact on history, to get to know him and make him known. This method represents the advanced stage of historical scholarship and one of the most meaningful components of historical thinking.

Âdamiyat claimed to be concerned with the objective and established aspects of history (*omur-e eyni va motahaqqeq* [*sic*]), and with pursuing an analytical and critical method. He described his work as "perhaps a service to the advancement of the craft of history"; he also referred to Mahmud with respect and affection; Mahmud had a good library, which he made available to Âdamiyat, and provided constant encouragement.[78]

In 1945, while a secretary at the Iranian Embassy in London, Âdamiyat enrolled at the London School of Economics, studied with Sir Charles Webster, Stevenson Professor of International History, and obtained his PhD four years later. He wrote a thesis on Persia's diplomatic relations with Britain, Turkey and Russia from 1815 to 1830, which remained unpublished. The intellectual milieu of the LSE, and more broadly the Labour-dominated Britain of the post-war years, left a deep mark on him. He also came to be influenced by the distinguished historian and reformist social critic R. H. Tawney, and by Harold J. Laski, then a towering figure at the School; he referred to the latter as one of his principal teachers. Focusing on the study of diplomatic history, Âdamiyat later published

78 Âdamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Irân* (3rd ed., Tehran, 1969), pp. 5–6.

a book in English in this field.[79] He also pursued an interest in political history and the history of ideas. His distinctly Whiggish approach to history and firm belief in unilinear progress may indicate the influence of Laski. However, it is not easy to pinpoint the direct and specific impact of any particular school of Western historical thinking on Âdamiyat in his intellectually formative years.

Although primarily a specialized monograph, *Amir Kabir* achieved a wide readership. Âdamiyat did not concern himself with furnishing an extensive analysis of the circumstances and factors accounting for Amir Kabir's successes and ultimate failure, nor did he directly provide a context to elucidate the society and political structure in which Amir Kabir operated as chief minister. In his survey of Amir Kabir's accomplishments, Âdamiyat did not provide an adequate or explicit discussion of the character of society and the structures of governance. He might have assumed little need on the part of his readers for background information, but more probably he allowed the sources to dictate and determine his narrative and approach. Âdamiyat's attention to specificities and detail was not matched by a commensurate interest in distilling their meaning and significance, or in providing a broader picture of Iranian society under the Qajars. He intermittently alluded to patterns of governance, and to social, administrative and cultural institutions. However, the reader was ultimately left to extrapolate the broader picture. Âdamiyat shunned the panoramic work of historical reconstruction and synthesis.

Intellectual history soon became Âdamiyat's main preoccupation. In a number of important works he explored the lives and thought of the exponents of modern reformist ideas and institutions in the Qajar era—Mirzâ Malkom Khan, Mirzâ Yusof Khan Mostashar-al-Dowle, Mirzâ Fath-Ali Akhundzâde, Mirzâ Âqâ Khan Kermâni, Abd-al-Rahim Tâlebof—and of the proponents of what he called the idea of social democracy in the Constitutional Movement. These books, along with works on Mirzâ Hoseyn Khan Sepahsâlâr and his era, on what Âdamiyat referred to as the

79 *Bahrein Islands: A Legal and Diplomatic Study of the British-Iranian Controversy* (New York, 1955).

"ideology of the Constitutional Movement", and on the tobacco rebellion, together with a book on the history of thought in the ancient world, and two collections of articles, make up the corpus of his work.[80] Concentrating both on individual thinkers and intellectual-political themes, he was primarily concerned with tracing the pedigrees of the seminal modern ideas preceding, accompanying or following the Constitutional Revolution. In his attempt to emphasize the salience of change in the second half of the 19th century, he referred to the intelligentsia's (*tabaqe-ye andishmand*) radical break with the past and its embracing of rationalist and empiricist modes of cognition.[81] More generally, he stressed the significance of the "idea of liberty " (*fekr-e âzâdi*) and traced its intellectual lineage, mainly in the pre-Constitutional era. An important and commendable component of this endeavor was to direct attention to the occlusion of ideas such as liberty during the greater part of the Pahlavi era. Heuristically, however, Âdamiyat's intellectualist model was problematic: for instance, speaking about "the ideology" of the Constitutional Movement involved assuming a recognizable and determining link between a set of ideas or "ideologies" and subsequent events—a link that was, and continues to be, often taken for granted or merely asserted but not satisfactorily demonstrated. He employed the concept of "ideology" in a generic and sometime misleading sense.

80 Fereydun Âdamiyat, *Fekr-e âzâdi va moqaddame-ye nahzat-e mashrutiyat* (Tehran, 1961); idem, *Andishe-hâ-ye Mirzâ Fath-Ali Âkhundzâde* (Tehran, 1970); idem, *Andishe-hâ-ye Mirzâ Âqâ Khân Kermâni* (Tehran, 1967); idem, *Andishe-ye taraqqi va hokumat-e qânun: asr-e Sepahsâlâr* (Tehran, 1972); idem, *Fekr-e demokrâsi-ye ejtemâ'i dar nahzat-e mashrutiyat-e Irân* (Tehran, 1975); idem, with Homâ Nâteq, *Afkâr-e ejtemâ'i va siyâsi va eqtesâdi dar âthâr-e montasher nashode-ye dowrân-e Qâjâr* (Tehran, 1977); idem, *Ide'olozhi-ye nahzat-e mashrutiyat-e Irân,* vol. 1 (Tehran, 1976); idem, *Ide'olozhi-ye nahzat-e mashrutiyat-e Irân: Majles-e avval va bohrân-e âzâdi* (Tehran, 1991); idem, *Andishe-hâ-ye Tâlebof-e Tabrizi* (Tehran, 1984); idem, *Shuresh bar emtiyâz-nâme-ye rezhi* (Tehran, 1981); idem, *Âshoftegi dar fekr-e târikhi* (Tehran, 1981); idem, *Maqâlât-e târikhi* (Tehran, 1973, 2nd ed. 1983).

81 Âdamiyat, *Andishe-ye tarraqi*, pp. 26–27.

Âdamiyat's work on the "ideology" of the Constitutional Movement, or the congeries of the primarily secular ideas and debates determining or dominating it, was in part a reaction to a trend that overemphasized the role of the clerics and the religious discourse in the movement. This Âdamiyat sought to rebut, finding it irritatingly simplistic and unsupported by the properly scrutinized evidence. For him the clerics' ideas of change were opaque, rudimentary and limited; the pro-constitutionalist clerics were motivated by consideration of their own interests and impelled to act by a populace affected by the unfavorable turn of events or galvanized by progressive elements. Âdamiyat was also highly critical of leftist extremists who advocated violence and radicalism irrespective of the realities of Iranian society and thus harmed constitutionalism.[82] The Constitutional Movement, Âdamiyat argued in *Ideolozhi-ye nahzat-e mashrutiyat-e Irân*—a work exploring its central ensemble of ideas and institutions—was intellectually and ideologically initiated, nourished and sustained by the intelligentsia, who espoused the ideas of national sovereignty, parliament and constitution.[83] This work, and its sequel on the first parliament, constitute a trenchant and spirited contribution to the investigation of salient ideas and debates, the emergence and configuration of parliamentary institutions, and the robust character of debates in the early phase of Iranian constitutionalism.

Âdamiyat's methodological approach, the theoretical underpinnings of his work, and his manner of reading texts were innovative. In the spirit of Ranke, he saw himself as recounting the events of the past as they had actually happened;[84] he also viewed himself as engaged in recovering, reconstituting or recapturing what had been thought. For him a real intellectual historian was an "architect of ideas" and not just their exponent; his personality and values could not be fully detached from his work.[85] Âdamiyat placed great emphasis on the need for searching, identifying and relying on primary and authentic sources; he classified and assessed them in their order

82 Âdamiyat, *Ide'olozhi* II, pp. 145–48.
83 Ibid., I, pp. 143ff.
84 Âdamiyat, *Âshoftegi,* p. 1.
85 Âdamiyat, *Âqâ Khân*, intro. p. 18.

of significance, and revealed a remarkable command of them. His efforts to unearth, collect, and consult primary sources was particularly significant in a society where even the basic prerequisites of modern historical inquiry were virtually non-existent. Âdamiyat was not a 'professional' historian with a sustained academic affiliation, but, conceiving of history as a specialized discipline and a demanding vocation, he more than any academic historian contributed to imbuing its study with an intellectual prestige and legitimacy, particularly among the intelligentsia. While the impact of most other serious historians remained limited, Âdamiyat's personal standing and public presence as a prominent intellectual won him considerable attention. His books gained a readership wider than was normally achieved by non-trivial works of history. His background as a high-ranking diplomat did not adversely affect his stature in the intellectual community.

Âdamiyat's contribution in providing forceful and vivid accounts of the controversial, often iconoclastic, and largely unknown or inaccessible works of writers such as Âkhundzâde and Kermâni was both audacious and culturally significant. With these thinkers he traversed a shared landscape of imagination; he gave them voice and coherence; his sympathies led him to polish the coarser aspects of their ideas, to make them more luminous, perceptive, persuasive, and culturally relevant. He implicitly placed himself alongside them as exponents of a far-reaching *kulturkritik*. Their sentiments and indignations were also largely his. Âkhundzâde (1812–78) spent fifty years in the Russian controlled Caucasus, forty-three of them as an official interpreter working for the government in Tbilisi. Yet, according to Âdamiyat, he remained a central figure in the intellectual universe of 19th century Iran; he was not only a fierce rationalist reformer, a freethinking radical critic of superstition and an advocate of religious liberalism and "Islamic protestantism", but was also an avid Persian nationalist.

Combining scholarly and didactic purposes, Âdamiyat saw his task as threefold: first, to explore the significance of Iranian thinkers and their impact on the development of modern ideas and on the ideology of the constitutionalist movement; secondly, to elevate historical thinking and the "techniques" of modern

historiography in the country; thirdly, to demonstrate that there were "intelligent and free-spirited people in the country who had lofty ideas, and who had refused to lead a life of servility."[86] With a comparative approach to modern socio-political thinking in Asian societies, Âdamiyat would admit that the primary role of modern Asian thinkers—Persians, Turks, Japanese—was to act as exponents and expositors of European thought in their own societies, rather than to put forward original ideas; yet he believed this to be no mean achievement. For him, Iranian writers were in some respects more innovative than their contemporaries elsewhere in the region.

In the spirit of Ranke, Âdamiyat perceived of ideas as capable of functioning as moving forces in history; political events could not be understood or assessed without understanding their intellectual background (*zamine-ye fekri*).[87] In his view, the very fact that certain writers or politicians were inspired by Western reformist ideas and wrote or reflected on them in pamphlets or letters was significant. While the impact of reformist statesmen such as Amir Kabir or Sepahsâlâr was undoubtedly considerable, it cannot be denied that they failed to transform or significantly change the contours of governance. Their ideas and those of other advocates of reform can not be readily assumed to have had a widespread impact in a society where literacy was limited and print culture or the means of propagating ideas were underdeveloped. Even if adequately published and circulated, new ideas were bound to have a limited effect that is not easy to ascertain or assess. The issue of the impact of new ideas on society did not escape Âdamiyat's attention, but he was primarily concerned with their imprint on the numerically small but effective urban literati. In any case the failure of ideas to gain ground did not, in his eyes, detract from their validity or relevance.[88] Moreover, if in Iran new ideas had a less profound impact than in the Ottoman Empire or Japan, this, he contended, was to be attributed ultimately to the "differences in moral standing,

86 Ibid., intro., p. 19.
87 Âdamiyat, *Ide'olozhi* II, p. 13.
88 Âdamiyat, *Âqâ Khân*, intro., pp. 16–17.

dedication, patriotism and selflessness" between the rulers of these societies.[89] Âdamiyat did not directly address the question of how such differences were to be explained.

Âdamiyat's history was primarily the story of the deeds and thoughts of leading men of reform, a sympathetic narrative of their struggles, aspirations and ideas. In his historical perception, the chief harbingers and agents of change were reformist thought and action; his explanatory model accorded programmatic pronouncements the status of concrete accomplishments. For instance, he spoke of Amir Kabir having established the rule of law as though it could be established by mere fiat.[90] It is not clear what the rule of law implied for Âdamiyat or what was meant by its establishment. Edicts issued by Amir Kabir were personal ordinances that unfailingly invoked royal sanction but had little other basis. There were no properly promulgated, codified, and specific laws in the recognizable modern sense to be invoked.

In Âdamiyat's work, historical narrative was interspersed with explanations that were often single-mindedly straightforward. His explicit or implicit voluntarism militated against any serious appreciation of structural constraints. In tracing the history of attempts to promote constitutionalist ideas and institutions of democratic governance, he did not explore the structural mechanisms and prerequisites for the establishment of such governance, and considered it to be in effect little more than a consequence of (good) will and determination. He often gave the impression that he conceived of history as essentially the consequence of the will of individuals or at best collectivities informed by or infused with progressive and reformist ideas, or with interests, superstitions and misguided or unpatriotic proclivities. Some of his explanations left many questions unanswered. For instance, his discussion of the practice of seeking sanctuary in an inviolable place to protest an injustice or escape persecution (*bast/bast-neshini*), and its banning by Amir Kabir, and his own sympathetic justification of the ban, is prob-

89 Ibid., intro., p. 14.
90 Âdamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Irân*, pp. 427–28.

lematic.[91] Âdamiyat maintained that this practice was rendered redundant because the rule of law had been established, and that such a form of protest was open to abuse. Similar reasons were in fact invoked in order to ban *bast* under Rezâ Shâh.

Âdamiyat maintained,

> Out of a mass of details, a perceptive historian identifies the most significant and meaningful, accurately describes how an event occurred and what its cause or causes were, assesses the logical sequence of events, and by analyzing and interpreting them, provides a picture as accurate and vivid as possible of the course of history. A history not based on primary sources (*asnâd va madârek-e asli*), and not attentive to their meaning, is not history.[92]

Âdamiyat's reference to interpretation and meaning might give the impression that he was consciously interested in hermeneutics; this was not, however, the case. Âdamiyat affirmed the normative and value-laden character of historical scholarship, and maintained that the rejection of norms and values would result in "historical nihilism" and a "lifeless" work.[93] Nevertheless, accepting that a historian's values and perspective inform not only his interpretation but also the choice and selection of sources, as well as his designation of what counts as fact and evidence, was not easy for historians like Âdamiyat, who appeared to believe in some kind of objectivity, or considered their findings to be objectively grounded. Âdamiyat maintained an interest in the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of history, but not far beyond the quasi-Rankean model that he long considered to be the paradigm of historical inquiry. He did not reveal an interest in debates about the history of *mentalités,* as opposed to conventional intellectual history; there was no discernible trace in his writing of influence by the Annales school, social history, history from below, the sociology of knowledge or contributions to the history of ideas made by many pioneering Western historians.

91 Ibid.
92 Âdamiyat, *Majles-e avval*, p. 14.
93 Âdamiyat, *Âqâ Khân*, intro., p. 18

Without being unduly sympathetic to those blessed by the imprint of privilege, Âdamiyat was a cultural élitist. He dismissed the ordinary people or the masses, for instance during the Constitutional Revolution, as "the embodiment of vulgarity, primitive norms, and irrational passions and instincts,"[94] but paradoxically blamed the parliamentarians for not appealing to them to counter the royalist coup of June 1908.[95] Blurring the distinction between crowds and mobs, he despised "lumpenism," by which he appeared to mean a mass susceptible to anti-democratic impulses and demagogic manipulation. Save for the occasional foray—for instance when dealing with the peasant rebellion of Gilan in 1906–7, or the strike of fishermen in the Caspian—he generally showed little interest in the lower classes, their preoccupations, travails and aspirations.[96] Nor did he reveal an adequate appreciation of spontaneous popular movements.

Like Kasravi, and often in reference to those who failed to live up to his intellectual expectations or share his political vision and normative assumptions, Âdamiyat would not refrain from frequently referring to shallowness, superficiality, and implicitly ignorance, or their sociological cognates, which he conveyed using a variety of oblique but derogatory terms—"confusion" (*âshoftegi*), "mental ambiguities" (*ebhâmât-e zehni*), and "commonplace mental habits" (*ma'nusât-e zehni*). In certain cases Âdamiyat might have had little difficulty justifying his verdicts; absurd, inconsistent, or mistakenly held beliefs have undoubtedly been potent forces in history; yet their historically situated identification is a delicate task requiring not only acute powers of perception but also humility and charity. On a deeper level, Âdamiyat did not seem sufficiently mindful of the fact that what participants or observers of past events have stated or highlighted, or what they have omitted or downplayed, is itself a subject of historical enquiry—an intriguing and integral component of social memory that needs to be historically situated and explained. His insufficient attentiveness to structural

94 Âdamiyat, *Ide'olozhi* II, p. 212.
95 Ibid., p. 339.
96 Âdamiyat, *Fekr-e demokrâsi-ye ejtemâ'i,* pp. 65–91.

factors was coupled with a disinclination to develop a sociologically elaborate conception of reasons and causes. On occasion, he would resort to assertively expressed quasi-explanations to mask his historical reductionism as readily as he would assume the authority of a savant confidently presuming the incontrovertibility of his conclusions. Allowing his otherwise fluid style to acquire a magisterial tone, he would appear assuredly immune to self-doubt. There were certainly many whose contentions about the past he correctly repudiated or whose competence as historians he justly rejected. Yet the often caustic language he employed, his refusal to harness his anger or indignation and submit to the encumbrance of restraint, detracted from the rigorous scholarly tenor of his work.

Âdamiyat's pugnacity or anger signified his impatience with what passed for history in Iran as much as it denoted and disguised a sense of despair. He seemed to have taken for granted the widespread diffusion of modern ideas in Iranian society. Yet he was embittered by the persistence of political repression, the moral flexibility and complicity of the political élite, the frailty and disarray of secular political forces of opposition, and the tenacity of the clerics' ideological power. Anger militated against a refined and tolerant tone, verbal decorum and measured judgment, yet, manifesting itself as boldness, it was socially appealing. Learning commanded respect, but in conjunction with integrity, courage and pugnacity it ensured public attention. Decorum was a valued component of Iranian civic culture, yet its excessively routinized form extended to scholarly pursuits could degenerate into habitual, thinly veiled insincerity; it could become a means to occlude rigor, condone feeble ideas, and tolerate or encourage the banal. Âdamiyat would not hesitate to flout certain conventions of courtesy in his writings, viewing them, along with misplaced or feigned humility, as detrimental to untrammeled veracity and courage, and as a barrier to alerting readers to fabrication and distortion. A more measured tone and greater control over his acerbic allusions would have proved more congenial to Âdamiyat's scholarly purposes, but less so as far as political effectiveness was concerned. It is plausible to assume that in the interest of defending the political ideals he valued, he refused to allow his distinct sense of etiquette

and courteous deportment to attenuate his unabashedly polemical tone and forceful bluntness in print. Having long concluded that scholarship and cultural battles were imbricated, he could not but consider an excess of scholarly subtlety detrimental to the desired impact.

In circumstances in which history was rarely distinguished from entertaining and tritely didactic narratives or dull chronicles, Âdamiyat's work was of undeniable appeal. Its resonance was enhanced as a spiritedly combative, crisply judgmental and authoritative counter-discourse to Pahlavist narratives, which belittled, ignored, or occluded past struggles to promote reform, let alone liberty. Âdamiyat played a key role in attracting attention to the currents of thought prevalent in the Qajar era, which was invariably, and implausibly, viewed as representing only stagnation and obscurantism. His distaste for Pahlavi autocracy was matched by a thinly disguised anti-clericalism. He was not averse to praising those clerics who had a reputation for learning and integrity and who understood the urgency of coming to terms with the modern world, but in his treatment of their overall role in recent Iranian history Âdamiyat employed an assertively critical and progressivist tone. In view of the prevailing political and socio-cultural milieu, his approach to history was perhaps inevitably and self-consciously presentist. It sought to advance an exploration of the history of thinking about liberty, not merely for exploration's sake, but also for underlining the significance, and implicitly the absence, of liberty.

Âdamiyat thus often appeared to treat pre-Pahlavi reformist figures as though they were his contemporaries. His empathetic reconstruction of their ideas often left little room for critical queries and assessments.[97] For him, commendable motives often superseded other considerations. His aim was less to historicize or contextualize reformist political ideas than to reveal their continued relevance. Unhesitant to impose coherence on writers who lacked it, and overlooking the derivative nature of their thought,

97 He later partially modified his uncritical assessment of Âqâ Khan; see: *Ide'olozhi* I, pp. 30–32.

he refused to furnish a critical appraisal of their prognosis of the ills of Iranian society or the practicality of their solutions. Nor did he ponder crucial questions: To what extent did the prescriptive components of the reformers' ideas rest on a sufficient understanding of the existing circumstances and capacities of Iranian society? What viable mechanisms did they envisage for realizing their objectives? What understanding did they develop of the strategies and structural resources needed to appropriate modernity while defying European imperialism? Âdamiyat not only avoided such questions, but considered any tendency to overemphasize them as an indication of a flawed understanding of the historical circumstances. Although fully committed to Enlightenment modernity, he was at the same time a nationalist who fiercely rejected Western imperial domination. He abhorred what he viewed as Orientalist misrepresentations of Iranian history, but did not perceive an intellectual correlation between the Enlightenment and European imperialism.

Âdamiyat revealed little sympathetic understanding of forces and ideas of which he disapproved, and underrated or ignored the accomplishments, even though consequential, of those men of action or ideas whose intellectual horizons did not converge with his. With an emotionally charged view of motives, he tended to regard opponents of liberal reform during the Qajar era as obscurantist. This characterization might have plausibly applied to most traditionalists, but as he himself sometimes admitted, there were others who could not be so readily dismissed. Both in Iran and in the Ottoman Empire, opponents of reform could not all be justifiably lumped together. Clearly, interest in progress and political reform constituted the primary criterion determining Âdamiyat's attitude to his historical subjects, as well as to other writers. Such a yardstick may have been appropriate for a self-described supporter of progress, but it could not be squared with the requirements of scholarly impartiality. Nor could his disdain for the ordinary people be easily reconciled with democratic attachments.

Although admitting a clear difference between error and deliberate distortion or fabrication, Âdamiyat was less than charitable in his designation of errors made in good faith. He would often

accuse other writers of careless or tendentious omissions or distortions. He himself has been accused of the same—for instance in his account of the ideas of Malkom Khan; or his tendency deliberately and arbitrarily to overemphasize, understate, or ignore certain aspects of a writer's thinking.[98] Lamenting the absence of tolerance for critical views in Iranian traditional culture, Âdamiyat advocated unencumbered liberty and civility; he spent many decades of his life chronicling the history of freedom and other modern liberal ideas and seeking to spread an appreciative interest in reform, progress and liberty. Yet the spirit of such ideas was rarely allowed to permeate his own style.[99] He was on occasion not only inordinately and fiercely judgmental but was unperturbed by the implications of his judgments.[100]

The very political and cultural circumstances that impeded scholarly advances in the humanities in Iran also helped imbue Âdamiyat with a self-image which, coupled with considerable public recognition, transcended his standing as merely a scholar. This situation furnished him with a sense of mission that permeated his work as a resolutely secular writer. Âdamiyat's experience and erudition could not but render him fully cognizant of the recognized hallmarks of a modern man of learning—cultivation, tolerant sensibilities, composure, good humor, and irony. Yet, given the existing socio-political ills, his urge as an impatient luminary was not only to edify but also politically to instruct, awaken, and chastise—to repudiate what he regarded as a powerful counter-Enlightenment trend in Iranian society. He saw himself as a champion of modernist thought, determined to discredit what he regarded to be dangerous attempts to rewrite the history of traditionalist and counter-secular ideas and thereby rehabilitate them. This situation made him a politically engaged public historian unprepared to allow any

98 Mâshâ-Allâh Âjudâni, *Mashrute-ye Irâni, va pish-zamine-hâ-ye nazariye-ye "velâyat-e faqih"* (London, 1997), pp. 276–89, 336–84.

99 See for instance, Âdamiyat, *Majles-e Avval*, pp. 383–403; idem, *Âkhundzâde*, p. 127, n. 40, reference to Zarrinkub; idem, *Andishe-hâ-ye Tâlebof*, reference to Hamid Enayat, pp. 51–52, n. 3; see also idem, *Âshoftegi.*

100 For instance, on the Baha'is and Jews, see *Amir Kabir*, p. 451; *Andishe-hâ-ye Mirzâ Âqâ Khân Kermâni*, p. 133, n. 3.

conventional imperative of scholarly detachment or analytical rigor to eclipse or subsume his passionate and active commitment to reason and progress, or to vitiate his capacity for sternly preached enlightened moralization.

If Âdamiyat felt no urgent need to refine his interpretive lens or reveal continued methodological curiosity about advances in his specific field, he was not entirely to blame. The prevailing intellectual culture was insufficiently demanding, and the standards of historical scholarship were too nascent to push him to attempt to transcend tasks such as summation and reconstruction of the ideas and aims of certain political figures whom he identified as pioneers and promoters of commendable political objectives. Yet such tasks, given the circumstances constraining and motivating him, were of far-reaching value. By tracing and chronicling the genesis of modern conceptions of freedom and progress in Iran, Âdamiyat could not coherently disown or escape their corollary, i.e. the persistent need for questioning authority, abandoning traditional deference, and above all acknowledging the necessity of criticism—including criticism of his work—as integral to any meaningful notion of freedom and progress. Any critical assessment of Âdamiyat's work must be construed as fully congruent with his own project of valorizing the quest for liberty—of speech, conscience and inquiry. No criticism should detract from his enormous contribution; two generations in Iran have come to view serious historical inquiry as represented, if not pioneered, by him.

6. Men of Letters and "Iranologists"

In addition to those scholars who were identified primarily as historians, historical research was also undertaken by a group of scholars who could be described as men of letters. Some of them pursued a rigorous, albeit ambitiously overarching approach to the past, which in terms of some of its methodological and cognitive interests resembled European Orientalism and would later come to be known as Iranology (*Irânshenâsi*). Practitioners of this

multifaceted mode of enquiry generally avoided the more recent past; they comprised a generation of older savants who through their hard work, exceptional talent, and prodigious memory had accumulated extensive knowledge of texts, documents, traditional subjects, literary and political figures. They had, in short, developed deep roots in the culture of the past, and the traditional and civic sensibilities associated with it. Many of them had spent time in Europe, had a good understanding of the contours of modern scholarship, and knowledge of European languages; yet, in crucial respects, they still viscerally if not intellectually belonged to an age in which the conventional academic division of labor and strict or narrow specialization made little sense, and learning demanded an exemplary and demonstrable command of details and facts, immersion in textual studies and the manuscript literature, impeccable Arabic, and a broad culture of learning.

These scholars were exemplified by Mohammad Qazvini (1877–1949), one of the very few men of learning designated by his acolytes or disciples as an "*allâme*" (polymath); he was regarded as the doyen of modern literary-historical scholarship and had considerable impact on a generation of scholars, including Eqbâl. Qazvini's singular knowledge of manuscript literature was matched by an exacting insistence on getting things right, and an almost paranoiac fear of error. Having spent some thirty-five years living in Europe, mainly in France, where he was primarily engaged in scholarly activities, Qazvini returned to Iran in 1939. His stay in Europe had enabled him to develop a detailed knowledge of the work of many European, particularly French, Orientalists, and a nuanced approach to their work. While willing to acknowledge their many contributions, he was unhesitant in pointing out their errors. He praised scholars such as E. G. Browne but criticized Henri Massé and Louis Massignon, and was particularly scathing about the latter. Although he developed little or no interest in distinctly modern historical scholarship, Qazvini played an important role in introducing new standards of textual research and scholarly precision to his compatriots. One of his major achievements, to which he devoted many years of his life, was preparing a critical edition of *Târikh-e Jahângoshâ-ye Joveyni* (3 vols., Leiden, 1912–37).

Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh (1878–1969), a constitutionalist activist, scholar and statesman, was also regarded as a pioneer and a man of considerable learning, including an active interest in history. Having lived, studied and worked in various European countries, particularly Germany and Britain, he also played a major role in introducing European scholarly approaches and standards. The subjects on which he worked included Manichaeism and its founder, Zoroaster; the calendar in ancient Iran, and aspects of the pre-Islamic and Islamic history of Iran. He wrote authoritative articles on the dates of the Sasanian kings and the date of Mani's death; his lectures on the Arabs and the early history of Islam were published by the Faculty of Theology of Tehran University.[101] Taqizadeh had undertaken to collaborate with Pirniyâ and Eqbâl on a project that would cover the entire span of Iranian history; he was to write on the period from the fall of the Sasanians to the Mongol invasion, but only produced a segment of this work.[102] He also wrote many essays in European languages and published on aspects of the Constitutional Revolution.[103]

Ebrâhim Pur-Dâvud (1886–1968) studied in Tehran, Beirut, Paris, and Germany, becoming a pioneering scholar of considerable learning, specializing in the religion, language and culture of ancient Iran. After the end of the First World War, he visited India to conduct research and study the Zoroastrian community but returned to Germany in 1928. He revisited India between 1932 and 1934 at the invitation of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. In 1939 he left Germany for Iran, and began teaching at Tehran University. In 1945 he established the Society for Iranology (*Anjoman-e Irânshenâsi*) in Tehran. Members of this society included prominent scholars such as Mohammad Mo'in, Manuchehr Sotude, Mostafâ Moqarrabi, Zabihollâh Safâ, Mohammad-Javâd Mashkur, and Iraj Afshâr. Pur-Dâvud wrote on various topics in ancient Iranian

101 Taqizadeh, *Târikh-e Arabestân va qowm-e Arab dar dowrân-e zohur-e Eslâm va qabl az ân* (2 vols., Tehran, 1949–51); idem, *Gâh-shomâri dar Irân-e qadim* (Tehran, 1937); idem, *Mâni va din-e u* (Tehran, 1937).

102 Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh, *Az Parviz tâ Changiz* (Tehran, 1930).

103 On Taqizadeh and other scholars discussed here, see also *EIr*, Specific topics, appended to Amanat's "Historiography, ix. Pahlavi Period."

history, including religion, the calendar, rites, festivals, and armor.[104] Certain aspects of his work directly pertain to historical scholarship and indicate an innovative approach to historical questions.[105] He was widely regarded as being not only a meticulous scholar of the past, but also deeply concerned about how the legacy of the past informs present day sensibilities, including nationalism. Permeating his intellectual concerns, nationalism led him, for instance, to write a riposte to Nasserist propaganda regarding Khuzestan.[106]

Less distinguished but still prominent among the scholars in the broad field of Iranology was Sa'id Nafisi (1895–1966), a versatile littérateur knowledgeable about Iran's past. Although unsystematic in his approach, he was a prolific scholar, writer, critic, bibliophile, journalist, and novelist.[107] He began teaching at Tehran University in 1934, and published widely on Iranian history and culture in different eras, including the Sasanian, the early Islamic period, and the Qajar.[108] His work on the Qajar era, like the rest of his historical writings, is descriptive and lacks scholarly coherence and rigor; it nevertheless conveys a sense of the constraints and challenges facing the Qajar rulers.

Less inquisitive and wide-ranging than Nafisi, but like him a companion of many prominent men of letters of his time, Gholâm-Rezâ Rashid-Yâsami (1896–1951) was one of the first scholars to

104 Ebrâhim Pur-Dâvud, *Farhang-e Irân-e bâstân* (Tehran, 1947); *Hormozdnâme* (Tehran, 1952); *Anâhitâ: panjâh goftâr-e târikhi va zabân-shenâsi*, ed. Mortezâ Gorji (Tehran, 1964); *Zin-abzâr*, ed. Jahângir Qâ'em-maqâmi (Tehran, 1968).

105 See for instance, Ebrâhim Pur-Dâvud, "Cherâ Irâniyân az tâziyân shekast khordand?" in *Anâhitâ,* pp. 340–82; Pur-Dâvud, "Naqsh-e asb dar Irân," in *Farhang-e Irân-e bâstân*, pp. 220–95.

106 Ebrâhim Pur-Dâvud, *Khuzestân-e mâ* (Tehran, 1968).

107 Fragments of Sa'id Nafisi's memoirs, previously published between 1957 and 1961 in popular Tehran journals, have now been collected; see *Be revâyat-e Sai'd Nafisi: khâterât-e adabi, siyâsi va javâni*, ed. Ali-Rezâ E'tesâm (Tehran, 2002).

108 Sa'id Nafisi, *Târikh-e tamaddon-e Irân-e Sâsâni* (Tehran 1952); idem, *Târikh-e ejtemâ'i-ye Irân: az enqerâz-e Sâsâniyân tâ enqerâz-e Omaviyân* (Tehran, 1963); idem, *Târikh-e khândân-e Tâheri* (Tehran, 1957); idem, *Târikh-e ejtemâ'i va siyâsi-ye Irân dar dowre-ye mo'âser* (2 vols., Tehran, 1956, 1965).

be appointed a professor of history at Tehran University. In addition to works on literature and literary history, he published a manual on how to write history, a work on Kurdish history, and an overview of Iran from the rise of Timur to the establishment of constitutionalism.[109] He knew several languages, was a translator and also a poet. Among other things, he translated the fourth volume of E. G. Browne's *Literary History of Persia* (1937), and Arthur Christensen's *L'Iran sous les Sassanides (Irân dar zamân-e sâsâniyân)* (1938).

Nasrollâh Falsafi (1901–81) was not only a diligent translator and a poet but also a scholar who could more justifiably be regarded as a historian than many of his peers. He was appointed to teach pre-Islamic history at Tehran University in 1936. In 1939 he published *Ta'thir-e târikh dar parvaresh-e afkâr,* following the establishment of the officially sponsored Organization for the Cultivation of Ideas (*Sâzmân-e parvaresh-e afkâr*). His most important accomplishment in history was a five-volume work on the life and times of Shah Abbâs I, the first volume of which appeared in 1953.[110] Dealing with various aspects of the life of Shah Abbâs, the work was based on a multiplicity of Persian and foreign sources; however the author rarely transcended an uncritical reading and reliance on those sources, and often merely reproduced them. By carefully chronicling events, crafting a narrative reconstruction of their sequence, using various sources, and amply quoting from them, the author shed light on many aspects of the life and times of his subject. Falsafi wrote as accurately as the available information allowed and did not hide unpalatable facts. He did not, however, display the refined conception of evidence, demonstration and historical argument characteristic of professional historical inquiry. Noticeably deficient in imaginative narrative texture, the work often read more like a conventional compilation of facts or quasi-facts; it lacked analytical coherence and rarely pursued a recognizable argument.

109 Gholâm-Rezâ Rashid-Yâsami, *Â'in-e negâresh-e târikh* (Tehran, 1937); idem, *Kord va peyvastegi-ye nezhâdi va târikhi-ye ou* (Tehran, 1940); idem, *Târikh-e Irân az zamân-e amir Teymur Gurkâni tâ esteqrâr-e mashrutiyat* (Tehran, 1944).

110 Nasrollâh Falsafi, *Zendegi-ye Shâh Abbâs-e Avval* (5 vols., Tehran, 1973–74).

Although not formally identifying himself as a historian, Gholâm-Hoseyn Sadiqi (1905–91), the civic-nationalist politician and professor of sociology at Tehran University, was a scholar, if not of history, of historical sociology. He published little, but his main work—his doctoral dissertation—remains an important, and for its time, pioneering work of history. Entitled *Les mouvements religieux iraniens au II^e et III^e siècle de l'hégire*, it was published in Paris in 1938. It dealt with Iranian religious movements that emerged in the second and third centuries after the rise of Islam and primarily sought to counter Arabo-Islamic ascendancy. A Persian translation of the book was eventually published in 1993;[111] prior to this date, it had only a limited impact on Iranian historians unfamiliar with French. With his meticulous erudition and prodigious knowledge of the history of Islamic Iran, Sadiqi greatly influenced and helped scholars seeking sources and guidance on socio-historical enquiry. He collected a large body of material and notes on various aspects of Iranian history, society and culture, particularly the Qajar period and the background to the Constitutional Movement, which, alas, remains inaccessible. He has been described as too much of a perfectionist, overly concerned with impartiality and prone to scholarly doubts, to commit himself to writing with ease.[112]

Among the scholars who worked at the intersection of history and literature, Abd-al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub (1923–99) gained considerable prominence. Although his works of history were not distinguished by the kind of exacting scrutiny of primary sources that characterized the work of earlier scholars, the range and diversity of the subjects he explored, together with his insights, imagination, sparks of originality, and attractive prose made him an influential and widely-read author. A prolific writer, he published works on literary history, Sufism, Islamic and Iranian history. His first book, *Do qarn-e sokut* (Two Centuries of Silence), on Iranian cultural and literary life after the Arab invasion,[113] achieved remarkable success, and he considered

111 Gholâm-Hoseyn Sadiqi, *Jonbesh-hâ-ye dini-ye Irâni dar qarn-hâ-ye dovvom va sevvom-e hejri* (Tehran, 1993).

112 Yahyâ Mahdavi, introduction to Sadiqi's *Jonbesh-hâ-ye dini*, p. xii.

113 Abd-al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub, *Do qarn-e sokut* (Tehran, 1957).

it his favorite work.[114] A highly gifted scholar, Zarrinkub was familiar with modern historiographical trends and the works of European scholars of Iran,[115] and showed considerable inventiveness in the use of sources, but did not always observe his own injunction regarding the necessity of a steadily critical assessment of them. His prose style was also sometimes clearly influenced, in an oddly mimetic manner, by the sources he used. This idiosyncrasy is particularly evident in one of his later and more distinctly historical works, the ambitiously titled *Târikh-e mardom-e Irân* (The History of the Iranian People).[116]

The themes of cultural resistance and survival also informed the work of Mohammad Mohammadi-Malâyeri (1911–2002), another scholar traversing various disciplines, including history. A professor at the universities of Tehran and Beirut, he started a major project in the 1940s on Iranian culture and history in the crucial transitional period from the Sasanian to the Islamic era. The result of this work was published partly in 1944 and 1975, eventually appearing in five volumes.[117] This innovative and multifaceted research sought, inter alia, to underline the resilience of Iranian culture in areas normally regarded as Arab or Arab-dominated, and to emphasize its continuity in the face of an assumed radical rupture. Mohammadi-Malâyeri maintained that "the decline and fall (*zavâl*) of the Sasanian state should not be mistaken for the collapse of the Iranian nation (*mellat-e Irân*) as an ancient nation relying on its own culture and civilization."[118] The use of the word nation here may sound clearly anachronistic, but what it intends to convey is a sense of the strong cultural ties and communal resources, which persisted despite the intrusion of a new religion. Although often eluding scholars, those societal attachments and resources enabled the Iranians culturally to survive the powerful onslaught of the Arabs.

114 Zarrinkub, interview in *Bokhârâ* 7 (August–September 1999), p. 46.

115 For his historiographical views see: *Târikh dar tarâzu: dar bâre-ye târikh va târikhnegâri* (Tehran, 1983).

116 Abd-al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub, *Târikh-e mardom-e Irân* (2 vols., Tehran, 1985, 1989).

117 Mohammad Mohammadi-Malâyeri, *Târikh va farhang-e Irân dar dowrân-e enteqâl az asr-e Sâsâni be asr-e Eslâmi* (Tehran, 1993–2001).

118 Ibid., I, p. 7.

A panoramic view of the long span of Iranian culture also permeates the work of Ehsan Yarshater (b. 1920), who has come to epitomize those scholars whose work—in terms of scope and erudition—combines the best of the earlier tradition and the scholarly standards and specialism of the modern world. Through numerous works of scholarship and editing, whether in Iran or in the U.S., he has made an immeasurable contribution to the study of Iranology and various aspects and periods of Persian history. The *Encyclopaedia Iranica* alone has had a profound impact on virtually every aspect of Iranian studies, including history. In the same vein, and in terms of the exploration of Iranian culture broadly conceived, the vast, exemplary contribution of Iraj Afshâr (1925–2011) comes to mind. No one has singlehandedly contributed to Iranian studies, including history, as much as Afshâr, who had, over a lifetime, tirelessly sought out, collected, edited and published material of tremendous importance to historians as well as other scholars of Iran.[119] Equally significant was his unrivalled bibliographical expertise. With his remarkable sense of dedication and prodigious knowledge of a long span of Persian history and culture, Afshâr was unfailingly a source of unfailing help and support to younger historians.

With respect to making unknown sources available and usable to other scholars, the work of Afshâr is a continuation of that of other distinguished scholars such as Mojtabâ Minovi (1903–77), an erudite, fastidious and sometimes combative scholar, who had mastered modern methods of literary criticism and textual research. Among other things, he located and microfilmed numerous important manuscripts in libraries outside Iran. In addition to being a specialist on the *Shahname* and several other seminal texts of Persian literature, he was a scholar of Saljuq, Mongol and Ilkhanid history, among other things. His main contribution was, however, in the field of critically editing and annotating key texts of the Persian language, and thus helping to increase the volume of primary sources and texts on which historians, as well as other scholars,

119 For Afshâr's assessment of Iranian historiography in English, see his "Iranian historiography," in *The East and the Meaning of History*, Studi Orientali 13 (Rome, 1994), pp. 219–42.

could rely. In terms of knowledge of sources and bibliographic contribution mention must also be made of two other outstanding scholars—Mohammad-Taqi Dâneshpazhuh and Sayyid Abdollâh Anvâr. Another scholar who combines the role of seeker and compiler of documents with the task of a historian is Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i (b. 1923); he has located and published important historical documents, and produced scholarly works on Karim Khan Zand and Nâder Shah Afshâr, among others.[120]

One of the last representatives of the generation of earlier litterateur/Iranologists was Abbâs Zaryâb-e Kho'i (1918–95). From a poor background and with a traditional Islamic education, he became immersed in Persian literature and culture, and well informed about Western learning in history and the humanities. He received a doctorate in history from Mainz, Germany, with a thesis entitled *Der Bericht über die Nachfolger Timurs aus dem Ta'rih-i Kabir des Ga'fari ibn Muhammad al-Husaini* (Mainz, 1960); taught history at Tehran University, becoming Head of Department; and was widely regarded as a man of considerable learning. He traveled and taught abroad, but also remained a scholar in the traditional sense, interested in manuscripts, literary sources, religion, history, philosophy, etc. He did not, however, produce a body of work that could be specifically regarded as history; moreover, his work has remained scattered and needs to be collected to be judged.[121] Leading a modest life, he was known for his generosity and enjoyed a scholarly reputation comparable to that of his learned predecessors.[122]

A combination of serious and popular history is to be found in the work of Mohammad-Ebrâhim Bâstâni-Pârizi (b. 1925), a professor of history at Tehran University. Aided by a remarkable memory, inquisitiveness, and narrative and literary talents, Pârizi

120 Abd-al-Hoseyn Navâ'i, *Asnâd va mokâtebât-e târikhi-ye Irân az Teymur tâ Shâh Esmâ'il* (Tehran, 1977); idem, *Karim Khân Zand* (Tehran, 1977); idem, *Nâder Shâh va bâzmândegânash* (Tehran, 1989).

121 See nevertheless, Abbâs Zaryâb-Kho'i, *Bazm-âvard: shast maqâle dar bâre-ye târikh va farhang va falsafe* (Tehran, 1989).

122 See further Ahmad Tafazzoli, ed. *Yek qatre bârân; Jashn-nâme-ye Abbâs Zaryâb-Kho'i* (Tehran 1991); see also Abbâs Zaryâb-Kho'i, "Târikh-negâri dar Iran," *Târikh va farhang-e mo'âser* 11–2 (1994), pp. 50–61.

has delved into many unusual topics; he has also amassed detailed knowledge of local histories, particularly the history of Kermân, Sirjân, Rafsanjân and his birthplace, Pâriz. His significant studies on aspects of the Safavid era are among his more professional output and indicate his considerable ability to accomplish this kind of work.[123] He is, however, better known for his sometimes delightfully absorbing eccentricity and whimsical story-telling urge; deftly combining wit and satire, he has not only sought to entertain his readers but also to advance his historical postulates, for instance, regarding the equal futility of the escapades of all historical figures, both famous and obscure.[124] While ensuring him a considerable readership, his indiscriminate blending of story-telling and historical enquiry has, perhaps, detracted from the role he has had the capacity to play as a professional historian.

More specifically in literary and textual studies many names come to mind. However, particular mention should be made of Mohammad-Taqi Bahâr (1886–1951), poet laureate, activist and littérateur who, among other things, chronicled the developments in various genres of Persian prose over a long historical span.[125] Qâsem Ghani, a physician and man of letters, crafted a remarkable and imaginative, albeit unfinished, reconstruction and political and cultural contextualization of the life and thought of Hâfez.[126] Zabihollâh Safâ, a professor of literature at Tehran University, produced a major work on the history of Persian literature, which, although not innovative, is nonetheless impressive.[127] The encyclopedic and massive lexicographic work (*Loghat-nâme*) of Ali-Akbar Dehkhodâ (1879–1956), along with his compilation of popular and literary proverbs (*Amthâl va hekam*), is of crucial significance to those seeking to study the his-

123 Bâstâni-Pârizi, *Siyâsat-va eqtesâd dar asr-e Safavi* (Tehran, 1988); also of interest is his important article "Azhdahâ-ye haft sar yâ râh-e abrisham." Reprinted in *Azhdahâ-ye haft sar* (Tehran, 1973), pp. 213–95.

124 See for instance, idem, *Nâ-ye haft band: maqâlât-e târikhi va adabi* (Tehran, 1971).

125 Mohammad-Taqi Bahâr, *Sabkshenâsi yâ târikh-e tattavor-e nathr-e fârsi* (3 vols., Tehran, 1942).

126 Qâsem Ghani, *Bahth dar âthâr va afkâr va ahvâl-e Hâfez* (2 vols., Tehran, 1942–43).

127 Zabihollâh Safâ, *Târikh-e adabiyât-e Irân* (10 vols., Tehran, 1968).

tory of changes in Persian literary and cultural sensibilities. Another lexicographer and man of letters, Mohammad Mo'in (1918–71) made contributions that were historically relevant. Most notably, in one influential work, he sought to show how many themes in Persian literature can be traced back to pre-Islamic religion and culture.[128] The best in the work of erudite men of letters can be found in the monumental and authoritative accomplishments of Mohammad-Rezâ Shafi'i-Kadkani (b. 1939), professor of Persian literature at Tehran University, both in his perceptive studies of poetry and literary history, and in his many fine editions of classical texts. The account given above cannot by any means be exhaustive of those men of letters and learning who have made important contributions to the historical understanding of Iranian culture.

7. Institutional, Political and Cultural Context

Some scholars have suggested that a preoccupation with national identity or nationalism was predominant in the historical writings and imagination of historians of the Pahlavi era.[129] If this was the case, it is neither difficult to explain, given the context, nor is it plausible to view it as an avoidable aberration. In a country where fear of territorial dismemberment was chronic, and Western imperial hegemony persistent, historians, like other members of the intelligentsia, could not avoid espousing nationalist attachments. Even if they strove to be impartial in the procedural components of their research, their very choice of subject was often informed by concern for the country. They saw themselves as striving to cultivate a consciousness of the past, which could provide a locus of attachment for the citizens of a modern Iran; this effort also involved focusing on an inclusive civic solidarity based on historically-rooted common cultural achievements and values. Such a task was indispensable to the project of an

128 Mohammad Mo'in, *Mazdeyasnâ va ta'thir-e ân dar adab-e fârsi* (Tehran, 1947).

129 See for instance, A. Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography, ix. Pahlavi Period, and Chapter 7.

emerging nation-state aspiring to modern sovereign governance and democratic self-rule and seeking to overcome numerous challenges in its path. The early Pahlavi era marked a formative period in which Iran was in transition from the heterogeneous Qajar kingdom to a nation-state. The study of history could not remain unaffected by nationalist attachments, but nationalism, although salient, was not the sole leitmotif in historical thinking.

Many institutional prerequisites for the development of a national culture and for scholarly pursuits emerged in the period following the Constitutional Revolution, and more specifically under the Pahlavis. In 1924, the Education Commission (*Komision-e ma'âref*) was established. Conceived as a charitable foundation, it was to raise money for the purposes of assisting and overseeing the writing of textbooks and educational works, and facilitating their publication. Over the years its members included some of the most distinguished political and cultural figures in the country, including Mahmud Alâmir, Yahyâ Dowlatâbâdi, Soleymân Mirzâ Eskandari, Yusof E'tesâmi, Ebrâhim Hakimi, Mehdi-Qoli Hedâyat, Mohammad Mosaddeq, Hasan and Hoseyn Pirniyâ, Arbâb Keykhosrow Shâhrokh, Ali-Akbar Siyâsi, and Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh.

Among the history books published under the auspices of the Commission were several works by Albert Malet (1864–1915) translated by well-known cultural/political figures.[130] Other noteworthy translations in history included works by Minorsky, Christensen, and Hinz.[131]

130 Works of Albert Malet translated into Persian included, *Târikh-e melal-e sharq va Yunân*, tr. Abd-al-Hoseyn Hazhir (Tehran, 1930); *Târikh-e Rum*, tr. Gholâm-Hoseyn Zirakzâde (Tehran, 1930); *Târikh-e qorun-e vostâ*, tr. Hazhir (Tehran, 1932); *Târikh-e qorun-e jadid*, tr. Fakhr-al-Din Shâdmân (Tehran, 1933); *Târikh-e qarn-e hejdahom va enqelâb-e kabir-e Farânse*, tr. Gholâm-Rezâ Rashid-Yâsami (Tehran, 1931); *Târikh-e qarn-e nuzdahom*, tr. Hoseyn Farhudi (2 vols., Tehran, 1934).

131 Minorsky's *Esquisse d'une histoire de Nader Chah* (Paris, 1934) was translated as *Târikhche-ye Nâder Shâh* by Rashid-Yâsami (Tehran, 1934); Mojtabâ Minovi translated Christensen's *L'empire des Sassanides, le peuple, l'état, la cour* (Copenhagen, 1907), as *Vaz'-e mellat, va dowlat va darbâr dar dowre-ye Shâhanshâhi-ye Sâsâniyân* (Tehran, 1935); and Walther Hinz's *Irans Aufstieg zum Nationalstaat im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1936), was translated by Keykâvus Jahândâri as *Tashkil-e dowlat-e melli dar Irân* (Tehran, 1968).

Similarly, the National Heritage Society (*Anjoman-e âthâr-e melli*), established in 1926, would play an important role in identifying, protecting and maintaining historic and archeological sites and monuments of history and culture. It also sponsored publication of many manuscripts and scholarly works of a cultural or historical nature. Its work would be complemented by several other institutions, such as the Bureau of Archeology (*Edâre-ye koll-e bâstân-shenâsi*), the National Organization for the Protection of Ancient Monuments (*Sâzmân-e melli- ye hefâzat-e âthâr-e bâstâni*), and the Archeological Institute of Tehran University.

Tehran University, the premier institution of higher education in the country, had the greatest impact on the development of modern approaches to knowledge, including the study of the humanities, research in various fields, and the emergence of a scholarly community. As well as Tehran University and its Central Library, important public repositories of books, manuscript and documents—such as the National Library, the Library of the Parliament, the Pahlavi Library, the Foreign Ministry archives, and the much later established National Archives (*Sâzmân-e asnâd-e melli*)—and private libraries such as the Malek Library facilitated research in the humanities, including history. Tehran University Press was set up in 1926, and headed until 1951 by Parviz Nâtel-Khânlari (1913–90)—professor of literature at the university and editor of the literary and cultural journal *Sokhan* (founded in 1943)—and subsequently by scholars such as Safâ and Afshâr. The press published several series of books of interest to historians, as did the Institute for Iranian History and Culture at the University of Tabriz many years later. Partially state funded, non-profit institutions such as the Bureau for the Translation and Publication of Books (*Bongâh-e tarjome va nashr-e ketâb*) established in the early 1960s, sponsored the publication of numerous important works in the field of history. It concentrated on the two areas of manuscripts and Iranology, that is, translation of the works of foreign scholars of Iran. The Iranology section of the Bureau, headed in the 1960s by Ehsan Yarshater, then a professor at Tehran University, published many important works in Iranian history. A similar organization, the Foundation for Iranian Culture (*Bonyâd-e farhang-e Irân*),

instituted in 1965 and headed by Parviz Nâtel-Khânlari, published a variety of books on literature, history, geography and learning in the past, as well as popular culture and folklore. Thus the publication of edited versions of important manuscripts, which had started much earlier, gained considerable momentum. Needless to say, many works of significance, including manuscripts, research and translations, were brought out by private publishers.

The significance in terms of impact on the study of history of journals such as *Yâdegâr* has been previously alluded to. *Râhnemâ-ye ketâb,* a monthly publication founded in 1957 by Afshâr and Yarshater and edited by the former, not only published articles in the field of Iranian studies, including history, but also set new academic standards for the reviewing of books. *Barrasi-hâ ye târikhi*, a bimonthly established in 1966 and published by the public relations department of the Iranian military's Chief of the General Staff, was also devoted to history and Iranian studies. Although clearly partisan, it was edited by Jahângir Qâ'em-maqâmi, a noted historian in his own right. The journal's editorial board also included historians such as Khânbâbâ Bayâni and Ehsân-Allâh Eshrâqi and occasionally published scholarly articles. A number of specialized journals were published by academic institutions such as the faculties of letters at various universities, which also furnished material of interest to historians. The same can be said of more general periodicals such as *Armaghân, Âyande, Mehr, Peymân, Sokhan*, *Yaghmâ, Jahân-e now, Farhang-e Irân Zamin, Sâlnâme-ye donyâ, Vahid,* and *Negin,* among others. There was, however, no professional journal of history associated with a bona fide academic or historical institute, nor indeed was there an institution established in the field of history comparable to the Institute for Social Research (*Mo'assese-ye tahqiqât-e ejtemâ'i*). This institute included a number of the country's top social scientists in the fields of sociology, anthropology, ethnography, demography, etc. Founded in the late 1950s, it was headed by the Swiss/French educated sociologist Ehsân Narâqi and also enjoyed the prestige of being presided over by Gholâm-Hoseyn Sadiqi.[132]

132 Ehsân Narâqi, interview, *Kelk* 71–2 (February–March 1996), pp. 528–69.

When in the 1960s the Iranian Academy of Letters and Arts (*Farhangestân-e adab va honar*) was established, its director, Nâtel-Khânlari, created two societies appended to the academy, one dedicated to history and the other to music. The Society for History (*Anjoman-e târikh*) was headed successively by Zaryâb-e Kho'i, Qâ'em-maqâmi and Afshâr. Among its notable initiatives was the organization, in 1977, of an international conference in the city of Hamadan, on Iranian social and administrative history up to the Saljuq period. The work of the Society came to an end with the Revolution. Clearly the practice of organizing scholarly conferences on Iranian studies had emerged slowly, and when they dealt specifically with history, it primarily concerned the distant past. In 1970, Tehran University launched and hosted a conference of Iranian studies (*Congre-ye melli-ye tahqiqât-e Irâni*), to be held annually in one of the country's academic institutions. The Ministry of Arts and Culture also regularly hosted an annual conference on Iranian history, which inevitably avoided subjects of direct political and contemporary resonance.

More immediately detrimental to historical research was the absence of a state archive in the modern sense of a repository of government records systematically arranged and freely accessible to researchers. The sources needed by historians were frustratingly scattered, and what passed for a 'document' remained indeterminate. The publication of many manuscript sources did not inspire any commensurate original scholarship on the pre-modern era; and no period of history attracted thorough, sustained and systematic study.[133] During the greater part of the Pahlavi era, material deemed to be politically sensitive, including newspapers of the periods when censorship was lax, could not be easily accessed. For instance, during the 1970s, at SAVAK's behest, newspaper and journal collections from the 1940s and early 1950s would not be made available to independent Iranian scholars or students.[134] The inaccessibility of archival and primary sources, as well as many

133 For an account of who has dealt with various periods of Iranian history and how, see A. Amanat, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography, ix, Pahlavi period.

134 Author's personal experience.

politically sensitive books, was a major constraint to historical research. The highly possessive attitude of notable families holding private papers presented an additional problem. Even if sources existed, they would be made available only to well-connected individuals or those considered politically reliable.

The absence of sustained political and civic liberties, and the impossibility of writing impartially or critically about the Pahlavi era during the greater part of Pahlavi rule, meant that actual or would-be serious historians avoided dealing with the contemporary period or with politically controversial topics. This constraint, together with the uninspiring nature of many works of history, and the all too common abuse of history for hagiographic or laudatory purposes,[135] or for politically motivated distortion and whitewashing of past events, had an adverse impact both on the public reception of history and on its practice. It frustrated not only the historians but also the public, who sought to read politically relevant and candid accounts of the recent past. Such a situation created a dangerous lacuna in the public knowledge of history, and proved detrimental to thoughtful civic engagement and the emergence of informed and responsible citizenship. Nevertheless, despite political repression, there were no insurmountable barriers to real research on many socio-economic or cultural aspects of the past that an imaginative historian could not, at least partially, overcome. Political obstacles were sometimes invoked to mask the absence of initiative, imagination and commitment to hard work.

Political constraints alone did not impede progress in the field of historical enquiry; many socio-cultural and educational prerequisites were also absent. One of the key socio-cultural factors militating against advances in historical research was the demoralizingly low status and prestige of history among academic subjects, and particularly the insecure and unpromising job prospects of history graduates. With constant social and parental pressure on the young to pursue subjects such as medicine and engineering, first

135 See note 142; see also Ali-Asghar Shamim, *Irân dar dowre-ye saltanat-e a'lâ hazrat Mohammad-Rezâ Shâh Pahlavi* (Tehran, 1967), Ali Dashti, *Panjâh-o-panj* (Tehran, 1975).

rate talent would rarely be attracted to history or other branches of the humanities. The better students in the humanities were usually drawn to law and political science. Moreover, the prevailing modality of education in the humanities pedagogically discouraged analytical, independent and critical thinking; it nurtured learning by rote and unquestioning deference to elders. It did not teach rigorous reasoning and imaginative synthesizing, and promoted a quasi-textual positivism. Progress in historical scholarship was impeded by the absence of a congenial intellectual and scientific milieu sustained by educational and cultural institutions.

8. The Constraints of Conventional History

The primary or conventional mode of historical enquiry in the period under review remained history from above, or history as the narrative of the deeds and misdeeds of the élite. In this sense history was often barely distinguished from a mere chronicle of events, dotted with dates and names. It seldom transcended its event-centered character in favor of a problem-oriented one; it was analytically relaxed and rarely theoretically or sociologically informed. Literary history, the history of education, journalism, diplomacy, post and telegraph, agriculture, and local history were to varying degrees studied. However, many areas of enquiry such as economic history, the history of movements, institutions, customs, culture, beliefs, attitudes, private life, childhood, gender, and other branches of social history remained virtually unexplored.[136] History from below, dealing with the working classes, the urban lower classes, peasants, and pastoral nomads, received little systematic attention. Even political and intellectual history, which were predominant, remained methodologically untouched by academic debates and advances

136 Important exceptions include a work on modern Iranian literary-cultural history: Yahyâ Âryanpur, *Az Sabâ tâ Nimâ* (2 vols., Tehran, 1971), and a study of the country's modern cultural and civilizational institutions, Hoseyn Mahbubi-Ardakâni, *Târikh-e mo'assesât-e tamaddoni-ye jadid dar Irân* (3 vols., Tehran, 1975–90).

elsewhere. Few successful attempts were made to forge a link between history and other social science disciplines. Only in certain cases did historians turn to some kind of Marxism, often of a Soviet variety, employing inflexible and reified notions informed by a rigid ideological perspective. Other than a number of important translations,[137] little work worthy of mention resulted.[138] Virtually nothing was done in the field of oral history.

History was perceived essentially as an outcome of the will and the decisions of individual actors. Such methodological individualism often blinded its practitioners to collective structural factors. At the same time, the prevailing facile conception of agency and motivation resulted in perceiving of action at best as the consequence of ideas and intentions, and at worst as the result of unsavory links, machinations and plots. This attitude, together with a belief in inordinate foreign influence, often resulted in attributing the conduct of political actors solely to their assumed links with foreign powers. The behavior of individuals would also automatically be considered as the direct outcome of social or class affiliations. The stifling political culture, and a rigidly schematic Marxism, proved inhospitable to an adequate understanding of autonomy in individual conduct or

137 Chiefly by Karim Keshâvarz and from Russian, these translations included Igor' Mikhailovich D'yakonov, *Istoriya Midii: ot drevneĭshikh vremen do kontsa IV veka do na. e.* (Moscow, 1956), tr. by Karim Keshâvarz as *Târikh-e Mâd* (Tehran, 1966); Nina Viktorovna Pigulevskaya et al., *Istoriya Irana s drevneĭshikh vremen do kontsa XVIII veka* (Leningrad, 1958), tr. by Karim Keshâvarz as *Târikh-e Irân az dowrân-e bâstân tâ pâyân-e sadeye hejdahom* (Tehran, 1967); Ilya Pavlovich Petrushevskiĭ, *Islam v. Irane v VII–XV vekakh* (Leningrad, 1966), tr. by Karim Keshâvarz as *Eslâm dar Irân, az hejrat tâ pâyân-e qarn-e nohom-e hejri* (Tehran, 1971); see also translation by Hubert Evans as *Islam in Iran* (London, 1985); idem, *Zemledelie i agrarnye otnosheniya v. Irane XIII–XIV vekov* (Leningrad, 1960), tr. by Karim Keshâvarz as *Keshâvarzi va monâsebât-e arzi dar Irân-e ahd-e moghol* (Tehran, 1965). See also Vasiliĭ Vladimirovich Bartol'd, *Turkestan v epokhu mongol'skogo nashestviya* (St. Petersburg, 1898–1900), tr. by Karim Keshavarz as *Torkestân-nâme: torkestân dar ahd-e hojum-e moghol* (Tehran, 1973); a revised English edition of Barthold's work was published as *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* (London 1928).

138 A possible exception might be: Mortezâ Râvandi, *Târikh-e ejtemâ'i-ye Irân az âghâz tâ asr-e jadid* (10 vols., Tehran, 1962–94).

thinking. Yet, paradoxically, those who readily emphasized the heteronomous character of all conduct or thinking were also too willing to reproach their subjects of enquiry for not acting or thinking differently. On a deeper level, historical explanations rarely reflected a nuanced appreciation of structural determinants and constraints. Historians who gave some room to explanation or interpretation rarely acknowledged the tentative nature of their findings, or admitted the impact of their own assumptions, values and perspectives on those findings. Subscribing consciously or otherwise to an unreconstructed or simplistic version of Ranke's paradigm, they assumed themselves to be engaged in representing the past as it actually was. The understanding of theoretical debates pertaining to historical enquiry remained limited; the issue of the diversity and complexity of sources, and their imaginative interpretation, was rarely viewed as problematic; topics such as historicism, relativism and the underdetermination of theory by data were not broached.

Political history was to a large extent overshadowed by a thin prosopography or élite genealogy, and by themes of service or disservice involving strong evaluative assessments of the behavior of the élite. Judgments regarding these individuals were, however, rarely mindful of the "relativism of distance" or attentive to their circumstances and constraints.[139] Judging those who had behaved consistently seemed straightforward, but inconsistency or ambivalence posed a greater challenge to the overly judgmental historian. There was an excessive, although inevitably unverifiable, attribution of intentions to historical actors coupled with a lack of sympathy for their predicaments or recognition of their interests and desires. A corollary to this was inadequate attention to situationally specific or contingent factors, as well as to the theatrical and frivolous components of behavior.

One immensely useful source for the work of the historian is the literature of memoirs and diaries. However, the zealous police state of the Rezâ Shâh era made keeping diaries or writing memoirs a perilous venture, to the considerable detriment of future historians. The

139 Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge. Mass. 1985), pp. 162–73.

same applied to the greater part of Mohammad-Rezâ Shâh's reign.[140] The genre of memoirs as it existed was unsatisfactory on a deeper level. Many were published, but their authors showed little talent or taste for candor or introspection; they were often tediously pedestrian and irritatingly self-promoting; they ignored inconvenient facts and avoided delving into private life, which they dismissed as trivial or irrelevant. Many memoirs contained little more than the reiteration of a truncated and skeletal political history. Stylistically, even those that were gracefully written, or comprised compelling narratives, often lacked wit or a sense of irony. Among the more useful memoirs published during the Pahlavi era one might mention the following examples: Yahyâ Dowlatâbâdi's *Hayât-e Yahyâ* (4 vols., 1957), which is an eyewitness account, often interspersed with perceptive comments on social and political life; Mehdi-Qoli Hedâyat's *Khâterât va khatarât* (1950) is tersely written and informative but too brief on important points. Abdollâh Mostowfi's *Sharh-e zendegâni-ye man* (3 vols., 1946; 1961) is useful on aspects of administrative, political and also social life, as is Isâ Sadiq's *Yâdegâr-e omr* (2 vols., 1959 and 1966) because of the light it sheds upon, among other things, the development of modern educational institutions. Kasravi's *Zendegâni-ye man* has been briefly described earlier.

In the absence of an academic culture and a scientific spirit and environment in which professional historical journals would promote modern standards of scholarship, substantive debate and criticism and the standards of historical scholarship remained underdeveloped. The line of demarcation between amateur and professional history was blurred or never sufficiently clarified. Rarely regarding history as an intellectually demanding pursuit, any well-placed individual with time, access to some documents or with a journalistic aptitude to contrive a narrative could claim to be a historian. Examples in the category of 'amateur historians' include Mahmud Mahmud (1872–1965), described by Âdamiyat as a "pioneer in the study of Iranian political history."[141] An activist and civil servant,

140 The secretly kept diaries of court minister Asadollâh Alam (1966–77) were published more than a decade after the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty: *Yâddâshthâ-ye Alam*, ed. Ali-Naqi Âlikhâni (6 vols., Bethesda, MD., 1993–2007).

141 Âdamiyat, *Amir Kabir*, p. 6.

Mahmud possessed considerable knowledge of, as well as documents pertaining to Qajar political and diplomatic history, and the details of post-constitutional politics. He played a role in influencing and encouraged historians like Âdamiyat. Motivated by a sense of revulsion against Pahlavi authoritarianism, Mahmud regretted the circumstances—mainly post-constitutional dislocations and the predominance of Britain—that brought it about. His *Târikh-e ravâbet-e siyâsi-ye Irân va Englis dar qarn-e nuzdahom-e milâdi* (1949–55), an eight-volume history of Anglo-Iranian relations in the 19th century, used some Iranian primary sources but largely reproduced extracts from or long summaries of the published works of British writers. It lacked intellectual coherence, and was a highly opinionated compilation written didactically and with simple pre-conceived ideas. Mahmud admitted the chronic vulnerability of Iran to British influence throughout the 19th century, but also seemed to assume that the Qajar state could have survived. He viewed the Constitutional Revolution as essentially pathological, while praising the record of the first three parliaments.

In the same genre, Mehdi Malekzâde, a physician and son of a prominent constitutionalist, provided useful, if at times flawed, information on the constitutional era in his multi-volume *Târikh-e enghelâb-e mashrute* (1949–53). Hoseyn Makki, a political activist and parliamentarian in the 1940s and early 1950s, produced *Târikh-e bist sâle-ye Irân*,[142] an eight-volume assemblage of long passages, speeches, and articles barely or poorly connected and never analyzed, covering the political ascendancy and rule of Rezâ Shâh. A skillful and patient historian might be able to distill it into one useful volume. The work of Esmâ'il Râ'in is also in the same mold.[143] Another practitioner of this brand of historical journalism, and a particularly tendentious simplifier, was Ebrâhim Safâ'i, who concentrated initially on the lives of Qajar politicians and "leaders of the Constitutional Movement." His forte was to obtain and publish 'documents' while rarely

142 The first three volumes were published between 1944 and 1946, and the remaining five appeared after 1979.

143 Esmâ'il Râ'in, *Farâmushkhâne va ferâmâsonery dar Irân* (3 vols., Tehran 1978).

revealing their provenance. By the mid-1970s he had ingratiated himself as a court historian.[144]

The works of amateur historians varied in reliability, coherence and intellectual value. A number of them sought to shed historical light on contemporary issues. In the late 1940s, when the movement for the nationalization of the oil industry was gaining momentum a few histories were written which aimed at drawing parallels with similar struggles in the past.[145] However, there was clearly an undeniable dearth of professionally trained historians or individuals genuinely interested in and intellectually equipped to write about the past. Political constraints, aggravated by and in turn reinforcing inadequate cultural-academic development, militated against the emergence of history as an independent and distinct discipline with its own epistemological and methodological identity. This was exemplified by the low quality of the history taught in the universities and by the fact that most noteworthy historical work was accomplished outside academia. Pirniyâ, Kasravi, and Âdamiyat were independent and 'non-academic;' even Eqbâl was in some respects an outsider and a maverick.

Towards the end of the Pahlavi era, the generation of earlier polymaths and Iranologists was on the wane, along with their traditions, but no new cohort of scholars comparably familiar with both western methods and approaches, and sources and repositories of past Iranian culture, had emerged. The greater division of labor and specialization, and the emergence of various disciples in the humanities had not produced any significant number of outstanding figures. The country could produce first-rate graduates in science and engineering but few in the humanities. By the last decade of Pahlavi rule, a number of academic historians had begun to make their mark. Those who worked on more recent history included Javâd Sheik-

144 See for instance, Ebrâhim Safâ'i, *Bonyâd-hâ-ye melli dar shahryâri-ye Rezâ Shâh-e Kabir* (Tehran, 1976); idem, *Rezâ Shâh-e Kabir dar â'ine-ye khâterât* (Tehran, 1976); idem, *Panjâh sâl, 2385–2436* (Tehran, 1976); idem, *Rezâ Shâh va tahavvolât-e farhangi-ye Irân* (Tehran, 1977).

145 See, for instance, Ebrâhim Teymuri, *Tahrim-e tanbâku, ya avvalin moqâvemat-e manfi dar Irân* (Tehran, 1949), and *Asr-e bi khabari, yâ târikh-e emtiyâzât dar Irân* (Tehran, 1953).

holeslâmi, who focused on Qajar political and diplomatic history, and Homâ Nâteq, who also worked on Qajar history, and between 1975 and 1982 collaborated with Âdamiyat, whom she acknowledged as a mentor. Her work on Asadâbâdi (al-Afghâni) and her two collections of articles established her as a promising historian.[146] Other female historians included Shirin Bayâni, who concentrated on the Mongol period.[147] Another academic historian, Mansoureh Ettehâdiyeh (Nezâm-e Mâfi), also a Qajar specialist, would make her mark after 1979. However, the factors militating against historical scholarship, particularly regarding the Pahlavi era, persisted.

With the collapse of the monarchy, it appeared that previous political obstacles to historical research would quickly vanish and the necessary sources would become readily available. This occurred only partially, and then in a haphazard and precarious fashion. Moreover, socio-political dislocations and uncertainty, together with the disruption of the academic system and the subsequent erosion of educational quality, created new obstacles. The instrumentalist and political use of history, and attempts to distort, selectively occlude and abuse the past for political-ideological reasons became more rampant. Despite the plethora of academic, official and semi-official institutions, archives, and journals, a boom in the publication of books and articles on previously taboo subjects, and the perseverance of a growing number of scholars who sought to pursue history seriously, formidable obstacles remained. These resulted from the continued absence of a permissive intellectual environment and a congenial scientific culture immune from improper socio-political interference. A corollary was the paucity of institutional, material, and intellectual resources necessary for sustaining and making possible scholarly advances in history and other fields of the humanities.

146 Homâ Nâteq (Nâtegh), *Djamal-ed-Din Assad Abadi* (Paris, 1969); idem, *Az mâst keh bar mâst* (Tehran, 1975); idem, *Mosibat-e vabâ va balâ-ye hokumat* (Tehran, 1979); see also idem, *Kârnâme va zamâne-ye Mirzâ Rezâ Kermâni* (Cologne, 1983).

147 Shirin Bayâni, *Zan dar Irân-e asr-e moghol* (Tehran, 1973). Badr-al-Moluk Bâmdâd's *Zan-e Irâni az enqelâb-e mashrutiyat tâ enqelâb-e sefid* (2 vols., Tehran, 1968–69) is slight but noteworthy because of its proto-feminist position.

CHAPTER 9

OTTOMAN HISTORICAL WRITING IN PERSIAN, 1400–1600*

Sara Nur Yildiz

1. Introduction: Ottomans and the Persian Tradition

This chapter explores the phenomenon of writing history in Persian at the Ottoman court.[1] It argues that patronage of Persian historical works by the Ottoman sultan and élite represents an attempt to develop an Ottoman imperial discourse by drawing directly upon the prestigious imperial traditions of the Persianate world. Ottoman patrons of Persian historical writing sought to shape the Persian tradition for their own cultural-political needs and aspirations, particularly in the context of rivalry with various Persianate polities in the greater Islamic Turko-Iranian oecumene. This process may be seen as an act of appropriation of the "transregional culture-power" of Persian in the attempt to recast Perso-Islamic cultural and imperial traditions within a specifically Ottoman mold.[2]

* I am grateful to the following for either helping me procure texts, read passages, and/or explain difficult verse: Firuza Abdullaeva, Marie Huber, Sunil Sharma, Sinem Arcak, Müfid Yüksel, and Göksel Baykan of the Süleymaniye Library. Special thanks go to Ebru Turan for her perspicacious comments and invaluable suggestions.

1 For Persian historical writing in Anatolia before the Ottomans, see Chapter 3 and Ch. Melville, "The early Persian historiography of Anatolia," in J. Pfeiffer *et al.*, eds. *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East. Studies in Honor of John E. Woods* (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 135–66.

2 For the concept of "transregional culture-power" as a term first developed for Sanskrit, see Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men. Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley, 2006),

Although Turkish served as the main language of literary composition under the Ottomans, Persian held a privileged place in Ottoman letters. Persian historical literature was first patronized during the reign of Mehmed II (reg. 1444–46, 1451–81) and continued unabated until the end of the 16th century.[3] During the reign of Mehmed III (1595–1603), however, the commissioning of Persian as a historical literary medium came to an abrupt halt. Ottoman patronage of historical writing in Persian coincides largely with the period of the transformation of the Ottoman polity from a regional power to an early modern empire, with a distinct imperial identity.[4] This process involved considerable territorial expansion and state consolidation, as well as the emergence of a growing and centralizing bureaucracy.[5] The political and cultural élite of the rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire likewise sought to develop an imperial idiom in Ottoman letters to convey these political aspirations.

pp. 11–12. Ottoman appropriation of Persianate cultural forms could be compared with the Samanid appropriation of Arabic historical knowledge in Persian as seen in Bal'ami's adaption of Tabari's history, cf. Julie Scott Meisami, "Why write history in Persian? Historical writing in the Samanid period," in Carole Hillenbrand, ed., *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. 2: *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture* (Leiden, 2000), p. 363.

3 Ottoman historiography was not first written in Persian, as Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt erroneously assume; "Introduction," in *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), p. 10

4 For the emergence of a distinct imperial identity of the early modern Ottoman polity, see Cornell H. Fleischer's seminal work, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli, 1541–1600* (Princeton, 1986); idem, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The making of the imperial image in the reign of Süleyman," in G. Veinstein, ed., *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps* (Paris, 1992), pp. 159–77; Gülru Necipoğlu, "A Kanun for the state, a canon for the arts: Conceptualizing the classical synthesis of Ottoman art and architecture," in G. Veinstein, ed., *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps*, pp. 195–216; Ebru Turan, "Voices of opposition in the reign of Sultan Süleyman: The case of İbrahim Paşa (1523–36)," in Robert G. Ousterhout, ed., *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007), pp. 23–35.

5 See Linda T. Darling, "Political change and political discourse in the early modern Mediterranean World," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38/4 (2008), pp. 505–31. For a study of the Ottoman bureaucracy in the 16th century, see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*.

Thus classical forms of Ottoman Turkish emerged in conjunction with the development of imperial ruling structures during the second half of the 15th century and throughout the 16th. The legendary court of the Timurid ruler Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ (1469–1506) at Herat, the cultural center of the Turko-Iranian world, served as a major source of linguistic and stylistic inspiration for Ottoman literary aspirations.[6] It was the fostering of a predominantly Turkish literary culture based on Persian models *in place of* Persian, however, that distinguishes the Ottomans from their post-Mongol Turko-Iranian political rivals, who retained Persian as their primary literary and administrative language.

Long the linguistic and literary idiom for conveying "transcendent political claims linking polities to a pan-regional political culture,"[7] Persian served as a 'minority' prestige language of culture at the largely Turcophone Ottoman court. As such, Iranian émigrés exercised a near monopoly on the production of Persian historical works for Ottoman patrons.[8] Indeed, "Rumis," or native-born Ottomans, were seldom noted for their excellence in Persian, and few ventured to compose historical works in Persian (with the notable exceptions of Shokr-Allâh and Ghobâri).[9] This chapter thus delves into questions of production and reception by exploring how certain historical works came to be patronized in Persian rather than the more common Turkish, as well as how they were received and

6 Eleazar Birnbaum, "The Ottomans and Chagatay literature. An early 16th-century manuscript of Navā'ī's Divan in Ottoman orthography," *Central Asiatic Journal* 20/3 (1976), pp. 157–90; Mehmet Çavuşoğlu, "Kanuni devrinin sonuna kadar Anadolu'da Nevâyî tesiri üzerine notlar," in *Atsız Armağanı* (Istanbul, 1976), pp. 75–90.

7 Daud Ali's phrase referring to Sheldon Pollock's ideas regarding Sanskrit's aesthetic power. Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 15–16.

8 For the most thorough study of the emigration of Iranian men of letters to the Ottoman realm, see Hanna Sohrweide, "Dichter und Gelehrte aus dem Osten im osmanischen Reich, 1453–1600. Ein Beitrag zur türkisch-persischen Kulturgeschichte," *Der Islam* 46 (1970), pp. 263–301.

9 This contrasts significantly with how the Chaghatai-speaking élite at the Mughal court approached Persian as their primary literary medium. See Muzaffar Alam, "The pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal politics," *Modern Asian Studies* 32 (1998), pp. 317–49.

perceived by the Ottoman élite. In addition to presenting a selective inventory of Persian historical works, contextualized in the religio-political and cultural conditions of production and reception, this chapter also examines generic features of Ottoman historical writing and intertextuality of Persian works with their Turkish counterpart. The notion that the Ottoman attraction to Persian visual and literary culture was due to the 'lure of the foreign' obscures not only the rather intimate relationship Ottoman intellectuals had with Persian, but also their ambivalent admiration for the prestigious cultural tradition vis-à-vis the Turcophone culture in which they felt more competent.[10] Ottoman identity was shaped to some extent by interaction, competition, and conflict with the Persianate world. In time, the Turcophone Ottoman élite developed a wholly Ottomanized form of Persianate literary culture in the idiom of Turkish, which took its most sophisticated shape in the second half of the 16th century, with the best examples being the highly Persianized Turkish historical works of Celâlzâde Mustafâ (d. 1567) and Mustafâ Âli of Gelibolu (d. 1601).

The privileged locus of Persian in Ottoman practice was based on its role as a "celebration of aesthetic power"—to extend to Persian Sheldon Pollock's concept for describing Sanskrit's pervasive political-cultural role in Asia for over a millennium.[11] Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, with its convergence of history, political theory and verse, provides the quintessential expression of the Persian aesthetic and its accompanying imperial tradition. Indeed, the late medieval and early modern periods of the Turko-Iranian world witnessed the spawning of versified *shahname*-histories for the expression of claims of transregional imperial power. Ottomans likewise shared this enthusiastic reception of the *Shahname*, which, "with its wide circulation came to organize a worldview for its listeners—

10 This notion has recently been expressed by the art historian Aimée Elisabeth Froom, "A Muraqqa' for the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595). Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Mixtus 313" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2001), pp. 324–26. For a discussion of Mustafâ Âli's composition in and "meditation on things Persian," see Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, pp. 141–42.

11 Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*, p. 14.

a particularly Persianate sense of time and being."[12] A considerable share of Persian historical writing undertaken for Ottoman patronage indeed took the form of *shahname*s, in parallel with the many Turkish examples.

After providing an overview of the early development of Ottoman historical writing and its ideological impetuses, touching upon the earliest Persian histories dealing with the Ottomans such as Shokr-Allâh's *Bahjat-al-tavârikh*, this chapter focuses on several seminal 15th- and early 16th-century versified *shahname*-style Persian histories. It analyzes the narrative structures, thematic aspects and ideological contours of Mo'âli's *Khonkar-nâme*, Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* (*Bâyazid-nâme*), and Adâ'i's *Shâhnâme-ye mohârebe-ye Soltân Salim*, followed by a discussion of how the tradition of Ottoman *shahname*-style versified histories coalesced in the establishment of the court *shahname*-composer (*shâhnâmeguy*, or *şehnameci*). An overview of Persian Ottoman dynastic histories composed in epistolary style follows the discussion of versified Persian histories. This more limited trend is best represented by Edris-e Bedlisi's masterful *Hasht Behesht*, an Ottoman dynastic history composed in 1506, which remained unsurpassed in content or style until Hoca Sa'deddin Efendi's (d. 1599) composition of *Tâcü't-tevârikh* in 1575, an Ottoman dynastic history largely based on Bedlisi yet composed in a high register of Ottoman Turkish.

The results of this exposition, nevertheless, remain preliminary. Despite wide acknowledgement of the importance of Persian in the development of Turkish literary idiom, we have but a rudimentary understanding of the actual diffusion of Persian as a literary language in the Ottoman lands.[13] Similarly, Ottoman Persian-language histories have received as of yet little scholarly attention.[14]

12 Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs. Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 26.

13 For surveys of Persian written in Anatolia from the 12th to the 14th centuries, see Ahmet Ateş, "Hicri VI–VII (XII–XIV.) Yüzyıllarda Anadolu'da Farsça Eserler," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 7–8 (1945), pp. 94–135. For a micro-study of Persian in the Ottoman Balkans, see Hamid Algar, "Persian literature in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 5 (1994), pp. 254–67.

14 Earlier studies on Persian-language histories composed in the Ottoman Empire are Mohammad Amin Riyâhi, *Nofuz-e zabân va adabiyât-e fârsi*

The majority of Persian Ottoman histories remain unread and unpublished in relatively inaccessible manuscripts. The vast corpus of 16th-century Persian histories awaits further study so that we can arrive at a better understanding of its role in shaping Ottoman literary practice, as well as Ottoman identity in the connection with, and in distinction to, their Turco-Iranian political rivals.

2. Ideological Experimentation in Early Ottoman Historical Writing

The earliest histories dealing with the Ottoman dynasty took the form of Islamic universal, or world histories.[15] Islamic world histories tend to preface the history of Mohammad's revelation, the

dar qalamrow-e othmâni (Tehran, 1971); idem, *Zabân va adab-e Fârsi dar qalamrow-e Othmâni* (Tehran, 1990); idem, *Osmanlı Topraklarında Fars Dili ve Edebiyatı*, tr. Mehmed Kanar (Istanbul, 1995); Sara Nur Yıldız, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography xi. Persian Historiography in the Ottoman Empire; idem, "Persian in service of the state: the role of Persophone historical writing in the development of an Ottoman imperial aesthetic," *Studies on Persianate Societies* 2 (2005), pp. 145–63. This present chapter attempts to correct mistakes and inaccuracies contained in the latter two works.

15 One cannot discuss the rise of Ottoman historical writing without making reference to the Turkish verse *Eskandar-nâme* (Turk. *İskender-nâme*) composed during the late 14th and early 15th century by Tâj al-Din Ebrâhim ebn Khezr Ahmadi (Turk. Tâcü'd-din İbrâhim ibn Hıdır Ahmedi) (1334–1412). Modelled after Nezâmi's masterpiece, Ahmadi's *Eskandar-nâme* contains a world history that culminates in an account of the early Ottomans, entitled "Narrative of the Deeds of the Kings of the House of Osman." Distinguished as the earliest extant work dealing with the history of the Ottoman dynasty, this section relates the rise of the dynasty in the aftermath of Mongol rule in Anatolia, beginning with Osman's father Ertuğrul, and continues until the accession of Emir Süleyman (d. 1410). Ahmadi presents the Ottoman sultans and their followers as fervent *ghâzi*s waging holy war against the infidels along moralistic rather than annalistic terms; see İsmail Ünver, *Aḥmedī, Iskender-nāme: Inceleme-Tıpkıbasım* (Ankara, 1983), Kemal Silay, "Aḥmedī's History of the Ottoman dynasty," *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 16 (1992), pp. 129–200; Caroline G. Sawyer, "Revising Alexander: Structure and evolution. Ahmedi's Ottoman Iskendernāme, c. 1400," *Edebiyāt* 13, no. 2 (2003), pp. 225–43.

early Islamic community, and the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates with Creation, the Old Testament prophets, and the ancient Iranian kings.[16] Universal histories sought to integrate Islamic history into the broader framework of world history, as well as provide a narrative demonstrating the place of a new dispensation or dynasty, the patron of the work, in the overall Islamic order.[17] Ottoman world histories in particular followed the general pattern established in the Persianate world, presenting a chain of Iranian and Turko-Iranian states recognizing Abbasid authority. The earliest accounts of the Ottomans composed in this period consist of the final sections of two world histories written only a few years apart: Shokr-Allâh's Persian *Bahjat-al-tavârikh* composed in 1459, and Enveri's Turkish *Düsturnâme*, dating from 1464. Both works were patronized by Mehmed II's grand vizier Mahmud Pasha, and both drew upon Qâdi Beyzâvi's Persian universal history, but in different ways: whereas Beyzâvi constituted only one of Shokr-Allâh's many sources, it was Enveri's primary source for his narrative up to the end of the Mongol period.[18] The similarities between the two works, however, end here. Written in a simple Turkish vernacular verse clearly meant to be recited, Enveri's work must have appealed to audiences lacking even the most rudimentary education. Composed after Mahmud Pasha's military successes against Lesbos, Imbros and Samothraki, Aegean

16 Hayrettin Yücesoy, "Ancient imperial heritage and Islamic universal historiography: al-Dinawari's secular perspective," *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007), pp. 135–55.

17 Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 9, 69.

18 Enveri explains that he composed this work because the Sultan Mehmed II lacked a "*tevârikh-i müluk*," such as that by Beyzâvi. Examination of the contents of Enveri's world history reveals the author's heavy reliance on Beyzâvi, including a chapter on the Salghurids; Mükrimin Halil Yınanç, ed., *Düsturnamei Enverî* (Istanbul, 1929), pp. 4–5. See also Necdet Öztürk, ed., *Fatih Devri Kaynaklarından Düstûrnâme-i Enverî, Osmanlı Tarihi Kısmı, 1299–1465* (Istanbul, 2003).

islands off the Anatolian coast, Enveri's *Düsturnâme* likewise recounts the Aegean exploits of the 14th-century Turkish *ghâzi*s under the leadership of the Aydinid ruler Umur Ghâzi. By situating Mahmud Pasha's conquests in the Aegean within a historical narrative of the earlier exploits of Turkish *ghâzi*s, or holy warriors, Enveri presents the conquests of the Aydin principality as a precedent, and thus useable past for the Ottomans.[19] Shokr-Allâh's more detailed Persian prose universal history, on the other hand, was directed toward a learned audience. Whereas Enveri's appeal to the ideology of *ghazâ*, or holy war, is limited to reference of military exploits by past *ghâzi*s, in contrast, Shokr-Allâh's treatment of this warfare took on metaphysical dimensions.

Shokr-Allâh's Persian *Bahjat-al-tavârikh* (1459): Universal Islamic History and the Cosmological Underpinnings of Ottoman Ghâzi Ideology

The *Bahjat-al-tavârikh* by Mowlânâ Shokr-Allâh (1388—d. after 1464), the *qâdi*, or religious magistrate, of Bursa, was one of the earliest historical accounts dealing with the Ottomans historically, and the first Ottoman history written in Persian. Composed in the format of an Islamic world history and ending with Mehmed II's accession to the throne in 1451, the work was commissioned by Mahmud Pasha in 1456, following his appointment to the grand vizierate.[20] Although the bulk of Shokr-Allâh's history deals with pre-Ottoman Islamic lore and history, and its relation to non-Islamic tradition, all scholarly attention has been directed to the work's relatively brief presentation of Ottoman history, valued primarily as an early source rather than as a comprehensive

19 Theoharis Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs: The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović, 1453–1474* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 193–95, 294–96.

20 Stavrides, *Sultan of Vezirs*, pp. 3–4, 294–96; M. Şehabeddin Tekindağ, *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (hereafter *İA*), s.v. Mahmud Paşa.

one. The rest of the universal history, on the other hand, has been ignored.[21]

The *Bahjat-al-tavârikh* is the product of Shokr-Allâh's lifetime of experience, devotion and service to the Ottoman dynasty and state. Descended from a long line of religious dignitaries, and having witnessed the unraveling of Ottoman power in his youth, as well as its renewal throughout the first half of the 15th century, Shokr-Allâh served the Ottoman dynasty for over fifty years. He gained direct experience with the Turko-Iranian powers to the east in the capacity as diplomatic envoy of Sultan Murâd II (1421–51). In 1444 he represented the Ottoman sultan in negotiations with the ruler of the Qaramanid principality in central Anatolia, İbrahim Bey (1424–64), after the Ottomans seized the principality's westernmost regions of Beyşehir and Akşehir in 1437. Immediately after Shâhrokh's death in 1447, when Qara Qoyunlu power under Jahânshâh (1430–67) reached unprecedented heights, the Ottomans sent a mission headed by Shokr-Allâh to the Qara Qoyunlu court, most likely to congratulate Jahânshâh on his victory over the Aq Qoyunlu with his seizure of their capital of Baghdad that year, and with hopes of forging an alliance against their mutual enemy.[22]

Shokr-Allâh paints the Chengisids as rapacious rulers, and asserts the political superiority of the Oghuz Turks of the western branch. He further elaborates the Oghuz genealogy as first encountered in earlier texts. Yet, he does not present Ottoman political claims based purely on Qayı lineage and leadership of the Oghuz. Shokr-Allâh chose to develop the legitimizing ideology of

21 Of Shokr-Allâh's entire text, only the Ottoman historical section, together with the introduction, has been published in a rather idiosyncratic Turkish translation by Çiftçioğlu Nihal Atsız, "Şükrullah. Behcetüttevârîh," in *Osmanlı Tarihleri I* (Istanbul, 1947–49), pp. 39–76, as well as in an Arabic script edition by Th. Seif, "Der Abschnitt über die Osmanen in Şükrullah's persischer Universalgeschichte," *Mitteilungen zur Osmanischen Geschichte* 2 (1923–26), pp. 63–128. The Ottoman historical narrative takes up less than 15 folios of the entire work, which, in its manuscript form, ranges from 150–180 folios in at least 18 different copies.

22 Atsız, "Şükrullah. Behcetüttevârih," pp. 39–40; John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Minneapolis/Chicago, 1976; revised ed., Salt Lake City, 1999), p. 85.

ghazâ as it earlier appeared in Ahmadi's *Eskandar-nâme*,[23] in defense of Ottoman political claims over rival polities. With his primary concern to defend Ottoman political legitimacy *Islamically* within the discourse of *ghazâ*, Shokr-Allâh thus presents Mehmed II as the "champion of the ghâzis and holy warriors, slayer of infidels and rebellious ones, defender of the Lord's saints, and avenger of the enemies of God."[24]

Shokr-Allâh likewise emphasizes the superiority of Islam over the other major monotheistic religious traditions, referring to Christians as *tarsâyân*. While the complex question of Shokr-Allâh's many sources remains outside the purview of this survey, the author himself cites, in addition to Beyzâvi, the well-known works of al-Tabari, Ebn-al-Jowzi, Ebn-al-Khalleqân, and a few more obscure one, such as Mowlânâ Hasan b. Ali b. Hammâd's *Qot-al-arvâh*.[25] In addition to historical narratives, Shokr-Allâh made ample use of *hadith*, *tafsir*, and other works of religious sciences. He likewise drew information from treatises on geometry, geography, medicine, astronomy and astrology,[26] and the natural sciences—the *mavâled-e seh-gâne*, that is, the three kingdoms of animal, vegetable and mineral.

The *Bahjat-al-tavârikh* opens with a brief presentation of the four world traditions (*revâyat*) of history: pre-Islamic Iranian "Magi" (*Moghân*) tradition; that of the Jewish Old Testament (*Bani Esrâ'il*), the Byzantine (*Rumi*), the Latins (*Afranj*), and the Muslims (*ahl-e Eslâm*).[27] The author compares the time in between Adam, the first man, and the birth of Mohammad according to all four: the Torah designates 4345 years, the Christian tradition 5972 years, and the Muslim tradition—the most sound—6075 years. Shokr-Allâh discusses the amount time that had lapsed in between the rise of important prophets, such as Noah (Nuh), Moses (Musâ),

23 For more on Ahmadi, see n. 15.

24 Shokr-Allâh, *Bahjat-al-tavârikh*, MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, suppl. Pers. 1120, f. 5a (hereafter Shokr-Allâh, MS Paris).

25 Atsız, "Şükrullah. Behcetüttevârih," p. 48.

26 Shokr-Allâh, MS Paris, f. 2b.

27 Shokr-Allâh, *Bahjat-al-tavârikh*, MS. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek H.O. 1, f. 2b (hereafter Shokr-Allâh, MS Vienna).

and Solomon (Soleymân).[28] Moving on to the creation of the universe, Shokr-Allâh delves into the complexities of natural science and cosmology, touching upon geographic knowledge, the four elements, and celestial beings, as well as the creation of Adam and his descendents. Chapter two deals with the prophets of the Judaic tradition, and is followed by three chapters (three to five) dedicated to the Prophet Mohammad, his genealogy, events of his life and prophecy, as well as his family and household. Four more chapters (six to nine) provide an overview of the historical religious community: the ten lost tribes of Israel, the companions of the Prophet, imams and members of the ulama, concluding with a chapter on renowned religious figures (shaikhs). Inserted between these seven chapters on the Prophet, and the historical development of the Islamic community (chapter twelve), is an exposition (chapter ten) of the philosophers of the Greek and Hellenistic tradition (*hokamâ-ye Yunân*), and an overview (chapter eleven) of the Pre-Islamic Iranian kings and commanders, beginning with the legendary Kayumarths (Gayumart), the inventor of the throne and crown and the first shah in the Iranian tradition. Shokr-Allâh includes the Umayyads in this chapter dealing with pre-Islamic Iran, referring to them as the "sultans of Islam" (*salâtin-e ahl-e Eslâm*) rather than as caliphs, pointing to their secular rather than religious legitimacy as the successors to Mohammad. Shokr-Allâh treats the subsequent Muslim dynasties in chapter twelve, presenting the Sunni Abbasids together with the Shi'i Fatimids, as well as rulers arising in Iran during the period of fragmentation of the Abbasid caliphate after 945: the Tahirids, Samanids, Ghaznavids, Buyids, and Saljuqs. There are no Shi'i-Sunni polemics in this work; indeed, the Shi'i Buyids are depicted simply as the secular administrators of a weakened Caliphate. Likewise, the Fatimids, referred to as the Alaviyyân, are portrayed as governors (*vâli*) of the Abbasids, without mention of their counterclaims to the caliphate and spiritual jurisdiction over the Muslim community. Chapter twelve closes with the Mongol conquest. The historical narrative of Shokr-Allâh's world history culminates in chapter thirteen, with a brief account of the Ottoman dynasty of no

28 Shokr-Allâh, MS Vienna, f. 2a.

more than fifteen to twenty folios in most manuscripts, thus sealing the chain of legitimate Muslim rulers in the series of Turko-Iranian dynasties following the Abbasid caliphate, the early Islamic community and the pre-Islamic Iranian kings and Hebrew prophets.

One of the more remarkable features of Shokr-Allâh's world history is his description of the divine act of Creation. The work opens with the *Nur-e Mohammad* epiphany, when God determined to manifest himself through the creation of the universe:

> When the Lord the Creator, endowed with Divine Will (*erâdat*), set about to create the universe, he first made the Light of Mohammad out of which he then fashioned the Tree of Four Branches (*darakht-e chahâr shâkh*), calling it the "Tree of Certainty" (*shajâre-ye yaqin*).[29]

After creating the Tree of Certainty, God created the peacock, which perched on the tree and praised the lord for seventy thousand years. The peacock then viewed itself in a mirror that likewise had been created from the Light of Mohammad. This in turn set off the subsequent creation of the various universes. Shokr-Allâh then explains how, in pre-eternity, human souls were created from the Light of Mohammad.[30] According to this account, each human soul was assigned a place on the cosmic scheme based on its ability to visually perceive the *Nur-e Mohammad*, presumably reflected in the mirror. In other words, the destiny of each individual soul was determined by its vision during this primordial moment of pre-creation of a particular component of the *Nur-e Mohammad* manifesting itself physically as a human body, thus evoking the form of the Perfect Man of Mohammad. Shokr-Allâh presents us with a litany of souls likened to various human stations in life, dependent upon which body part of Mohammad was viewed in the mirror by the souls. Shokr-Allâh begins with the head, the most important part of the epiphany of Mohammad as the reflection of the divine,[31] for it is the head which leads the body; thus the souls witnessing the vision of Mohammad's head (*sar*) were to have a

29 Ibid., f. 8a.
30 Ibid., f. 8a.
31 In Horufi Cabalism, the name of God is considered to be written on the face of the Perfect Man; A. Bausani, *EI* ², s.v. Ḥurūfiyya.

special place on the hierarchy of human occupations—these souls would be reserved for those "worthy of holding the positions of caliphate and sultanate" (*khelâfat o saltanat*). The souls sighting his eyebrow (*abru*), would be imparted onto the body of artists or painters (*naqqâsh*); those viewing the eyes (*chashm*) would be granted to the "reciters and memorizers of the Qor'an" (*telâvat-e Qor'ân-e majid va hâfez-e Qor'ân-e hamid*); those souls witnessing the cheeks (*rokh*) would be born to those possessing "virtue and morality" (*hosn o kholq*); the viewer of the nose (*bini*) would be the souls of "druggists/perfumers (*attâr*) and physicians (*tabib*);" the viewers of the lips (*lab*) would be imparted to "the possessors of eloquence (*fasâhat*) and rhetoric (*balâghat*);" that of the teeth (*dandân*) would be born to the possessors of the vizierate (*vezârat*); that of the tongue (*zabân*) would be born to those "who recite the name of God and repeat the praises of God (*dhekr va tasbih*);" the viewers of the neck (*gardan*) would become the souls of "the callers to the prayer (*mo'adhdhen*) and preachers (*vâ'ez*)." Shokr-Allâh tops this élite group with the souls who viewed the entire face (*ru*) of Mohammad—the souls destined for the *ghâzi*s, or wagers of holy war.[32] Shokr-Allâh continues to name various body parts, which were witnessed by souls of less lofty groups such as merchants and storekeepers, working his way down from the head to the feet (*pâ*). Finally, Shokr-Allâh points out, the souls of infidels (*kâferân*) and Godless ones (*fâseqân*) who don't repent, saw nothing of the embodiment of the *Nur-e Mohammad*.[33]

One obvious aspect of Shokr-Allâh's hierarchy is the notion of associating souls with functional and moral characteristics related to the body part constituting their vision, and thus assigning the human occupation for which they are destined. His account of creation contains striking similarities, albeit in a highly simplified form, to the cosmological formulations of the theosophical thinker Ebn-Arabi (d. 1241), and, in particular, with his brief Arabic treatise on creation, the *Shajârat-al-kown*, or "Tree of Being."[34] Ebn-

32 Shokr-Allâh, Vienna MS, ff. 8b–9a.

33 Ibid., f. 9a.

34 Arthur Jeffrey, "Ibn Al-'Arabi's Shajarat al-Kawn," *Studia Islamica* 10 (1959), pp. 46, 54.

Arabi's doctrine of Mohammad as the Perfect Man appears to have gained great popularity in the Ottoman realm in the 15th century, profoundly affecting intellectual formulations of the period. According to Arthur Jeffrey, Ebn-Arabi's treatise, concerned principally with the "Person of Mohammad," asserts that the spiritual rank of Mohammad was higher than that of Jesus. Ebn-Arabi's work played a major role in the articulation of the Logos doctrine in Islam, with the developments of Logos-Christianity transferred to the person of Mohammad.[35] The rationalist Mo'tazilite interpretation of the doctrine translated the Logos into the Divine Will, which was then identified with the pre-existent Mohammad, created in the image of God. Ebn-Arabi thus takes the pre-existence of the Logos as a given, and associates it with light, creating the doctrine of the *Nur-e Mohammad*, where the Logos was the seminal reason as well as the instrument for the creation of the world.

Shokr-Allâh's reworking of the cosmological doctrines of Ebn-Arabi, or, more broadly, of Ebn-Arabism, provides a framework and legitimizing ideology for Ottoman claims to sovereignty as a sultanate on terms equal to that of the caliphate. We see this with the correspondence of the souls that view the *Nur-e Mohammad*'s head with the rank of both the caliphate as well as the sultanate. Shokr-Allâh's cosmology thus allows for the religious community of Muslims to be legitimately headed by either a caliph or a sultan, and implicitly by an Ottoman sultan in the absence of a caliph. It is this theosophical approach to understanding the divine underpinnings of Ottoman claims to universal rule that allows Shokr-Allâh to ignore traditional legalist caliphal theory.

We thus see in Shokr-Allâh's reference to the souls of the *ghâzi* an Ottomanization of a cosmology that appears to have been originally derived from Ebn-Arabi. As viewers of the face, the souls of the *ghâzi*s complement the viewers of the head, the souls of those designated to hold the sultanate or caliphate, thus purporting the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan over other Muslim rulers by being distinguished by their promotion of the *ghazâ*.

35 Jeffrey, "Ibn Al-'Arabi's Shajarat al-Kawn," pp. 46, 52.

Shokr-Allâh's assertions of Ottoman political superiority based on Islamic rhetoric and formulations were a timely development for the territorially expanding Ottoman Empire. By 1466, Mehmed II began to assert the superiority of Ottoman claims as the premier Islamic leader in response to his political rivals in the Islamic world.[36] Rivalry between Mehmed II and the Aq Qoyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan began as early as the 1459 in a skirmish in the northeastern frontier of Anatolia. That Uzun Hasan had been extolled year earlier with by title "Sultan of the Ghâzis" in correspondence composed by Jâmi indicates that the Ottomans had rivals to the claim.[37]

3. Versified Persian Historical Writing

Mo'âli's *Khonkâr-nâme* (1474): A Defense of Mehmed II's Imperial Power

Verse historical compilations often defy generic classification.[38] Mo'âli's Persian *Khonkâr-nâme* (Book of the Sovereign) presents such a case.[39] A mixture of *ghazâ-nâme*,[40] *târikh*, and travelogue,

36 Halil İnalcık, *İA*, s.v. Meḥemmed II.

37 Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, pp. 89–90; Colin Paul Mitchell, "To preserve and protect: Husayn Va'iz-i Kashifi and Perso-Islamic chancery culture," *Iranian Studies* 36 (2003), p. 493.

38 For further discussion of the mixing of genre in versified histories, see Sunil Sharma, "Amir Khusraw and the genre of historical narratives in verse," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22/1–2 (2002), pp. 112–18.

39 Mo'âli's name is alternatively rendered as Ma'âli (Turkish Me'âli). There is a greater likelihood of a poetic name being based on an adjective produced from a noun, as we see with *mo'âli*, "the lofty one," rather than on a plural noun form like *ma'âli* "eminences, sublime matters," which, on the other hand, contitutes part of the common name Abu'l-ma'âli; see Refet Yalçın Balata, "Hunkarnâme (Tavârih-i âl-i Osmân). Mir Sayyid 'Alî b. Muzaffar-i Ma'âli" (Ph.D. dissertation, Istanbul University, 1992), p. 32; Erhan Afyoncu, *Tanzimat Öncesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma Rehberi* (Istanbul, 2007), p. 28.

40 For an introduction on Ottoman *ghâzâ-nâme*s see Agah Sırrı Levend, *Ġazavāt-nāmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Ġazavāt-nāmesi* (Ankara, 1956).

Mo'âli's *shahname*-style versified history utilizing the *motaqâreb* meter is a hybrid work that defies strict categorization. Sayyid Mir Ali ebn-Mozaffar, or Mo'âli, the pen name by which he was commonly known,[41] joined the burgeoning Ottoman literary scene as an Iranian emigré after arriving in Istanbul soon after the conquest, as he intimates in his work composed in 1474: "It's twenty-one years that I have been grateful to be in the shadow of the sultan of the faith …"[42] Originally from Tus, he left his hometown never to return, sometime after 1447.[43] He traveled for close to a decade throughout the Muslim world, from eastern Iran, the Caucasus to Egypt, before making his way to the Ottoman capital, where he seems to have entered the literary circle associated with Mahmud Pasha, the grand vizier under Mehmed II.

Sometime towards the end of April 1474, eight months after the Ottoman victory at Otlukbeli (Bashkent, Tercan) in August 1473, Mo'âli presented the Ottoman court with his *Khonkâr-nâme*. The work consists of three main distinct sections: an account of the campaign which culminated in Mehmed II's triumph over Uzun Hasan, a general history of the Timurid and Turkmen polities ending with the rise of Uzun Hasan, and a description of Mo'âli's wanderings in the Islamic Middle East and his experiences at other Muslim courts prior to his entrance into Ottoman service. Affixed at the end of the original tripartite work is an account of downfall of the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha, in striking contrast to the story of Mehmed II's triumph over Uzun Hasan. Mo'âli's compilation, then, seems not to have taken final form in April 1474, when as its seal indicates, it first entered the imperial library. The text was subsequently modified several months later when the final developments in the drama of Mahmud Pasha's fall from power were incorporated into the narrative.

41 Mo'âli, *Khonkâr-nâme,* MS Istanbul Topkapı Palace Museum, Hazine, no. 1417, f. 138a (hereafter *Khonkâr-nâme,* MS Istanbul).

42 *Khonkâr-nâme,* MS Istanbul, f. 182b.

43 Robert Anhegger, "Mu'âli'nin Hünkârnâmesi, I," *Tarih Dergisi* 1 (1949–50), p. 148.

In the tradition of the poet boasting about his poetry, Mo'âli compares himself with the most renowned poet of Tus, Abu'l-Qâsem Ferdowsi, and declares his superiority over his peers:[44]

> Mir Mo'âli—like Ferdowsi,
> is as sharp in word as the sharpest sword.
>
> He prevails over all those who come afterward
> even if there be hundreds of thousands like Tusi.

Writing history in the form of a *mathnavi*, Mo'âli makes use of common poetic conventions of style and structure. The author prefaces the work with praise and glorification of both spiritual and material benefaction, praising the Lord as the Creator.[45] This is followed by mention of Mohammad's revelation (*be-elm al-yaqin âmad andar vojud / sefâti-ke dhât-e khodâ-râ namud*) and ascension to the heavens (*be-balâ bar âmad be-arsh-e majid / ke âvâz-e pâyesh malâyek shanid:* He ascended to His glorious throne, the angels listening to the sound of his footsteps).[46] The author then introduces the names of the sultans from Osmân to Mehmed II, referring to them simultaneously as *ghâzi*s and *shâhanshâh*s,[47] and refers to himself as an invoker of blessings and supplicant at the magnanimous imperial court. He dedicates a qaside to Mehmed II, "the sultan of the seven climes" and "Dârâ (Darius) of the realm," thus comparing the Ottoman sultan with one of the mightiest kings of the Achaemenid empire.[48] It is here that we first come upon the author's penname Mo'âli (f. 6a). Following these articulations of Mehmed II's imperial claims, Mo'âli exalts the sultan's conquest of Constantinople and conversion of Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya) into a

44 *Khonkâr-nâme*, MS Istanbul, f. 168a. This may also be a reference to another Iranian emigré at Mehmed II's court, Alâ'-al-Din Tusi. First appointed by Murâd II as professor at Mehmed I's madrasa in Bursa, he instructed both Mehmed II and Mahmud Pasha. He later left for Samarqand where he died in 1482; Sohrweide, "Dichter und Gelehrte," pp. 284–85; Aziz Şakir, "Edirne ve Civarında Osmanlı Kültür ve Bilim Ortamının Oluşumu" (Ph.D. dissertation, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2004), p. 176.

45 *Khonkâr-nâme*, MS Istanbul, f. 2b.

46 Ibid, f. 3a.

47 Ibid, ff. 3b–4a.

48 Ibid., f. 5a.

mosque, an act symbolizing the triumph of Islam with its appropriation of this legendary Christian imperial space. Mo'âli likewise surveys Mahmud Pasha's building activities (*emârat*) in the city with his impressive mosque complex.

After providing a brief overview of Mehmed II's conquests in Albania, the Morea, Serbia and Bosnia, the narrative turns to the conflict with the Aq Qoyunlu. The work prefaces the account of the battle between Uzun Hasan and Mehmed II with reference to the Aq Qoyunlu sack and razing of the northeastern Anatolian city of Tokat in 1472, an act of aggression that spurred Mehmed II onto the offensive and reproduces the sultan's speech rousing his soldiers into action (ff. 6a–14b). Following a second qaside extolling Mehmed II, Mo'âli launches into a detailed account of the campaign against Uzun Hasan in the summer of 1473 (ff. 16a–67a). He describes the canon fire used to besiege several fortresses in enemy hands and the capture of Aq Qoyunlu princes and amirs in a preliminary skirmish. Mo'âli relates also how, after crossing the northern Euphrates into Aq Qoyunlu territory, Mehmed II ceremoniously ascended his throne (*nehâdan-e takht o neshastan-e khonkâr khân*) along the eastern bank of the river in a provocative display of political supremacy over his enemy.[49] Following the battle narrative of the Ottoman victory (f. 58), the work shifts to the other end of the Empire; Mo'âli describes the wondrous mosques erected by Mehmed II's forefathers and in the capital by the sultan himself, the *ghâzi khonkâr* (ff. 66a–67b). Mehmed II is further praised for his construction of public works in the city.

The second section is an account of the struggle for control over Iran among the Timurids, Qara Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu in the turbulent 15th century. This historical overview of sixty-nine folios presents what seems to be little known details regarding Timurid and Turkmen relations. This section awaits further study with respect to the nature of its historical content.[50] Mo'âli then describes his journey to various lands and courts, as well as his encounters with famous shaikhs in Iran, the Caucasus, and the Mamluk realm

49 Ibid., f. 40b.
50 Ibid., ff. 67b–136b.

in the 1440s–1450s, up until his arrival at Istanbul shortly after its conquest.[51] Born to a notable family of Tus, the author identifies himself as Sayyid Mir Ali Mo'âli,[52] but never reveals why he abandoned his hometown and cut off ties with his family.

The work then turns to Ottoman internal affairs with the account of Mahmud Pasha and his execution on 18 July 1474, an event that stunned the Ottoman élite and commoners alike. It appears that the author's aim in this narrative is the defense of the sultan's seemingly excessive exercise of royal power. Mo'âli does so by invoking the prerogatives of imperial sovereignty, an ideological stance that did not prevent him from extolling the achievements of the extraordinary grand vizier.[53] Indeed, Mo'âli's choice of title, *Khonkâr-nâme*, emphasizes the theme of sovereignty as divinely granted to the sultan. Mo'âli composed this narrative as gossip, rumor and speculation regarding the sultan's motives in executing the former grand vizier were running rampant throughout the empire. Central to this speculation was the strained relations between Mahmud Pasha and Mustafâ, the Ottoman prince and governor of Karaman. Mo'âli links Mahmud Pasha's execution with the suspicious death of the sultan's son Mustafâ in Karaman some six months after Mehmed's triumph over Uzun Hasan. Mo'âli thus engaged with the rumors of a past scandal between prince Mustafâ and Mahmud Pasha, which involved the young prince's violation of the Pasha's wife. According to these rumors, when the sultan refused to redress the wrong committed by his son against the grand vizier, the relations between them soured, one result being his demotion from grand vizier in 1465, only later to be briefly reinstated for the Aq Qoyunlu campaign in 1473. As emotions intensified during the campaign, Mahmud Pasha, motivated by revenge and hatred of the prince, had him poisoned. Mo'âli thus reframes these rumors of the royal scandal by justifying Mehmed II's behavior: despite the great popularity of the grand vizier, known for his competency and public works, the sultan was forced to remove him permanently,

51 Ibid., ff. 137b–165b.

52 Ibid., f. 138a.

53 The most thorough investigation of the sources dealing with these murky events is found in Stavrides, *Sultan of Vezirs*, pp. 174–83, 329.

for, by murdering the sultan's heir-apparent, Mahmud Pasha had threatened the very existence of the dynastic royal house. And no matter what the injustice, Mo'âli suggests, no-one has the right to endanger the Ottoman imperial line.

The *shahname*-style of the work in particular suits its twin themes of military victory and imperial sovereignty; indeed, Mo'âli's *Khonkâr-nâme* exemplifies the complexity and the versatility of *shahname*-style verse historical writing. It is a genre suitable not just for extolling a sultan's virtues and military victories, but also for addressing dynastic concerns regarding the limits and prerogatives of a sultan's authority. While not replicating the content of Ferdowsi's epic, *shahname*-style versified histories nevertheless drew upon its ideals of kingship. The linking of contemporary concerns with the tradition emulated for centuries provided an effective source of ideological authority for a text. Thus Ferdowsi's *Shahname* provided a blueprint for political behavior in its invocation of unwavering loyalty to the dynastic house and ruling shah, especially when confronted with the foibles and imperfections of a less-than-perfect monarch. Ferdowsi's warning that the royal crown was to be guarded from usurpation, "Not for them is proper royal crown and throne, there must be a Shah victorious, fortunate,"[54] resonated with the ideals of pre-modern Turko-Iranian polities organized around dynastic houses. The ideals of the *Shahname* offered ideological support for the Turko-Iranian monarchical order, which, as a collective élite project of rule, was wholly dependent upon the cooperation and steadfast loyalty of the sultan's men.

54 As seen in the *Shahname* verse quoted by George Morrison, Julian Baldick, and Shafīʿī Kadkanī, *History of Persian Literature: From the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day* (Leiden, 1981), p. 24.

Malek Ommi (T. Melik Ümmi)'s *Shâhnâme*, or the *Bâyazid-nâme* (1486)

Writing about conquest and military victories as well as internal conflicts and power struggles in Persian historical verse in a style inspired by Ferdowsi and Nezâmi can be first attributed to the Indo-Persian poet Amir Khosrow Dehlavi (d. 1325).[55] Initially patronized at Mehmed II's court, Persian versified histories continued to be produced for élite consumption up until the end of the 16th century. Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* provides a salient example of how the little studied genre of historical versification further developed under Bayezid II's patronage. Completed in 1486 in the name of the sultan, Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* is a *mathnavi* in *motaqâreb* meter, which chronicles in a highly figurative and florid style the first years of Bayezid II's reign, from 1481 to 1484. Half the work narrates the sultan's trials and tribulations in succeeding to the throne and overcoming his brother Cem's rival claims. The other half deals with Ottoman military activities in Moldavia (Karaboğdan) along the northwestern Black Sea coast. Composed on the eve of Bayezid II's war with the Mamluks in Cilicia (1485–91), Malek Ommi concludes his narrative with the account of a Mamluk embassy sent to the Ottoman court.

Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* exists in two manuscripts, which have not, until now, been identified as the same work. One, housed at the Topkapı Palace Library (H. 1123), has been given the title, *Shâhnâme az goftâr-e Malek Ommi*, presumably by its copyist, the artist Dervish Mahmud b. Abd-Allâh Naqqâsh.[56] A finely produced work, illuminated and illustrated to a quality that suggests the work of a court artist, this version may be assumed to have been created for the imperial library. The second manuscript, entitled *Bâyazid-*

55 Sharma, "Amir Khusraw and the genre of historical narratives in verse," p. 112.

56 *Shâhnâme az goftâr-e Malek Ommi*, MS. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, Hazine, no. 1123, f. 99b (hereafter, *Shâhnâme*, MS Istanbul). Yoltar believes that this artist was of Iranian origin and had possibly been employed at the Aq Qoyunlu court of Ya'qub Soltân at Tabriz; Ayşin Yoltar, "The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Luxury Book Production, 1413–1520" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2002), pp. 354–55.

nâme, is housed at the Cambridge University Library.[57] Examination of the contents of the two manuscripts reveals that they are the same work, with only minor textual differences detected in the introductory couplets. While the Istanbul Topkapi Palace copy lacks a date, it attributes authorship to Malek Ommi. The Cambridge copy, on the other hand, lacks reference to an author, yet provides the date of completion in 1486.[58] In contrast to the professionally produced miniatures of the Topkapi palace manuscript, the Cambridge copy contains thirteen miniatures evidently added in the 19th century in the Qajar style. That these two manuscripts have not been previously identified as the same work is due to the belief that the *Bâyazid-nâme* deals with the reign of Bayezid "the Thunderbolt," i.e. Bayezid I rather than Bayezid II.[59] While the Cambridge *Bâyazid-nâme* has gone unnoticed, the Topkapı *Shâhnâme az goftâr-e Malek Ommi*, on the other hand, has received attention from art historians as the first illustrated Ottoman *shahname* using Ferdowsi's *Shahname* as a model.[60] The written text of both manuscripts, however, has been completely ignored by historians.

Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme*, a medium-sized work of 84 short chapters in approximately 100 folios, is framed around the twin

57 *Bâyazid-nâme,* MS Cambridge, University Library, Or. 196, f. 1b (hereafter, *Bâyazid-nâme*, MS Cambridge).

58 Zeren Tanındı, "The illustration of the Shâhnama and arts of the book in Ottoman Turkey," unpublished paper presented at the Shahnama Conference, Cambridge, 13–15 December 2007 (abstract), believes the work to have been composed around 1496.

59 Edward G. Browne, *A Supplementary Handlist of the Muhammad Manuscripts in the Libraries of the Universities and Colleges of Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1922, p. 243; repeated by Charles Ambrose Storey, *Persian Literature. A Bio-bibliographical Survey*, vol. II (London, 1927), p. 411.

60 Ayşin Yoltar provides the most substantial treatment of Malek Ommi in her dissertation, taking into consideration the written text, "The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts," pp. 386–407; 624–30; Esin Atıl, *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Washington D.C., 1985), p. 44; Tanındı, "The illustration of the Shahnama" (abstract); Barry David Wood, "The Shahnama-i Isma'il: Art and Cultural Memory in Sixteenth-Century Iran" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2002), p. 233.

themes of Bayezid II's triumph over his brother Cem in the years 1481–82, and his military victories in Moldavia. An Iranian emigré who joined prince Bayezid's court in Amasya, Malek Ommi was among the entourage to follow him to the capital upon his bid for the throne.[61] It is likely, therefore, that the author was an eyewitness to some of the events he narrates. The exordium opens in a decidedly mystical tone,[62] and sets the scene with the phoenix (*homâ*) in flight, about to cast its shadow over the next ruler—a narrative device forecasting the succession struggle between the Ottoman princes:[63]

> In the name of the life-granting King
> The world-creating Lord,
>
> He cannot be found on earth
> He is concealed like a flame hidden in stone.
>
> The world emerged as a manifestation of His perfection
> Just as a wave comes to being, rising from the surface of the sea.
>
> Evidence of the [great] measure of His beneficence
> [May be seen] in the gratitude of fish and fowl.
>
> When the hoopoe became aware of His Name
> and shook his feathery crown, he too became God!
>
> The phoenix of the globe of the sun and moon
> keeps watch while aflight.

The historical narrative begins with Bayezid II's struggle with his brother Cem Çelebi.[64] Much space is given to the various figures mediating between the two brothers, episodes that emphasize Bayezid's magnanimous attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully, even after defeating Cem at the Battle of Yenişehir in the summer

61 Tanındı, "The illustration of the Shahnama" (abstract).

62 Sunil Sharma points out that by the 14th century, "mystical poetry with its special register of language and imagery had pervaded all existing literary traditions in Persian …" and thus concludes that the categories of mystical and heroic have little use; Sunil Sharma, "Hāfiz's Sāqināmah: The genesis and transformation of classical poetic genre," *Persica* 18 (2002), p. 77.

63 *Bâyazid-nâme*, MS Cambridge, f. 1b.

64 *Shâhnâme*, MS Istanbul, ff. 6b–16b.

of 1481. When negotiations came to naught, Bayezid was forced to resort to arms a second time. In July 1482 Bayezid's Janissaries armies set out against Cem and his Karamanid supporters and defeated by Bayezid's superior military forces, Cem was forced to flee Anatolia once again. Although the drama continued for another thirteen years and greatly shaped Bayezid's foreign policy with Christian powers in the west, Malek Ommi makes no further mention of Cem's fate. Instead, the narrative moves onto the victories of Bayezid and his commanders in the west, culminating in the conquest of the fortresses of Kilia and Akkirman on the northwestern shore of the Black Sea in Moldavia in 1484. The work likewise covers Bayezid's diplomatic activities, closing with the arrival in Istanbul of the Mamluk embassy on the eve of the Ottoman-Mamluk war that broke out in 1485.

The work's metaphorical embellishment and narrative diversions, as seen in the poetical device of the cupbearer (*sâqi*) to muse on fate, serve to highlight critical moments and narrative highpoints. Just as the armies are about to engage in warfare at the battlefield of Yenişehir, the battle, with all its bloody realities of combat, is momentarily suspended with a summons to the cupbearer:[65]

> The battle standards raised and the soldiers drawing up in array,
> they entered the imperial battlefield thirsty for blood.
>
> Oh sâqi! give me the potent wine
> for the red field of your attire is tight.
>
> The young red steed (*golgun-e khâm*) galloped to and fro,
> The destiny of the world now half sealed with it.

Constructed as a *double-entendre*, the third couplet could likewise be read as "When that red wine (*golgun-e jâm*) bubbles up, the destiny of the world is half fulfilled in it." We may also envision Bayezid mounted on his steed about to charge Cem's troops, with the young prince likened to *golgun* which refers not only to the color of vermillion, and by extension, a goblet of wine, but also to Shirin's bright bay horse, often depicted as rose-colored in Ottoman

65 *Shâhnâme*, MS Istanbul, f. 40b–41a.

miniature painting.[66] That his destiny was only half sealed (*nim kâm*) refers to the fact that Bayezid's victory at Yenişehir was the first of the two victories over Cem that secured his hold of the throne. The ensuing battle is illustrated in the Istanbul manuscript, complete with decapitated bodies and other gory details.[67]

Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* is replete with terms drawn from traditional Perso-Islamic imperial discourse. Throughout the text Bayezid is designated as the "imperial one" (*Khosrow*). This particular image draws upon the imperial icon, the legendary Iranian shah, Khosrow II, coupled with his beloved Shirin. The romance of Khosrow and Shirin became popular at the Ottoman court in the 15th-century, with *mathnavi*s inspired in particular by Nezâmi's *Khosrow va Shirin*, such as Şeykhi's Ottoman Turkish *Hüsrev ü Şirin* and the Persian version by the Timurid poet Hâtefi. The Ottoman sultan is likewise attributed regal qualities echoing the warrior ethos of the *Shahname*, with his depiction as "lion-hearted" and a "rank-crushing Rostam" (*shâh-e shir-del Rostam-e saff-shekan*).[68] Bayezid is likewise referred to as Abu'l-Nasr and Abu'l-Nasr *shahriyâr*, "the Father of Victory," perhaps with the intent of emphasizing his victories over Cem and his conquests in 1484. Alternatively, Abu'l-Nasr may impart the sense of "Father of the Succourers" [of the religion], highlighting Bayezid's role as the leader of the ghazis. A host of other titles and images are used to designate the sultan, ranging from the simple "the monarch of the age" (*shahriyâr-e zamân*) to the more elaborate "the fortuitous shah of absolute power, the felicitous potentate, Father of Victory, the shah of the world, Bayazid" (*shâh-e kâmrân shahriyâr-e sa'id / Abu'l-Nasr shâh-e jahân Bâyazid*).[69]

66 Golgun is depicted as a rose-colored or pinkish horse in the illustrated manuscripts of Şeykhi's *Hüsrev ü Şirin*, also dating from Bayezid II's reign. Yoltar points out that the calligrapher/naqqâsh who executed the Istanbul manuscript of Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* likewise produced an illustrated copy of Hâtefi's *Khosrow va Shirin*; Yoltar, "The Role of Illustrated Manuscripts," pp. 282–85, 287, 296, 320, 354.

67 For an analysis of this scene, see ibid., p. 394.

68 *Shâhnâme*, MS Istanbul, f. 13b.

69 *Shâhnâme*, MS Istanbul, ff. 13b, 41a.

Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* reverberates with mystical overtones, metaphorical allusions, tropes and *double-entendre*s. The author displays his poetic virtuosity with stock-in-trade literary devices of the Persian court poet tradition, such as complaining about the vagaries of fate and summoning the *sâqi* at critical moments.[70] How characteristic his work is of late-15th-century literary trends emerging from Herat, in particular, remains to be investigated. That the author consciously composed a work in the *shahname*-style is borne out by the line: "I have composed a *shâhnâme* in your [Bayezid II's] name."[71] Malek Ommi claims inspiration from Ferdowsi as his source of imperial discourse, and Nezâmi as his source of poetic style:[72]

> If I am able to complete the panegyric (*madh*) of this imperial one (*khosrow*) [Bayezid II]
> it is because I have learned the imperial discourse (*khosrow sokhan*).
>
> Devoting my soul to every utterance (*sokhan*)
> I submit to Ferdowsi's sphere (*meydân-e Ferdowsi*).
>
> I learned to versify from Nezâmi's verse
> and it is with this poetry that I bring an end to my words.

As we have seen with Mo'âli's *Khonkâr-nâme*, the *shahname*-style versified history functions as a versatile medium for describing various contemporary events and conflicts while extolling the sultan's authority and fashioning an imperial identity. This versatility is demonstrated well with Malek Ommi's highly literary *Shâhnâme*, which is not limited to extolling the sultan's military success, but also deals dramatically with the trauma of internal dynastic conflict and succession struggle on a metaphysical level. Malek Ommi's text is distinguished from that of Mo'âli's by its extensive poetic musings, metaphoric allusions, and multiple digressions versified on a higher poetic level.

70 Sunil Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier. Mas'ûd Sa'd Salmân of Lahore* (Dehli, 2001), p. 39.
71 *Shâhnâme*, MS Istanbul, f. 98b.
72 Ibid., f. 99a.

Versifying Selim I's Conquests: Adâ'i's *Shâhnâme-ye mohârebe-ye Soltân Salim* (ca. 1520–21)

During the first half of the 16th century, there was a flurry of historical writings that focused on the short reign of Selim I (1512–20). Among these are several Persian works. Qâzizâde's *Ghazavât-e Soltân Salim* is composed in straightforward prose, and, as its title indicates, is a campaign account (*ghazavât-nâme*) of Selim's conquest of Egypt, including a brief overview of the history of the Mamluk rulers of Circassian background. The author Qâzizâde Abd-al-Kabir ebn Ovays ebn Mohammad Latifi, participated in the campaign as an imperial chancery official. A certain Sayyid Amir Sadr-al-Din Mehmed is cited by the author as motivating him to produce this account.[73] He may have been indeed been encouraged to write this work as part of his duties as an imperial chancery secretary on campaign duty. While the date of this work is not known, one may presume that it was completed soon after the Egyptian campaign in 1517.

Adâ'i's *Shâhnâme-ye mohârebe-ye Soltân Salim* is a versified history that relates Selim's rise to the throne as well as his military achievements. In respect to literary structure, poetic style, and thematic concerns, the work shares similarities with Mo'âli's *Khonkâr-nâme*, and in particular with Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme*. Like Mo'âli and Malek Ommi, Adâ'i was an Iranian immigrant to the Ottoman realm. Originally from Shiraz, Mowlânâ Bahâ'-al-Dîn Shirâzî, or Adâ'i, also spent the formative years of his adult life as a courtier of one of the Deccan sultanates in India.[74] Writing Persian poetry in the transregional inter-textual environment of

73 M.C. Şehabeddin Tekindağ, "Selim-nâmeler," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1 (1970), pp. 218–19; Abdüsselam Bilgen, ed. and tr., *Adā'ī-yi Şīrāzi ve Selim-nāmesi, İnceleme—Metin—Çeviri* (Ankara, 2007), pp. xxxiv–xxxv (hereafter Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen).

74 Although Shiraz was conquered in 1504 by the Safavids, Adâ'i makes no mention of religious persecution as the cause of his immigration to the Deccan. For his full name, see Mohammad Qazvini's *Hasht Behesht* (MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Fatih, no. 4523, f. 163a).

imitation (*esteqbâl*),[75] Malek Ommi and Adâ'i both appear to have been under the influence of late Timurid and early Safavid poetics. Whereas Malik Ommi attributes his craft to the twin influences of Ferdowsi and Nezâmi, Adâ'i places particular emphasis on Nezâmi.

The *Shâhnâme-ye mohârebe-ye Soltân Salim* covers the entire reign of Selim I, from his rise to power to his death, particularly the Syrian and Egyptian campaigns of 1516–17, which account for 32 out of the work's total of 69 small chapters. In comparison, there are only 18 chapters on the Iranian campaign (which, of course, was a less extended affair), and only six chapters on the succession struggle resulting in Selim's enthronement and Bayezid II's abdication. After the discussion of Selim's return from the Egyptian campaign in chapter 68, the work ends abruptly with the sultan's death and Süleyman's accession. Based on its structure, content, and circumstantial external evidence, one may argue that the bulk of this undated work appears to have been written soon after the Egyptian campaign while Selim I was still alive. Upon his unexpected death, Adâ'i may have hastily completed the work by adding a short final chapter describing the sultan's funeral and his son's accession.

The work begins with praises to God and Mohammad, followed by a separate chapter on Mohammad's ascension (*me'râj*). Chapter four is devoted to an exordium of Selim ("You, the Sun, and I, a mere particle on your path"—*tu khurshid u man zarre dar râh-e tu*),[76] followed by a section outlining the impetus behind the composition, which, as convention dictates, provides biographical information about the poet. Adâ'i tells us that he arrived in Istanbul after having spent many years in India. A courtier of one of the sultans of the Deccan (he doesn't specify), Adâ'i claims to have received much favor for his poetic skills. Yet he found life in India intellectually stifling and traveled back to the Islamic heartland by performing the pilgrimage at Mecca.[77]

75 Marta Simidchieva, "Imitation and innovation in Timurid poetics: Kashifi's Badāyi' al-afkār and its predecessors al-Mu'jam and Hadā'iq al-siḥr," *Iranian Studies* 36 (2003), pp. 509–30.

76 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, Persian text, p. 17.

77 Ibid., p. 17.

Throughout the section entitled, "The reason for arraying these pages in accordance with the hidden pearls and the adornment of this bride with colorful attire" (*sabab-e ârâyesh dâdan in sahife-râ be-durr-e maknun u mozayyan kardan in arus-râ dar lebâs-e gunâgun*),[78] Adâ'i employs an extended metaphor equating his work to a virgin bride adorned in her wedding finery. The metaphor of the bride is further developed in the following two final chapters of the introduction, "Praise for the Qadi-askar Efendi,"[79] and "In praise of the sultan of philosophers and poets, the great shaikh, Shaikh Nezâmi."[80] Adâ'i tells us that Qadi-askar Efendi, the patron of this work, acknowledges that it was dependent upon two sources, which Adâ'i intimates through a series of clues ("It is but from the pen of these two proud ones, that this world-soothing book has come into being"): the first is a man who is the "companion of sultans, and the adornment of religion and state." More specifically: "Having spread learning across the world, he has made his name homonymous (*tajnis*) with [the prophet] Edris."[81] Based on the clues given, one may conclude that Adâ'i is referring to Edris-e Bedlisi, and may point to his drawing on Edris's Persian prose account of Selim's reign, copies of which may have been circulating among a select group of readers, although it appears to have been not completed and officially presented to court. The second source, hints Adâ'i, is a man whose works spread throughout the world, soothing the hearts of others, the great shaikh Nezâmi: "Let me kiss the ground trod on by the precious (*gerâmi*) *shaikh* and pay homage to the spirit of Nezâmi."[82] The Qadi-askar Efendi, as Adâ'i relates, challenged him to produce something new, demanding to know how Adâ'i himself proposed to adorn the bride. Adâ'i responds here that he has clothed the bride with new adornment while drawing upon the twin sources of form (Nezâmi) and content (Edris-e Bedlisi).[83]

78 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, Persian text, p. 16.
79 Ibid., p. 21.
80 Ibid., p. 24.
81 Ibid., p. 22.
82 Ibid., p. 23.
83 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

Interwoven with this declaration of his poetics is Adâ'i's own story of how he came to write this work for his patron. A newcomer to Istanbul, Adâ'i was struck with awe over the city's beauty and wonders. With no friends or social network, however, he soon found himself lost in the big and unfamiliar city. Luck had it that he made the acquaintance of two fellow Iranian emigrés, one of whom was Hakim Shâh-Mohammad Qazvini, Selim I's personal physician. It is through Qazvini's introduction to the patron of his work, the chief military judge, or qadi-askar (T. kaz'asker), that Adâ'i penetrated the inner circle of Ottoman power.[84] We thus may consider the possibility that Adâ'i composed this work in order to present it to the sultan in hope of gaining an appointment at court or in the ranks of the religio-administrative sphere. Adâ'i's reference to his work as a bride may possibly indicate that this was his first work presented before the court.

As for the identity of his patron, Adâ'i provides us with the two clues that he was named after the Prophet, and that he was an expert in Islamic law. Circumstantial evidence points to a certain Mohammad, or Mehmed, from the prominent Fenâri family of jurists and qadis: the qadi-askar (kaz'asker) Fenârizâde Mehmed Şâh Çelebi (d. 1523), son of Ali b. Yusof Bali b. Shams-al-Din al-Fenâri, who likewise held the post of kaz'asker (1473–77) under Bayezid II. After studying law under the great jurist Efdâlzâde, the müfti of Istanbul in the 1490s, Mehmed Şâh held teaching posts and qadi appointments. He rose to the post of qadi of Istanbul before being appointed as kaz'asker of the Arab conquests in 1517, and then served as Rumeli kaz'asker in 1518–21, and finally, as kaz'asker of both Anatolia and Rumeli in 1522–23.[85] That the greater part of Adâ'i's work concentrates on the campaign of Egypt in 1517 during which his patron served as kaz'asker strengthens poet's connection with Mehmed Şah. Adâ'i appears not to have had a chance to submit the

84 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, Persian text, p. 20

85 R.C. Repp, *The Müfti of Istanbul. A Study of the Development of the Ottoman Learned Hierarchy* (London, 1986), pp. 233, 263–68; Mehmet İpşirli, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (hereafter *TDVİA*), s.v. Fenârîzâde Muhyîddîn Mehmed Şâh. Bilgen, the editor of Adâ'i's work, makes no attempt to identify his patron.

work to Selim I, who died from illness in 1520, but added the final chapter in order to present it to Selim's successor, Süleyman. Adâ'i himself died soon afterwards of the plague in 1521, as Adâ'i's close friend Qazvini informs us in his Persian biography of poets.[86]

Adâ'i presents a somewhat fictionalized account of Selim I's controversial succession, emphasizing his success in gaining the throne as preordained by the heavens and depicting Bayezid as happily handing over the throne to Selim. His father, Bayezid II, at first had chosen no side, for he regarded his three sons equally worthy of the throne. Indeed, the elderly and ailing sultan was wise enough to realize that the choice of succession was not in his hands.[87] Fate (*falak*), rather than any established principle of primogeniture, was to be the determining factor in the turn of events. However, as these unfolded in favor of Selim, Bayezid soon came to the realization that his youngest son was destined for sovereignty. Thus, in Adâ'i's account, Bayezid summoned Selim before him and consulted the realm's sages (*hakimân*) to determine, through astrological signs, the most auspicious moment to abdicate and have Selim enthroned.[88] A relatively long chapter follows, on the astrological positions of the planets during Selim's enthronement.[89] The emphasis on fate and the notion that success was a sign of divine approval distracts the reader from the vexing question of Selim deposing his father from the throne. That Selim engaged in military combat with his father's forces before he forced him to abdicate or that Selim may have even had his father poisoned are issues about which Adâ'i remains completely silent. Rather, the unpleasant re-

86 Mohammad Qazvini, *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Fatih, no. 4523, f. 163b; Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, pp. xxxvii, n. 40, xxxviii–xxxvix. Information about Adâ'i is found in the final chapter of Hakimshâh Mohammad Qazvini's biographical dictionary, a Persian translation from Chaghatai of Ali-Shir Navâ'i's *Majâles-al-nafâ'es* produced on the request of Selim I, but completed during the reign of Süleyman. At the end of the work, Qazvini added a chapter dealing with the poets from Selim's literary milieu. A version of the work has been published by Ali-Asghar Hekmat, *Tarjome-ye Majâles-al-nafâ'es* (Tehran, 1945).

87 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, Persian text, p. 30.

88 Ibid., p. 37.

89 Ibid., pp. 38–43.

alities of internal political struggle are glossed over with a noble image of prince Selim destined for the crown, as was obvious from the light of sovereignty emanating from his forehead.[90]

The Egyptian campaign, an important focus of Adâ'i's work, is given more coverage than the preceding events. This section begins with an extensive description of Egypt, extolling its healthy air and natural beauty. Just before the Ottoman army arrived at the northern Syrian plain of Marj Dâbeq, they came across an imposing mountain and a river running alongside it. Thus, prior to the decisive battle at Marj Dâbeq, Adâ'i devotes an entire section to describing the mountain (Tal-Habash),[91] a detail not found in the otherwise more detailed narrative of Edris-e Bedlisi. Its peak, hidden among the clouds, was so high, Adâ'i tells us, that "during the Flood of Noah's time its foot didn't get the slightest bit wet."[92] Despite the exaggerated metaphors and imaginary allusions, Adâ'i's verse imparts an almost realistic sense of the difficulty of the terrain the Ottomans were passing through on the eve of the decisive battle that resulted in the Ottoman conquest of Syria. In addition to the encounters between the Mamluk and Ottoman forces, Adâ'i recounts the negotiations with the Egyptian commander Tumânbây, newly elected as Mamluk sultan following the death of Qânsuh, as well as the famous illuminated *fath-nâme* drawn up by Edris-e Bedlisi announcing the Ottoman victory at Marj Dâbeq. The account of the Egyptian campaign closes with Selim's repairs on Mohyi-al-Din Ebn-Arabi's grave while passing through Damascus on the way back to the Ottoman capital.

Adâ'i's *Shâhnâme-ye mohârebe-ye Soltân Salim* appears to have been well regarded by some of the 16th-century administrative and literary élite. Edris-e Bedlisi's son Abu'l-Fazl, an arbiter of taste at the Ottoman court, praises Adâ'i for his eloquence, pleasing style (*oslub-e marghub*) and fine presentation (*shive-ye hosn-edâ*).[93] The work nevertheless seems to have been little copied. It survives only in two manuscripts, one dating from 1550, copied

90 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, Persian text, p. 30.
91 Selâhattin Tansel, *Yavuz Sultan Selim* (Ankara, 1969), p. 136.
92 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, Persian text, p. 121.
93 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, pp. lxvi–lxvii.

by a certain Mozaffar-Ali Shirvâni, and another from 1853.[94] Thus, in comparison with a near contemporary verse work on Selim's reign in Turkish, the *Selimnâme*, by Shokri-ye Bedlisi [T. Şükri-i Bitlisi], Adâ'i's *Shâhnâme* seems to have had limited circulation. This may be attributed to primarily to the dynamics of patronage at the Ottoman court. Şükri-ye Bidlisi's patron was an influential high-ranking official, Haliloğlu Koçi Beg, who had risen from the palace ranks as Selim's *kapıcıbaşı* to a military commander under Süleyman, and replaced the rebellious governor in the east, Dulkadir Bey Şehsuvaroğlu Ali Beg, following his execution in 1524. Haliloğlu Koçi Beg thus promoted the work of his protégé Şükri Bitlisi at the court through the auspices of Süleyman's powerful grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, who appears to have influenced his replacing Şehsuvaroğlu Ali.[95] Adâ'i's death in 1520, on the other hand, just after having completed the work and presented it to the sultan, as well as the death of his patron Fenârizâde Mehmed Şah in 1523, might explain why the work went into oblivion. For success, a work needed to be promoted by its author and patron through a complex set of patronage networks which resulted in a matrix of material rewards and personal loyalties.

Adâ'i's *Shâhnâme*, as well as his predecessor Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme*, are examples of creative historical writing in the hands of late 15th-century and early 16th-century immigrant Persian poets in the Ottoman realm. Both employ a variety of rhetorical devices, embellishment, complicated puns, extended and exaggerated metaphors, and elaborate word play typical of the Turkmen-Timurid literary style. Adâ'i's response to the challenge by his patron kaz'asker Efendi for poetic innovation indicates participation in the emerging literary trend in the Persianate world of the *tâzegu'i*, or "speaking freshly." This transregional poetic movement

94 Adâ'i, ed. Bilgen, p. cii.

95 Mustafâ Argunşah, ed. *Şükri-i Bitlisi, Selîm-nâme* (Kayseri, 1997), pp. 6–7; İsmail Erünsal, "Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Devrine Ait Bir İn'amat Defteri," *Osmanlı Tarih Araştırmaları* 4 (1984), p. 204; Ebru Turan, "The Sultan's Favorite: Ibrahim Pasha and the Making of Ottoman Universal Sovereignty in the Reign of Sultan Suleyman, 1516–1526" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007), p. 97.

emerging during the transitional political period from the Turkmen-Timurids to the Safavids, Mughals, and Ottomans sought to generate new poetic meaning through creative, as well as competitive, interaction with the masters of old without breaking out of the structural constraints of poetic convention. Contemporary events in particular presented the poet with a previously untapped creative realm of narrative material, as seen with Adâ'i's claim to merge new content derived from the Edris-e Bedlisi's account of Selim I, with the stylistics of the great master, Nezâmi.[96]

4. Ottoman Court *shahname*-composers under Süleyman and his Successors

Persian historical works, especially versified *shahname*-style histories produced for Mehmed II, Bayezid II and Selim II, played an important role in the importation and assimilation of the terminology and imagery of the Persian imperial tradition into an Ottoman context, and contributed to the development of an Ottoman imperial idiom of rulership. Ottoman literary historical writing nevertheless drew from a variety of styles. Production of *shahname*-style histories in uncomplicated Turkish verse paralleled that of rhetorically elaborate *shahname*-style Persian verse histories. Under the long reign of Süleyman (1520–66), this tradition became further developed and increasingly Ottomanized, with Persian traditions of imperial authority and sultanic martial prowess increasingly blended with Sunni piety and mysticism.[97]

96 Sharma, "Amir Khusraw and the genre of historical narratives," pp. 112–14; Rajeev Kinra, "Fresh words for a fresh world: *Tāza-gū'ī* and the poetics of newness in early Modern Indo-Persian poetry," *Sikh Formations* 3/2 (1997), p. 125.

97 For an overview of historical writing under Süleyman, see Abdülkadir Özcan, "Historiography in the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent," in Tulay Duaran, ed., *The Ottoman Empire in the Reign of Süleyman the Magnificent*, vol. 2 (Istanbul and Ankara, 1998), pp. 167–222. Also consult Levend, *Gazavât-nâmeler ve Mihaloğlu Ali Bey'in Gazavât-nâmesi.*

Süleyman's interest in Persian verse *shahname*-style works celebrating his reign, military victories and other achievements, led to the establishment in the early 1550s of the court *shahname*-composer, or *shahname-guy* (Turkish: *şehnâmeci*). The *shahname*-composer's task was to compose an Ottoman dynastic history in the style of the *Shahname* in Persian verse in the motaqâreb meter, as a kind of Ottoman *dheyl*, or continuation of the Ferdowsi tradition, accompanied by elaborate miniatures. The impulse behind this, together with the production of lavishly illustrated copies of Sharafi's [T. Şerifi] Turkish *Shahname* translation, may be related to ongoing cultural competition with the Safavids, who likewise appropriated the illustrated Ferdowsi tradition and continued to shape it within their own contexts.[98]

In around 1550, Süleyman requested the Naqshbandi shaikh Ghobâri to write a Persian *shahname*-style history for the house of Osman. Ghobâri, who had been employed as royal tutor at the provincial court of Prince Beyazid at Kütahya since 1546, was celebrated for his calligraphic skills and lauded as a talented versifier by the Ottoman biographers of poets. Originally from Akşehir, Ghobâri was a rare Anatolian Turk whose Persian works earned greater acclaim than his Turkish compositions.[99] Ghobâri produced in epistolary prose, with liberal doses of verse, a rough draft of his history, which covers Selim's campaigns in Iran and Egypt and the early years of Süleyman's reign. Based on the two surviving manuscripts, one may surmise that the author did not have the opportunity to complete the work. It is impossible, however, to determine whether this was due to Süleyman's dissatisfaction (did the sultan want a verse *shahname* instead of a prose one?), or to other circumstances. In ca. 1555, Süleyman appointed the first court *shahname*-

98 Robert Hillenbrand, "The iconography of the *Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhī*," in Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London and New York, 1996), pp. 53–54, 65–66; Zeren Tanındı, "Additions to illustrated manuscripts in Ottoman workshops," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000), p. 147.

99 İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, "Abdurrahman Gubâri'nin Hayatı ve Eserleri," *Tarih Dergisi* 1/2 (1950), p. 347; Ali Alparslan, *TDVİA*, s.v. Gubârî, 'Abdurrahman.

guy. The project appears to have been a conceived as an Islamic world history culminating with the Ottoman dynasty. One may speculate that Ghobâri composed his Ottoman *shahname* history in application for this post, but lost out to his competitor, Fath-Allâh Çelebi Âref, or Ârefi [T. Fethullâh ʻÂrif, or ʻÂrifi] (d. 1561), the first holder of the post.

An Iranian from Diyarbakr, Ârefi was the maternal grandson of the renowned Sufi shaikh Ebrâhim Gholshani [T. İbrâhim Gülşeni], the founder of the Gholshaniyye branch of the Khalvatiyye order. The 16th-century Ottoman biographers Gelibolulu Mustafâ Âli and Âşıq Çelebi both erroneously claim that Ârefi came to Istanbul in the retinue of Alqâs Mirzâ, the Persian prince and governor of Shirvân who led an unsuccessful revolt against Shah Tahmâsp in 1547. Tahsin Yazıcı points out the impossibility of this, however, since official documentation shows Ârefi among those drawing a salary from the Ottoman court in the year 1542. Ârefi's father Darvish Çelebi, Ebrâhim Golshani's disciple and son-in-law, left Diyarbakr following the rise of Safavid power in the region, and found employment at the Ottoman court. Darvish Çelebi had some connection with Alqâs Mirzâ, however, for he was charged with transporting Süleyman's gifts to the rebellious prince in return for the portion of the plunder gathered from his invasion of western Iran.[100]

Ârefi's task as court *shahname*-composer, as one assumes Süleyman envisioned the post, was to produce on a grand scale a Persian verse Ottoman dynastic work, prefaced by an Islamic world-history and culminating with Süleyman's reign. This Ottoman *shahname* was also to be elaborately illustrated, which was the responsibility of the composer. Indeed, the composer performed administrative as well as a creative duties, for he was to orchestrate the entire production of the work, from its binding to its illumination and illustration. Emine Fetvacı likens these responsibilities to those of

100 Muhyi-yi Gülşeni [Mohyi-ye Golshani], *Menâḳib-i İbrâhîm-i Gülşenî ve Şemleli-zâde Aḥmed Efendi Şîve-i Ṭarîḳat-i Gülşenîye*, ed. Tahsin Yazıcı (Ankara, 1982), pp. lii, 245–47; Tahsin Yazıcı, *EIr*, s.v. Čelebī, Fatḥ-Allāh ʻĀref; Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Şehnâmeci Lokman," in *Vekayi'nüvis. Makaleler*. (Istanbul, 1994), pp. 7–8.

the chief architect, who likewise oversaw all aspects of construction. The difference between the two was the more sporadic nature of production under the *shahname*-composer.[101] Based on a study of archival material related to the court career of Seyyid Loqmân, Emine Fetvacı revises Woodhead's conception of the *shahname*-composer as a permanent salaried one. Rather, Fetvacı points out, the work was project-based and occasional in nature, if not intermittent and sporadic. The *shahname*-composer had neither a permanent staff nor a permanent studio. Artists working under him did so on an *ad hoc* basis, and were often simultaneously employed on other projects at court.[102]

The historico-literary production of the court *shahname*-composer was closely monitored by the sultan and grand vizier, who in turn subjected the text to the approval of a committee of experts.[103] Loqmân discusses in the introduction of his *shahname* on Selim II the rigorous approval process drafts of his text underwent. After close scrutiny of the first draft submitted to the sultan and the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmet Pasha, Loqmân was then required to present the corrected work to a committee, members of which included the *Sheykh-al-Eslâm* Ebusu'ud Efendi and Abu'l-Fazl Mohammad, the son of Edris-e Bedlisi, to evaluate and approve the work.[104]

During the several years of his tenure, Ârefi produced the first five volumes of the Persian versified Ottoman-Islamic world history. The first, entitled *Anbiyâ'-nâme*, deals with creation, the Old and New Testament prophets, as well as the Pre-Islamic kings of Iran, and ends with the birth of Gog and Magog. The no-longer extant volumes two and three are devoted to Mohammad and the rise of Islam and the early Islamic community, and the history of

101 Emine Fetvacı, "The office of the Ottoman court historian," in Robert G. Ousterhout, ed., *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond: The Freely Papers* (Philadelphia, 2007), p. 14.

102 Fetvacı, "Ottoman court historian," pp. 10–13, 15.

103 Christine Woodhead, "Reading Ottoman Şehnames: Official historiography in the late sixteenth century," *Studia Islamica* 104–5 (2007), pp. 67–80, 71.

104 Filiz Çağman, "Şahnâme-i Selim Han ve Minyatürleri," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 5 (1972–73), pp. 441–42.

the ancient Turkish rulers and the Saljuqs. The fourth volume, the *Osmân-nâme,* covers Ottoman dynastic history and volume five, the *Soleymân-nâme*, is devoted solely to Süleymân's reign. This was left unfinished with 60,000 couplets covering the period 1520–55 and illustrated with 62 paintings.[105] Ârefi also produced two pieces separate from the *Soleymân-nâme*. The *Fotuhât-e Jamile,* completed in 1557 with seven illustrations, narrates Süleyman's Hungarian campaign of 1551.[106] The *Vaqâye'-e Soltân Bâyazid ma'a Salim Khân* (ca. 1559) deals with the battle on the plain of Konya between Süleyman's sons Selim and Bayezid on 28 May 1559. According to Âşıq Çelebi's biography of poets, Ârefi was generously rewarded by the sultan for his results. Upon the completion of the first 30,000 couplets, Ârefi's initial daily salary was raised from 25 *akçe* to 70 *akçe*.[107] Ârefi, however, became the target of jealous detractors who denigrated his poetical abilities, including one of the miniaturists who had worked with the poet.[108] In 1559, Ârefi left for Cairo to visit his clan of Golshani relatives, and died there in 1561.

In 1569, after a rather unfruitful period under Aflâtun, Ârefi's successor as court-*shahname*-composer, Selim II's grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha appointed Sayyid Loqmân to the post. From a family originally from Urmia in Azerbaijan, Sayyid Loqmân b. Hoseyn al-Âshuri al-Hoseyni al-Ormavi was a qadi in a town outside Mosul in the early 1560s. Although we do not know how or when, Loqmân entered the grand vizier's circle through his protégé, Ahmed Feridun Bey (d. 1583), and the support of the influential Hoca Saʿdeddin Efendi. Sayyid Loqmân remained in the position for more than 25 years. As an indication of his rising prestige at court, he was inducted in 1575 into the prestigious *müteferrika*, an exclusive mounted corps of notables acting as an extended entourage of the sultan, accompanying him on his campaigns, hunts, and other excursions. As such, Loqmân was expected to be in close proximity of the sultan, perhaps to aid him in

105 Yazıcı, *EIr*, s.v. Čelebī, Fatḥ-Allāh ʿĀref; Atıl, *Süleymanname*, p. 64.

106 Nurhan Atasoy and Filiz Çağman, *Turkish Miniature Painting* (Istanbul, 1974), p. 29.

107 Yazıcı, *EIr*, s.v. Čelebī, Fatḥ-Allāh ʿĀref.

108 Ibid.

recording the deeds of the royal personage and court. In addition to being *shahname*-composer, Loqmân held other administrative posts. Sometime in the mid-1580s, he was appointed clerk at the imperial chancery, and in 1589 finance director (*defterdâr*). In 1596, after the ascension of Mehmed III (1595–1603), Loqmân was dismissed from his post and left for Egypt, where he died sometime after 1600.[109]

The post of *shahname*-composer was well remunerated with the revenues of an estate worth annually 30,000 *akçe*, with the additional sum of 10,000 *akçe* upon the completion of a project.[110] Indeed, it was during the reign of Murad III (1574–95), that Loqmân proved his worth, with the completion of ten works, five in Persian and four in Turkish. Not only did he enhance the status of the post with his productivity, but this period also coincides with the apogee of Ottoman miniature painting, and the illustrations in Loqmân's works are considered to be among the best examples. He completed his first installment in 1578 with the Persian *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye Homâyun*, or *Shâhnâme-ye Homâyun*. This work chronicles the final years of Süleymân's reign from 1559 to 1566, thus completing the historical narrative begun by Ârefi's *Soleymân-nâme*. Although the preface is in prose, the rest of the work is verse. Loqmân also produced around this time the Persian *Târikh-e Soltân Soleymân Khân*, an amplification of the *Shâhnâme-ye Homâyun*. He also completed two Persian verse illustrated pieces dealing with specific events in Süleyman's reign, the *Zafar-nâme* (1579), and the *Tatemme-ye ahvâl-e Soltân Soleymân* (Appendix to the events of Sultan Süleyman), both of which cover the final years of the sultan. The Appendix gives additional details of the sultan's campaigns, building programs, and ruling style, such as his enforcement of

109 Kütükoğlu, "Şehnâmeci Lokman," pp. 41–42; Christine Woodhead, "An experiment in official historiography: The post of şehnâmeci in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555–1605," *WZKM* 75 (1983), p. 161; Istvan Nyitrai, "Rendering history topical: One aspect of a 16th century Persian historical epic in the Ottoman Empire," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricum* 48 (1995), p. 110; Hanna Sohrweide, *EI*², s.v. Lukmân b. Sayyid Hussayn; Fetvacı, "Ottoman court historian," p. 12.

110 Fetvacı, "Ottoman court historian," p. 11.

public morality in the form of *shari'a*-based regulations such as a ban against wine-drinking. The notion of Ottoman political legitimacy based on strict enforcement of the *shari'a* is an important theme running throughout the work. As Loqmân puts it, "their [Ottoman sultans'] value is higher than that of other rulers because each of their deeds is based on the *shari'a*."[111]

According to Nyitrai, Loqmân's *Tatemme* revives the notion of Süleyman as messianic sovereign, portraying the sultan as the shadow of God assisted by celestial powers. Loqmân emphasizes the military exploits of his patron Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (d. 1579), the grand vizier of noble Bosnian background under three consecutive sultans, depicting Sokollu as an heroic warrior whose brilliant military tactics resulted in his single-handed conquest of the outer castle of Svigetvar in 1566. Loqmân also praises his handling of Süleyman's death during the campaign, keeping it secret until Selim II's enthronement was assured. In bringing to the fore Sokollu's achievements during these critical moments, Loqmân reasserted the authority of the elderly senior statesman who was increasingly under attack by a new court faction rising to power under Murad III.[112]

In 1581, Loqmân presented the court with the next two installments of the project: the *Shâhnâme-ye Salim Khân*, covering the entire reign of Selim II (1566–74), and volume one of the *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye khodâvandegâr-e din-panâh Soltân Morâd Khân*,[113] or, more simply, *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye Morâd Khân*, which goes up to the year 1581 of Murad III's reign.[114] Emphasis is likewise placed on the achievements of Sokollu in both works. For instance,

111 Circulation copies of these two appendixes are described by V. Minorsky, *The Chester Beatty Library. A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures* (Dublin, 1958), no. 413–2; Sohrweide, *EI²*, s.v. Lukmân b. Sayyid Hussayn; Nyitrai, "Rendering history topical," pp. 110–11 (my translation of the quotation).

112 Nyitrai, "Rendering history topical," pp. 112–14; Giles Veinstein, *EI²*, s.v. Soḳollu Meḥmed Pasha.

113 Loqmân, *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye Morâd Khân*, MS Istanbul, Istanbul University, YF. no. 1404, f. 1b (cited hereafter as Loqmân, *Shâhanshâh-nâme*, IU, YF. no. 1404).

114 Atasoy and Çağman, *Turkish Miniature Painting*, p. 34.

in the *Shâhnâme-ye Salim Khân*, the vizier is likened to Asaf, the legendary vizier of the prophet, King Solomon, in a miniature accompanying the text portraying him dispensing justice to petitioners.[115] Loqmân's description of the assassination of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, a pivotal event in the narrative of the *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye Morâd Khân*, on the other hand, reflects the growing power of Habeşi Mehmed Ağa (d. 1590), the chief black eunuch who managed the harem as the *darüssaade ağa*, a new post created in 1574 by Murad III. Habeşi Mehmed Ağa appears in four of the miniatures in parallel to Loqmân's text dealing with the events around the assassination. We thus witness Mehmed Ağa visiting the Pasha after his attack, in discussion with the Pasha at his deathbed, informing the sultan of the Pasha's death, and having the assassin captured. Zeren Tanındı, based on the depiction of his high-profile role in these events, suggests that Mehmed Ağa may have been involved in shaping the text and its illustrations. He may, in fact, have taken over the role of the deceased Pasha, who until then had been closely involved in the production of Loqmân's work.[116] Murad III's reign witnessed the decline of the power of the grand vizier vis-à-vis the rise of the head eunuch of the harem and the imperial household headed by Murad III's mother, the Valide Sultan, Nurbânu (d. 1583).[117]

Unable to extol the particularly unwarriorlike sultan for his martial deeds, Loqmân resorted to alternative textual strategies to assert Ottoman dynastic power. Thus, in the *Shâhanshâh-nâme-*

115 G.M. Meredith-Owens, "Turkish miniatures in the 'Selīm-Nāme'," *The British Museum Quarterly* 26/1–2 (1962), p. 35.

116 Zeren Tanındı, "Bibliophile Aghas (Eunuchs) at Topkapı Saray," in Gülru Necipoğlu *et al.*, eds., *Essays in Honor of J. M. Rogers* (Leiden, 2004), p. 333.

117 Pal Fodor, "Sultan, Imperial Council, Grand Vizier: Changes in the Ottoman ruling elite and the formation of the Grand Vizieral Telhîs," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Sceintiarum Hungaricarum* 47/1–2 (1994), p. 72; Halil Sahillioğlu, ed., *Koca Sinan Paşa'nın Telhisleri* (Istanbul, 2004), p. xviii; Franz Babinger and Geza David, *EI*², s.v. Sinān Pāsha, Khodja (d. 1596). For more on Nurbânu, as well as her attempts to enhance the sultanic image of her son, see Pınar Kayaalp-Aktan, "The 'Atik Valide Mosque Complex: A Testament of Nurbanu's Prestige, Power and Piety" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2005).

ye Morâd Khân, Loqmân portrays the Ottoman state as a world empire, with its influence extending east and west from China to the Danubian lands of the Bulghars, and before whom other powers trembled (especially Iran):[118]

> The world rejoiced upon his [Murad III's] accession
> the earth became his well-cultivated garden
> Wherever his *farmân* (*firman*) goes
> subjects (*farmânbari*) offer exclusive gifts as tribute (*pishkesh*)
> Whenever his royal decree (*yarligh*) arrives before the Tatar [Khân]
> its influence [resonates] from China to the land of the Bulghars
> his renown has struck calamity in Iran
> [making] the Damâvand and Alborz [mountains] tremble in their place

Indeed, it was not necessary for the sultan to leave his seat of power to assert his dynastic magnificence: Ottoman power was grand enough to resonate throughout the world via fear-inducing imperial decrees.

In addition to his glorification of Ottoman dynastic power during Murad III's reign and the detailed descriptions of the activities of state functionaries, Loqmân's *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye Morâd Khân* likewise provides valuable and accurate information on the observatory (*rasad-khâne*) of Istanbul under the directorship of Taqi-al-Din.[119] The poem is our only source to provide the date of the observatory's construction in 1577, cited by Loqmân as one of Murad III's praiseworthy activities. Opening with a discussion of the usefulness of astronomical and astrological knowledge, including the determination of the times of prayer as well as the exact direction of the *qebla*, Loqmân points out that the science of astronomy has been neglected since the production of the astronomical tables of Nasir-al-Din Tusi and Olugh Beg, which "had

118 Loqmân, *Shâhanshâh-nâme*, IU, YF. no. 1404, f. 20a.

119 Aydın Sayılı, "Alâuddin Mansur'un İstanbul Rasathanesi hakkında şiirleri / 'Alâ al Dîn al Manṣûr's poems on the Istanbul Observatory," *Belleten* 20 (1956), pp. 411–12, 429–31, 443. In this bilingual article, Sayılı provides a Persian text, accompanied by Turkish and English translations, consisting of the parts of Loqmân's work which deal with the observatory (MS Istanbul, IU, F.1404, ff. 54b–58a, and 143b–144b). Sayılı incorrectly attributes authorship to the scribe, Alauddin Mansur, mentioned at the end of the work.

become worn-out like traces of mats upon soft soil."[120] But, during the reign of "the Shâhanshâh of the climes, Sultan Murad, things changed completely," and the observatory was erected. After new astronomical tables were compiled to replace the former Ilkhanid ones, Loqmân tells us that Taqi-al-Din encouraged the sultan to destroy the observatory, which was demolished in 1580. In fact, it was Ottoman religious scholars who opposed the practice of astrology in predicting human affairs as not being in accordance with the *shari'a*, for the main purpose of astrology was indeed predictions. Loqmân's final comments do hint at the religious disapproval:

> Do not make decisions concerning the affairs of the firmament
> For who, beside God, knows the gait and the revolution of the heavens?[121]

It is not surprising to see Loqmân end his discussion of the ill-fated observatory in this way; for it to be illustrated, his work had to pass muster of the committee, of which the *Sheykh-al-Eslâm* was a member. Loqmân may have been required to add these comments for the manuscript to be approved. The contradictions running throughout Loqmân's story of the observatory illustrate well the difficult position the court-*shahname* composer found himself in trying to produce an "official" account of the sultan's reign with so many competing voices vying for control of the narrative.

In 1589, Loqmân completed the last of the Persian series of the Ottoman *shahname* with volume two of *Shâhanshâh-nâme-ye Morâd*, bringing Murad III's reign up to 1588 (its miniatures were completed in 1592). This final volume attests to Loqmân's attempts to celebrate the grand vizier, Koca Sinan Pasha, in an attempt to secure his patronage, while adopting a highly critical attitude towards Sinan Pasha's rival, Lala Mustafa Pasha.[122] As this text and Loqmân's previous works demonstrate, Murad III appears to have exercised only partial control over the ideological contours of the

120 Translation provided by Aydın Sayılı, "Alâuddin Mansur'un İstanbul Rasathanesi hakkında şiirleri," p. 472.

121 Ibid., pp. 432, 435, 445–47.

122 Fetvacı, "Ottoman court historian," pp. 16, 18.

composition.[123] In the post-Süleyman era, the *shahname*-composer was not solely beholden to the sultan, but was likewise bound to other powers in the court and state. In turn, he not only attempted to shape the image and identity of the Ottoman dynasty but also that of the Ottoman élite. Although Baki Tezcan asserts there is a strong connection between Murad III's absolutist projects and Loqmân's works,[124] Fetvacı acutely observes that Loqmân not only acted as the mouthpiece of the dynasty and eulogizer of the sultan, but likewise accommodated the demands of the ever-changing inner circles of power-holders at court. After more than twenty years of service, however, Loqmân failed to survive factional power politics. Upon the ushering in of a new order with the accession of Mehmed III in 1596, Loqmân was dismissed from his post by the grand vizier, Koca Sinan Pasha, who placed his protégé, Talikizâde, co-*shahname*-composer since 1590, as the sole holder of the post.[125]

Not only does the post of court *shahname*-composer reflect the enduring importance of Ferdowsi's *Shahname* in the development of Ottoman historical writing and thought, but it also represents a culmination of this discursive tradition in the Ottoman realm within an increasingly bureaucratizing and centralizing administration. Even if the *shahname*-composer produced on a more *ad hoc*, project-based fashion than previously assumed, his literary production occurred under the direct supervision of the sultan and/or the primary power-wielders of the court within a more regularized process of financial remunerations. One may contrast this development with the previous practice of unregularized literary production in order to enter or rise in government ranks, as seen in the case of Adâ'i, who, in order to gain royal favor, composed an unsolicited Persian *shahname*-style verse history in the name of the sultan. The disappearance of the post of the *shahname*-composer in the early 17th century may not have been solely due to the changing image of the sultan, who after Süleyman, with a few exceptions, no longer

123 Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*, p. 172.

124 Baki Tezcan, "The politics of early modern Ottoman historiography," in Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman, eds., *The Early Modern Ottomans:Remapping the Empire* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 172.

125 Fetvacı, "Ottoman court historian," pp. 14, 20.

took an active role in warfare and sought to cultivate the charisma of a warrior-sultan. Fetvacı attributes the impossibility of the *shah-name*-composer's position within the increasing factionalization of the Ottoman court and polyphonic voices of authority in competition with the royal household. Fetvacı also suggests that the waning of the post may have been related to the broader yet little understood phenomenon of decreased interest in illustrated manuscripts.[126]

5. Persian Epistolary Histories

Ottoman Dynastic History and Epistolary Composition

The emergence of an Ottoman dynastic historical tradition did not fully develop until Bayezid II's reign. This narrative tradition took shape predominantly in vernacular straightforward Turkish prose with folksy story-telling elements. Generally entitled *Târikh-e âl-e Othmân* or *Tavârikh-e âl-e Othmân*, these Turkish prose accounts appealed to a wider audience than the Persian verse works, which were confined to a learned readership primarily from the Ottoman administrative and intellectual élite. Based on earlier sources no longer extant, these prose histories present a comprehensive narrative of the Ottoman dynasty from its origins to the authors' own time. Even if some were originally commissioned during Mehmed II's reign, they took their final shape during the early years of Bayezid II and, as such, appear to have been tailored to address the political concerns of the period. Some of the histories, such as the Oxford Anonymous and Neşri, end their narrative with Bayezid II's triumphs in 1484. Furthermore, Bayezid was on the verge of entering a war with the Mamluks in 1484, and, as İnalcık points out, he wanted project an image of dynastic superiority in the Islamic world.[127]

126 Fetvacı, "Ottoman court historian," p. 18.

127 Halil İnalcık, "The rise of Ottoman historiography," in Bernard Lewis and P.M. Holt, eds., *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962); reprint, *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History* (Istanbul, 1995), pp. 12, 14–15.

The popular Turkish chronicles that laid down the foundations of a detailed and comprehensive narrative of Ottoman history had their limitations. While addressing a wider audience, their unsophisticated vernacular style was deemed unsuitable to convey the imperial image that Bayezid II sought to foster. Around the same time, with the emergence of the canonical Ottoman narrative historical tradition in relatively simple Turkish in the 1480s and 1490s, we see the beginnings of a trend to compose Ottoman history in more artful and stylistically complex ways, in both Persian and Turkish prose. High literary Ottoman historical prose developed at the hands of scribes of the chancellery among whose duties was to compose stylistically elaborate diplomatic letters and documents. This epistolary or chancellery style (*enshâ'*) was shaped by the balance and cadence of rhymed phrasing (*saj'*), and distinguished by its elevated diction achieved through ample use of verse, Qor'anic quotation, figurative language, rhetorical embellishment, esoteric references, and obscure vocabulary choices.[128]

The first Ottoman Turkish history composed in epistolary prose was the *Ta'rikh-e Ebü'l-Feth* by Tursun Beg (d. after 1491), a secretary of the imperial council (*divân kâtebi*) under Mahmud Pasha, and later, the financial minister of Anatolia and keeper of the *timar*, or land grant, registers in Anatolia. Taking as his models the panegyric Persian histories of Timur by Nezâm-al-Din Shâmi and Ali Yazdi, Tursun Bey composed a history covering the reign of Mehmed II and part of Bayezid's, breaking off abruptly in 1488.[129]

Contemporary with Tursun Bey's history is Qonyavi's *Târikh-e âl-e Othmân*, the first account of the Ottoman dynasty produced in Persian epistolary prose. Composed by a *shari'a* court clerk

128 H. R. Roemer, *EI*², s.v. Inshā' (Inshā).

129 Kenan İnan, "The effects of ornamented prose style on Ottoman historiography: The Târih-i Ebü'l-Feth [History of the Father of Conquest] by Tursun Bey," in James S. Amelang and Siegfried Beer, eds., *Public Power in Europe: Studies in Historical Transformations* (Pisa, 2006), pp. 127–28; Mertol Tulum, ed. and tr., *Tursun Bey. Tarih-i Ebü'l Feth* (Istanbul, 1977), p. xxiv; Halil İnalcık, "Tursun Beg, historian of Mehmed the Conqueror's time," *WZKM* 69 (1977), pp. 51–71; repr. in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1993), pp. 418–31.

from Konya, Mohammad b. Hâjji Khalil Qonyavi (T. Mehmed b. Hacı Halil el-Konyevi), this Persian dynastic history covers events in Bayezid II's reign up to 1484.[130] Qonyavi claims to have reworked a short Persian prose history of the Ottomans dedicated to Mehmed II into a more elegant style—to be identified as the Ottoman history section contained in Shokr-Allâh's work. Qonyavi's *Târikh-e âl-e Othmân* begins with an abridged history of the Saljuqs, and asserts that the Ottomans were their legitimate successors. The author states that his account of the Anatolian Saljuqs is superior to previous works, including his source (Shokr-Allâh), as a result of his extracting additional information from sources in his native Konya, such as building inscriptions, historical calendars, and *waqfiyya* documents.[131] Having begun the work upon the command of Mehmed II, Qonyavi continued to add to it, bringing it up to the first few years of Bayezid's reign. The last third of the text has no counterpart in Shokr-Allâh's work, and continues the narrative from Mehmed II's accession in 1451 until 1484.[132] Qonyavi's text appears not to have had much of a life other than the single manuscript in which it survives, most likely the original presentation copy. The unique manuscript is of uneven quality, with the last section consisting of no more than a skeleton of events related year by year in the style of historical calendars.

Although of great interest to the modern historian, these early histories in epistolary prose in Turkish by Tursun Bey and in Persian by Qonyavi had little impact upon subsequent Ottoman historical writing. Epistolary prose histories, in both Turkish and

130 E. Blochet, *Catalogue de la collection des manuscrits orientaux arabes, persans et turcs formée par M. Charles Schefer* (Paris, 1900), p. 87; Victor Louis Ménage, "A Survey of the Early Ottoman Histories, with Studies on Their Textual Problems and Their Sources" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London), I, p. 102; Franz Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* (Leipzig, 1927), p. 18.

131 The dates Shokr-Allâh provides for the reigns of Saljuq sultans tend to be inaccurate. For instance, he dates the death of Kaykhosrow II as 1244 rather than 1246; Robert Anhegger, "Mehmed b. Hacı Halîl ül-Kunevî'nin Tarih-i âl-i 'Osmân'ı," *Tarih Dergisi* 2/3–4 (1950–51), p. 52.

132 Anhegger, "el-Kunevi," pp. 51–54; Ménage, "A Survey of the Early Ottoman Histories," I, pp. 103–4.

Persian, however, soon reached new heights in both literary style and the quality of their contents. Towards the end of his reign, Bayezid II commissioned two ambitious and influential works that cast the entire narrative of Ottoman dynastic history into a higher literary register: Edris-e Bedlisi (T. Idris Bidlisi)'s Persian *Hasht Behesht* and Ibn Kemal's Turkish *Tevârikh-i âl-i Osmân*. These two histories, set in a format of eight chapters, each dedicated to one of the eight ruling sultans from Osman to Bayezid II, flesh out in greater detail than previous works the entire history of the Ottoman dynasty, composed in a style suitable to Ottoman imperial pretensions as supreme Muslim sovereigns.

Edris-e Bedlisi's *Hasht Behesht* (ca. 1506)

Completed in around 1506,[133] the *Hasht Behesht* by Mevlânâ (Mowlânâ) Hakim-al-Din Edris-e Bidlisi (d. 1520) represents a watershed in Ottoman historiographical production, with no match in terms of comprehensiveness or epistolary style. Bayezid II commissioned Edris-e Bedlisi to write the work shortly after his arrival in Istanbul in around 1501, following Shah Esmâ'il's advance on Tabriz. Even before Edris arrived, however, Bayezid II was well acquainted with the scholarly accomplishments of his father, Shaikh Hosâm-al-Din Ali Bedlisi (d. 1495), who dedicated his mystically oriented Qor'anic commentary, the *Jâme'-al-tanzil wa ta'wil fi tafsir al-Qor'ân*, to the Ottoman sultan. Edris likewise had impressed Bayezid II with his eloquence with a congratulatory letter composed in the name of the Aq Qoyunlu ruler Ya'qub-Soltân in 1485.[134]

133 Babinger's date of 1503 is too early; Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen*, p. 45; Cornell Fleischer, *EIr*, s.v. Bedlīsī, Mawlānā Ḥakīm-al-Dīn Edrīs.

134 Orhan Başaran, "İdrîs-i Bitlîsî'nin *Heşt Bihişt*'inin Hâtime'si. Metin-İnceleme-Çeviri" (Ph.D. dissertation, Atatürk University, Erzurum, 2000), pp. 13, 17; Orhan Başaran, "İdrîs-i Bitlisî Hakkında Bazı Yeni Bilgiler," *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 14 (2002), pp. 201–8; Ahmed Uğur, *İdris-i Bitlisi ve Şükri-i Bitlisi* (Kayseri, 1991), p. 8; Abdülkadir Özcan, *TDVİA*, s.v. İdrîs-i Bitlisî; Victor Ménage, *EI²*, s.v. Bidlīsī, Idrīs, Mewlānā Ḥakīm al-Dīn Idrīs.

With his experience as head of the chancery, or *neshânji*, at the Aq Qoyunlu court in Tabriz, Edris was thus ordered by Bayezid to apply his epistolary skills to compose an Ottoman dynastic historical narrative in the Persian high style of Joveyni, Vassâf, and Sharaf-al-Din Ali Yazdi.[135]

Typical of Islamic epistolary histories, Edris-e Bedlisi's work is heavily embellished with Arabic and Persian verse, Qor'anic quotation and ornate figurative language. The work is also infused with religio-mystical and moralistic elements. The title, *Hasht Behesht*, which associates the eight reigns of the Ottoman sultans with the eight paradises, suggests a metaphysical agenda. Edris's religious orientation can be seen in the titles given to the Ottoman sultans, designating them in general as "Caesars of Islam" and the "Sultans of justice,"[136] as well as the Shahs of the *ghazâ*.[137] For instance, in addition to being "the seventh Caesar and Sultan of justice," Mehmed II is portrayed as "the Sultan confirmed as the richest holy warrior" (*aghnâ al-soltân-al-mojâhed-al-mo'ayyad*) and the "leader who assists religion" (*al-emâm al-mo'ayyed le'l-din*).[138]

The first book opens with a discussion of the craft of history and the superior virtues of the Ottomans vis-à-vis other rulers. It continues with fourteen episodes (*dâstân*) of events from the Saljuq and Turkish principality (*beylik*) periods, and concludes with one *dâstân* dealing with Osmân, the legendary eponymous founder of the Ottoman dynasty. The following five books, dealing with the subsequent sultans up to Murad II, begin with introductory discussions (*moqaddema*) of the virtues of the sultan in relation to his contemporaries, followed by a preface (*tali'e*) that discusses the

135 *Menâḳib-i İbrâhîm-i Gülşenî*, ed. Yazıcı, pp. 79, 166; Mecdi Mehmed Efendi, *Şakaik-ı Nu'maniye ve Zeyilleri. Hadaiku'ş-şakaik*. Mecdî Mehmed Efendi, ed. Abdülkadir Özcan (Istanbul, 1989), I, p. 327; Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* I (London, 1879), pp. 216–17; Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen*, pp. 45–46; Woods, *The Aqquyunlu* (1976 ed.), p. 23; İnalcık, "The rise of Ottoman historiography," p. 14. See also Chapter 4.

136 Edris-e Bedlisi, *Hasht Behesht,* British Museum, Add. O. 7646, f. 184b.

137 Edris-e Bedlisi, *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Ef., no. 2197, f. 557b (hereafter *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2197).

138 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2197, f. 325b.

circumstance of his accession to the throne. Coverage of events during the sultan's reign are found in the episodes that number anywhere from 16 to 28, with a focus on campaigns and conquests. Each book closes with a *khâteme*. The last two books dealing with Mehmed II and Bayezid II are even more elaborately organized, containing a "heart" (*qalb*) on the sultan's army, sources of power, public works, and pious foundations, followed by two "wings" (*jenâh*), the first dealing with the sultan's children, and the second with his viziers and officials.[139]

In book eight, Edris-e Bedlisi highlights both the worldly and spiritual conquests (*fotuhât-e molki va dini*) of the Sultan Abu'l-Nâser Bâyazid Khan, whom he often refers to as the "sultan of the sultans of the holy warriors (*mojâhedân*)."[140] He opens the book asserting that the caliphate and kingship of the Ottoman dynasty is the most blessed of the Islamic caliphs and rulers, and that the Ottoman sultans are the leaders in justice.[141] The *moqaddame* delves into "the subtle essences of accomplishments and excellencies" (*latâ'ef-e monjehât va morajjahât*) of the present sultan, Bayezid II, whom he designates as the caliph of the community of believers.[142] Emphasizing the sultan's sacred person, the preface continues the discussion of the qualities and virtues of the sultan according to his various excellent aspects. In order to illustrate the material manifestations of these, part two presents a detailed account of his pious foundations and good works, in Istanbul and Amasya where he governed as prince, including accounts of the daily expenses of the *emârats*, or service-providing foundations, and a survey of the bridges (*qanâtir*) that he built across the empire.[143]

In describing Bayezid's attributes of justice and courage (*shajâ'at*), Edris compares Bayezid II with the legendary figure of Bahram

139 Babinger, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen*, p. 46.

140 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2197, ff. 446a, 447b.

141 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2197, ff. 446a, 461b–463b; MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ayasofya, no. 3538, f. 2a (hereafter *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Ayasofya, no. 3538).

142 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2197, f. 446b; MS Istanbul, Ayasofya, no. 3538, f. 2a.

143 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2198, ff. 461b–464a.

Gur, including a *nazire* of a section from Nezâmi's *Haft Peykar*, "how Bahram seizes the crown from between two lions." In Edris's version, the story is modified to a contest between a lion and a water buffalo. In order to escape the lion, the water buffalo charged in the direction of Sultan Bayezid II. The sultan successfully dodged the water buffalo and administered a fatal blow on the animal's head with his mace. According to Edris, Sultan Bayezid II's display of bravery and physical strength in this instance even surpassed that Bahram Gur when he seized the crown from between two battling lions.[144]

In the section referred to as the "heart," Edris-e Bedlisi takes up Bayezid's accession and succession struggle with Cem. The work continues in two further sections (*ba's*). The first deals with military campaigns and noteworthy events, with eight subsections (*dâstân*) of the left "wing," concluding with the Ottoman repulse of the French and Venetians as they attacked Mitylene in 1501, and ten sub-sections of peaceful events, ending with the festivities of the circumcision feast for his son Prince Mahmud. The second section deals with the sultan's children and the Ottoman officials and statesmen, including the viziers, generals, qadis, and members of the religious administration. Book eight concludes with Firuz Beg's appointment as the governor of Bosnia in 1506.

Edris-e Bedlisi's work was not well received at court upon its presentation to Bayezid II. As a result of dissatisfaction with the *Hasht Behesht*, the sultan commissioned an alternative account in Ottoman Turkish, on the suggestion of the *kaz'asker* of Anadolu, and Bayezid's advisor and intimate companion since his days as prince-governor of Amasya, Mü'eyyedzade Abdurrahmân Çelebi (d. 1516). Mü'eyyedzâde proposed that his protégé Ahmed b. Suleymân b. Kemâl Paşa (d. 1534), popularly known as Ebn-Kemâl (T. İbn-i Kemâl, İbn Kemâl, or Kemâlpaşazâde), be given the task of composing the definitive history of the Ottomans in a high

144 Orhan Başaran, "Osmanlı Tarihçisi İdris-i Bidlisî'nin Ünlü Tarihçi Nizâmi'ye Bir Naziresi," *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiye Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 20 (2002), pp. 107–14.

register of Turkish (*lisân-i Türki*).[145] Appointed professor at the Edirne Taşlık Ali Bey Medrese in 1505, Ebn-Kemâl set about writing his history, completing it in 1510. Unlike the *Hasht Behesht*, Ebn-Kemâl's *Tevârikh-i âl-i Osmân* was praised at court, and eclipsed all other dynastic histories in popularity of the time. The work likewise enhanced the religious scholar's administrative career; he soon after went on to hold numerous top posts, including the *kaz'asker* of Anadolu, and *Sheykh-al-Eslâm* (1526–34).

A comparison of the two texts is helpful in understanding why Bayezid's high-placed officials and military men strongly objected to Edris's history yet found Ebn-Kemâl's work exemplary. For instance, the two works present significantly different accounts of Bayezid and Cem's contest over the succession, during which, after Bayezid was placed on the throne by the Janissaries in Istanbul following the death of their father Mehmed II, Cem briefly set up rule as sultan in Bursa in 1481. In his account of these events, Edris explains that as Cem set out for Bursa with an army made up of Karamanids and Turgud tribesmen, the traditional enemies of the Ottomans, Bayezid sent Ayas Pasha with a Janissary force of two thousand to Bursa to intercept Cem's forces and prevent them from taking the city. Although Ayas Pasha and the Janissaries arrived before the city gates before Cem and his army arrived, they were unable to defend the city. Fearful of their reckless behavior and propensity towards violence, the inhabitants refused the Janissaries entry. As Cem's forces arrived before the city, they engaged Ayas Pasha's army in combat. Taking Ayas Pasha prisoner, Cem and his men emerged victorious in this initial encounter, and were allowed entry into Bursa by its inhabitants. Ruling as sultan, Cem issued coins and had the *khotba* pronounced in his name. He sent a delegation headed by his paternal aunt, Selçuk Soltân, a daughter of Mehmed I, in the company of influential members of the ulama of Bursa, including Shokr-Allâh's son, to negotiate with Bayezid over the throne. Cem proposed that they divide the realm into two:

145 V.L. Ménage, *EI*², s.v. Kemal Pasha-zāde, or Ibn(-i) Kemāl; Ebn-Kemâl, *Tevârih-i âl-i Osmân. VII. Defter (tenkidli transkripsiyon)*, ed. Şerefettin Turan, (Ankara, second edition, 1991), p. xx; Mustafâ 'Âli, *Muṣṭafā 'Ālī's Künhü'l-Aḫbār and its Preface*, ed. Schmidt, f. 5b, p. 36.

he would rule most of Anatolia, whereas Bayezid would get Rumeli. Needless to say, Bayezid turned down the proposal; with the Janissaries backing him, he preferred to settle the dispute by the force of arms.[146]

In contrast, Ebn-Kemâl's account is rich in decorative detail, with extensive descriptions of the Ottoman preparations for the campaign against Cem, whose forces, arrayed around the skirts of the Keşiş Mountain outside of Bursa, are depicted as tulips in their red pointed caps (*kızıl börk*), thus associated with the heretical Kızılbash (Qezelbâsh). Ebn-Kemâl's rendition, however, appears to have holes in the narrative. He has Cem enter Bursa *before* the arrival of Ayas Pasha and his Janissary force, thus avoiding mentioning the unpopularity of the Janissaries who were denied entrance to the city. Just as the two forces clashed, Ebn-Kemâl narrates how Selçuk Soltân arrived in Istanbul (but not in the company of religious dignitaries) and met with Bayezid, presenting Cem's case before the sultan, pleading him not to deprive his brother of his father's patrimony. And, in contrast to Edris's account of the initial defeat of the Janissaries, Ebn-Kemâl describes what is seemingly a never-ending battle, with the two armies finally engaging on the plains of Yenişehir, where Cem is defeated and takes flight.[147] By conflating the first military encounter outside of Bursa with the subsequent victory at Yenişehir, Ebn-Kemâl glosses over the shame of Ayas Pasha's initial defeat.

As a relative outsider to the inner circle of power holders among the Ottoman military and administrative élite, Edris seems to have displayed less sensitivity to the reputations of those involved in the events he narrates; his account thus does not sacrifice the narrative integrity for a more 'politically correct' version, as does Ebn-Kemâl. Not only is Edris's history more accurate, but it is also characterized by a ponderous, scholastic approach, alluding to the religious foundations of rule at every opportunity. For instance, he

146 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Ayasofya, no. 3538, ff. 49a–49b.

147 Ebn-Kemâl, *Tevârih-i âl-i Oṣmân. VIII. Defter (transkripsiyon)*, ed. Ahmet Uğur (Ankara, 1997), pp. 15–21 (hereafter Ebn-Kemâl, ed. Uğur).

equates Cem's proposal of dividing the Ottoman Empire into two with the cardinal sin of *shirk*, or polytheism:[148]

> Sharing the realm and sovereignty (*sharkat-e shâhi o jahândâri*) is akin to associating the Creator with a partner (*hast methl-e sharik bâ bâri*)

Ebn-Kemâl, on the other hand, not only paints over situations that might offend those involved, but skillfully employs a bemused and light tone amidst his heavily adorned prose. For instance, he highlights the absurdity of the notion of shared sovereignty by belittling the intellectual abilities of the Ottoman princess, Selçuk Soltân, who argued on behalf of Cem; despite her royalty, as a woman she must have been a particularly innocuous scapegoat:

> due to her mental deficiency, she did not understand that there could not be two lions in a lair; due to her lack of comprehension, she could not fathom that two swords could not share a scabbard.[149]

His work unappreciated and eclipsed by the more popular Turkish counterpart, Edris-e Bedlisi soon found himself out of favor with Bayezid II. Whereas Ebn-Kemâl was paid thirty thousand *akçe* for his history, Edris received nothing for his labors. Ottoman biographies of poets point out that Bayezid II snubbed Edris due to the influence of jealous courtiers, who claimed that his history praised the kings of Iran.[150] Indeed, factional politics seem to have played a large role in Edris's marginalization at court, the members of which seemed to be more in control over state affairs than the elderly and ailing sultan. Anxious to escape his enemies, Edris requested leave to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, which was finally granted in 1511 following the death of the grand vizier Hâdım Ali Pasha. In a bitter letter addressed to the sultan, complaining of the injustices exacted upon him, and predicting that misfortune would fall upon the unjust regime, Edris informed the Ottoman court that he had no intention of returning to the capital, but rather intended to remain

148 *Hasht Behesht*, MS Istanbul, Esad Ef., no. 2198, f. 470a; Ebn-Kemâl, ed. Uğur, pp. 11–17.

149 Ibn Kemâl, ed. Uğur, p. 16.

150 Fleischer, *EIr*, s.v. Bedlīsī, Mawlānā Ḥakīm-al-Dīn Edrīs.

in Mecca. Among his complaints was the unauthorized use of his history, for which he had received no pay—a copy of book seven dealing with Mehmed II's reign had apparently been given as a gift to the Tatar ruler, Mangri Khan. That his exquisitely composed work was now in the hands of an illiterate Turk, who could not possibly appreciate its literary merits, was adding insult to injury.[151]

Edris-e Bedlisi's attitude changed with Selim's seizure of the throne and the purging of Bayezid II's supporters. Selim summoned Edris to Istanbul, persuading him to return by presenting him with sumptuous gifts and a large sum of money. Before arriving at the Ottoman capital, Edris revised the conclusion of his work, and re-presented it to Selim.[152] Book eight thus concludes with a section known as the *khâteme*, which was composed entirely in verse while Edris-e Bedlisi was still in Mecca. This narrates Bayezid's abdication and death as well as Selim's accession. Edris also takes the opportunity to air his grievances and explain his self-imposed exile in Mecca with reference to the injustice he experienced at Bayezid II's court. The *khâteme* provides valuable information regarding the contentious atmosphere of the court on the eve of Selim's takeover. According to Edris, Bayezid was the most virtuous of all Ottoman sultans. As he aged, he was unable to rule as he had for the past thirty-one years, and the state fell into chaos under the direction of negligent officials.[153] In his praise of the new order founded by Selim I, Edris makes ample use of a metaphor involving the two lanterns of faith (*du sham' az nur*) taken up by Selim I, in following the example of the Prophet Mohammad: one was the lustrous sword illuminating the world (*yaki sham'esh zi shamshir-i jahân-tâb*); the other was the Qor'an full of divine light (*cherâgh-e digaresh Qor'ân-e por nur*):[154]

151 The original letter is in the Topkapı Palace Museum Archives (E. no. 5675); it is translated by Hasan Fehmi Turgal in Faik Reşit Unat, "Neşri Tarihi Üzerinde Yapılan Çalışmalar," *Belleten* 7/25–27 (1943), pp. 198–99.

152 Fleischer, *EIr*, s.v. Bedlīsī.

153 Başaran, "İdrîs-i Bitlîsî'nin *Heşt Bihişt*'inin Hâtime'si," Persian text, pp. 7–8. Başaran's Persian edition of the *Hasht Behest*'s *khâteme* is an invaluable contribution to the scholarship on Edris.

154 Başaran, "İdrîs-i Bitlîsî'nin *Heşt Bihişt*'inin Hâtime'si," Persian text, pp. 4–5.

After the Sun of the Guide set (i.e., Mohammad's death),
the light continued to shine through his descendants and companions.

The light of the Qor'an continued to shine in every one of them;
the other candle shone through the sword and arrow.

The bright light of the mojâhed comes
from their dual candle of religion and weapons: their sword and mace.

Praise to the shah of the religion and land of the Muslims!
It is everyone's duty to praise him.

Thank God that during these happy days
the shah is in possession of the two candles lighting up the world.

In one hand is the candle of the shari'a which illuminates the hearts;
in the other, is the candle of the sword which obliterates unbelief.

This sultan of faith has become renowned
for preserving both the shari'a and protecting the lands of Islam.

As noble as Jamshid, and as wise as Alexander is this shah
who brightens the world and promotes virtue.

He is a just pâdshâh of an exalted line
who busies himself only with justice and jehâd.

Despite its initial poor reception under Bayezid II, Edris's history was regarded with much admiration by subsequent Ottoman historians. According to the late 16th-century Ottoman financial minister and man of letters Mustafâ Âli (d. 1600) of Gelibolu, Edris-e Bedlisi's work was exceptional in content and style. Yet the *Hasht Behesht*'s difficult language posed a problem for its Ottoman audience.[155] Despite this, Edris-e Bedlisi's *Hasht Behesht* remained an influential work and constituted an important historical source upon which subsequent works drew. Hoca Saʿdeddin's well-known late 16th-century Turkish work, *Tâcü't-tevârikh* is closely based on *Hasht Behesht*. There are approximately 42 known extant copies in Istanbul libraries (ten in the Süleymaniye), which makes it the third most common Persian history in Istanbul libraries, after

155 Mustafâ Âli, *Mustafâ 'Âli's Künhü'l-Akhbâr and its Preface According to the Leiden Manuscript*, ed. and tr. Jan Schmidt (Istanbul, 1987), f. 5b; pp. 35–36. The translation is mine rather than Schmidt's.

Mirkhʷând's *Rowzat-al-safâ* (87 copies), and Vassâf's *Tajziyat-al-amsâr va tazjiyat-al-as'âr* (73 copies).[156] And there are many more copies in European libraries. In 1733 Sultan Mahmud I (r. 1730–54) commissioned a Turkish translation from Vanlı Abd-al-Bâqi Sa'di Efendi, the brother of Ahmed Dürri Efendi, the Ottoman financial minister who was sent to Iran as an envoy in the 1720s.[157] The translation however, as Fleischer points out, is of uneven quality. Despite its importance, Edris-e Bedlisi's masterpiece continues to be neglected by scholars. This important unpublished and unedited history awaits further study.[158]

The second phase of Edris's career in Ottoman service began under Selim I. Edris's background and social network proved to be a valuable asset to the sultan in absorbing the former Aq Qoyunlu territories lying to the east of the upper Euphrates, which had been under nominal Safavid rule. Selim I employed Edris as mediator between the Ottoman administration and local power holders in the east. From a prestigious line of religious figures hailing from the predominantly Kurdish southeastern town of Bedlis, Edris must have used his influence as son of revered local shaikh to convince Kurdish princes and rulers in the region to switch their loyalties to the Ottomans.

After accompanying Selim I on his campaign against the Safavids in 1514 and following the Ottoman seizure of Tabriz, Edris remained in Diyarbakr for another year in order to pursue the policy of political persuasion. After convincing twenty-five Kurdish chiefs to accept Ottoman suzerainty, he established Ottoman administration in the region by organizing the territories into districts, maintaining the autonomy of five of the most important Kurdish princes. In 1516 Edris briefly held the post of *kaz'asker* of

156 Osman G. Özgüdenli and Abdulkadir Erdoğan, "İstanbul Kütüphanelerinde Bulunan Farsça Tarihi Yazmaları," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 23 (2004), pp. 155, 158.

157 Faik Reşit Unat, *Osmânlı Sefirleri ve Sefâretnâmeleri* (Ankara, 1968), pp. 59–60.

158 Unfortunately I have not had access to the dissertation by Aikaterini Dimitriadou, "The Hest Bihist of Idris Bidlisi: the reign of Bayezid II, 1481–1512" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2001).

the Arab and Ajam lands, before joining Selim in Cairo following the Ottoman victory over the Mamluks.[159]

As part of a historiographical trend begun towards the end of Selim's reign, Edris produced this epistolary composition in mixed prose and verse around the same time that his contemporaries were busy compiling works on Selim's reign and conquests. Edris-e Bedlisi's *Salim-shâhnâme* is based on his recollections, notes and other materials he gathered, and on his own experiences in pacifying the region of eastern Anatolia and the northern Jazira. He includes epistolary material and documents, such as a letter full of insults sent by Shah Esmâ'il to Selim I, the equally insulting letter sent to Esmâ'il on behalf of Selim composed by Kh^{w}âje Mollâ-ye Esfahâni in mixed Persian and Turkish, and which compares the Safavid red caps (*börk*) to poisonous vipers, as well as the *fathnâme* that he prepared announcing the Ottoman victory over the Mamluks in Egypt.[160]

The *Salim-shâhnâme* is divided into two main sections (*qesm*). The first, further divided into four discourses (*goftâr*), deals with Selim's early years, literary accomplishments, religiosity and moral qualities. The second deals with the events of his life and reign, beginning with his birth and ending with his death. Every prose section is followed by a verse section rendered in the *motaqâreb* meter, treating the contents in a similar vein.[161] The standard introductory sections taking up approximately 30 folios end with an explanation provided by Edris's son, Abu'l-Fazl Mohammad Daftardâri, of how the text was prepared by him for presentation to Selim II as an ascension gift in 1567. Under his poetic name of Fazli, Abu'l-Fazl also added a versified epilogue in which he praises and gives advice to Selim II and his son Murad.[162]

159 Başaran, "İdrîs-i Bitlîsî'nin *Heşt Bihişt*'inin Hâtime'si," p. 19.

160 Edris-e Bedlisi, *Salim-Shâhnâme*, tr. Hicabi Kırlangıç, *İdrîs-i Bidlisi. Selim Şah-nâme* (Ankara, 2001), pp. 4, 11, 125 (hereafter, *Salim-Shâhnâme*, tr. Kırlangıç).

161 Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* I, p. 219; *Salim-Shâhnâme*, tr. Kırlangıç, pp. 24, 26–27.

162 *Salim-Shâhnâme*, tr. Kırlangıç, pp. 23, 61.

In his preface, Abu'l-Fazl explains how the sole manuscript of his father's work had become dispersed when his father had died in December 1520 due to his own absence from Istanbul on a tour of duty as financial officer in Syria. Abu'l-Fazl was subsequently ordered by Süleyman to collect the text after returning to the capital as imperial financial minister, or *defterdâr*. In this preface, Abu'l-Fazl stresses Edris's service to Selim I, stating that no one was closer to the sultan than his father, who was to Selim what Aristotle was to Alexander. He also praises his father's epistolary skills, which he attributes to a conscious styling after the great Ilkhanid historian Vassâf: "With the polo stick of the pen he stole the ball from Vassâf in the playing field of words."[163]

While Edris-e Bedlisi honed his epistolary skills at the Aq Qoyunlu chancery, his intellectual formation, vast religious knowledge and mystical training, were the product of the dynamic intellectual atmosphere of Aq Qoyunlu Tabriz, the literary and cultural capital of Persia, and an important mystical center since the Mongol period, as well as of his own impressive Sufi family background.[164] Recording what must have been local tradition, the *Sharaf-nâme* of Sharaf-al-Din Sharaf Khan Bedlisi (d. 1603) states that Edris's father, Mowlânâ Hosâm-al-Dîn, a native of Bedlis, was a Sufi who attained the highest degree of spiritual perfection through a rigorous asceticism. Sharaf-al-Din states specifically that Hosâm-al-Din's mystical lineage (*nasab*) went back to Shaikh Ammâr-e Yâsiri (d. between 1188 and 1207), a disciple of Abu Najib-al-Din al-Sohravardi (d. 1168), and teacher of Najm-al-Din Kobrâ (d. 1221), the founder of the Kobravis.[165] Edris likewise

163 *Salim-Shâhnâme*, tr. Kırlangıç, pp. 70–71.

164 Leonard Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity. The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* (Richmond, Surrey, 1995), p. 79.

165 Sharaf Khan Bedlisi, *Sharaf-nâme*, MS Istanbul, Atatürk, no. O.29, f. 165b. This text is an Ottoman Turkish translation of Sharaf Khan's Persian work by Mohammad b. Ahmed Bey Mirzâ, produced in 1669 upon the request of his nephew, Sharaf Khan b. Abdal Han, the great-grandson of Sharaf Khan. For more on Ammâr Bedlisi, whose name is rendered as Ḍiyâ al-Dîn Abû Yâsir 'Ammâr al-Bidlîsî by E. Badeen, see F. Soberioj, *EI²*, s.v. al-Suhrawardī, Abu'l-Naḏjīb 'Abd al-Ḳāhir b. 'Abd Allāh al-Bakrī, Ḍiyā', and Edward Badeen, *Zwei mystische Schriften des 'Ammār al-Bidlīsī* (Beirut, 1999).

states that his father Hosâm-al-Din Ali was a disciple of Sayyid Mohammad Nurbakhsh.[166] A prolific author, Hosâm-al-Din was known for his Persian commentary of the celebrated *Golshan-e râz* by Mahmud Shabestari (d. 1340), the Sufi metaphysical versified manual infused with the terminology and concepts of Ebn-Arabi. Edris's prolific literary and scholarly output in both Arabic and Persian with an impressive corpus of twenty-seven works attests to his broad learning and interest in various administrative, religious, mystical and scientific topics. Just before he died in 1520, shortly after Süleyman's ascension to the throne, Edris completed a Persian work on ethics and statecraft in the new sultan's name, the *Qânun-e Shâhanshâh*. Modeled after *Lavâme'-al-eshrâq fî makârem-al-akhlâq*, or, as it was better known, *Akhlâq-e Jalâli*, by Jalâl-al-Din Mohammad Davâni (d. 1502), and highly influenced by the thought of Ebn-Arabi, this comprehensive treatise of Sufi political philosophy emphasizes in particular spiritual and esoteric aspects of rulership. The work consists of four parts (*maqsad*), broken down into the categories of the nature of rulership, the ethics of rulership, the responsibilities of rulers, and the attainment of spiritual rulership. The work defines rulership as an extension of God's divine government, and posits moral perfection as the basis of rulership, with the ruler's virtues reflective of God's attributes. As Hüseyin Yılmaz points out, Edris "turned knowledge and practice of rulership into part of Islamic Gnosticism."[167]

166 Başaran, "İdrîs-i Bitlîsî'nin *Heşt Bihişt*'inin Hâtime'si," p. 11. Başaran cites Edris-e Bidlisi's *Hakk-al-mobin fî sharh Haqq-al-yaqin*, MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Şehid Ali Paşa, no. 1402, fol. 174b, as the basis of his claim that Hosâm-al-Din Bedlisi was a disciple (*morid* and *khalife*) of Sayyid Mohammad Nurbakhsh.

167 Özcan, *TDVİA*, s.v. İdrîs-i Bitlisi; Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, p. 233. See also the edition and Turkish tr. by Hasan Tavakkoli, "İdris Bitlisi'nin 'Kanun-i Şâhenşâhisi'nin tenkidli neşri ve türkçeye tercümesi" (Ph.D. dissertation, Istanbul University, 1974); Cornell Fleischer, "Royal authority, dynastic cyclism, and 'Ibn Khaldunism' in sixteenth-century Ottoman letters," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18/3–4 (1983), p. 49; Hüseyin Yılmaz, "The Sultan and the Sultanate: Envisioning Rulership in the Age of Süleyman the Lawgiver (1520–1566)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2004), pp. 82–83, 86, 94, 136.

Prose and Epistolary Historiography in the Süleyman and Post-Süleyman Era

Whereas versified Persian historical works continued to prove popular throughout the reigns of Süleyman, Selim II and Murad III, the commissioning of Persian prose histories appears to be less regular after Edris-e Bedlisi. Indeed, it is difficult to trace the circumstances in which some surviving pieces were produced since their authorship and dates of composition remain undetermined. One such example is an early anonymous campaign account, the *Ghazâ-ye Soleymân* or *Tavârikh-e âl-e Osmân*. Composed upon the orders of Süleyman, the work narrates the early years of the reign up to 1527.[168] Another anonymous Persian work is the *Safar-e farkhonde âthâr-e hazrat-e pâdshâh-e âlam-panâh be-janâb-e Baghdâd*, an account of the Baghdad campaign of 1534.[169] The most substantial anonymous Persian prose account of Süleyman's campaign is the *Kanz-al-javâher-al-saniyye fi'l-fotuhât-al-Soleymâniyye*,[170] which covers the campaigns of Belgrade (1521), Rhodes (1522), and Vienna (1529).[171] The *Kanz-al-javâher*, however, remains incomplete, as indicated by the author's description of the work's ambitious purview, focusing not only on the sultan, but providing a complete description of the state and its apparatus. Only the first *rukn* was composed. The campaign of Belgrade is recited in approximately fifty folios, whereas considerably less space is devoted to the conquest of Rhodes. The work concludes with 55 folios on the 1529 Viennese Campaign.[172] While Felix Tauer at first speculated that *Kanz-*

168 An undated 16th-century manuscript of the text exists in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Schefer mss. persans no. 1467. See Blochet, *Catalogue de la collection des manuscrits orientaux arabes, persans et turcs*, p. 108.

169 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Schefer mss. persans no. 1480.

170 MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Ayasofya, no. 3392; for a partial published edition, see Felix Tauer, ed., "*Dāstān-i safar-i Bech*, Soliman's Wiener Feldzug," *Archiv Orientalni* 7 (1935), pp. 1–47.

171 Hüseyin G. Yurdaydın, "Celâl-zâde Salih'in Süleyman-nâme'si," *Ankara İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 14 (1966), p. 3.

172 Félix Tauer, *Histoire de la campagne de Sultan Suleyman 1er contre Belgrade en 1521. Texte persan publié d'après deux manuscrits de Constantinople avec une traduction abrégé* (Prague, 1924), pp. 10–11.

al-javâher's unnamed author was either Celâlzâde Sâlih Çelebi (d. 1565), or his brother, Süleyman's renowned *nişancı,* Celâlzâde Mustafâ Çelebi (d. 1567), he later retracted this assumption.[173] It appears that the author, as Yurdaydın argues, may have drawn on Turkish accounts of these events attributed to Celâlzâde Sâlih.[174] The anonymous Turkish *Ta'rikh-i Sultân Süleymân*, which covers the years 1520–28, may be one such work.[175]

Upon his ascension to the throne in 1566, Selim II was presented a Persian prose abridged world history, the *Mer'ât-al-advâr va merqât-al-akhbâr*, by Mohammad Mosleh-al-Din Lâri Ansâri. An Iranian emigré to Istanbul, Lâri (d. 1571) was born in Lârestân and educated in Shiraz under a disciple of Jalâl-al-Din Davâni. As the result of Safavid persecution of Sunnis, Lâri sought refuge at the court of the Mughal ruler Homâyun Shâh. Following the death of his patron in 1555, Lâri left India, and, after having performed the *hajj*, arrived in Istanbul, where he found patronage under the Şeyhülislam Ebu's-Suud Efendi, who secured him a madrasa position at the daily rate of 50 *akçe*. A falling out with Ebu's-Suud caused him to be unhappy with his circumstances in the capital and Lâri left for Diyarbakr. He was employed as private tutor to the household of the regional commander İskender Pasha, in addition to an appointment as professor at the Hüsrev Pasha madrasa. Shortly before his death he attained the position of *müfti* of Diyarbakr.[176]

Lâri's *Mer'ât-al-advâr* concludes with a short section on the Ottomans, stopping at the death of Süleyman in 1566. In addition to several Turkish works he consulted, in the preface Lâri names fifty Arabic and Persian sources, among them the *Târikh-e Hâfez-e Abru* and *Rowzat-al-safâ*. In addition to a short introduction (*moqaddeme*), it consists of 10 chapters (*bâbs*). The first four books cover the

173 Félix Tauer, "Additions a mon ouvrage 'Histoire de la campagne du Sultan Suleymān 1er contre Belgrade en 1521' tirées de l'histoire de Suleymān 1er par Djelālzāde Sālih Efendi," *Tarih Dergisi* 7 (1935), pp. 191–96.

174 Yurdaydın, "Celâl-zâde Salih'in Süleyman-nâme'si," p. 2.

175 Ibid., p. 3. Yurdaydın likewise attributes to Celâlzâde Sâlih the Vienna manuscript of the Turkish *Rodos Kal'ası Fethnâme* or *Fethnâme-i Rodos* as well as the *Ta'riḫ-i Budun*.

176 Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts* I, pp. 115–17; Algar, "Persian literature in Bosnia-Herzegovina," p. 256.

pre-Islamic period, treating the Old Testament Prophets to the early Iranian kings contemporary with them, ending with the Sasanian and Arab rulers. The fifth book introduces the Islamic epic with an account of Mohammad, the early Caliphs, the Umayyads and Abbasids. The sixth books focuses on the Iranian dynasties contemporary with the Abbasids and concludes with the Ismailis. Chengis Khan and his successors, including the Chupanids, Karakhitais and the Mozaffarids are dealt with in the seventh book. The eighth is dedicated solely to Timur and his successors, while the ninth covers the Aq Qoyunlu, and briefly mentions Shah Esmâ'il and Shah Tahmâsp, concluding with the lament that all the great scholars of Iran had been driven out of the realm by his fanaticism. The tenth book provides a brief synopsis of the Ottomans, a mere 16 folios in the British Museum manuscript, up until Süleyman and the beginning of the Hungarian war 1526. The work also includes at the very end a biographical section on statesman, scholars and poets.[177]

Although Lâri's work was little copied in its time, it received the attention of Hoca Sa'deddin, who translated it into Turkish at the request Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, and it was dedicated to Murad III in 1575.[178] Hoca Sa'deddin, however, is renowned for his comprehensive *Tâcü't-tevârikh*, composed in a highly polished Ottoman prose with a heavy Persian imprint.[179] This had great influence on subsequent Ottoman works and has been made good use of by Ottoman scholars. We know for instance that Taşköprüzâde relied greatly on his work.

While fascination with Edris-e Bedlisi's masterful and complex Persian history continued among the Ottoman élite, Persian epistolary prose for historical writing seems to have lost its attraction at the court, as these few somewhat obscure examples from the reigns of Süleyman and his immediate successors indicate. By the mid-16th century, as Cornell Fleischer points out, two distinct historiographical streams simultaneously emerged, vying for control over the Ottoman dynastic image. One was versified Persian his-

177 Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts* I, p. 116.

178 Parmaksızoğlu, "Abdurrahman Gubâri'nin Hayatı ve Eserleri," p. ix.

179 Barbara H. Flemming, "The Sultan's prayer," in Colin Heywood and Colin Imber, eds., *Studies in Ottoman History in Honour of Professor V. L. Menage* (Istanbul, 1994), pp. 72–73.

torical composition, which became the exclusive province of the official court *shahname*-composer. The other was epistolary prose historical writing in Turkish, notably developed by the *nişancı*, the chief of the chancellery who was given the sole privilege of inscribing the imperial monogram, as seen in the cases of Celâlzâde Mustafâ and Ramazânzâde Mehmed Çelebi (d. 1571).

Towards the end of the 16th century, the struggle over the historical representation of the dynasty, Fleischer argues, was won by the chancellery bureaucrats rather than the court *shahname*-composer.[180] By this time, not only had Persian lost its function as a medium for dynastic historical writing, but epistolary prose in Ottoman Turkish had replaced verse as the preferred genre for historical and non-imaginary literary composition.[181]

6. Conclusions

As a verbal instrument in the celebration of royal power, Persian employed in historical writing provided a means by which traditional Iranian imperial discourse took root in Ottoman consciousness and practice. By associating Ottoman rulers and high officials alike with mythical and historical exemplars, these works assimilated Persianate imperial concepts of rulership into the Ottoman context. Persian imperial discourse likewise became melded with specific Ottoman notions of political legitimacy: Persian historical writing in particular represented the monarchical prerogatives of the sultan and those closest to him. Although Persian versified histories modeled after Ferdowsi's *Shahname* appear to have been the more popular, Persian epistolary prose, heavily adorned with verse and religious discourse, was nevertheless equally prestigious, with Edris-e Bedlisi's dynastic history the most masterful example.

180 Cornell Fleischer, "Between the lines: Realities of scribal life in the sixteenth century," in Heywood and Imber, eds., *Studies in Ottoman History*, p. 59, n. 39.

181 Emine Fatma Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transitions in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage, 1566–1617" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2005), pp. iv, 264–65.

The adoption of the title *Shâhanshâh*, one of the most evocative symbols of Persian imperial rule, for the sultan by 15th and 16th-century authors such as Mo'âli,[182] and the court *shahname*-composer Loqmân, is just one conspicuous example of the Ottoman adoption of Persian regal vocabulary.[183] A glance at Süleyman's Turkish *waqfiyye* registered in around 1559 is instructive in how firmly Ottoman conceptions of imperial rule and power had become rooted in the Iranian tradition, especially as codified in the *Shahname*, even in documents of a more religio-administrative nature. In the *waqfiyye*'s highly Arabized and Persianized Turkish preface we thus see Süleyman shown to possess the qualities of "Darius, King of Kings, and the luminous Faridun, sovereign of the seven climes." Süleyman is also the "Solomon of the age, the present Alexander," phrases which stress both the sultan's wisdom and justice and status as world conqueror.[184] At the same time, one sees how the Persian tradition in Süleyman's hands becomes assimilated into a particularly pious Sunni Muslim perspective, as in the phrase describing Süleyman as "the one who has brought together the magnificence of Faridun and the valor of Esfandiyâr with the uprightness of Dhu l-Nun (Prophet Jonah) and the piety of Mâlek b. Dinâr."[185]

182 *Khonkâr-nâme*, MS Istanbul, f. 2b.

183 Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, p. 298.

184 K.E. Kürkçüoğlu, ed., *Süleymaniye Vakfiyesi* (Ankara, 1962), pp. 37, 56; quoted by Kayaalp-Aktan, "The 'Atik Valide Mosque Complex," p. 93.

185 Kürkçüoğlu, ed., *Süleymaniye Vakfiyesi*, p. 22. Kayaalp, "The 'Atik Valide Mosque Complex," p. 93. Mâlek-e Dinâr, or Abu Yahyâ Mâlek b. Dinâr al-Sâmi (d. 748) was a Basran traditionist, ascetic, and Sufi, who made a living by copying Qor'ans and to whom the idea of *jehâd* is traced back; Ch. Pellat, *EI²*, s.v. Mālik b. Dīnār al-Sāmī, Abū Yayḥā. Farid-al-Din Attâr presents both Zunun (Dhu'l-Nun) and Mâlik b. Dinâr as friends of God in his biographical dictionary on mystics, *Tadhkerat-al-Owliyâ*; John Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment and Saint-hood* (Berkeley, 2008), pp. 254–55. For an analytic interpretation of the culturally recognized symbolic and ideological associations of the Süleymaniye Mosque complex's multilayered architectural discourse, see Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "The Süleymaniye complex in Istanbul: An interpretation," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985), pp. 97–112.

The development of Persian Ottoman historical writing was often parallel to historiographical developments in Ottoman Turkish. Yet, much of Persian historical writing, especially versified histories, was the product of Iranian emigré poets seeking appointments in the Ottoman court and administration. Persian versified histories thus differed stylistically from Ottoman ones in that they were composed by poets largely under the influence of the mid- to late 15th-century trends and literary fashions emerging from Shiraz as well as the Timurid court of Herat. Reminiscent of the features of Turkmen-Timurid literature, Malek Ommi's *Shâhnâme* was heavily adorned with creative poetic conceits, inventive metaphors, extended verbal play and *double-entendres*. Adâ'i situates his work, the *Shâhnâme-ye mohârebe-ye Soltân Salim*, in newly emerging *tâzegu'i* poetics, explaining how, when challenged by his patron, he attempted to produce something fresh and new, while at the same time following the inimitable models of the classical period. *Shahname*-style Turkish versified histories likewise echo the language of Ferdowsi's *Shahname*, and draw on his cast of characters.

By the 1580s, Persian was on the wane at the Ottoman court, with its privileged status as a vehicle of high literary style and imperial discourse giving way to Ottoman Turkish. Ottoman aspirations to emulate, and even surpass, Persian models became a major theme in the composition of Ottoman works, with the Mustafâ Âli as representative of this trend. The complete dominance of Ottoman Turkish at court was achieved under Mehmed III (1595–1603). After Loqmân's last Persian *Shâhnâme*, completed in 1589, no other work was produced for the Ottoman court in Persian.[186] Fetvacı attributes the almost sudden death of Persian at the Ottoman court to the cultural agenda of Mehmed III's circle, many of whom were not well-versed in Persian and promoted the development of Ottoman Turkish as the sole vehicle of high literary expression. The main instigator of this trend was the chief white eunuch, Gazanfar Ağa (Agha), the constant companion of Mehmed III. Gazanfar Ağa was supported by the literary and intellectual circle surrounding

186 Sharaf al-Din Bedlisi's Persian *Sharaf-nâme*, however, constitutes the exception to this trend.

the new sultan, including the famed scholar and historian Hoca Sa'deddin and the renowned poet Baki. At the end of the 16th century, the number of works composed in Ottoman Turkish, as opposed to Persian or Arabic, rose significantly. The preference for Turkish was accompanied by a large-scale translation project of Persian and Arabic works into Ottoman Turkish on the part of the chief white eunuch. These shifts in literary tastes, as Fetvacı posits, "mirror the transitions in courtly culture from the 'classical' Ottoman institutions to the new world order of the seventeenth century."[187]

187 Fetvacı, "Viziers to eunuchs," pp. iv, 264–65, 273.

CHAPTER 10

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN CENTRAL ASIA SINCE THE 16TH CENTURY

R. D. McChesney

"History is what historians do."
(J. Pardon Tillinghast, *The Specious Past*)

1. Introduction

Historiography in the major urban centers of Central Asia, especially Bukhara, Samarqand, and Balkh during the neo-Chengisid (Shibanid and Toghay-Timurid) eras (1500–1700) is the principal focus of this chapter. In the mid 18th century, part of the region came under Afghan rule and was separated politically from Transoxanian Bukhara (Mawarannahr). The following chapter on Afghan historiography continues the narrative for that region down to the 1930s. What is particularly noteworthy is that works now considered by scholars of Central Asian history as 'historiographical' are themselves rarely devoted solely to the chronological narration of a series of significant public events. Most devote considerable space to geography and biography and, on occasion, ethnography, mythology, and even philosophy. What links them all, and distinguishes them from books of grammar, jurisprudence, or belles-lettres, is their use of time as a way to organize narrative. Rare, however, is the work whose sole frame of reference is time or the linking of events to specific dates (*târikh/ta'rikh*). Moreover, neither the purest form of târikh, the creation of word-dates, or chronograms (dates revealed by the numeric value of the letters

of the chronogram), nor the chronological structure underlying it, appear to have been what most of our authors thought of as the most refined way to view the past. In fact, some writers whom we might think of as historians are surprisingly casual about dates in their narration of events. Mahmud b. Amir Vali, to be discussed below, seems most inclined to mention dates only when referring to the time he is writing. All the writers to be discussed in this chapter considered biography and geography as an integral part of writing history and perhaps even more important than chronology. The reconstructed lives of individuals made up the story of the past that was worth recounting, and served best to instruct a contemporary readership, while the stage on which the historical actors played their roles shares almost equal importance with their depicted lives.

The few purely annalistic works, such as the mid 15th-century *Mojmal-e Fasihi* of Fasih-al-Din Khʷâfi and the late 17th-century *Târikh-e Râqemi* are simply catalogues of noteworthy events—births, obituaries, enthronements, battles, public building construction, and extraordinary natural phenomena—with little or no attempt to explain context, motivation, or consequences, and hence lack the essential didactic quality of historiography.[1] Such works were far less common than those commissioned and written to provide a cloak of legitimacy to a ruling group, to celebrate the deeds of a particular ruler, to appeal to the sensibilities of someone in a position to compensate the author, or merely for the author's own amusement. Many, if not most, writers of narrative histories assumed that there was an inherent importance in the heritability of status and genetically-endowed talent (hence the importance of biography), in the linkages between people and place (hence the emphasis on geography), between different groups of people as motives for action (hence the importance of ethnography), and finally between God and man, and especially those who mediated

1 See e.g. Fasih-al-Din Ahmad b. Mohammad Khʷâfi, *Mojmal-e Fasihi*, ed. Mahmud Farrokh (3 vols., Mashhad, 1960–61), and Sharaf-al-Din b. Nur-al-Din Andejâni Tâshkandi, *Târikh-e Mir Sayyid Sharif Râqem* or *Târikh-e Râqemi*, MS London, Royal Asiatic Society, Morley CLXIII; ed. Manuchehr Sotude as *Târikh-e Râqem* (Tehran, 2001).

that connection (hence the importance of hagiography). One of the most important sources for the history of late 16th-century Central Asia is the massive (552 folios) hagiographical work of Badr-al-Din Kashmiri written on behalf of the Juybâri shaikh Khʷâje Sa'd-al-Din. Besides biographical narratives, it provides a fairly comprehensive account of political events (*vâqe'ât*) in the 1580s and 1590s and reproduces royal patents (*neshân-hâ*) issued on behalf of the shaikh and dozens of letters from princes who corresponded with him. Kashmiri also wrote a cycle of versified histories called *Rosol-nâme*, the fourth segment of which, entitled *Zafar-nâme*, covered the reign of his sovereign, Abd-Allâh Khan.[2] The more a writer could integrate all these facets of life into his work, the more satisfying the outcome would be.

Detailed studies already exist that thoroughly catalog and contextualize the many works of history produced in Central Asia that have survived from the four centuries comprising the post-Timurid era.[3] Here, the discussion will focus on a few major examples of narrative to show the diversity of first, what constituted intentionality in the writing of history and second, what could be included in a narrative of the past. In conformity with this volume's theme, the emphasis will be on writings that organize their perceptions and exposition of events within a more or less chronological framework. In Central Asian writing one encounters two terms that most closely correspond to 'historiography:' *târikh-nevisi* ('the writing of dates') and *vaqâye'* (or *vâqe'ât*)-*nevisi* ('the reporting of events'). As noted earlier, in the strictest sense, târikh is the writing of chronograms, a phrase, a verse or a few verses, commemorating some event by dating it using the *abjad* system, in which all numbers between one and 1,000 may be represented using the Arabic alphabet and therefore incorporated in discursive writing. One of the greatest chronogram writers of the period, Mowlânâ Abd-al-Rahmân 'Moshfeqi' Bokhâri Marvazi was a true

2 Yuri Bregel, *EIr*., s.v. Historiography xii. Central Asia, p. 397b.

3 See B.A. Akhmedov, *Istoriko-geograficheskaya literatura Sredneĭ Azii XVI–XVIII vv.* (Tashkent, 1985); Yu.E. Bregel', *Persidskaya literatura: Bio-bibliograficheskiĭ obzor*, vol. II (Moscow, 1972), especially pp. 1115–1208; and Bregel in *EIr*, s.v. Historiography xii. Central Asia.

celebrity of his time, whose services were called on for obituaries, victories, and verbal sketches of interesting incidents. He was also somewhat notorious in his lifetime for writing defamatory poems (*ahâji*).[4] Bregel/Storey lists him as an historian for his versified history of the reign of Abd-Allâh Khan, which does not survive, but his contemporaries did not remember him for this. Rather it was his impromptu compositions of chronograms that left the strongest impression on later writers. Râqem, for example, names him as his source for all of his chronograms relating to Mawarannahr and Balkh.[5]

'Events-reporting' is much closer in meaning to the modern connotation of the term historiography. It also should be noted that in certain contexts (Afghanistan in the late 19th century, for example) the 'events reporter' (*vaqâye'-nevis*) signified a local intelligence source reporting regularly to the throne on administrative irregularities, rumors of injustice and fraud, as well as general conditions in his or her domain (women were widely used as such agents in those environments to which only they had access), whether that was in the army, in the marketplace, or in provincial courts and chancelleries. But the term *vaqâye'-nevis* may be applied to a range of writers all of whom may be considered 'historiographers.' When Motrebi wrote the *khâteme* to his anthology of poets, a record of his meetings with Jahângir Pâdshâh in Lahore, he labeled each session an "event" (*vâqe'e*).[6]

In any event, to sidestep any suggestion of the incompatibility of the term 'historiography' as discussed in the introduction, with the Central Asian discursive writings that dealt with the past, this chapter will focus on the personalities who constructed the past in their writings and will cite their writings to illustrate their views of the world around them. It is impossible to do justice to the vision of the past that we believe these writers held by limiting ourselves

4 See Motrebi Samarqandi, *Noskhe-ye zibâ-ye Jahângiri*, ed. by Esmâ'il Bik Jânuf and Sayyid Ali Mujâni (Qom, 1998), pp. 75–76.

5 Raqem, *Târikh*, f. 158b; cf. ed. Sotude, p. 163.

6 Motrebi *Noskhe*, *passim*, pp. 266–314. Or perhaps the copyist, Mohammad-Amin al-Hoseyni, writing in 1654 for Owrangzib Âlamgir, added the heading (*vâqe'e-ye okhrâ*) for each session after the first.

even to those works usually thought of as chronicles, but which are generally more in the nature of encyclopedias and are, as often as not, in verse form or incorporate substantial amounts of verse. This makes linguistic analysis essential to understanding their social significance. Instead, the chapter will attempt to expose the careers of the writers as a way to understand how and why they wrote the past in the way they did. Particular emphasis is laid on the social context within which they wrote, to the extent this can be determined. By 'social context' is meant, among other things, the expectations of their peers, their relations to their patrons and to other politically and economically powerful individuals, their own economic situations and how they sought to improve them, and their modes of belief and ideological frames of reference.

Three major writers will be considered here, representing the three major cultural centers: Hâfez-e Tanish of Bukhara, Motrebi of Samarqand, and Mahmud b. Amir Vali of Balkh. Certain common threads emerge from comparing their lives and their works: each sought and received some form of government support either as cash grants or as salaried positions. In their works each one emphasizes individuals and their actions as the critical elements to gaining an understanding of the past and its lessons; two of the three were fascinated by India and reveal its allure for the early modern Central Asian intellectual; each of them displays some marked sense of loyalty to place; and finally, all their works reflect to one degree or another the ideological tensions of the time in the continuing dialogue between two, sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting, cultural traditions: a Turko-Mongol matrix of practices and beliefs stemming from the life and career of Chengis Khan and a textually-rooted Islamicate tradition based on the life and teachings of the Prophet Mohammad. While the Islamicate tradition had achieved a uniformity and universalism in Central Asia, thanks to the authority and ubiquity of canonical texts largely produced during the Timurid period (14th–15th centuries), Chengisid Turko-Mongol culture, most prevalent in the political and military domains, began to lose some of its force during the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, while Islamicate cultural norms filled more and more of the discursive space in the political

realm. The vestiges of intercultural tension are most evident in two of the writers under consideration, Hâfez-i Tanish in the late 16th century and Mahmud b. Amir Vali a generation later. By the end of the 17th and the first half of the 18th century, all those constructing the past in writing stress above all the Islamic credentials of those seeking recognition as legitimate figures of authority.

2. Hâfez-e Tanish b. Mir-Mohammad of Bukhara

The late 16th century saw a flurry of writing about the past, centered in particular on the most powerful political figure of the latter half of the century, Abd-Allâh Khan (reg. 1530–98). Three major works were either commissioned by him (Hâfez-e Tanish's *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*) or were written in his honor and presented to him (Kashmiri's *Zafar-nâme* and Hâfez Moqim Bustânkhâni's *Zafar-nâme-ye Moqimi*). Motrebi refers the reader wanting to know about all of the political activities of Abd-Allâh Khan to go to Hâfez-e Tanish or Bustânkhâni and relates how the latter came to write his work. The two *Zafar-nâme*s were both in verse, and while appealing to the Khan's aesthetic sensibilities have not worn well through time as exemplars of the historiographic arts. In fact, the only known manuscript of the latter has long since vanished.[7]

Perhaps the single most important representative of the Central Asian historiographic tradition of the 16th-century Central Asia is Hâfez-e Tanish, author of the *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*. His own work contains some biographical information about both himself and his father, Mir-Mohammad, an intimate (*moqarrab*) of the Bukharan court of Obeyd-Allâh Khan b. Mahmud Soltân (ruled Bukhara 1512–40).[8] His father's position may have created certain expectations of the son, but as a presumed loyalist of the Shah-

7 Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura* II, p. 1129. Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 121, 170. See also idem, *Tadhkerat-al-sho'arâ*, ed. by Ali Rafi'i Ala Marvdashti (Tehran, 2003), pp. 146 and 476–77. Kashmiri's *Zafar-nâme* is found in a unicum ms. in Dushanbe (see Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura* II, pp. 1134–35).

8 Akhmedov, *Istoriko-geograficheskaya literatura*, p. 47, note 91.

Bodaqid line of Abu'l-Kheyrid Shibanids, his father would not have been able to pass his status on to Hâfez-e Tanish when the Jani-Begids under Abd-Allâh seized Bukhara and eliminated the Shah-Bodaqid clan.[9]

Hâfez-e Tanish first came to public attention as a poet.[10] He appears in the anthology of poets written in 1566 in Bukhara by Hasan Nethâri.[11] His entry occurs in the third chapter, which is devoted to poets whom Nethâri had met, who lived in Bukhara, and who "had not yet attained the age of shaikh-hood (*sheykhukhiyat*)," i.e. were still youthful. He describes Hâfez-e Tanish under his pen name "Nakhli" as a good-looking youth with a pleasing disposition, one whose style found favor with people of insight (*arbâb-e qolub*). In what is a very brief entry, the only other information Nethâri provides is that Nakhli had completely memorized (*hefz*) the Qor'an, hence his earned title 'Hâfez' and "had a total grasp (*voquf-e tâmm*) of Shâtebi."[12] (Shâtebi was shorthand for the 12th-century Qor'anic scholar, Abu'l-Qâsem b. Ferrokh-al-Shâtebi, famed for his verse works that were intended to facilitate memorization of the Qor'ân and for the tradition of commentary on those works).

The origin of the name 'Tanish' has never been satisfactorily explained and Nethâri makes no attempt to do so. One of Nethâri's students, Soltân-Mohammad 'Asamm-e Samarqandi' (the deaf one of Samarqand), better known by the pen-name 'Motrebi Samarqandi' (to be considered below), updated his mentor's information about Hâfez-e Tanish in a work compiled in the late 1620s,

9 For a concise general interpretive survey of the history of 16th-century Central Asia see Robert D. McChesney, *EIr*., s.v. Central Asia vi. In the 10th–12th/16th–18th Centuries. For more detail see Audrey Burton, *The Bukharans: A Dynastic, Diplomatic and Commercial History 1550–1702* (Richmond, Surrey, 1997), pp. 1–98.

10 Hafez-e Tanish, *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*, facsimile text and tr. by M.A. Salakhetdinova (2 vols. of 4 projected, Moscow, 1983–89). In the preface Salakhetdinova details all the sources providing biographical information about Hafez-e Tanish.

11 Khᵂâje Bahâ'-al-Din Hasan Nethâri Bokhâri, *Modhakker-e ahbâb*, ed. Syed Muhammad Fazlullah as *Mudhakkir-i-Ahbâb* (New Delhi, 1969).

12 Nethâri, *Modhakker-e ahbâb*, pp. 443–44.

Noskhe-ye zibâ-ye Jahângir, although it is not evident that he ever met Hâfez-e Tanish. Motrebi says that the Khan, Abd-Allâh b. Eskandar, found Hâfez-e Tanish's voice pleasing (when he recited the Qor'ân) and he waited on the Khan "from a very young age." Then as "his innate competence" emerged, his position improved day by day until he was appointed court reporter (*vâqe'e-nevis*) in which capacity he recorded all of the Khan's victories (*fotuhât*) "up until the conquest of Tashkent," which took place in 1582. Motrebi adds, "he also recorded some of the *fotuhât* of Khorasan at which time the tree of his life fell to earth on account of the winds of eternity."[13] The passage lacks Motrebi's usual precision and may have been just hearsay. Although Motrebi often sought out works in the libraries of Bukhara and Samarqand by authors of interest to him, these were usually works of poetry. He does not seem to have been especially interested in Hâfez-e Tanish's record of Abd-Allâh Khan's *fotuhât* nor in any of his other historical compositions.

Another source contemporary with Motrebi and the author of a treatise on music, Darvish Ali, says that by the age of eighteen Hâfez-e Tanish had already compiled a collection of his own poetry, while the latter himself claims to have presented Abd-Allâh Khan with a *mathnavi* of 4,000 verses.[14]

This highlighting of poetic accomplishments reflects the privileged place held by poetry as an art form. All the authors reviewed here took great pride in and probably devoted much, if not most, of their creative effort to poetic composition. Although the modern reader's sensibilities tend to lead him or her to give no more than a passing nod to information about *divan*s, or insertions of *qaside*s and *ghazal*s in the text, it is clear that peer recognition for these men meant poetic accomplishment, not fame gained from describing the feats of their patrons.

Hâfez-e Tanish tells the reader that at the age of thirty-six he was invited to compile a record of the deeds of his patron, Abd-Allâh Khan. Akhmedov notes that the title of the work (*Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*) is a chronogram giving the *hejri* date 992 (1584) and suggests

13 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, p. 169.

14 Salakhetdinova, intro. to Hafez-e Tanish, *Sharaf-nâme*, p. 9.

that was when work on it began, which happened to be one year after Abd-Allâh succeeded his father as ruling khan.[15] This corresponds with the fact that Nethâri, writing in 1566, knows Hâfez-e Tanish as a young poet of promise, perhaps then about eighteen years of age, not as an events-writer. Although the date of Hâfez-e Tanish's death is uncertain, the last episode in the *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi* before the *khâteme* (in all known copies of the work) is the capture of Herat from the Safavids in 1588.[16] More significantly, the work does not record the death of Khʷâje Sa'd on 23 October 1589, so that Hâfez-e Tanish's own end probably came sometime during that year.

Most of the *Sharaf-nâme* is original, based on the author's own observations and stories told him by his contemporaries. However, for the introductory material on the genealogy of Abd-Allâh Khan and the story of the Mongol khans and Moghulistan, Hâfez-e Tanish cites and makes use of the *Jâme'-al-tavârikh,* Mirkhʷând's *Rowzat-al-safâ,* Yazdi's *Zafar-nâme*, Ali b. Hoseyn al-Va'ez al-Kâshefi's *Rashahât eyn-al-hayât*, and Binâ'i's *Shibâni-nâme*.[17] Though characterized by Storey as "pompous and verbose," the *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi* is an excellent example of the literary sensibilities of the time and the kind of historical literature that highly educated writers sought to produce. Written in rhymed prose and periodically punctuated by appropriate verse (perhaps as much as twenty percent of the text) and Qor'anic quotations, it was written to promote the legitimacy of the Jani-Begid family of the Abu'l-Kheyrid Shibanids as the legitimate heirs of the Chengisid Khanate and to do it by celebrating the lives and achievements of two individuals: Khʷâje Sa'd-al-Din, the son of Khʷâje Mohammad-Eslâm Juybâri, and his disciple and supporter, the Jani-Begid Abd-Allâh the son of Eskandar and grandson of the eponymous Jâni Beg. Both men were still alive when the work as it now exists was completed. Although it mainly follows Abd-Allâh's career (and so

15 Ibid., p. 10, on the other hand, dates commencement of the work much earlier, to 1570 or shortly thereafter, and suggests he may have begun it on his own initiative.

16 Ibid.

17 See e.g. Hafez-e Tanish, *Sharaf-nâme,* f. 10b and Salekhetdinova's intro., p. 19.

is alternately known as the *Abd-Allâh-nâme*), the decisive influence of Khʷâje Sa'd (also known as Khʷâje Kalân Khʷâje) on his life is meticulously recorded throughout the work and gives the whole production a quasi-hagiographical cast.

When Hâfez-e Tanish began work, the inter-appanage struggles between clans of the Abu'l-Kheyrid Shibanids that had marked the period 1556–84 in particular and brought his patron and the Jani-Begid clan to a position of pre-eminence were fresh in memory. His task, only implicitly stated, was to place a discursive cloak of legitimacy over the outcome of these struggles, which had brought Abd-Allâh Khan and the Jani-Begid clan to the peak of power in Central Asia (their push outwards against the Safavids and Khʷârazmian Chengisids was not yet begun in a serious way) and eliminated clans equally qualified to inherit the Chengisid mantle: the Shah-Bodaqids in Bukhara, the Kuchkonjids in Samarqand, the Sivinjids (Soyunjoqids) in Tashkent and rival Jani-Begids in Balkh. In this project of legitimation, Khʷâje Sa'd-al-Din Juybâri plays a central role. As his father had done in the crucial struggle for Bukhara in 1556, Khʷâje Sa'd put his full backing behind the Jani-Begid fortunes as represented by Abd-Allâh. We know this from both Hâfez-e Tanish and from the Juybâri family's own memorializer, Badr-al-Din Kashmiri. The project to promote Abd-Allâh as the sole legitimate heir to the Chengisid mantle was also supported by another influential figure in both politics and the arts, Qol-Bâbâ Kukeltâsh. Qol-Bâbâ was Abd-Allâh's top general, his 'milk brother' (*kukeltâsh*), an important bureaucrat, and, most importantly, for both Motrebi and Hâfez-e Tanish, a major patron of the literary arts.[18]

The *Sharaf-nâme* is important as a record of the preservation of Chengisid Mongol tradition and in many ways reveals how Muslim and Mongol cultures interacted. The tradition of enthronement in which the new khan was raised up on a felt carpet was a direct re-enactment of Mongol tradition, but was Islamicized with a sprinkling of holy water from the well of Zamzam at Mecca and included religious figures among those positioned at the corners

18 Hâfez-e Tanish (S), f. 8a, Russian tr., p. 43; and Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 36–37.

of the carpet. The terms for army formations, not to mention battle tactics, the hierarchy of seating at court, the use of koumiss in court ceremonial—all these things created a sense of continuity with the Chengisid past, which in turn conferred legitimacy, in the eyes of the military at least, on those who kept the ceremonies and traditions alive.[19] The work as set out in the beginning was to include the introduction, two chapters (*maqâle*s), and a concluding section (*khâteme*), which was never written. The introduction, besides praise of God and the Prophet, was to include the reasons for writing the book; the genealogy of Abd-Allâh Khan going back to Japheth and Noah; an account of the Turko-Mongol tribes of Central Asia; the story of Chengis Khan and his descendants; and the biography of Khʷâje Mohammad-Eslâm, Abd-Allâh's first spiritual mentor. The first *maqâle* describes political events in Central Asia from Abd-Allâh's birth in 1533 until his accession to the throne as ruling khan in June 1583. The second *maqâle* was to describe events taking place in Central Asia and neighboring regions from Abd-Allâh's accession onwards. A *khâteme* was to include biographies of shaikhs, viziers, amirs, poets, and scholars, as well as an inventory of the public buildings erected during Abd-Allâh's reign.[20] Because of the author's death, the plan was not fully realized and the work ends, as noted above, with events of 1588–89.

Stylistically, the work reflects Hâfez-e Tanish's training. It is frequently punctuated with Qor'anic citations and his poetry appears on virtually every page. The overall impression is of a work meant to impress his peers with its erudition, while simultaneously attempting to reconcile the parallel, if not conflicting, Chengisid and Islamic traditions.

Hâfez-e Tanish thus provides us with a model of the chronicler/historian: first of all a poet, then a Qor'anic scholar, and finally an employee of a royal court. The only thing missing from his résumé is a personal connection with India. His work describes envoys

19 R. D. McChesney, "Zamzam water on a white felt carpet: Adapting Mongol ways in Muslim Central Asia, 1550–1650," in Michael Gervers and Wayne Schlepp, eds., *Religion, Customary Law and Technology* (Toronto, 2000), pp. 63–80.

20 Akhmedov, *Istoriko-geograficheskaya literatura*, p. 49.

exchanged between Akbar's court in Agra and Bukhara under Eskandar Khan and his son Abd-Allâh Khan, but there is no evidence that Hâfez-e Tanish contemplated traveling to India or showed any particular interest in the attractions of that land.

3. Soltân-Mohammad Motrebi of Samarqand

Motrebi Samarqandi (ca. 1559-ca. 1630) might seem to be more appropriately classified as an anthologist rather than as an historiographer-chronicler on the basis of the works of his that have survived, but in keeping with the broader definition of historiographers as those whose aim was to record events of the past and of their own times, then Motrebi cannot be excluded. Indeed, in one of his books he is particularly important as a promoter of the continuing legitimacy of the Timurid house as rightful rulers of Central Asia, long after their mandate had ceased. It is abundantly evident that a chronicler or writer had to please his patron, but finding clear evidence of the way this was done other than through the excessive flattery and obsequies one finds in such works is more difficult. Rarer still is the case where one writer offers the same work consecutively to different patrons or would-be patrons and makes the kinds of alterations that allow the reader of both to see the choices being made. Such was the case of Motrebi's anthology of poets. He first dedicated the *Tadhkerat-al-sho'arâ*, written ca. 1604, to the Toghay-Timurid Vali-Mohammad Khân (reg. 1605–11) and then a substantially revised version of it to the ruler of Mughal India, Jahângir Pâdshâh (reg. 1605–27) in 1626 under the title *Noskhe-ye zibâ-ye Jahângir*. Clearly, any ideological slant that appears in either version arises out of Motrebi's own ambitions and, unlike other events-reporters who reveal an ideological position, his ideology was flexible and driven apparently by hope of reward. The way in which the *Noskhe* reconstructs the past seems distinctly intended to play into, if not reinforce and validate, the irredentist interests of the Mughal ruler in recovering control, or if not control, at least substantial influence over the lands once subject to

Timurid rule. Perhaps more significantly, Samarqand was the site of their ancestors' remains, a region that had been forfeited when the last Timurid of Central Asia, Bâbur the son of Omar Sheykh (d. 1530) was driven from the homelands.

Motrebi's life may be pieced together from the autobiographical data found scattered throughout the *Noskhe,* which contains a wealth of information about his relations with political, religious, and literary figures in Transoxania, India, and Afghanistan, and offers some insight into how the vicissitudes of political life, the fates of the Timurids (Chaghatay or Gurkâniyân) in India and of their successors in Central Asia, the neo-Chengisids, shaped the literary output of both regions' intellectuals.[21]

Motrebi's infancy and youth (until his late teens) coincided with factional struggles for control of Samarqand, particularly after the death of the Kuchkonjid Sultan Sa'id b. Abu-Sa'id b. Kuchkonji Khan in 1572. Three years before his death, the Jani-Begid puissant khan at Bukhara, Abd-Allâh, in alliance with the Suyunjuqid at Tashkent, Darwish Khan, attacked and laid siege to Samarqand in December 1569.[22] The accounts of Motrebi and Hâfez-e Tanish diverge at this point, the latter saying that after a long siege and with winter having set in, the Bukharan and Tashkent armies withdrew to their respective centers without taking Samarqand. Motrebi, on the other hand, says that Sultan Sa'id abandoned Samarqand and fled to Dizaq (Jizaq) and Shâhrokhiyye and Abd-Allâh subjected the town to half a day of pillaging.[23] According to Motrebi, worse was to come. The Khan's uncle, Uzbek Soltân, returned to the city sometime thereafter and "began a reign of tyranny and oppression." This was a traumatic time for the ten-year-old boy. For a week, Uzbek Soltân's forces ran wild and inflicted considerable hardship on the populace. People were assembled in mosques, Motrebi says,

21 For a recent account of his life see "Mutribi" al-Asamm Samarqandi, tr. by Richard C. Foltz as *Conversations with Emperor Jahângir* (Costa Mesa, 1998), pp. 3–5 (introduction).

22 Hâfez-e Tanish, *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*, MS London, India Office Library, ff. 154a–155a.

23 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 71–72.

and suspended by ropes with their hands tied to their feet.[24] Many men of Samarqand left their families behind, and fled, something Motrebi may have personally experienced. Eventually, forces loyal to Sultan Sa'id regained control of the town and did their best to repay the Jani-Begid forces life for life and injury for injury. Afterwards, Sultan Sa'id returned to rule for another three years until his death in May 1572, when Motrebi had just entered his teens. The following six years would be marked by internal Kuchkonjid struggles for control of Samarqand, leading eventually to its final takeover by the Jani-Begid at Bukhara, Abd-Allâh.[25]

Motrebi's early life in Samarqand, prior to his moving to Bukhara to study under Hasan Nethâri and others, may be reconstructed from anecdotes scattered here and there in his *Noskhe*. During Sultan Sa'id's two-decade-long reign over Samarqand (1552–72) Motrebi tells us that he attended a *maktab* with one of Sultan Sa'id's sons, Bahâdor Soltân, and implies that he knew him for several years, when the latter was ten, thirteen, and sixteen years old.[26] If Motrebi were of approximately the same age as Bahâdor Soltân, the maktab years were probably during the late 1560s and early 1570s and may have lasted ten or more years. In the course of it, he learned to recite Qor'an under a hâfez named Mohammad Amin.[27] From Qor'an recitation (which he refers to as *mo'ezzi-kh^{w}âni*, glory-recitation) he went on to studying Qor'anic commentary (*tafsir*) and *hadith.* In the latter subject he reports that his text was the *Meshkât (al-masâbih)*, a popular 14th-century commentary on a 12th-century work, the *Masâbih-al-sonna*.[28] He also mentions the names of two of his *mokarrer*s, the man or older boy who repeated the lessons for dictation as the teacher read them out, and mentions that one of them died during Javânmard-Ali Khan's reign in Samarqand, i.e. between 1572 and 1579.[29] Other works he studied later in his maktab career included Jâmi's widely read commen-

24 Ibid., p. 72.
25 On the details, of his campaign see Hâfez-e Tanish, ff. 215b–223a.
26 Motrebi, *Noskhe,* p. 95.
27 Ibid., p. 94.
28 Ibid., p. 187.
29 Ibid., p. 79.

tary on Ebn-Hâjeb's versified Arabic grammar called *Favâ'ed-e zeyâ'iyye* and Marghinâni's standard work of jurisprudence *al-Hedâya*, which he read with other students under the guidance of the Sufi shaikh, Khʷâje Abu-Hâshem Dehbidi.[30]

Probably after his maktab years but while he was still in Samarqand, he became the student of Mowlânâ Esmat-Allâh, pen-name Shâkeri, and spent several years studying the rational and transmitted sciences (*olum-e aqli va naqli*) and theoretical and applied law (*osul va foru'*) under him. The latter's son, later a *qâzi*, Mohammad-Amin, was his classmate.[31] Besides these studies he also took up the flute (*ney*) and the study of musical composition, a vocation that he continued for much of the rest of his life.

Outside the classroom, Motrebi presents the reader with a number of anecdotes that depict incidents that left strong impressions on him. During the reign of Sultan Sa'id, he witnessed the accidental death of a chief artillerist (*tupchi-bâshi*) who was trying, without much success, to demonstrate the competence of his gunnery to Sultan Sa'id. The man was checking to see whether the stone projectile was properly seated in the barrel of the gun when a stray spark landed in the fuse hole, ignited the powder, and the projectile "carried (the artillerist) off into the sky so that all they found was bits of him scattered all over."[32] Given the detail with which he recounts the story, one has to conclude that the incident left a very strong mark on an impressionable boy.

The more raffish side of Samarqand also left an impression on the boy's psyche. He names the area of the city where libertines and prostitutes (*lavandân* and *khabithe*) solicited business, "the Beyn-al-Tâqeyn ('between the gateways') of Ologh Beg Mirzâ."[33] Given what is known about Ologh Beg's buildings in Samarqand, this most likely referred to the Rigestân area, where today three imposing entryways (of the Ologh Beg, Sheyr Dâr and Tella Kâr madrasas) form three sides of the large square. At the time of which Motrebi was writing, the latter two had not yet been built but there

30 Ibid., p. 148
31 Ibid., p. 97.
32 Ibid., pp. 24–25.
33 Ibid., pp. 94, 109

were five other public buildings occupying the site, three of which had been built by Ologh Beg—his madrasa, a *khâneqâh* (Sufi hospice) opposite it and a mosque called the Masjed-e Moqatta'.[34] He tells of encountering the poet Shohrati Miyânkâli dead drunk with a dog collar around his neck. The collar was from a pet belonging to a(n) "(in)famous youth" (*javân-e ma'ruf*) of Samarqand with whom he had fallen in love. It is not clear from this account whether this was during Motrebi's childhood, or much later, on one of his returns to Samarqand.[35] It also raises some question about the accuracy of his memory and sense of time, for later on he adds that Shohrati "repented" (his homosexuality apparently) and married; he and his wife died in a pandemic (*vabâ-ye âmm*) in 1564 when Motrebi was only five years old. It is quite possible that Motrebi is appropriating stories he had heard or simply recalling the past inaccurately.

The story about another habitué of the Beyn-al-Tâqeyn named Mowlânâ Bâbâ Hayavân, a man whose sexual activities were the stuff of stories frightening to the young Motrebi, is definitely from his youthful period. "When I was still a beardless youth, I heard stories about him," he writes. "At noon he would leave the (Khʷâje Ahrâr) Madrasa and sit down at the Beyn-al-Tâqeyn of Mirzâ Ologh Beg and one day when I came out of my lessons the mollâ's path crossed mine. I ran in another direction because of my fear of him but my father drew his hand from the sleeve of pleasure and praised and commended him a good deal. I was surprised because my father was usually protective of me and given the fact that the mollâ was notorious for debauchery, (my father) did not forswear his perversions but commanded me to greet and salute the mollâ." When they did meet, Motrebi says his father stopped and talked with the mollâ for an hour. The latter asked Motrebi what he was reading and Motrebi replied that it was Taftazâni's commentary on the *Shamsiyye*, a work on logic. This incident, too, obviously

34 See G.A. Pugachenkova and L.I. Rempel', *Vyidayushchiesya pamyatniki arkhitektury Uzbekistana* (Tashkent, 1958), p. 127, for a scheme of the site at the beginning of the 16th century.

35 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, p. 81.

burned itself into his memory. He devotes considerable space to it and then to a description of the miraculous powers of the mollâ.[36]

Perhaps well before 1582 but certainly no later than that, Motrebi left Samarqand and the protection of his father's house for Bukhara. He himself tells us that in that year he paid homage to the sovereign, Eskandar Khan, Abd-Allâh's father. In Bukhara, Motrebi became a student of the man he considered the dean of Bukharan poets, Hasan Nethâri, author of the *Modhakker-al-ahbâb*, completed in 1566 and which secured his position as the leading literary critic of the city. He also appears to have played the role of mentor to young aspiring poets like Motrebi, teaching them the "craft of poetry" (*fonun-e ash'âr*).[37] Nethâri was a major figure in the Naqshbandi Sufi order and lived in a large house beside the Bolbolak Pool (*howz*) near the shrine of Bahâ'-al-Din Naqshband on the eastern outskirts of the city, an area known as Qasr-e Ârefân. Motrebi appears to have lived in Nethâri's house for a time, but it is clear from another anecdote that he lived elsewhere as well. For example, he spent two months in the house of Mowlânâ Piru-ye Bokhâri studying books about the life of the Prophet (*siyar-al-nabi*).[38] Motrebi continued his study of the rational sciences, reading Taftazâni's *Motavval*, a widely read commentary on al-Sakkâki's treatise on rhetoric.[39] He also continued his music studies in Bukhara under Ostâd Ali-Dust, a *ney* player and author of treatises on musical composition, and Hâfez Abd-al-Rahim who played the *qânun* and *ney* and gave Motrebi lessons on the latter.[40] Mostly however, judging by the stories he relates, he spent his time in the company of Nethâri, absorbing Nethâri's views and critical perspectives on the contemporary poetry scene.

Motrebi calls Bukhara his "adopted homeland" (*vatan-e ma'luf*) and perhaps we can assume that he made Bukhara his home until Nethâri's death in 1597, at which point he seems to have returned to Samarqand. He retained a primal loyalty to Samarqand as the

36 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 107–8.
37 Ibid., p. 190.
38 Ibid., pp. 158–59.
39 Ibid., p. 49.
40 Ibid., pp. 175–76 and 164.

place of his birth, and this influenced his writing. In all three of our writers, this civic pride comes out in sections devoted to the virtues and attractions of their respective cities.

In both Bukhara and Samarqand Motrebi enjoyed the patronage of Uzbek military figures. He singles out two men of similar name who served as governors of Samarqand, Hâji Bi Durman and Hâji Bi Qushji. Both also held the title *atâliq*, the highest that could be earned by a non-Chengisid. The former served as governor of Samarqand for Abd-Allâh Khan after the assassination of the Khan's brother Ebâd-Allâh on 16 August 1586. He was the latter's atâliq and so served as city administrator when not with Ebâd-Allâh on his frequent campaigns.[41] The latter Hâji Bi was a supporter of the Toghay-Timurids, served as governor of Samarqand during Vali-Mohammad's tenure as khan (1605–11), and was executed on Vali-Mohammad's orders in 1610.[42] In Bukhara, the chief amirid patron in Motrebi's eyes was Qol-Bâbâ Kukeltâsh, who figures prominently in both of his works.

His views of the actual rulers of Bukhara during his stay there seem somewhat more restrained and less flattering than his depiction of amirs. He describes Eskandar Khan as a "dervish pâdishâh" and very old when he met him in 1582 (he was already in his late eighties) and Motrebi composed a chronogram (*târikh*) on the Khan's death, which occurred in late June 1583. He describes Eskandar Khan's son and successor, Abd-Allâh, merely as "just" and relates two anecdotes involving a *senjed* (jujube) seller and a kebab seller to illustrate his application of justice.[43] Otherwise his depiction of the man whom Hâfez-e Tanish extols throughout his book centers around dreams Motrebi had involving the Khan's prediction of his own death.

41 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 235–37; Hafez-e Tanish, *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*, ff. 460a, 461a; and Mahmud b. Amir Vali, *Bahr-al-asrâr fi manâqeb-al-akhyâr*, vol. VI, part 3, MS Tashkent, IVAN Uzbekistana, no. T1375, f. 248b, and ibid., vol. VI, part 4, MS London, British Library (I.O. Collection), no. 575, f. 163b.

42 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 183–84. Mahmud b. Amir Vali, *Bahr-al-asrâr* (BL/IOL): ff. 88b, 173b, 176a, 180b, 181b.

43 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, pp. 124–25.

Motrebi's Works

It is difficult to say when he began writing his own anthology, imitating Nethâri's but introducing poets whose talents had emerged during the three decades since Nethâri wrote. Writing the work and choosing whom to include and whom to exclude must have been somewhat complicated by the rapidly changing political situation in Central Asia at the very end of the 16th century and the first decade of the 17th, with the downfall of the Shibanid house and the rise and internal struggles of the Toghay-Timurids. The great amirid patron in Bukhara, Qol-Bâbâ Kukeltâsh, had moved to Herat as governor when it was conquered by Abd-Allâh Khân in 1588. Ten years later, when Abd-Allâh Khân died and was succeeded by his son, Abd-al-Mo'men, who was by now the implacable enemy of Qol-Bâbâ, the Bukharan Maecenas was put to death. Then, within six months, Abd-al-Mo'men himself was assassinated by a conspiracy of amirs worried about his mental state. Thus the Shibanid mandate ended.

The contents and dedication of Motrebi's first work, *Tadhkerat-al-sho'arâ*, suggest some uncertainty about what was politically correct and also indicates that the work may have been begun in the very last years of Abd-Allâh Khân's reign and continued during Abd-al-Mo'men's brief tenure. As Nethâri had done, the first chapters (called *esm*s one, two and three) were devoted to political figures known for their poetry. The first two entries are Abd-Allâh Khân and Abd-al-Mo'men. The work is then dedicated to two men, Nethâri, whose death in 1597 may have been the catalyst to start Motrebi writing, and Vali-Mohammad Khân. The dedication to the third Toghay-Timurid khan suggests the work was more or less finished before the latter's accession and that he had just come to the throne when Motrebi was seeking a (paying) sponsor. There is no indication the latter ever accepted the work or even acknowledged it. After making three research trips to Balkh and to Badakhshan to carry out revisions, Motrebi departed for India in 1625 with high hopes of presenting his work and receiving some reward. This was almost exactly the moment when our third historiographer, the much younger Mahmud b. Amir Vali, also set out on his Indian

adventure. Motrebi met Jahângir in Lahore and attended his court on at least twenty-four occasions over the course of two months. It is not clear whether Motrebi presented the Mughal ruler with a copy of the *Tadhkere* or the *Noskhe*. If it was the latter, it must have been considerably different from the version published in 1998. For one thing, the *khâteme* could only have been written during or more likely after his return to Samarqand, including the chapter on additional poets of Akbar's time.[44] Secondly, Motrebi writes that in their twenty-second meeting Jahângir said that he was reading the poetry of Mohammad-Yusof Khʷâje, a member of the Juybâri family of Bukhara, in the version that Motrebi had presented him.[45] Yet there is no mention of, let alone an entry for, Mohammad-Yusof Khʷâje in either the *Tadhkere* or the *Noskhe*. It is quite possible that various versions of both of Motrebi's books circulated and he may have altered the manuscript according to the anticipated audience. Then again, later copyists may have added and subtracted according to their patrons' desires as well. The manuscript that forms the basis of the published edition of *Noskhe* was written during the reign of, and perhaps for, Owrangzib, the grandson of Jahângir, and may have been reworked accordingly.

A full comparison of the *Tadhkere* with the *Noskhe* is beyond the scope of this chapter. Here a comparison is only of interest for what it tells us of the manner in which the desire for recognition (and money), some basic loyalties to place, and the need to promote the status, if not political legitimacy, of the dedicatee and his line all interacted. What is of particular interest is how this interplay gave rise to the changed representation of political figures between the *Tadhkere* and the *Noskhe* in the versions available to us today.

As noted above, the *Tadhkere* opens with three sections on political figures from all over Central Asia and India who were known for their poetry. The organization of the *Noskhe*, on the other hand, shows a different focus. That version, according to the preface, was to be divided into two chapters (*selsele*s rather than

44 Cf. Motrebi, tr. Foltz, *Conversations*, and *Noskhe*. Note that the twenty-fourth and last of Motrebi's meetings with Jahângir in the former is not found in the latter.

45 Motrebi, tr. Foltz, *Conversations*, p. 81 and *Noskhe*, p. 308.

esms), the first on the "Chaghatay sultans," the poets of their times and their poems circulating in Transoxania (Mawarannahr) and the second *selsele* on the "Uzbek sultans," which was then further divided into two sections (*tabaqes*), the first on those sultans who had a "close and permanent relationship (*nesbat-e peyvastegi*) to the family of Timur" and the second to those sultans "whose lineage went to Chengis Khan." By this latter only the Jani-Begids were apparently intended since those in the first tabaqe also were descended directly from Chengis Khan. In this schema, Abd-Allâh Khan and Abd-al-Mo'men Khan, who are at the front of the *Tadhkere*, are now moved to the back. Motrebi opens the first selsele with a fulsome account of the third Mughal ruler, Jalâl-al-Din Akbar, the father of Jahângir, a man who had not merited an entry at all in the *Tadhkere* and much space (some twenty percent of the entire work) is given over to describing his generosity, praising his rule, and mentioning some poets connected with his reign.

The first tabaqe of the second selsele is devoted to eight Shibanids of the Kuchkonjid line during the time Samarqand was their appanage (ca. 1512 until the final Jani-Begid conquest of Samarqand in 1579). The Jani-Begids, only recently eliminated from the political scene at the time Motrebi was writing, are relegated to the second and last tabaqe. Not only are the Samarqandis given precedence, a sign of Motrebi's patriotism, but he explicitly draws the connection between the line of Kuchkonji and the Mughals (Chaghatay) of India. "Although these sultans are of the Ozbekiyye tabaqe whose lineage goes back to Chengis Khan, still they possess the son-in-law relationship of Abu'l-Kheyr Khan (the Shibanid from whom all the Central Asian clans sprang) to the martyred Sultan Ologh Beg Guregân (grandson of Timur). Consequently, Sultan Sa'id Khan and the *pâdshâh-e ghâzi* (Akbar) have enjoyed a close and intimate friendship."[46]

Between the writing of these two works, Motrebi reshapes his view of the past to give precedence to the Samarqand ruling clan, to de-emphasize the preeminence gained over the course of the 16th century by the Jani-Begid clan, and to underscore the connection

46 Motrebi, *Noskhe*, p. 69.

(Abu'l-Kheyr's marrying a daughter of Ologh Beg who became the mother of Kuchkonji) between the Samarqand appanage holders and the rulers of India, a connection that promoted the Mughal claim to have rights in Samarqand, and by extension all the former Timurid lands in Central Asia. This seems the essence of historiography though wrapped in the garb of a poetic anthology: legitimating the claims of one's (anticipated or actual) patrons, rewriting history in the hope of some kind of gain, and, through carefully-placed autobiographical notes, establishing one's credentials as author to provide a credible and authentic view of the past.

What distinguishes Motrebi's work from that of Hâfez-e Tanish and Mahmud b. Amir Vali, a distinction that may be due as much to the genre in which he was writing as to deliberate intent, is the absence of reference to sources for his work, other than his own observations and the stories he gleaned over a lifetime. Our two other historians cite many of the classic historical works of their time as sources for the early topics they cover. Motrebi does not; and perhaps he never cites another work because he simply never referred to any other work in compiling his information.

4. Mahmud b. Amir Vali of Balkh

We have nothing like the quantity of biographical material for Mahmud b. Amir Vali that we do for Motrebi. He was born in Balkh sometime about 1595 and died after 1641.[47] His father was a native of Kâsân in the Ferghana Valley and moved to Balkh to serve in the administration of the Abu'l-Kheyrid Shibanid, Pir-Mohammad b. Jâni Beg, who ruled Balkh in 1546–67 and briefly

47 See the pioneering work of B.A. Akhmedov, *Istoriko-geograficheskaya literatura* and his "The *Bahr al-asrar* of Mahmud b. Vali and its study in the USSR and elsewhere," tr. by Devin DeWeese, *Journal of Asian History* 25/2 (1991), pp. 163–80. Dr Ansar Zahid Khan also gives a sketch of Mahmud's life, his forebears, his works of poetry, and his travels in India in his edition of *The Bahr al-asrâr fi ma'rifat il-*[sic] *akhyâr of Mahmud b. Amir Wali Balkhi*, vol. I, pt. 2 (Karachi, 1996).

served as reigning khan. Mahmud's paternal grandfather was employed in the Samarqand administration of the Toghay-Timurid ruler of Mawarannahr, Bâqi-Mohammad Khan (reg. 1601–5). Mahmud's brother, Amir Abd-al-Bâri, is remembered for his expert knowledge of jurisprudence and medicine. The family had a long tradition of education and traced its origins to a line of Kâsâni sayyids. (Mahmud himself showed his continuing sentiment for Kâsân in his pseudonym, Mir Hâlat-e Kâsâni, although there is no evidence he ever traveled there.) Mahmud enjoyed a good education at Balkh in the Qor'anic disciplines, the literary arts, and the natural sciences. At the age of nineteen he became a student, disciple, and at some point the brother-in-law of Sayyid Mirak-Shâh al-Hoseyni, the son of Mir Sayyid Asil, a noted traditionist (*mohaddeth* and Sufi, though of no known *tariqe* affiliation. Mahmud spent the next ten years in al-Hoseyni's khâneqâh and remained under al-Hoseyni's tutelage until the latter's death in 1623. During this period he developed his writing, producing a number of poetic works in the style of existing classics. None of these have apparently survived, nor did his poetry acquire sufficient fame to merit inclusion in the anthologies of his time.

Immediately after his mentor's death, Mahmud left Balkh for India, where he spent seven years traveling about the country, from the Punjab down the Ganges to Calcutta then south to Vijayanagar and Sri Lanka (Sarandip).[48] From Sarandip he took a European ship bound for Aceh and Thailand. Whether it was his intent to head for the lands of Southeast Asia he does not say, and the question became moot when the ship ran aground and was wrecked somewhere on the coast of Orissa. He survived the wreck and in Cuttack, Orissa's capital, he obtained what many Central Asians traveling to India sought—a salaried position at a court, in his case the provincial court of Bâqer Khan, governor of Orissa. He had impressed the governor with a composition he wrote and was given a position as a translator (probably of Arabic texts). There he married into a

48 His travels were first summarized in Mahmud b. Amir Vali Balkhi, *The Bahr ul-asrar: Travelogue of South Asia*, Introduced, edited and annotated by Riazul Islam (Karachi, 1980).

wealthy Sufi family and became attached to a certain Mirzâ Hoseyni, perhaps traveling with him as his assistant. After some two years in Cuttack he traveled west to Agra and presented gifts to Shâh Jahân on the Id-al-Azhâ, 31 July 1629. From Agra, where he buried his wife, Mahmud went on to Ajmer then Jaisalmer, and across the desert to reach Sukkur on the banks of the Indus. After about a year there, he parted company with Mirzâ Hoseyni, intending to go to Ghazna and Kabul. Following a number of mishaps and after nearly being killed by Afghan bandits near Qandahar, he made his way back to Balkh, arriving there on 19 August 1631.

Whether he kept notes on his trip during its course, or dredged all his experiences from memory once safely ensconced in Nadhr-Mohammad Khan's library, it is clear that India was a stunning revelation to the man from Balkh.[49] His account reflects the age's interest in holy places, wonders of nature, and social difference. His repeated references to the women he saw, sometimes with admiration, sometimes with a puritanical disdain, reflect one very obvious realm where the societies of Central Asia and India held different values. He found Hindu and Muslim holidays and ceremonies likewise sufficiently compelling to devote considerable space to describing them. He gives a very detailed account of the celebration of the ten days of Moharram, which he witnessed in Lahore in 1625, as well as Hindu festivals such as Diwali and the Jagganath festival in Puri.

Besides his fascination with Indian women and Hindu customs, he also writes that he discovered in India a passion for history:

> Historical studies have a great vogue in India and therefore I started studying books composed on that subject. Accordingly, I studied [al-Balkhi's] *Sovar-al-aqâlim;* [Jâhez's] *Ketâb-al-bayân [va'l-tabyin];* [al-Estakhri's] *Masâlek-al-mamâlek;* [al-Qazvini's] *Ajâ'eb-al-makhluqât;* [an unknown's] *Bahr-e mohit,* [probably al-Bada'oni's

49 An excellent summary and analysis of Mahmud's Indian sojourn is found in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "From a Ocean of Wonders: Mahmûd bin Amîr Walî Balkhî and his Indian travels, 1625–1631," in Claudine Salmon, ed., *Récits de voyages asiatiques: Genres, mentalités, conception de l'espace, Actes du colloque EFEO-EHESS de décembre 1994* (Paris, 1996), especially pp. 179–82.

version of *Târikh-e alfi*]; [Mirkhʷând's] *Rowzat-al-safâ;* [Mostowfi Qazvini's *Târikh-e*] *gozide;* [*Târikh-e*] *Banâkati;* [*Târikh-e*] *Vassâf;* [Rashid-al-Din's] *Jâme'-e Rashidi* [i.e. *Jâme'-al-tavârikh*]; [Joveyni's *Târikh-e*] *jahân-goshâ;* [al-Qazvini al-Helâli's] *Manâhej-al-tâlebin*; and thereby acquired perfect command over that science.[50]

Whether he studied these books in India or on his return, his Indian experience sparked a strong desire to understand the role of the past in shaping the present. The striking differences of social behavior, religious phenomena, attitudes towards death and salvation he encountered there clearly shaped his expressed interest in studying history. On his return to Balkh, Nadhr-Mohammad Khan appointed him chief (*ketâbdâr*) of the library/scriptorium inside the royal palace complex, where Mahmud had access to these and many more books of history, geography, and the natural sciences. By the standards of the day, the royal library was quite large, containing at least 2,000 volumes. This was the number Mahmud b. Amir Vali reported as the Khan's book donation to the great madrasa, completed by 1635, which Nadhr-Mohammad built in Balkh. As chief librarian, he presumably was in a position to know.[51] Among the works he cites as having used in compiling his history, besides those mentioned above, are Sharaf-al-Din Ali Yazdi's *Zafar-nâme*, Ologh Beg's *Târikh-e arba'a olus*, Mohammad-Heydar Dughlât's *Târikh-e Rashidi*, and Hâfez-e Tanish's *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi*.[52]

Nadhr-Mohammad also commissioned Mahmud to write a universal history in the style of Rashid-al-Din or Mirkhʷând that would commemorate the rule of the Toghay-Timurids. This work, the *Bahr-al-asrâr fi manâqeb-al-akhyâr*, consumed at least the next ten years of his life. In the author's own words, the work was planned in seven volumes (*mojallad*s), each divided into four sections (*rokn*s); a prologue (*fâtehe*) and a concluding section (*khâteme*).[53] For the purposes here, volume six on the history of the Mongols is the most

50 As cited and tr. Riazul Islam, *Travelogue of South Asia*, p. 3.

51 Mahmud b. Amir Vali, *Bahr al-asrâr* (India Office Library ms.), f. 214b.

52 Akhmedov, "The Bahr al-asrar," p. 164.

53 Yu. Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura*, pp. 1136–37, lists the contents of each volume in some detail and raises the question of whether the entire work was ever completed.

significant. The first rokn is the history of Chengis Khan and his successors in China and Iran; the second on the Chaghatay khans of Transoxania down to Amir Qazaghan (reg. 1346–58) and the khans of Kashghar down to the author's own time; the third covers the history of the Jochid/Shibanids of Transoxania and Khorasan up to Abd-al-Mu'men Khan (d. 1598); and the fourth is devoted to the history of the Jochid/Toghay-Timurids (also known as Ashtarkhanids and Janids) to the year 1640. The conclusion (*khâteme*) contains a description of the tribes and peoples (*aqvâm va olusât*) of the Qepchâq Steppe (based mostly on Rashid-al-Din but according to Akhmedov including new information on the Olus Chaghatay), a description of the protocol (*asâlib*) at Nadhr-Mohammad's court, and an account of the author's travels in India.

Of the seven volumes, only the third and fourth rokns of volume one and all four rokns of volume six have survived. Whether the others were ever written remains unclear. Judging by what has survived, it was a monumental undertaking that might have been envisioned as amounting to as many as 10,000 pages. The surviving volumes alone total over 2,700 pages and they represent only slightly more than one-quarter of the planned work.[54] This was a project as ambitious in scope as Rashid-al-Din's *Jâme'-al-tavârikh* and certainly as important for the history of 16th and 17th-century Central Asia as Rashid-al-Din's was for the 13th century.[55]

54 The two rokns of the incomplete first volume comprise over 1,066 pages (see D. Yu. Yusupova and R. P. Dzhalilova, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopiseĭ Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoĭ SSR: Istoriya* [Tashkent, 1998], p. 91, ms. inv. no. 2372) and the four rokns of volume six total 1,648 pages, the fourth rokn alone being half of the total. Yusupova and Dzhalilova, p. 92, ms. inv. no. 7418, and Hermann Ethé, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the India Office Library* (London, 1937, repr. 1980), ms. no. 575.

55 The work has also served modern nationalist sensibilities as well. The most extensively published part is the geographical portion of volume one, see Mahmud b. Amir Vali, *More taĭn otnositel'no doblesteĭ blagorodnykh (Geografiya)* (Tashkent, 1977). If one misses a single sentence (p. 4) one might assume it was a full publication of the text, when in fact it contains only Central Asia locales. Not to be outdone, scholars in Pakistan published the geographical parts relating to South Asia, or those parts of Afghanistan that at one time were under South Asian (Mughal) control. (See e.g. Mahmud b. Amir Vali, ed. Karachi, 1984 and ed. Karachi, 1996).

The *Bahr-al-asrâr* is an encyclopedia—including geography, mythology, and biography—in which historical events play a major part. Mahmud b. Amir Vali's perspective on what constitutes history can be understood through a brief description of the diverse contents of the fourth *rokn* of volume six, the central subject of which is the emergence of the Toghay-Timurid line of the Jochid/Chengis-Khanids as the legitimate rulers of Trans- and Cisoxania, of whom his patron, Nadhr-Mohammad Khan, along with his older brother, Emâm-Qoli Khan, the supreme khan in Bukhara, were the living representatives. There are three sections devoted to events, which altogether take up about half the work. The other half consists of biographical and geographical description. The first historical section includes the genealogy of the Toghay-Timurid line of Chengisids; their origins in Astrakhân (Hajj Tarkhân or Ashtar Khan) from the 13th to the first half of the 16th century; their migration to Transoxania and alliances with the Abu'l-Kheyrid Shibanids; the military career of Nadhr-Mohammad's father, Din-Mohammad b. Jâni-Mohammad, and uncles, Bâqi-Mohammad and Vali-Mohammad in Khorasan as supporters of the last great Shibanid leader, Abd-Allâh Khan; the return of the family to Transoxania; displacement of vestigial Shibanids in Samarqand and Bukhara in 1599–1600; the first khans down to Emâm-Qoli (reg. 1611–41); and their relations with the Qazaqs. This section takes up the first 124 folios. The second historical section focuses on Nadhr-Mohammad, his early life and political career up to 1631, and covers fifty folios (159a–209a). The third and final section is called an appendix (*dheyl*) although it occurs in the middle of the book and comprises thirty-nine folios (235a–274a) and covers the years 1637–40. These three sections are all that can be called 'historiographical' in the sense of relating events in chronological order. The other half of the rokn is devoted to biographies, traditions about the city of Bukhara, and a detailed description of Balkh and its traditions. The biographies are carefully organized first into those who were deceased at the time of writing and then those still alive, those associated with Bukhara and those with Balkh, and then according to profession and vocation: other Chengisids who were subordinate to the Toghay-Timurids, amirs,

ulama, bureaucrats (*vozarâ* and *divâniyân*), magistrates (*qâzi*s and *qâzi-askar*s), Sufi shaikhs, poets, artists, and Qor'an memorizers (*hâfez*s). The last thirty folios of the rokn form the *khâteme*, containing the three distinct and unrelated subjects mentioned above: the tribes and people of the Dasht-e Qepchaq; the protocol of Nadhr-Mohammad Khân's court; and the author's own travel account of his seven years in India.

For a work of history it has a singular flaw: it uses dates very sparingly. In fact, one finds more sense of chronology and the use of dates in the anthology of Motrebi, though his memory may have failed him on occasion when he assigned dates. In the manner of one of Mahmud b. Amir Vali's sources, the *Târikh-e Vassâf*, the *Bahr-al-asrâr* makes very little use of chronograms, the way other contemporary works do, to date significant events or achievements. The work employs a refined literary style that was intended both to impress his patron, Nadhr-Mohammad Khan, and to serve as a signal commemoration of his patron's exemplary rule. He prefaces each chapter (*dâstân*) of the sixth volume, which is mostly devoted to his patron, with a homiletic excursus employing Qor'anic and hadith quotations whose theme would then be illustrated by contents of the dâstân. Throughout, he employs rhyming prose (*saj'*) punctuated by selections of short poetry, excerpts from the Qor'an and citations of relevant hadiths. Stylistically, the *Bahr-al-asrâr* represents a 17th-century reprise of the mannered and ornate historiographical style of Vassâf and Hâfez-e Tanish.

5. Conclusions

To locate a Central Asian historiographic tradition one has to look beyond the works typically classified as 'chronicles' in modern scholarship to every kind of writing in which the individual is emphasized. We see that even chronicles that have been viewed as organizing and presenting events (*vâqe'ât/vaqâye'*) like the *Sharaf-nâme-ye shâhi* and *Bahr-al-asrâr* focus more on the lives and actions of individuals, and not just political leaders, than on the policies of

governments, historical forces, or even on events *per se*. In addition, historiographic literature brings to the foreground the importance of place, the rooting of individuals and the tying of their loyalties to a landscape and a careful depiction of that landscape, namely its built environment (its mosques, khâneqâhs, madrasas, shrines, dowlat-khânes, etc.) and those parts of its landscape sanctified in some way by a Turko-Mongol tradition such as the royal hunting preserves (*quruq/quroq*), or by the reputed presence of a past saint (*qadamgâh*). The three works surveyed here should be considered representative of the larger body of historiographic literature produced during the early modern period in Central Asia and reflect the field's emphasis on the individual, whether royalty, warrior, artist, poet, scholar, or saint, and the individual's striving to achieve God's purpose for humankind as well as for personal salvation. These works and others that followed stand on the shoulders of the great classics of Persian historiography and continue to use those earlier works as models for portraying the lessons of their own times.

CHAPTER 11

HISTORIOGRAPHY IN AFGHANISTAN

R. D. McChesney

The modern nation of Afghanistan traces its founding to the emergence of the Dorrâni confederation of tribes under the Saduzay chief, Ahmad Khan, in 1747 and the empire he forged from the eastern remains of the empire left by the Iranian warrior, Nâder Shah Afshâr. For a time, Persian/Dari history-writing follows patterns established by Safavid and Afsharid-era historians; it was largely produced under commission by the political leadership and therefore focused on the ruling circles and their activities.[1]

The purpose of this chapter is not to attempt a survey of this historiography,[2] but to examine in some detail the works of three historiographers of the early 20th century. These represent a culmination of the classical Persian tradition of history-writing in Afghanistan and also reflect the diverse conditions under which writing about the past took place. The three historians, Mohammad Yusof 'Riyâzi,' Feyz-Mohammad 'Kâteb-e Hazâra,' and Abd-al-Mohammad 'Mo'addeb-al-Soltân,' were contemporaries, their lives spanning the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. They are not well-known known to scholarship outside Afghanistan, although Russian scholars have long taken an interest in

1 On Afghan history writing see C. A. Storey/Yu. E. Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura: Bio-bibliograficheskiĭ obzor* (Moscow, 1975), II, pp. 1209–46.

2 For a thorough survey of the historiography of Afghanistan from 1747 to the present, see Christine Noelle-Karimi, *EIr*, s.v. Historiography xi. Afghanistan. In addition, important articles on Afghan authors and their works are found in *Dânesh-nâme-ye adab-e fârsi: jeld-e seyyom, Adab-e fârsi dar Afghânestân*, ed. Hasan Anushe (Tehran, 1999).

Feyz-Mohammad.[3] In recent times, because of the ethnic and sectarian fighting of the post-Soviet era in Afghanistan (particularly in the years 1992–2001), Afghan expatriates in Iran and Iranian scholars as well, have also shown particular interest in the works of Feyz-Mohammad, an Imami Shi'ite, and have republished one of his works, *Serâj-al-tavârikh* and published another, *Nezhâdnâme-ye Afghân*, for the first time.

The motives and circumstances for writing differed among the three. Only one, Feyz-Mohammad, wrote as a result of royal commission. Abd-al-Mohammad 'Mo'addeb-al-Soltân' wrote his history as a speculative venture, hoping that it would receive the patronage of one of the amirs of Afghanistan, first Habib-Allâh Khan (reg. 1901–19) and then Amân-Allâh Khan (reg. 1919–29). Mohammad Yusof 'Riyâzi' never expected to receive material patronage and instead wrote his work as homage to the Twelve Imams.

It should be noted at the outset that although all three men incorporated either the word *târikh* (pl. *tavârikh*; literally, 'dates' or 'dating') or *vâqe'e* (pl. *vaqâye'*, 'events') in the titles of their works, usually a sign to the reader that the work is 'history,' the scope of what these men thought of as history goes well beyond mere event- or date-recording. Recognizing personality and place as fundamental to the historical record, they devoted considerable space to geography, biography, and—because of its importance to defining human nature—poetry.

In addition, it is an interesting coincidence that all three were Imami (Twelver/*Ithnâ-ash'ari*) Shi'is, and two of them, Feyz-Mohammad 'Kâteb' and Mohammad Yusof 'Riyâzi,' were well versed in the religious sciences and to all appearances quite devout. Mo'addeb al-Soltân's piety is more difficult to discern.

3 Of particular note are the studies of the work by V. A. Romodin, *Ocherki po istorii i istorii kul'tury Afganistana seredina XIX–pervaya tret' XX v.* (Moscow, 1983). Chapter 4, "Iz istorii afganskoĭ knigi: 'Siradzh at-tavarikh' i ee avtor," pp. 110–38; "Poslednyĭ letopisets Afganistana," *Strany i narody Vostoka*, vol. 25, "Geografiya, etnografiya, istoriya" (Moscow, 1987), pp. 194–200; and "Sochinenie 'Siradzh at-tavarikh' i ego istochniki," *Strany i narody Vostoka*, vol. 26, "Srednyaya i Tsentral'naya Aziya" (Moscow, 1989), pp. 225–48.

1. Mohammad Yusof 'Riyâzi': The Making of an Historian

Riyâzi was born on 10 May 1873 and died sometime in 1916. His lineage combined the two 'royal' lines that met in eastern Khorasan, the Abdâli/Dorrâni, which became the royal clan of Afghanistan, and the Afshâr, the tribe of the Iranian ruler Nâder Shah Afshâr (d. 1747). His mother was Afshâr, the granddaughter of a certain Hâji Âqâ-Mohammad Khan of whom Riyâzi writes

> … [he] settled in Herat at the time of Nâder Shah. He was accused of being friendly with the government of Iran during the time of the late Hosâm-al-Saltane and so performed *mohâjarat* (emigrated) to Mashhad.[4] His clansmen (*aqvâm*) and relatives (*aqâreb*) are numerous in both Herat and Mashhad.[5]

Riyâzi 's father was descended through the male line from Hayât Soltân "better known as Firuz Khan, who in 1606 was the *pâdshâh* of the Abdâli and whose reign was famed to the far horizons."[6] Riyâzi thus certainly considered himself a Herati notable. His family were landowners and businessmen, trading in guns, opium, grain, and textiles, and, to all appearances, were very well off. In Herat they had a home in the Khʷâje Abd-Allâh Misri quarter and a suburban house in the village of Chahâr Bâgh-e Tork-hâ. His father was also an official in the finance department of Herat. When Riyâzi was twelve years old (although he dates this episode in his life to late 1883 when he would only have been ten), his father took leave from his government duties, and together they set out on pilgrimage to the Shi'i shrines of Iran and Ottoman Iraq. In their

4 Soltân-Morâd Mirzâ 'Hosâm-al-Saltane' was the uncle of Nâsir-al-Din Shah (reg. 1848–96). He was governor of Khorasan in the 1850s and commanded the Persian army that captured Herat in 1856. See Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*: *Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1851–1896* (Washington, DC, 1997), pp. 115, 283 and Hasan-e Fasâ'i, tr. Heribert Busse as *History of Persia Under Qajar Rule* (New York, 1972), p. 320.

5 Riyâzi, *Bayân-al-vâqe'e* (Mashhad, 1945), p. 8.

6 Ibid.

seven months of travel, they managed to pay homage at the burial places of eight of the Imams—in Mashhad, Qom, and Najaf—as well as at the graves of several of the Prophet Mohammad's descendants and "martyrs from among his Companions."[7] His *Bayân-al-vâqe'e* provides a detailed itinerary of the trip, which not only exposed the boy to landmarks of his religious heritage but also to aspects of the modern world, like the railway that he rode several times from the home where they were staying in Kâzemeyn into Baghdad. On their return home, news of the death of his brother reached them at Mashhad, a tragedy that plunged his father into deep mourning.

In 1884, now a teenager, Riyâzi was introduced to the English boundary commission led by Colonel Joseph West Ridgeway and General Peter Stark Lumsden, which came to Herat and wintered there. Riyâzi struck up an acquaintance with Amir Khan, an Indian attendant of Ridgeway's and, according to Riyâzi's later recollection, Amir Khan "kept nothing hidden of the doings of the English sâhebs from the writer and also would ask the writer to run personal errands for him."[8] This contact with the English commission, Riyâzi tells us, "opened his eyes and ears" to the affairs of the country and turned his interests to geography and military tactics and strategy (*mashq-e nezâmi*), hoping that it would lead one day to an appointment of some kind with the Afghan government, a hope that was never realized. He laments the fact that the family was accused by partisans of the Amir, Abd-al-Rahmân Khan (reg. 1890–1901), of having been too friendly with children of Amir Sheyr-Ali Khan (reg. 1863–67, 1869–78), the latter having successfully fought Abd-al-Rahmân's father and uncle for control of the amirate. Riyâzi calls the charge a scurrilous lie but the accusation proved effective and "so we sat quietly with our property, houses, and farms and had no dealings with others."[9]

In 1891, when the war against the Imami Shi'i Hazâras of Afghanistan began, those accusations were repeated, now given new

7 Ibid., p. 3.
8 Ibid., p. 4.
9 Ibid.

credence by sectarian war-mongering. As co-religionists of the Hazâras, the Shi'is of Herat were vulnerable to the same accusations of disloyalty towards the dogmatically Hanafi Sunni regime. Riyâzi's father died about this time and one of his cousins was arrested, tortured, and killed. "In short, the situation of our family in Afghanistan became black indeed and, dazed and confused, we all scattered hither and yon."[10] Riyâzi himself left for Mashhad, where there were relatives and sanctuary. In 1894, he returned to Herat to find his farms occupied by his tenants and anti-Shi'i feelings running high because of the continuing Hazâra war. A year later he was accused of something that he does not specify, but on appeal to the chief military officer in Herat, Sepahsâlâr Farâmarz Khan, he was cleared of the charge. Nevertheless, he left Herat and returned to Mashhad. There his troubles followed him. He was sued by a clerk in the British consulate, Mirzâ Abd-Allâh Monshi, and he claims he was a victim of discrimination because of his Afghan citizenship. Although he does not say what the outcome was, his silence on the matter, coupled with his complaints about his treatment as an Afghan, suggests he lost the litigation.

It is not clear when he began writing the collection of works that appear under the title *Bahr-al-favâ'ed* (or *Kolliyât-e Riyâzi*), but it was completed by 1906, the date of publication.[11] He must have been adding to it right to the end for there are four appendices, two that emend two of the treatises, one concerning his health, and the fourth regarding the "martyrdom of Hazrat-e Abbâs" (the Prophet Mohammad's uncle and eponym of the Abbasid caliphate). In addition, throughout the text there are inverted carets for the inclusion of marginal notes that add or correct information in the main text. Either these were transferred directly from the manuscript or were added at the last possible moment to the print plate. For example, in the *Eyn-al-vaqâye'*, when enumerating the amirs of the Saduzay clan, he apparently forgot Shojâ'-al-Molk the son of Timur Shah

10 Ibid.

11 The anonymous entry for him in *Dânesh-nâme-ye adab-e fârsi dar Afghânestân*, p. 477, says he began writing the work in Herat and finished it in Mashhad, but does not indicate its sources.

and had to add him in the margin (p. 81). Other marginal notes appear to have been intentional and so have no insertion marks.

The *Bahr-al-favâ'ed* is first and foremost a homage to the Twelve Imams, a fact visible in its structure. It contains twelve separate works, each of which is divided into twelve sections, some of which are further subdivided into twelve parts. In addition, one of the treatises, *Manba'-al-bokâ',* comprises qasides and elegies (*marthiyes*) for the Imams while another work, *Porsesh va pâsokh* poses theological questions which the author then answers from an Imami believer's perspective. The first three works in the compilation are the most distinctly historical, the *Bayân-al-vâqe'e*, an autobiographical work; the *Ziyâ-al-ma'refe*, a miscellany of stories (twelve of them), including one on the geography of Afghanistan and a few places in Khorasan, and a verse eulogy for the Iranian prince Ali-Naqi Rokn-al-Dowle Mirzâ.[12] These relate mostly to the author's own time and might be called a work of historical anthropology. The third historical work is the *Eyn-al-vaqâye'*, an annalistic narrative of events. (The *khâteme*, an 88-page account of the just-concluded Russo-Japanese War, though historical, will not be considered here[13]).

The *Bayân-al-vâqe'e* (31 pages) presents the life of a privileged but persecuted member of Afghan society living in the city of Herat, and by his own assertions deeply loyal to Afghanistan but with close family, financial, and religious connections to Iran. In a way, this is history as self-justification, understandable in light of the historic position of Shi'ism in Afghanistan and the always-looming presence of Iran. One of the dominant elements of Afghan politics today is a deep distrust of any Iranian involvement in Afghanistan and a deeply rooted suspicion about the loyalties of Afghans with strong personal ties to Iran. Riyâzi 's case, as well as that of Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb, provides evidence to sustain that

12 To be identified with the son of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar? See Fasa'i, tr. Busse, *Persia under Qajar Rule,* p. 229.

13 The remaining works include the author's poetry (*Feyz-e ruhâni, Takhsimât,* and *Robâ'iyât*); ethical and miscellaneous treatises (*Daftar-e dânesh and Parishân-e Riyâzi*) and a geographical work (*Owzâ'-e belâd*—a very brief [one-and-a-half page] listing of cities of the world).

mindset. But Iranophobic sectarianism created a vicious circle for both men, as they had little choice but to look to Iran for sanctuary and assistance when persecuted as Imami Shi'is, a persecution arising in part from suspicion of where their true loyalties lay. The author's implicit intent in writing the *Bayân-al-vâqe'e* was to underscore the tenuous position of Persianate peoples in Afghanistan, especially those following Imami and Ismaili Shi'ism (Hazâras, Qezelbâsh, Chahâr Aymaqs, and many of the Tajiks), no matter how long they had been resident there. He also used the work to assert repeatedly his loyalty and love for Afghanistan, well aware that while his religion provided a certain fellowship with Iranians, his Afghan birth and citizenship overrode religion in Iranian eyes and made him a foreigner.

The twenty-five page *Ziyâ-al-ma'refe* is divided into twelve *ettelâ*'s and a six-page introduction (*dibâche*). The latter contains twelve anecdotes, most relating to life in Herat at this time. One provides background to Riyâzi 's family's dealing in opium. The title of the work suggests a desire to impress Afghan officialdom, evoking as it does the throne name of the late Amir of Afghanistan, Abd-al-Rahmân Khan, 'Ziyâ-al-Mella wa'l-Din.'

The *Eyn-al-vaqâye'* is the longest work by far in the compilation (at 309 pages more than half the entire book) and most representative of the historiographic impulse.[14] It is organized into twelve *mohârabe* (struggles or battles) as well as by year.

Riyâzi gives five reasons for writing the work: [15]

> (1) to present a true history of Afghanistan which no one has done before, nor has anyone told the story in a way that the point of it is understood; (2) to render the rules governing kinds of battles (*ghazavât*) and types of struggles (*mojâdale*) so that the esteemed people of Islam will understand their shortcomings when it comes to war and mobilizing armies, will become knowledgeable about conventional (*nezâmi*) and unconventional (*ra'iyati*) fighting, and learn those methods which lead to victory; (3) so that all Muslims will exert every effort to learn how to govern (*mamlakat-dâri* with forethought

14 It was published as a separate work in 1994 in Tehran by Mohammad-Âsaf Fekrat.

15 *Eyn-al-vaqâye'* (Mashhad, 1945), p. 60.

> and an eye to the consequences; (4) to change present strife (between Muslims) into harmony and so increase the power and might of their community and government and bring tranquility to the religion of the Prophet; (5) and so that people will remember the author for his efforts to write history and to be precise in explaining and clarifying the strife-ridden topics of these pages.

The first ten pages of the work cover the years 1792 to 1827 and are entirely taken up with events in Herat and the involvement of the Iranian government in the politics of the Saduzay princes and their supporters. In 1827, Riyâzi takes brief detours to cover the beginning of the Russo-Persian war in the Caucasus and in 1828 to recount the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh's conquest of Kashmir. But he mostly remains focused on Herat and the eastern policies of the Iranian government, especially during the crucial years of 1838–39 and 1855–56, when Iran made concerted efforts to recapture Herat from the Afghans. In his presentation of these encounters, he depicts the heroism of individual Iranian units in what were in both cases lost causes, for diplomatic rather than military reasons. Riyâzi explains the Iranian withdrawal from Herat in 1838 as follows:

> The entire reason for the retreat of the Shah of Iran was this: William IV, the English pâdeshâh passed away and his cousin, Queen Victoria, was enthroned. At the very beginning of her reign she asked His Majesty, Mohammad Shâh—may he rest in peace—to do this (i.e. withdraw) and he complied.[16]

As Riyâzi progresses year by year through the 19th century, his sources of information and his interests widen. An excursus on the Bâbi movement, the full text of an Iranian-Ottoman treaty signed on 11 June 1846, brief references to Irish struggles against the English, Polish struggles with Russians, the American Civil War, the first Ottoman envoy to the Papacy, the Russian discovery of gold in the Urals, the California gold rush, among many other worldwide incidents as well as various "marvels and oddities," punctuate what is fundamentally at first a political, military, and social history of Khorasan with particular regard to related events in Iran and

16 *Eyn-al-vaqaye'* (Mashhad, 1906), p. 77.

Afghanistan.[17] As the work moves into depicting the latter half of the 19th century and the first few years of the 20th, it becomes increasing a kind of almanac of world events. The year 1857 (1274 AH), for example, begins with a report of heavy rains and flooding in Herat in mid-February, recounts the transfer of Farah from the children of Dust-Mohammad Khan to those of Sardâr Kohandel Khan, shifts to Iran and the Hosâm-al-Saltane's (Soltân-Morâd Mirzâ) punishing the Turkmens for raids on Sarakhs, adds a marginal note on food shortages and high prices in Marv, and reports the death of the prince Amir-Qâsem Mirzâ, the heir apparent. The subject then shifts to China, recounting the English taking control of Canton from a 'Tatar' general, the deaths of 60,000 rebels in Canton, the capture and transporting to Calcutta of the Tatar general, a Russian-Chinese treaty of friendship, the establishment of English and French embassies in Peking and Chinese missions in Paris and London, Chinese reparations paid to the English and French for the costs of the war, the concession given to foreigners to control the opium trade, and the freedom of Christian missionaries to proselytize in China. The author then turns to Japan and reports its establishing trade relations with four countries: Russia, England, the United States (*Etâ'uni*), and France. Then events in 'Europe' (Spain and Austria) are covered followed by Germany, England, Russia, Switzerland, the Ottoman Empire, Greece, America, and the 'Southern New World.'[18] This becomes the format for the rest of the work, although when events in Afghanistan and Iran warrant, the bulk of the coverage is devoted to those two regions.

The work represents a new direction in the historiography of Afghanistan: an awareness of global connections and a tacit understanding that French and English imperialism in China, for example, also has an impact on Afghanistan. The *Eyn-al-vaqâye'* reflects a new cosmopolitanism in 'events-writing' and displays a keen interest in other parts of the world beyond the Dâr-al-Eslâm. But the work remains of primary importance for its record of the history of Iranian and Afghan Khorasan, especially during the

17 Ibid., pp. 84–85, 88–90.
18 Ibid., pp. 132–33.

reign of Amir Abd-al-Rahmân Khan (1880–1901). More than half of the work is devoted to the period of his reign, although much of it covers events in the rest of the world as well.[19] Because Riyâzi was not constrained by the dictates or expectations of a patron, he was free to write whatever was of personal interest and in so doing he provides an insight into the world-view of someone of his background and experience.

It should also be noted that the Mashhad lithograph is something of an artistic masterpiece as well. Scattered through its pages are fourteen full-page illustrations, two double page illustrations, and two half-page illustrations (on the same page). In addition, each of the twelve works is headed by a distinctive engraving. The author's portrait appears twice, once as a young man and then as a middle-aged man. Although the majority of the illustrations are of Afghan battle scenes, the two double-page illustrations are renderings of the Battles of Mukden and Tsushima Strait (in the Russo-Japanese War). Riyâzi also includes his family tree and cameo portraits on one page of Afghan and Persian rulers.

2. Feyz-Mohammad Hazâra 'Kâteb'

While Riyâzi worked according to his own inclinations, Feyz-Mohammad worked for the most part under the supervision of the Mohammadzay prince and later amir, Habib-Allâh Khan (reg. 1901–19), the eldest son of Abd-al-Rahmân Khan (reg. 1880–1901). Under royal commission and with varying royal support, Feyz-Mohammad produced the magisterial multi-volume *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, certainly the most significant single work of Afghan historiography and one of the finest late examples of the genre of Persian historiography. He also wrote a number of other commissioned works and left thousands of manuscript pages of unpublished history as well.

Feyz-Mohammad was born in 1862 into the Mohammad-Kh^{w}âje clan of the Hazâras. His birthplace was the village of Zard Sang

19 Ibid., pp. 189–353.

in the Qarâbâgh district of Ghazna. His father Sa'id Mohammad, was a prominent figure in the Mohammad-Khʷâje clan so it is likely the family was relatively well off. Feyz-Mohammad completed his elementary studies at home. When he was in his late teens there was trouble in the Qarâbâgh region which forced members of the Mohammad-Khʷâje clan to leave their homes and move northwest to Nâhwar (alternately Nâwur), a town some thirty-five miles northwest of Ghazna. One report is that they were forced from their homes by sectarian fighting between Sunni and Shi'i.[20] The period when they were driven from Zard Sang (1879) was a turbulent one. The long-time ruler, Amir Sheyr-Ali Khan (reg. 1863–66, 1868–78) abdicated under British pressure and his son, Mohammad Ya'qub Khan (reg. 1878–79), took the throne. But when their resident representative, Sir Louis Cavagnari, was killed in an uprising of unpaid soldiers, the British invaded and occupied the capital and Mohammad Ya'qub was ousted. At that point, an Afghan army overwhelmed a British force at Maywand (or Maymand) near Qandahar and the British sought desperately for someone friendly to take the reins of the amirate, so they could withdraw from Kabul and establish Qandahar as an independent entity subordinate to India. The subsequent struggle for control of Qandahar and ultimately the amirate itself between the new British-backed amir in Kabul, Abd-al-Rahmân Khan, and his cousin in Herat, Mohammad Ayyub, the victor at Maywand, resulted in a British withdrawal from the entire country. The lack of any central governmental control during this time, a period that lasted nearly three years, made it an opportune moment for settling local scores without concern for outside interference.

It was in consequence of the 1878–79 troubles that Feyz-Mohammad himself, now married, probably moved to Qandahar where he spent the next six years studying with Shi'i scholars of the town and, according to one source, learning Pashto.[21] In 1885 he left Qandahar to study in Lahore. There he picked up Urdu

20 Hoseyn Barzegar, "Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb-e Hazâra," *Dâneshnâme-ye adab-e fârsi*, p. 790.

21 Mir Hoseyn Shâh, "Serâj al-tavârikh va tajdid-e châp-e ân," *Omid (Umayd)* 80 (1 November 1993), p. 3.

and a smattering of English. He returned to Afghanistan in 1887 and settled in Kabul where he worked with Mollâ Mohammad Sarwar Ishaqzay and read, among other books, the *Tahrir-e Uqlidis, Kholâsat-al-hesâb*, and *Sharh-e Chaghmini*.[22] The first of these was Nasir-al-Din Tusi's 1248 reworking in Arabic of Euclid's *Elements*, of which a number of Persian translations were available to Feyz-Mohammad. The *Kholâsat-al-hesâb,* a book on arithmetic, was written by the famous mentor of the Safavid Shah Abbâs, Bahâ-al-Din Âmeli (d. 1622). The *Sharh-e Chaghmini* (Commentary on Chaghmini) was probably the version completed for the Samarqand Timurid, Ologh Beg, in the first half of the 15th century by Hoseyn b. al-Hoseyni al-Khʷârazmi. It was a Persian commentary on a 13th-century Arabic work on astronomy written by Mahmud b. Mohammad b. Omar Chaghmini.[23] All three books were fairly standard texts and apparently useful for appointment and advancement in government offices as well as for pedagogical purposes. In Kabul in 1912, for example, the *Tahrir-e Uqlidis* was advertised for sale in the journal *Serâj-al-akhbâr* to be used for teaching the first through fourth levels of Persian.[24]

In February 1893, Feyz-Mohammad was recommended to the court by his teacher and mentor, Mohammad Sarwar Ishaqzay. The skill that brought him to the amir's attention was his handwriting, an excellent *nasta'liq*.[25] One of the first works he copied was *Dastur-al-amal-e Âgahi*, a collection of instructions issued by the Mughal emperor Owrangzib (reg. 1658–1707) to his sons. The copy, now in the Afghan National Archives, was produced in Jalalabad for the then-prince, Habib-Allâh Khan, and signed and dated 5 February

22 Barzegar, "Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb-e Hazâra," p. 790.

23 On these works see C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* (London, 1958), II, pt. 1, pp. 1, 11, 50–51.

24 *Serâj-al-akhbâr* 12, no. 14 (endsheet).

25 See Hoseyn Nâyel, "Pazhuheshi dar bâre-ye *Serâj-al-tavârikh va nevisande-ye ân Mollâ Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb* (bakhsh-e avval)," *Naqd va Ârmân / Critique and Vision: An Afghan Journal of Culture, Politics & History* 4–5 (Winter/Spring 1975–76), pp. 80–100, and idem, "Pazhuheshi dar bâz-namâyi va bâz-shenâsi-ye âthâr-e Kâteb," *Ketâb* 1 (Kabul, 1982), pp. 30–49 for a full list of Feyz-Mohammad's works both composed and copied.

1894 (29 Rajab 1311).[26] Besides copying works of interest to the prince, he was kept busy writing letters for the latter as well as letters and *farmân*s for the amir. When Abd-al-Rahmân sent his second son, Nasr-Allâh Khan, on a trip to London in 1895, Feyz-Mohammad was assigned to make copies of the prince's letters and post them in Kabul's main marketplace "so that noble and commoner alike would be apprised of the honor and respect that the English were according (the prince)."[27] In the 1920s, when the third of the historiographers considered here, Abd-al-Mohammad 'Mo'addeb-al-Soltân,' came to Kabul, he left the five volumes of his manuscript with Feyz-Mohammad, who copied at least three of them.[28] As a result of his epistolary and calligraphic work, he acquired the nickname 'Kâteb' (writer), a signifier that immediately identifies him among educated Afghans today. He earned the title *mollâ* because of his knowledge of Muslim law and theology, both Hanafi Sunni and Ja'fari Shi'i.[29]

Not long after Habib-Allâh succeeded Abd-al-Rahmân (d. October 1901), he commissioned Feyz-Mohammad to write a history of Afghanistan. By late 1904, Feyz-Mohammad had written three volumes of a work that he titled *Tohfat-al-habib* (Gift for Habib/the Beloved). Volume one began with the rise of Ahmad Shah Dorrâni and followed his clan, the Saduzay, down to their fall in the third decade of the 19th century and the emergence of the Barakzay/Mohammadzay as the dominant ruling clan. Volume two dealt with the rise of Dust-Mohammad Khan, founder of the Mohammadzay line and narrated events down to the fall of Amir Mohammad Ya'qub Khan in late 1879 and the coming to power of Amir Abd-al-Rahmân Khan. The third volume is reported to cover

26 Hoseyn Nâyel, "Pazhuheshi dar bâz-namâyi va bâz-shenâsi-ye âthâr-e Kâteb," p. 44.

27 Feyz-Mohammad, *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, p. 1107.

28 Now preserved in the National Archives of Afghanistan.

29 In his own memoir, *Ketâb tadhakkor-e enqelâb* (translated by A.I. Shkirando, *Kniga upominaniĭ o myatezhe* [Moscow, 1988] and translated [from the Russian] and reworked by R.D. McChesney, *Kabul under Siege: Feyz-Mohammad's Account of the 1929 Uprising* [Princeton, 1999]), he frequently displays his knowledge of *feqh* (jurisprudence) and is not above favorably comparing his own expertise with others (see e.g. Feyz-Mohammad, *Kabul under Siege*, pp. 147, 154–55, 201, and 249–50.)

the first decade of Abd-al-Rahmân Khan's rule.[30] The work is long and met with a very cool reception. Those who have seen it note its highly critical treatment of members of the ruling family; and the manuscript is marked by angry marginal comments throughout from the Amir himself, and from two elderly and respected figures in Kabul, men who had lived through and witnessed many of the events recorded in it. Although Feyz-Mohammad himself responded in the margins to the criticism, the Amir refused to allow it to be printed and instead ordered him to begin again. Hence the genesis of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, which would be published but which would treat the period up to the reign of Amir Abd-al-Rahmân much more cursorily, giving the 133-year period a mere 377 quarto-sized pages, including several pages of introductory geographical description. Feyz-Mohammad no doubt drew on the research he had done for the *Tohfat-al-habib* in writing the *Serâj* but there was still a long process of royal and other reviews before the work was approved for publication.

The first decade of the 20th century brought the introduction of European-inspired secondary schools to Kabul, the first being an eponymous one established by Amir Habib-Allâh Khan himself. Staffed at first by Indian Muslims, the Habibiya Madrasa became a place where anti-monarchical and constitutionalist sentiments, undoubtedly fueled by the constitutional movement in Iran, took root. The most enthusiastic adherents of constitutionalism were young men from the ruling class and others associated with the court. There is no direct evidence of any enthusiasm on Feyz-Mohammad's part for the constitutionalist movement, but in 1909 he was arrested along with many others, seven of whom were put to death. His imprisonment, however, was brief and "because the Amir had known him ever since his days as prince and since he was performing a service (to the Amir) by writing the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, after a short period [the Amir] had him released."[31]

30 Bâbak Atishin Jân, "Tohfat-al-habib," *Dânesh-nâme-ye adab-e fârsi*, p. 252. The first two vols. are in the Afghan National Archives. The third is reported to be in the hands of Feyz-Mohammad's descendants.

31 Abd-al-Hayy Habibi, *Jonbesh-e mashrutiyât dar Afghânestân* (Kabul, 1967), p. 72.

As this episode indicates, Feyz-Mohammad's relations with the Amir while writing the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* were not always smooth. They became particularly strained over the pace of his writing. He was slow to produce the second volume and in the third he records the consequences:

> In 1325 AH [1907], the noble prince, Sardâr Nasr-Allâh Khan, as a result of my writing the first volume of this history—a project which had then been completed—made me the object of favor, raising me to the pinnacle of glory with an annual salary of 1,000 rupees. But it was his order that I only be paid 700 rupees. His Highness (Habib-Allâh Khan) had ordered that (my) original 320-rupee salary be suspended as punishment for the delay and tardiness in writing the second volume and (Sardar Nasr-Allâh) followed his lead. From the date my salary was suspended until the time I fulfilled the command of His Highness my (back) salary would be paid in one lump sum. I shall be thankful for abundant favors. I had yet to receive the back salary when in 1331 [1913],[32] my pious sovereign, the friend of young and old alike, instructed me—as has already been mentioned at the beginning of the book—to write this felicitous history by myself, independent of any other involvement from other employees of the blessed court. He immediately increased my salary by 500 rupees, conferring great favor (thereby) and assigned food for me from his private kitchen while I was sitting and writing. Over and above these favors, 500 rupees were to be paid in Jalalabad and 1,000 at the completion of the second volume. All these kindnesses and a monthly salary of 100 rupees in exchange for a good name which would last forever are reckoned to be fair in the world of abundant favors and emoluments, because this book is a memorial to His Highness and confers an honor and privilege on its author. Therefore it is an obligation and a duty for the author to be grateful for such favors, to always praise the wise pâdshâh, to pray for his government, to call on God to make his rule endure, and at no time be neglectful (of this duty) but always be attentive to it.[33]

From an early 21st-century perspective, the discussion of his pay seems to be laden with sarcasm and resentment but that may not

32 This is actually the date of publication of the combined vols. 1–2 although here it clearly sounds as if the volume was still incomplete.

33 Feyz-Mohammad, ed. Kabul, 1915, pp. 868–69.

have been his intent at all. He included the account of his career here because his hiring took place in 1892, the events of which he was then writing. Still, his inclusion of these remarks on his salary and its non-payment in a volume which the Amir was going to review and censor seems remarkable, and even more remarkable that it would pass scrutiny. It is possible, of course, that by this point, the Amir was not paying very close attention to the manuscript as delivered to him by the author.

Besides working on the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, Feyz-Mohammad also reportedly contributed to the journal *Serâj-al-akhbâr* during its seven-plus years of publication (1911–18), but it is not clear exactly what his contributions were.[34] Since he mentions in the introduction to the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* that part of his plan was to compile "a genealogy of the Afghan clans and an enumeration of their luminaries,"[35] we may assume that he was also spending some time on the work, eventually entitled *Nezhâd-nâme-ye Afghân*, an anthropology of the people of Afghanistan.[36]

Between 1913 and 1919 he worked at the royal palace complex (the Arg) burrowing in the archives, attending durbars, and taking his meals from the royal kitchen. On 21 February 1919, his patron and protector, Habib-Allâh Khan, was assassinated. When the King's son, Amân-Allâh, took the throne Feyz-Mohammad's role as court historian was probably enhanced by his earlier involvement with the constitutionalists with whom Amân-Allâh felt strong sympathies. On 14 December 1919, a Soviet envoy, Yakov Z. Suritz was received by the new Amir. Two of the men in his party were introduced to Feyz-Mohammad as the court historian and later recalled his presence at the reception as one of watchfully observing "from the shadows."[37] Then and later, at least until 1922 or 1923, there is much evidence that Amir Amân-Allâh Khan

34 V. A. Romodin, "Poslednyĭ letopisets Afganistana," p. 196.

35 Feyz-Mohammad, *Serâj al-tavârikh* I, p. 2.

36 Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb Hazâra, *Nezhâd-nâme-ye Afghân*, ed. Aziz-Allâh Rahimi with an introduction by Kâzem Yazdâni (Qom, 1993). Some eighty-five percent of the work deals with the Pashtun Afghans and the remaining fifteen percent with the other ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

37 Romodin, "Poslednyĭ letopisets Afganistana," p. 195.

intended that Feyz-Mohammad continue his work as historian. The National Archives holds a farmân from Amân-Allâh dated 1920 (1299 AH) in which it was announced that Feyz-Mohammad would complete the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, including volume four on the reign of Habib-Allâh Khan, and then write a history of Amân-Allâh's reign to be titled *Târikh-e asr-e Amâniyye.*[38]

But meantime, the printing of the third volume of *Serâj-al-tavârikh* had apparently come to a halt. According to Wolfgang Lentz, a German ethnographer working in Nuristan in the 1920s,

> After Habib-Allâh's death publication of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* was interrupted for a long time and five years elapsed before typesetting recommenced … and apparently the type was set and impressions were even made of the last part of volume three.[39]

Nevertheless, volume three never progressed beyond page 1240 (there may have been another 300–400 or so pages left to print). Around 1924, the date that Lentz's account would suggest, Amân-Allâh Khan suddenly ordered all copies seized and burned.[40]

The reason given by Ghobâr and those who followed him was that Amân-Allâh Khan had taken it upon himself to read carefully through the already printed sections of volume three, especially those focused on Anglo-Afghan relations.[41] He was reportedly enraged by the portrayal in it of Abd-al-Rahmân Khan's rapprochement with the British, in particular the account of his accepting the medal, "Star of India," from Queen Victoria.[42] Certainly, the way

38 Hoseyn Nâyel, "Pazhuheshi dar bâz-namâyi …," p. 40.

39 Cited by Romodin, "Sochinenie 'Siradzh at-tawarikh' i ego istochniki," p. 227.

40 On this most sources seem to agree. See R. D. McChesney and A. H. Tarzi, *EIr*, s.v. Fayż Moḥammad Kāteb, p. 455b. Mir Gholâm-Mohammad Ghobâr, who is cited by all as the source of this story, at first only stated that for 'unspecified reasons' printing was suspended. He says nothing at that point about who stopped the press or that there was a burn order issued, see Ahmad Ali Kohzad, *Târikh-e adabiyât-e Afghânestân* (Kabul, 1951), p. 396. Later, in his main opus *Afghânestân dar masir-e târikh,* he points the finger at Amân-Allâh Khan and says he ordered copies burned (cited by Romodin, "Sochinenie 'Siradzh at-tavarikh' i ego istochniki," p. 227.)

41 Nâyel, "Pazhuheshi dar bâz-namâyi …," p. 40, on the other hand, does not appear to subscribe to the idea that Amân-Allâh ordered the volumes burned.

42 Feyz-Mohammad, *Serâj-al-tavârikh* (ed. Kabul), III, p. 468.

the account reads, Abd-al-Rahmân is placed in an obviously subordinate position, not a fellow monarch of equal standing with the Queen but one of her loyal and courageous minions. Amân-Allâh, who had fought a small war in 1919 in order to wrest the country's full independence from Great Britain, was fiercely anti-British. He had been made more so by the British refusal at first to negotiate Afghanistan's right to conduct its own affairs with other countries, and then after the conclusion of the war in June 1919, by their dragging their feet for two years over a treaty of friendship.[43] It appears that once Amân-Allâh Khan had familiarized himself with the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, Feyz-Mohammad's role as court historian came to an end. He kept on writing however, without official patronage, and completed manuscripts not only of the remainder of volume three but also volume four on the reign of Habib-Allâh and volume five (what would have been called *Târikh-e asr-e Amâniyye* had Amân-Allâh continued to support his work).

In any event, Feyz-Mohammad now came to earn his living teaching literature and history at the Habibiya School, and editing and writing textbooks in the publications department of the Ministry of Education.[44] Beyond this gainful employment he also served as an unofficial spokesman for the Hazâras. The Iranian ambassador to Kabul in 1927, Sayyid Mahdi Farrokh, has left a telling portrait of Feyz-Mohammad and fills in a number of blank spots in his career after Amân-Allâh came to the throne.[45] His account stresses Feyz-Mohammad's status among the Imami Shi'is of Afghanistan and presents him, somewhat hyperbolically, as a devoted friend of Iran ready to bring the Hazâras to Iran should sectarian conditions in Afghanistan warrant it. Feyz-Mohammad himself, in his memoir of the Bacha-ye Saqqaw period written two years after this, lends some credence to Farrokh's depiction of him

43 Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century: Relations with the USSR, Germany, and Britain* (Tucson, 1974), p. 91.

44 One of his books written at this time was *Târikh-e hokamâ-ye motaqaddemin az hobut-e Âdam tâ be-vojud-âmadan-e hazrat-e Isâ* (Kabul, 1923), very brief biographies of eighty-one ancient Greek, Roman, Indian, and Persian sages.

45 Sayyid Mehdi Farrokh, *Korsi-neshinân-e Kâbol* (Tehran, 1991), pp. 252–54.

as a valuable asset for Iran in its relations with Afghanistan. Feyz-Mohammad states that for eight years beginning in 1921, the year the Iranians established diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, he had visited their embassy twice a week.[46]

Until the fall of Amân-Allâh's government in January 1929 Feyz-Mohammad reportedly worked on the fifth volume of *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, the *Târikh-e asr-e Amâniyye*, even though he had no official commission. According to one source during this time, he completed both the fourth volume on the reign of Habib-Allâh Khan and the history of Amân-Allâh's reign through the eighth year (1926).[47] Similarly volume five, which existed as a holograph and included the events of eight years and three months of the reign of Amân-Allâh Khan, was reportedly seen by Abd-al-Afw Gharqe. Recently more information about the end of volume three and volume four has come to light, as well as volume five.[48]

The capture of Kabul in January 1929 by Habib-Allâh Kalakâni (derogatorily known as Bachah-i Saqao [*bachche-ye saqqâ*]—the

46 Feyz-Mohammad, *Kabul under Siege*, p. 236.

47 Preface to the Orgân-e nashriyât-e Sayyid Jamâl-al-Din Hoseyni (Habl-Allâh) edition (Qom?, 1993) of Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb, *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, jeld-e siyyum. qesmat-e avval, pp. x–xi. "It has been reported (*qarâri*) that in 1981 (1360) in Moscow, Dr. Behruz, a politician, told Dr. Abd-al-Hayy Habibi that Kâteb had written his history up to the eighth year of the Amâni period, 1927 (1306). On the instructions of Feyz-Mohammad Khan, the Minister of Education, and Hâshem Shâyeq, director of the Dâr-al-ta'lif (Bureau of Composition), Mirzâ Mohammad Qâsem Khan Kâboli had copied into one volume of approximately 3,000 pages the last six years of the government of Amir Abd-al-Rahmân Khan and the entire period of Habib-Allâh Khan's amirate and this volume was in the library of the Ministry of Education. It contained the circumstances of Amir Habib-Allâh's murder but it has since disappeared."

48 In 2008 the Persian service of the BBC reported that the Afghan government had purchased a 1,467-page manuscript of volume four dated Hut 1304/February–March 1925, and deposited it in the National Archives (Ayub Arvin, "Kharidâri-ye noskhe-ye khatti-ye jeld-e chahârom-e *Serâj-al-tavârikh-e Afghânestân*, BBCPersian.com, accessed on 20 May 2008). Thanks to an Afghan scholar, Rezâ Kâteb, I was able to get a photocopy of the title page and pages one and two, which indicate that the manuscript actually contains most if not all of the unpublished volume three and part of volume five—probably the early years of Amân Allâh Khan's reign.

watercarrier's boy), a Tajik from the Kuhestan region just north of the capital, the abdication of Amân-Allâh Khan,[49] and the consequent turmoil refocused Feyz-Mohammad's interests. As first Amân-Allâh and then his former Minister of War, Mohammad Nâder Khan, campaigning on his own behalf, sought to dislodge Kalakâni, Feyz-Mohammad remained in Kabul writing an eyewitness account of the nine-month occupation by the Tajik. He is uncompromisingly hostile to the Tajik administration in this report, which was to be his last major work of history.[50]

The "Saqqâwi" period was fatal for Feyz-Mohammad. In the late spring of 1929 he was dragooned into joining a delegation to the Hazârajât to win support for Habib-Allâh Kalakâni's government. In early July, after the mission failed (Feyz-Mohammad himself claims that he made every effort to subvert it) he and two other members of the delegation were sentenced to be bludgeoned to death. Feyz-Mohammad himself treated the incident with a degree of mordant humor, which tends to mask how seriously injured he was:

> We three were supposed to die from the beating. But because there were so many bandits taking part, only three or four of the staves actually hit us; the rest of the time the executioners managed only to strike each other, and so we survived.[51]

He was left unable to walk and turned to the Iranian embassy for aid. The military attaché of the embassy brought iodine for his superficial wounds and Feyz-Mohammad took to his bed. He remained bedridden for at least three and a half weeks and probably much longer, during which time he gave up writing. In October,

49 See Angela Parvanta, "Bachcha-yi Saqqa'—Afghan Robin Hood or bandit? Khalil-Allah Khalili's revision of the events of 1929," in Charles Melville, ed., *Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies. Part 2, Medieval and Modern Persian Studies* (Wiesbaden, 1999), pp. 351–57.

50 Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb, *Ketâb-e tadhakkor-e enqelâb*, ms. in National Archives of Afghanistan, Kabul. The manuscript appears to be a final copy without the marginal notes found on some of his drafts of his other works. It breaks off suddenly with the phrase "On Wednesday, the 22 Rabi' al-avval (28 August) …" In 1988, A.I. Shkirando published a Russian translation of the work (Feyz-Mohammad, *Kniga upominanii*); see also *Kabul under Siege*.

51 Feyz-Mohammad, *Kabul under Siege*, p. 210.

Kalakâni was overthrown and executed by Mohammad Nâder Khân and sometime the following year Feyz-Mohammad went to Iran for medical treatment. After less than a year there he returned to Kabul and died on 3 March 1931, bringing to an end the extraordinary career of "the last chronicler of Afghanistan."[52]

The Making of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*

The Publication Process

Fascicles of *Serâj-al-tavârikh* in the National Archives of Afghanistan indicate something of the process of the writing and printing of the work. Although the exact stages are not completely certain, Feyz-Mohammad first gathered his materials and wrote out his notes. A manuscript of those notes for the third volume was once held by the Foreign Ministry. That draft is organized by regions with extensive deletions, corrections, and marginal notes. From this, Feyz-Mohammad produced manuscript fascicles of about thirty pages.[53] These first went to Arabic and Persian proofreaders; Mirzâ Abd-al-Ra'uf, a professor at the Habibiya Madrasa, verified the correct use of Arabic and Mirzâ Abd-al-Latif Khân checked all the Persian. Both wrote their attestations at the end of each fascicle and after they had signed, the Amir read and approved it with his changes, signing with the royal title 'Serâj-al-Mella wa'l-Din' ('Lamp of the Nation and the Religion').[54] Much of the text that

52 Romodin, "Poslednyĭ letopisets," p. 194.

53 An analysis of the differences between this early draft and what was actually published is beyond the scope of this chapter but will appear in the introduction to the forthcoming English translation of the three published volumes of *Serâj-al-tavârikh*. Suffice it to say that the changes were considerable and reveal a good deal about Feyz-Mohammad's political consciousness. The Orgân-e nashriyât-e Sayyid Jamâl-al-Din Hoseyni edition, which the anonymous editor apparently thought was the final version of volume three, is in fact a portion of this early draft version.

54 Some of the deleted parts in vol. III were restored by the editor of the 1994 Tehran edition published by the Mo'assase-ye tahqiqât va enteshârât-e Balkh. See for example pp. 64, 68, 89.

the Amir eliminated was Feyz-Mohammad's own poetry, which sometimes ran on for pages. On at least one occasion, however, Feyz-Mohammad did not accept one of the Amir's changes and in doing so reveals something of the process. On page 382 of the Kabul edition, he refers to a Qezelbâsh at the governor's court in Herat whom he describes as the *nâzem* (court poet). He then adds this note in the margin of the printed edition:

> The phrase 'nâzem of the court of Herat' has been crossed out (by the Amir). But a number of farmâns (firmans) from His Highness himself, Lamp of the Government and Religion, have been issued in the nâzem's name and so the deleted lines were restored.

This shows that Feyz-Mohammad was not completely without recourse and that he was probably expected to respond to unjustified changes. The approved fascicle then went to the typeset press (Matba'e-ye horufi) in the Mâshinkhâne or Steam Workshop, located at the foot of Sheyr Darvâze Mountain in Kabul, and those pages were printed and added to pages already approved and printed.

The Sources of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*

At the beginning of volume one, Feyz-Mohammad lists sixteen published works that he consulted: 1) Mirza Mohammad Mahdi Khan Astarâbâdi, *Târikh-e jahân-goshâ-ye Nâderi*; 2) Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia* in Persian translation; 3) Monshi Mohammad Abd-al-Karim Alavi's *Târikh-e Ahmadi*; 4) Gholâm-Ali 'Âzâde' Belgrâmi, *Khezâne-ye âmire*; 5) the Qajar volume of Mohammad-Taqi 'Sepehr' Kâshâni, *Nâsekh-al-tavârikh*; 6) "the Arabic treatise of Sayyid Jamâl-al-Din al-Afghânestâni," i.e., *Tatemmat-al-bayân fi târikh al-Afghân*; 7) Soltân-Mohammad Khan b. Musâ Khan Dorrâni, *Târikh-e soltâni*; 8) Ali-Qoli Mirzâ, E'tezâd-al-Saltane, *Târikh-e vaqâye' va savâneh-e Afghânestân*; 9) Monshi Mohammad Abd-al-Karim Alavi, *Risâle-ye Mohârabe-ye Kâbol va Qandahâr*; 10) Hamid-e Kashmiri, *Ketâb-i manzume*, i.e. *Akbar-nâme*; 11) Shâh Shojâ', *Vâqe'at-e Shâh Shojâ'*; 12) Hayât Khan, *Ketâb-e Hayât-e Afghâni*; 13) Rezâ-Qoli Khan 'Hedâyat,' *Rowzat-al-safâ'-ye Nâsiri*; 14) Cornelius Van Alen Van

Dyck, *Mer'at-al-wadiya fi'l-kurah-al-ardiya* [in Arabic]; 15) Amir Abd-al-Rahmân Khan, *Pand-nâme-ye donyâ va'l-din*; and Farhâd Mirzâ, *Jâm-e jam*.[55] These sources would only have been useful for the period covered by the first two volumes, 1747–1879.

He also names a number of oral sources, including Sardâr Mohammad Yusof Khan (1849–1916), one of the many sons of Amir Dust-Mohammad Khan and fourteen years old at the time of his father's death; Qazi Sa'd-al-Din Khan (1848–1916), the son of the chief magistrate of Kabul under Dust-Mohammad and Amir Sheyr-Ali Khan; and Sardâr Nur-Ali Khan, a son of Sardâr Sheyr-Ali Khan, the latter a man who had been set up by the British in 1879 as the semi-independent ruler of Qandahar. When Abd-al-Rahmân Khan took control of Qandahar, the sardâr and his son went into exile in India. Sardâr Nur-Ali Khan was eventually forgiven for his father's errors of judgment and returned to Kabul in 1894.[56] There were also two secretaries of the court listed as sources, Mirzâ Mohammad Ya'qub and Mirzâ Mo'men, the latter having been personal secretary to Vazir Mohammad Akbar Khan, the eldest son of Amir Dust-Mohammad Khan and the leader of the resistance to the British during the first Afghan-Anglo war (1838–42).[57] Except for Qazi Sa'd-al-Din Khan, these informants would have been useful only for volumes one and two. Volume three, which covers the period 1880–96, seems to have relied entirely on the documentary record and Feyz-Mohammad's own observations.

The Style and Contents of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh*

The aborted *Tohfat-al-habib* was the basis of the first two volumes of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* and may have formed much of the third part as well (i.e. events up to 1889).[58] As noted above, the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* was originally planned to be published in four volumes:

55 Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb, *Serâj al-tavârikh* I (Kabul, 1913), p. 3.
56 Romodin, "Sochinenie 'Siradzh at-tavarikh' i ego istochniki," pp. 229–31.
57 Feyz-Mohammad, *Serâj-al-tavârikh*, ed. Sayyid Jamâl-al-Din Hoseyni (Habl-Allâh), III, part 1 (Qom, 1993), pp. hasht–nuh (viii–ix).
58 Ibid., pp. nuh–dah (ix–x).

volume one on the Saduzay period; volume two on the Mohammadzay period beginning with the rise of Dust Mohammad Khan; volume three on the reign of Amir Abd-al-Rahmân Khan, and volume four on the reign of Habib-Allâh Khan.[59] Volume five on Amân-Allâh Khan's reign was later added to the plan.

Volumes one and two follow a more coherent narrative style in which individual sections cover significant events from their beginnings to their ends, depending on the length of time involved. Volume three is much more strictly chronological and episodic. The author begins a discussion of an event at the moment it occurs, then breaks off that discussion and summarizes what will happen later, with words to the effect that "further details will be recorded in due course." Later, as the chronological framework requires, he will return to the event, summarize what was said earlier, give the details of what is happening at the particular moment he is discussing, and then conclude with a summary of what is going to happen later and how he will return to it "in due course." Events or sequences of events that transpire over a long period, such as the sedition of Abd-al-Rahmân Khan's cousin, Sardâr Mohammad Ishâq Khan; the pacification of the Ghilzay Pashtun tribes of the Andar, Hutak, Ali Khayl, and Taraki east and southeast of Ghazna; the war against the Hazâras; and the conquest of Kâferestân are treated in dozens of places. Even relatively trivial items such as the (not infrequent) petitioning of exiles to return to Afghanistan may be broken up into three or four separate discussions: the arrival of the petition, the issuance of a royal farmân of forgiveness, the return of the petitioner, and sometimes the later career of the returnee. This format is often violated and it may not be entirely clear to the reader which part of an event occurs during the chronological moment under consideration.

Shifts of subject within the time frame are invariably introduced by some variety of the phrase, "during this time" ("meanwhile," "at this time," "during these days," "at the same time," "on the same day," etc.). Rhyming words and metaphor are extensively

59 See e.g. the advertisement in *Serâj-al-akhbâr* 5/10 (17 January 1916), p. 16, col. 2.

employed, "banners are raised in the direction of" to signify royal movement, "ears are boxed" to signify mild punishment, "heads are drawn through the collar of disobedience" to describe rebellion, troublemakers flee to "the valley of adversity" or ascend "the mountain of error." The throne is referred to as "sublime threshold," "the forecourt of felicity's vestibule," the "foundation of the dais of power," among other terms. Given the censorship to which the volume was subject, it is not surprising to find that government opponents are invariably portrayed as evildoers (*ashrâr*), rebels (*boghât*), or mutineers (*motamarredin*) among many other pejorative terms. But Feyz-Mohammad repeats the term "evildoer" (*sharir,* plural *ashrâr*) so often in characterizing his own people, the Hazâras, that one begins to sense he is using it facetiously, repeating it so frequently that it loses its semantic power, while his censor, Amir Habib-Allâh could hardly take exception to its repetition.

The third volume, with its mass of farmâns, letters, and government manuals and instructions (*dastur-al-amals*), is an extremely rich source for the social and political history of Afghanistan during the last two decades of the 19th century. Moreover, the recent purchase of the manuscript of the fourth volume,[60] should prove of utmost importance for understanding the history of Afghanistan in the early 20th century.

The story of the writing of this work is as important as the contents themselves for what it reveals of the contentious process of official history-writing, the ways in which control was exerted by the royal sponsor and how the author could assert his own autonomy and subvert and resist royal interference with his interpretation. The censoring of the work also shows the limits on that autonomy and the unanticipated consequences of political change to a commemorative project of this nature.

60 See note 48.

3. Hâjj Mirzâ Abd-al-Mohammad Khan Pur Alizâde Esfahâni Irâni 'Mo'addeb-al-Soltân'

With Mo'addeb-al-Soltân, we come to a historian who falls somewhere between Riyâzi and Feyz-Mohammad in terms of the conditions under which he wrote, his world view, and what he considered history. Like the other two he was an Imami Shi'i but there is nothing to suggest any particular devotion on his part to his religion. Like Riyâzi, he wrote without a commission, but unlike the Herati native he did everything he could to get the Afghan amirs, first Habib-Allâh Khan (reg. 1901–19) and then Amân-Allâh Khan (reg. 1919–29), to reward him for his work. Again like Riyâzi, he was an expatriate who occasionally returned home, although he shows no real affection for his hometown of Isfahan. But his early life and career were entirely different from the other two men.

Mo'addeb al-Soltân was born in Isfahan about 1873 and his father died when he was seven.[61] His family must have been relatively prosperous, for he was able to attend madrasa in Isfahan and from there was apprenticed to a merchant. At "ten years past reaching (his) majority" (i.e. in his twenties), he was sent to Baku as sales agent for the Sherkat-e Eslâmiye, a commercial partnership in Isfahan. He spent several years in Baku (probably from about 1894 until 1903 or 1904) during which time he traveled throughout Russia. By 1904, he was finally settled in Cairo and aside from brief sojourns to Afghanistan, Iran, and Europe, Cairo remained his home until his death on 19 April 1935.

In 1904, he founded a newspaper, the *Chehre-nomâ (The Mirror)* to serve the Persian expatriate community of Cairo.[62] According to his will, which was registered at the Iranian consulate in

61 Biographical information comes from Yu. E. Bregel, *Persidskaya literatura* II, p. 1245 and from Mo'addeb-al-Soltân's own writing. See also, R. D. McChesney, "A little-known history of Afghanistan: The Aman al-Tawarikh," in *Uzbekiston Urta Asrlarda: Tarikh va madaniyat / Uzbekistan v srednie veka: Istoriya i kul'tura* (Tashkent, 2003), p. 35.

62 On the newspaper see Mohammed Yadegari, "The Role of the Iranian Emigrant Press in the Development of Iranian Journalism" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1979).

Cairo, *Chehre-nomâ* was also his pen name (*takhallos*) for a time. The origin of his later takhallos, 'Mo'addeb-al-Soltân' (Mentor of the Sultan) is unknown and also first appears on his will.[63] Could the choice of this name have been a rueful gesture on his part in response to his apparently futile efforts to become a mentor to Amân-Allâh Khan with his book on Afghanistan?

While editing the *Chehre-nomâ* he researched and wrote articles on various countries including Afghanistan and was encouraged, "by various people, scholars, orientalists, and ulama" to write a book on Afghanistan.[64] To a well-traveled and cosmopolitan resident of Cairo, Afghanistan must have seemed attractively exotic. Cairo itself in his words was "the center of civilization and culture and a place where the new (western) sciences flourish."[65] Afghanistan on the other hand was an unspoiled place, "Garden of Eram," which would no doubt benefit by his efforts to record its history and publish its accomplishments in the Persianate world. By 1915, he had begun work and must have quickly been daunted by the amount of material he would have to absorb and analyze.[66] From the outset he viewed the work as a history (at first he refers to it as *Târikh-e Afghânestân* and *Ketâb-e mostatâb-e târikh-e Afghânestân*, but in its final version it is much more an 'encyclopaedia Afghanica.'[67] As a businessman, he seems to have planned the work as a speculative venture that would pay off when the Amir of Afghanistan recognized what he had achieved. From the outset, he makes pleas for money, asking how anyone could possibly deal with the entire history of Afghanistan without support. He cites as famous past examples of patronage Ebn-al-Moqaffa' by the Caliph al-Mansur, Ebn-Sina by the Samanid Amir Nuh b. Nasr and, more in his own time, the patronage of Mohammad-Taqi 'Sepehr' and Rezâ-Qoli

63 The verbal noun from the Arabic means chastisement and "mentor" should be understood as the one who admonishes and guides the person in his charge.

64 Hâjj Mirzâ Abd-al-Mohammad Esfahâni Irâni, *Amân-al-tavârikh*, MS New York, Fales Library, New York University, 7 vols., II, p. 572.

65 Ibid., I, p. 6.

66 Ibid., III, p. 1.

67 Ibid., I, pp. 9, 12.

'Hedâyat' by the Qajar Shah, Nâser-al-Din. Working at the Egyptian National Library, he did have help from a librarian, Âghâ-ye Nur-al-Din Beg Arnâ'uwi, as well as from numerous other unnamed scholars. "Although I had deficiencies in Arabic and Turkish," he writes, "and knew only a little French, English and Russian (friends) helped me with hieroglyphics, Phoenician, Nusrani (Aramaic?), Pahlavi, Hebrew, Syriac, Ethiopic, Latin, Sanskrit, English, French, German, and Rumi (Greek?)." With a little help from his friends, he had completed a draft of volume one by 1913 and started work on volume two.[68] He began volume three the following year and volume 4 in 1915, completing that and starting volume 5 in 1917. There then appears to have been a five-year hiatus.

He had already tried to open a line of communication to the Afghan Amir, Habib-Allâh Khan. Perhaps he knew of the *Serâj-al-tavârikh* and thought the Amir a likely source of support for another work on Afghanistan. In 1914, he wrote to the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Mahmud Khan Tarzi, who had been educated in exile in Damascus and Istanbul and then allowed to return to Afghanistan when Habib-Allâh came to the throne.[69] As editor of the modernist journal, *Serâj-al-akhbâr*, in Kabul and as foreign minister and therefore a confidant of Habib-Allâh, this must have seemed a good choice for entrée to the court. Apparently Tarzi did not reply to the letter.

Eight years later, with a new and reputedly reformist amir on the throne, he again wrote Tarzi and asked him to intercede on his behalf, so that he could come to Kabul and present his volumes to Amân-Allâh, despite the fact that he had not finished the work. Tarzi responded with an invitation dated 14 December 1921, which Abd-al-Mohammad reproduces in full.[70] Abd-al-Mohammad soon left Cairo and reached Peshawar on 23 January 1922, where the Amir's commercial and postal agent met him and the two men drove to Kabul. There after several meetings with Tarzi arrangements were made for the Amir to receive him. He says he met three

68 Ibid., II, p. 3.
69 Ibid., VII, p. 43.
70 Ibid.

times with the Amir, one of those being a reception held for him at the Bâgh-e Bâbur to honor his work. It would appear from this that some kind of promise about support must have been made to him, a supposition supported by the fact that he left all five volumes (of which he had no copies) behind, having been assured that copies would be made and the originals returned to him.[71] He made a number of acquaintances while in Kabul and persuaded ten notables to endorse his work and write blurbs (*taqâriz*), which he included in volume seven. Among these new acquaintances was Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb, with whom he formed a close relationship. Feyz-Mohammad gave him access to his own work both in print and in manuscript and one of the latter's works, which he calls *Nasab-nâme-ye tavâ'ef-e Afâghine va nofus-e ishân*,[72] was included by Abd-al-Mohammad in the second version of the fifth volume of *Amân-al-tavârikh*. He acknowledges the debt he owed Feyz-Mohammad and as it turned out Feyz-Mohammad, who was famous for skill as a calligrapher, was entrusted with the copying of at least three of the volumes of the five Abd-al-Mohammad had brought. These are now held by the National Archives.

The work itself is certainly more an encyclopaedia than a pure chronicle-history. Volume one covers the era from the Creation until the appearance of Islam with a general geography of Afghanistan and a description of its cities. Volume two begins with the appearance of the Prophet Mohammad and ends with the reign of Karim Khan Zand. Volume three contains biographies—stories about the Prophet and famous Muslims up to the 12th century organized by region. Volume four is an anthology of famous Persian poets, especially those of Khorasan and Afghanistan. Volume five begins a more conventional history of Afghanistan. Written originally before he visited Kabul in 1922, Abd-al-Mohammad rewrote it after he had met Feyz-Mohammad and was introduced to the rich sources Feyz-Mohammad had at his disposal. It covers the same ground as volumes one and two of *Serâj-al-tavârikh* (from

71 For further details of his time in Kabul see McChesney, "A little-known work," pp. 38–39.

72 Published in Qom in 1993 under the title *Nezhâd-nâme-ye Afghân*, ed. Aziz-Allâh Rahimi.

Ahmad Shah Dorrâni to 1880 and the beginning of Abd-al-Rahmân's reign). Volumes six and seven were written after the Afghan trip and copies apparently never reached Kabul, which indicates the hoped-for and possibly promised financial support never materialized. Volume six begins in 1880 and according to one source ends with the assassination of Habib-Allâh Khan in 1919, but at least one extant manuscript ends well before the conclusion of Abd-al-Rahmân's reign and does not cover Habib-Allâh's reign at all.[73] Volume seven contains biographies of contemporary poets in Afghanistan writing in Persian, a description of the Afghan ministries, descriptions of sixteen Afghan and foreign intellectuals, and the blurbs from Kabul notables (Feyz-Mohammad himself, the ambassadors of Iran, Bukhara, and Tashkent, the director of the Habibiya Madrasa, and others).[74]

After all his efforts, Hâjj Abd-al-Mohammad's expectations were frustrated. The manuscript volumes document the dashing of his hopes. Volume one, which he carried to Kabul, and then eventually received back, bears a dedication to Amân-Allâh Khan on the title page. But a piece of paper has been carefully pasted over the dedication. Since these volumes remained in Abd-al-Mohammad's hands and passed eventually to his grandson who sold them to the Fales Library, we might reasonably assume that it was Abd-al-Mohammad who tried to expunge the dedication. In addition there is a revised introduction to volume one in which the dedication to Amân-Allâh may have appeared, but if it was included it was excised and now appears as a loose page at the end of volume six. Presumably had he wanted to remove for all time any reference to Amân-Allâh he might have done so more thoroughly but the title of the work would always have to be explained. The surviving evidence may just record the ambivalence and disappointment he might have felt. When Amân-Allâh was driven from the throne in January 1929, Abd-al-Mohammad probably realized all hope for reward was now gone.

73 Hoseyn Barzegar Kashtali, "Amân-al-tavârikh," *Dânesh-nâme-ye adab-e fârsi*, p. 114. But the MS of vol. 6 at Fales Library (322 unpaginated pages) reaches only July 1889 (end of 1306 AH).

74 Abd-al-Mohammad Esfahâni, *Amân-al-tavârikh* VII, pp. 114–23.

4. The Beginning of a New Historiographic Tradition

The *Amân-al-tavarikh* marks the end of the kind of encyclopedic chronicle-writing in Afghanistan typified in its latter stages by the works of Riyâzi and Feyz-Mohammad Kâteb. New political and social phenomena were transforming the way in which the story of the past was recorded. First, archaeologists, notably the French, discovered Afghanistan and Afghan historians discovered the findings of French archaeology. Travelers to the country had long come home with pre-Islamic artefacts that they had purchased or dug up themselves, but professional archaeology only began in 1922 with the signing of an accord between France and Afghanistan. In 1924 and 1925 under the terms of this agreement, a French expedition began to excavate in the northern part of the country.[75] What it and subsequent expeditions discovered fundamentally changed the historiography of the country.

Second, nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments, which had been fueled by the victory of an Asian people, the Japanese, in its decisive defeat of Russian Europeans in 1905, received another boost with the conclusion of the Great War in Europe and the Wilsonian call for national self-determination. In Afghanistan, what Afghans understood as a clear victory over England in the War of Independence (or Third Afghan War) in 1919 further strengthened the idea of Afghanistan as a nation in a world of nations. Thirdly, the rise of fascism in the 1920s, especially in Germany and Italy, two countries with which Afghan intellectuals had close contacts, gave the racial theory of a superior people known as the Aryans considerable momentum in Afghanistan. These three elements left a clear imprint on the historiography of the 1920s and 1930s, which in turn shaped national myths for some time to come.

The effort to instill a nationalist spirit in Afghans can be traced in the curriculum of the Habibiya Madrasa, where history was one of the required subjects. One of the history professors, Sayyid Mohammad Hâshem, was commissioned about 1920 to write a text-

75 For a survey of the history of archaeology in Afghanistan see, N.H. Dupree, *EIr*, s.v. Afghanistan viii. Archeology.

book for the study of Afghan history, *Kholâse-ye târikh-e vatan* ('A Concise History of the Nation'). The use of the word *vatan* (nation) is significant and substitutes for what had long been the traditional signifier of 'nation' (*mellat*), which is probably best rendered as 'community' or even 'religious community.' *Vataniyye* ('nationalism') had become the watchword of the time throughout the Middle East and Sayyid Mohammad Hâshem attempts to clarify what the term *vatan* should mean to someone living in Afghanistan, using a question and answer format that would have been familiar to any student of the religious sciences. In attempting to account for Afghanistan's long history as either subject to Iranian governments in the West, Indian governments in the East, or Central Asian governments in the North, he asserts, not unreasonably, that it was only the cities that became dependencies of foreign powers and people in the mountains and valleys remained independent (and a nation) down through time. The nation is eternal (and predates actual history-writing) but was perpetuated and preserved only in rural areas. This of course tended to privilege, although never explicitly, the Pashtun people as a whole.

A second element in shaping Afghanistan as a nation is Islam and Islam is what gives the nation a history. The story of the past begins with Islam, or at least the Islamic view of creation. Sayyid Hâshem's work then proceeds along fairly traditional lines, organized dynastically with no mention of the different peoples who make up the population of the country. It reflects, of course, an élitist view and as the élite was wholly Persianate it was written in Persian; no Pashto version is known to exist, although publishing in Pashto was by then well established. Sayyid Hâshem's textbook may be seen as a bridge between the old historiography of Riyâzi, Feyz-Mohammad, and Hâjj Abd-al-Mohammad and what was to come in the 1930s. He emphasized the 'nation' of Afghanistan at the outset but then resorted to the kind of events-writing that blurred, if not wholly obscured, the outlines of a nation rooted in rural life and independent of 'foreign' dynasties.

Archaeological findings of the mid 1920s and after, reinforced by new political and racial ideologies, completed the transition to the new historiography. In Afghanistan, these all came on top of

a tumultuous period marked by the ouster and exile of the Amir, Amân-Allâh Khan, the turbulent nine-month regime in Kabul of Amir Habib-Allâh Kalakâni, and his overthrow and execution in October 1929 by another Mohammadzay figure, Mohammad Nâder Khan.

In 1931, the new regime established the Literary Society (*Anjoman-e adabi*) in Kabul to study and publish Afghanistan cultural heritage in a monthly journal, *Majalle-ye Kâbol* and an annual almanac, *Sâlnâme-ye Kâbol*. The first issue of the *Sâlnâme* came out in 1932 and featured a work by a young man who should be considered the founder of the new Afghan historiography, Mir Gholâm-Mohammad Ghobâr. His article was entitled "Târikhche-ye mokhtasar-e Afghânestân" ('A Brief History of Afghanistan') and it presented Afghanistan's past in way it had not been seen before.[76] The piece has a strong visual impact for it includes numerous illustrations of excavated Buddhist statuary, Kushan artefacts, and architectural monuments of the Islamic period. Ghobâr followed the conventional classification of the past into the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods but then departed from convention by asserting that Afghanistan's history begins with the arrival of Aryans. Afghanistan as the homeland of the Aryans and the city of Balkh as their 'cradle' became extremely attractive both in political and scholarly circles and has left a strong imprint on popular and academic ideas of Afghanistan's past.[77] Ghobâr's interpretation proved extremely useful to Afghan ruling circles. It gave precedence to a Persianized Hanafi Pashtun culture and became a master narrative of Afghan history. The kind of histories written by Feyz-Mohammad, Riyâzi, and Hâjj Mohammad Esfahâni now seemed out-of-date and old fashioned and their coverage of the non-Pashtun communities of Afghanistan irrelevant to the forging of a nation in a world community of nation states.

76 *Sâlnâme-ye Kâbol 1311*, pp. 7–40.

77 For more on this see R.D. McChesney, "Architecture and narrative: The Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa Shrine, Part 2: Representing the Complex in word and image, 1696–1998," *Muqarnas* 19 (2002), pp. 85–86.

CHAPTER 12

INDO-PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Stephen F. Dale

1. Introduction

This essay deals with traditional historiographical subjects—the biases of annalistic or narrative historians and the themes of their works—in texts written in New Persian during the nearly seven centuries of Muslim rule in northern and central India. It includes works written either by émigré Iranians or by indigenous Persian-speaking Indian scholars, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. Persian was the principal language that Muslims, and Hindu authors employed by Muslim states, used to write Indo-Muslim histories, literature and religious and scientific treatises. Most of these men, when they were not actually Iranians, were fully paid subscribers to Perso-Islamic culture, whose administrative traditions, art, painting, philosophy and poetry became the dominant high culture of the Indo-Muslim élite and their Hindu colleagues in the period of the Delhi Sultanate (ca. 1206–1398) and the Moghul or Mughal Empire (1526–1739 and notionally to 1857). Perso-Islamic culture, in fact, includes a spectrum of Iranian influence, which was often expressed in Indian languages as well as Persian. These ranged from Iranian ideas of kingship, to Iranian variants of Sufism and the popularity of Iranian literary genres and 'classical' Iranian poets. This essay does not discuss such non-Persian language manifestations of Perso-Islamic culture in South Asia, a complex and poorly documented aspect of the Perso-Islamic legacy in India.

It is essential at the outset to note that India houses a vast store of Persian manuscripts in various government repositories or in

private hands. As an example, even in the far southeastern region of India at Chennai, formerly Madras, the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library holds more than 1,300 Persian manuscripts. Thousands more are found in the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Kolkatta (Calcutta), the Khuda Bakhsh Library in Patna, the Arabic and Persian Research Institute in Tonk, Rajasthan, the Salar Jang Museum and Library in Hyderabad and the Rampur State Library in Rampur, to name just a few of the most important collections. Many of these manuscripts are copies of *divans* of classic Iranian poets, especially Ferdowsi, Sa'di, Hâfez, Nezâmi, Jâmi and Amir Khosrow Dehlavi. Most, however, are particular to Indo-Persian history, culture and politics. A staggering number of local histories, many of individuals or families, are also extant in various collections.[1] Most of these manuscripts have never been published or, if the texts have been printed, they have not been published in critical editions. The major histories of the North Indian dynasties have been translated, many by British officials in the 19th and 20th century, but many of these badly need to be re-translated with new commentaries. It would be presumptuous, therefore, to claim or imply that an individual scholar could accurately explain the perspectives of more than a few Indo-Persian authors or cogently analyze the values they espouse in most of their works. Only one scholar has written a genuine historiographical analysis of a limited number of 14th-century Indo-Persian texts, namely Peter Hardy in his seminal study *The Historians of Medieval India.*[2] This present chapter is, therefore, intended to serve only as an introduction to Indo-Persian historical literature. A truly comprehensive study awaits the work of generations of scholars in what is at present a largely neglected field.

1 D.N. Marshall identifies and locates many of these sources for the Mughal era in his monumental bibliographic works: *Mughals in India, A Bibliographical Survey,* Vol. 1 Manuscripts (New York, 1967), and *Mughals in India, A Bibliographical Survey*, *Supplementary,* Pt. I (New Delhi, 1996). Unpublished works mentioned in this chapter are referred to Marshall's surveys (see also Bibliographical note).

2 Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India* (London, 1966).

It is also worth emphasizing at the beginning that in cultural terms, most of the Indo-Muslim élite during the period of Muslim rule were deferential colonial subjects of Iran, and many Iranians, in turn, viewed Indo-Persian writers in just this way, as representatives of an inferior culture, which was a pale and, in many respects, a corrupt version of a sophisticated, centuries-old civilization. The 17th-century Iranian poet, Ashraf Mâzandarâni, was not alone when he compared Mughal India, where he found employment, with his Isfahan home, and observed it was impossible to compare a "copy" with the "original."[3] Mâzandarâni's presence at the Mughal court exemplifies the flood of Iranian intellectuals and scholars who temporarily or permanently migrated to Mughal India and who constantly reinvigorated its Persianate culture. The son of an *âlem* who had married into the important Majlesi family of Isfahan, Ashraf Mâzandarâni was a poet, whose works included verses dedicated to the literate daughter of Owrangzib, Zib-al-Nesâ, whose tutor he was for a time; his life is summarized in the *Divân-e ash'âr-e Ashraf Mâzandarâni*.[4] Some Iranians in the 21st century still think of *sabk-e hendi*, the new verse style originated in Iran by such Persian language poets as Feghâni (d. 1519), as a decadent product of writers whose deviation from classical Iranian literary norms could be attributed to their residence or birth in the humid, overheated and bewildering Hindu-dominated cultures of the subcontinent.[5] The mistaken attribution to Indian writers of this style or form of "fresh" or "new" poetical speech reflects the profound cultural bias of Iranian scholars and writers. If poetry was not melodious, or was somehow displeasing or just not sufficiently in the tradition of Hâfez, it could be attributed to the defects of a derivative culture.

3 Stephen Frederic Dale, "A Safavid poet in the heart of darkness: The Indian poems of Ashraf Mazandarani," *Iranian Studies* 36/2 (June 2003), p. 208.

4 Mohammad Sa'id Ashraf Mâzandarâni, *Divân-e ash'âr-e Ashraf-e Mâzandarâni*, ed. Mohammad Hoseyn Sa'idiyân (Tehran, 1994).

5 For the most important recent scholarship on *sabk-e Hendi* see Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī. Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, Ca., 1998).

2. Early Persian Historiography

The rise of Persian historiography in Iran, Afghanistan and Mawarannahr (Transoxania) was coincident with the expansion of Muslim power into India, and the immediate background to Indo-Persian historiography is the rise of Iranian or Persianate dynasties in Transoxania and Afghanistan. Three such dynasties were critical in this regard: the Samanids of Bukhara (ca. 892–999), the Ghaznavids of Afghanistan, Khorasan and North India (994–1040, in the latter alone to 1187) and the Ghurids of Afghanistan and North India (1148–1215). Vladimir Minorsky used the felicitous phrase "Persian Intermezzo" to characterize the renaissance of Iranian, Persian language culture in the years of these dynasties—the era between the decay of the power of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 10th century and the advent of the Turks and the Mongol assaults of the early 13th century. The Samanids of Bukhara were one of the earliest dynasties to epitomize this phenomenon, as they were an ethnically Iranian dynasty descended from *dehqâns*, local Iranian landed élite. Originally Abbasid governors, they became independent rulers and, while they continued to use Arabic in their administration, like most inhabitants of western Transoxania and Khurasan, they spoke Persian. The Samanids consciously revived Iranian customs and traditions and, to varying degrees, patronized Persian literary and historical culture. In the early 10th century, for example, the Samanid ruler Nasr b. Ahmad (914–35) supported Rudaki's (858–941) translation of the Indian text *Kalile va Demne* into Persian, and the mid-11th-century Mansur b. Nuh (961–76) had Tabari's general history and his Qor'anic commentary translated into Persian. The degree to which the Samanids represented not only an ethnic but a culturally Iranian dynasty is partly demonstrated by the heavily Persianized literary culture of their Turkic *gholâm*s, the Ghaznavids, who spoke and read Persian and patronized Persian literature when they established themselves as an independent dynasty in Afghanistan and northeastern Iran at the end of the 10th century.[6]

6 See C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids, their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994–1040* (Edinburgh, 1963). Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 15–47.

While some Ghaznavid rulers knew Arabic and used Arabic as well as Persian as administrative languages and did not, like their former Samanid masters, seek to resuscitate Iranian traditions, they overwhelmingly patronized Persian-language poets and their rule saw the composition of two major works of historical writing in Persian.

The works patronized by these Persianized Turkic *gholâm*s constitute the bridgehead of Persian culture in the Indian subcontinent.[7] Ghaznavid rulers, in particular Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 999–1030), patronized a variety of Persian panegyric and lyrical verse in the works of the poets Farrokhi (d. ca. 1037), Manuchehri (d. 1040) and lesser-known writers. Most of all, Ferdowsi was vicariously associated with Mahmud's court at Ghazna, southwest of Kabul, and the poet's monumental *Shahname* later became the revered cultural memory for Indo-Persian writers, just as it did for other legatees of Perso-Islamic culture in Mawarannahr, Iran and Anatolia. It was also during Mahmud's lifetime and that of his immediate successor that the two most important Persian language historians of the era wrote.

The first of these men was the panegyric court historian Gardizi, about whom little is known, but who may have been a pupil of the philosopher and scientist, Biruni (980–1037). Gardizi in his dynastic history exhibited a strong Iranian bias, focusing on the Iranian rulers of Khorasan, culminating, naturally, in Mahmud's glorious reign. In describing this, he particularly stressed the Sultan's role as the "warrior sultan" who propagated the true faith.[8] Gardizi's view of Mahmud's historical role is one that became the common interpretive currency of many later historians who saw the Ghaznavid as the founder of Indo-Muslim society. The other major historian of the era, Beyhaqi, whose dates are not known, also served in Mahmud's court and that of his successor, Mas'ud I (1030–41). Beyhaqi wrote the single most intellectually stimulating and innovative Persian-language

7 C. E. Bosworth, "The development of Persian culture under the early Ghaznavids," *Iran* 6 (1968), pp. 33–44.

8 Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 74.

history of pre-modern times, shaped in part by Greco-Islamic philosophical or ethical ideals.[9]

It was particularly in Lahore, the Ghaznavid provincial administrative center and prominent Punjabi city, that Persian culture took root in India, for in addition to government officials, clerics and scholars began settling there in Mahmud's day, as the city became the base for plundering India. Indeed, in the later Ghaznavid period, from the time of Mas'ud's loss to the Saljuqs in 1040 and the defeat of the last Ghaznavid sultan by the Ghurids of Afghanistan in 1186, Lahore was the capital of the Ghaznavids' truncated empire.[10] Apart from the presence in the city of Iranian émigré writers such as Sa'd-e Salmân (1046–1121) and Sanâ'i (d. ca. 1131), it was also there that Hojviri (ca. 990–1077) wrote the oldest extant Persian language treatise on Sufism, the *Kashf-al-mahjub.*[11]

3. The Delhi Sultanate

In cultural terms then, the Ghaznavid period represents the foundation of the Indo-Persian cultural tradition in India. It is impossible even to guess at the numbers of Muslims or Persian-speaking Muslims who settled in India as the Ghaznavids extended their authority into the Punjab. New Muslim émigrés would almost certainly have joined substantial numbers of Iranian merchants already doing business in Lahore and other Punjabi cities, which for millennia had been cosmopolitan commercial centers linking northwestern India with Kabul, Transoxania and Iran. Ghaznavid rule in Lahore would have generated a new population of officials, religious scholars and Sufis, such as Hojviri, ministering to the

9 Ibid., pp. 47–141 and especially Ranin Kazemi, "Morality and Idealism: Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi's Historical Thought in *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*," Unpublished M.A. thesis, Ohio State University, 2005. See also above, Chapters 1 and 3.

10 C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids* (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 76–77.

11 Abu'l-Hasan Ali Othman Hojviri, *Kashf-al-mahjub*, tr. by R.A. Nicolson (2nd ed. London, 1936).

burgeoning Muslim settlement, as well as poets, such as Salmân, seeking royal patronage. Unfortunately, little is known about the Perso-Islamic cultural milieu in Lahore in Ghaznavid times, but the prevalence of substantial numbers of Iranian speakers and the increasingly dominant role of Persian as an administrative and cultural language is manifest in the history of the rulers, ulama and literati of the Delhi Sultanate, the term used to identify the series of habitually unstable dynasties that solidified Muslim control of northwestern and northern India in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Many of these rulers were, like the Ghaznavids themselves, ethnic Turks and *gholâm*s, but had entered the Islamic world through the Iranian cultural portal and, even while speaking Turkic dialects among themselves, adopted Persian as their principal administrative and cultural language. An interesting case in point of a Turk intensely conscious of his Turkic identity, who nonetheless wrote poetry in Persian and used the language for his historical writing, was that of Fakhr-al-Din Mobârakshâh Marv-al-rudi, an official of the Ghurids.[12] Evidently a free-born Muslim and son of a Ghaznavid official, he was living in the Indo-Muslim capital of Lahore in 1206, the date usually given for the formal establishment of the Delhi Sultanate by the Turkic *gholâm*, Qotb-al-Din Aibek. Mobârakshâh praises Turks, their Central Asian homeland and both the Turkic language and Turkic literature, but nonetheless, did so in formal, elegant Persian prose.

An early Indo-Persian historian, who typifies a variant example of a Persian-language historian of Mobârakshâh Marv-al-rudi's day, was his younger contemporary Menhâj-al-Serâj al-Juzjâni (b. 1193) the principal historian of the Ghurid state and the early Delhi Sultanate.[13] In contrast to Mobârakshâh, an Iranized Turk whose

12 E. Denison Ross, ed., *Ta'rîkh-i Fakhru'd-Dîn Mubârakshâh* being *The Historical Introduction to the Book of Genealogies of Fakhru'd-Dîn Mubârakshâh Marvar-rûdî* completed in 1206 (London, 1927). See also the author's work *Rahiq-al-tahqiq; beh enzemâm-e ash'âr-e digar-e u,* ed. Nasr-Allâh Purjavâdi (Tehran, 2002).

13 Menhâj-al-Din Juzjâni, *Tabaqât-e Nâseri*, ed. Abd-al-Hayy Habibi (2 vols., Kabul, 1963–64); tr. into Eng. by H.G. Raverty as *Tabakât-e Nâseri* (repr. London, 1971–72).

literary and historical writing most closely resembles the *adab* tradition of scholarship, Juzjâni was probably an Iranian, who was the son of a prominent qâdi at the Ghurid court, where culture was a Persian reprise of the Ghaznavid state. Rather than a bureaucrat like Mobârakshâh, he became a religious and legal scholar, who served the early slave sultans of Delhi from 1228 until his death, perhaps sometime in the 1260s. Juzjâni used Mobârakshâh's text to give his Ghurid patrons an ancient Iranian lineage—as well asserting an important connection as an ally of the Abbasid caliphs.[14] His principal work is the *Tabaqât-e Nâseri*, although he also, like most other officials of his class, wrote Persian verse. While Juzjâni, like many if not most of the Persian-language court historians of the Delhi Sultanate, identified the particular Turkic tribal background of many Sultanate *gholâm*s, he stressed the role of his early Ghurid patrons as Muslim defenders of the Indian frontiers against the heathen Mongols, a dominant concern of the Delhi Sultans during much of the 13th century.[15] Many later Indo-Persian historians exploited Juzjâni's history, organized in discrete sections by dynasty, but its baroque style make it difficult for later scholars to utilize, except with extreme care.

Thus the identifying characteristic of Indo-Persian historiography was its emphasis on the two dominant culture streams encapsulated in the term Perso-Islamic: a consciousness of pre-Islamic and Islamic Iranian history and an embrace of the truth of the Prophet Mohammad's revelation, as well as the normative values of Islamic culture. Apart from Mobârakshâh Marv-al-rudi, Indo-Persian historians of the Sultanate era largely ignored the importance of ethnicity of their Turkic and Afghan rulers and wrote within the developing context of Indo-Persian historiography.

Apart from Juzjâni, the Indo-Persian historical tradition is best represented by three major writers of the late 13th and early 14th century, only one of whom wrote narrative dynastic histories: Ziyâ'-al-Din Barani (1285–1357), Amir Khosrow Dehlavi (1253–1325)

14 C.E. Bosworth, *EI*², s.v. Ghurids.

15 Sunil Kumar, "The ignored elites: Turks, Mongols and a Persian secretarial class in the early Delhi Sultanate," *Modern Asian Studies* 43/1 (2009), p. 59.

and Abd-al-Malek Esâmi (d. after 1350). All three were, in different ways, heirs of the Perso-Islamic religious, literary and historical tradition of the Ghaznavid and Ghurid dynasties.

Barani, a member of the inner court circles of the Delhi Sultanate and a *nadim* or 'boon companion' of Sultan Mohammad b. Toghloq, wrote the most important single narrative history of the Sultanate period, the *Târikh-e Firuzshâhi* (1357), dedicated to the Sultan's son.[16] Even though Barani was primarily a courtier, as well as the son and nephew of Sultanate officials, he thought of annalistic history primarily as companion to *hadith*, a narrative with a "didactic religious purpose."[17] History should be written, in his view, to teach moral lessons, measured against the norms of Sunni Muslim religious precepts. Histories served as 'mirrors for princes,' offering illustrations and moral precepts for rulers derived from the truth of Mohammad's revelation.[18]

While Barani's *Târikh-e Firuzshâhi* exemplifies the Islamic stream of Perso-Islamic thought, his other principal work, the *Fatâvâ-ye jahândâri* reflects not only the Islamic stream, but the Iranian one was well.[19] Barani wrote this work in the form of an advice treatise that Mahmud of Ghazna gave his sons as to the duties of Muslim monarchs. In that way, it typifies the preoccupation of Sultanate historians with the Ghaznavids as the founders of Islam in India, but in the text Barani bitterly complains that the sultans of Delhi have failed in their duty to establish a truly Islamic polity, allowing Hindus to flourish throughout the Delhi sultans' dominions—as rulers, wealthy merchants and religious scholars of a crudely polytheistic faith. Reflecting on what he saw as the corruption of the ideals of Islamic polity since the days of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Barani openly conceded that it was impossible in his day to rule according to the precepts of Islam. Instead, it was necessary for Indo-Muslim monarchs to model themselves on the

16 Ziyâ'-al-Din Barani, *Târikh-e Firuzshâhi*, ed. Saiyid Ahmad Khán (Calcutta, 1862).

17 Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, p. 23.

18 Ibid., p. 39.

19 Barani, *Fatâvâ-ye jahândâri*, tr. with commentary by Mohammad Habib as *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate* (Allahabad, 1961).

imperial principles of the pre-Islamic monarchs of Iran, balancing their concern for their Muslim subjects with the *realpolitik* of a successful imperial tradition.[20]

Neither Amir Khosrow Dehlavi nor Esâmi, as the latter writer is generally known by his pen name, thought of themselves or wrote as annalistic historians, but both produced work with historical content that reflected important aspects of Indo-Persian culture. Amir Khosrow was the more creative and culturally significant of the two. Born in India of a Turkic father, a refugee from Mongol Transoxania, and an Indian Muslim mother, he was an enormously talented and productive poet and musician, a member of the Cheshti Sufi order and the person who, more than any other figure, exemplified Indo-Persian culture in the Delhi Sultanate era, in that he wrote in Persian and belonged to an Iranian-derived Sufi order, whose devotional poetry and other literature was also expressed in Persian. His panegyric, lyrical and devotional poetry was affecting and original, but it was particularly five *mathnavi*s and one prose account that were written from an historical perspective. These were the *Qerân-al-sa'deyn* (1289), the *Meftâh-al-fotuh* (1291), the prose work, *Khazâ'en-al-fotuh* (1311), the *Duval Râni Khezr Khân*, the *Noh sepehr* (1318) and the *Toghloq-nâme* (1320).[21] These poems and one prose account are literary pieces rather than histories, but they all relate particular events, apart from the *Noh sepehr*, which primarily describes court life and the flora, fauna and climate of India—contrasting the country favorably with Iran, which he knew only by report. Yet Amir Khosrow wrote these works for the moment and the patronage of individuals—and to demonstrate his remarkable literary talent. While they offer some insight into the politics and court life of the Delhi Sultanate, they are dramatic tableaus

20 Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, pp. 25–27.

21 Amir Khosrrow, *Qerân-al-sa'deyn*, ed. Sayyid Hasan Barni (Aligarh, 1918); ed. Ahmad Hasan Dâni (Islamabad, 1976); idem, *Meftâh-al-fotûh*, ed. Yasin Khan Niyazi, *Oriental College Magazine*, Lahore 12/3 (May 1936) to 13/2 (February 1937); idem, *Khazâ'en-al-fotuh*, ed. Syed Moinul Haq (Aligarh, 1927); *Duval Râni Khezr Khân*, ed. Rashid Ahmad (Aligarh, 1917); idem, *The Noh sepehr*, ed. Muhammad Wahid Mirza (London, 1950); idem, *Toghloq-nâme*, ed. Sayyed Hashemi Faridâbâdi (Hyderabad, 1933). See Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India*, pp. 68–69.

of a poet rather than the narrative of an historian such as Beyhaqi, who had an explicit vision of historical development and a precise Greco-Islamic view of the moral qualities needed to be a successful monarch. More than anything else, Amir Khosrow's writings demonstrate the vitality and sophistication of Perso-Islamic culture in the North Indian urban centers of the Subcontinent, a judgment ratified by the immediate and continued Iranian recognition of his literary talent, the only Indo-Persian writer widely quoted by Iranian poets and almost universally admired by Iranian scholars.

Esâmi, like Amir Khosrow, was a poet, but one even more immediately linked to the Iranian historical and literary past. A longtime resident of the Bahmani Sultanate, one of the independent Muslim states of the central Indian region known as the Deccan, and a frustrated poet in search patronage from the reigning Bahmani sultan, Esâmi modeled his principal work, a verse history of the Delhi sultans in 11,000 couplets entitled the *Fotuh-al-salâtin* (1349), on Ferdowsi's *Shahname,* to the extent of using the same metre as Ferdowsi's epic poem.[22] Explicitly attempting to surpass Ferdowsi's work, Esâmi begins with Adam and surveys the Iranian kings of the *Shahname*, and briefly mentions Mohammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, before focusing on his principal subject, the Muslim rulers of north India. He wrote the *Fotuh-al-salâtin*, however, not as a study or survey of Indo-Muslim culture or society, but as a paean to the triumphs and royal virtues of the Delhi sultans.[23] While later Indo-Muslim historians occasionally used Esâmi's text, it is no more a continuous and intelligible chronology than his *Shahname* model. Like Amir Khosrow, he thought and wrote like the poet he was, offering stirring episodic vignettes designed to please the Bahmani ruler. " 'Isāmī placed his characters in literary rather than in historical situations. They are either heroes or villains," who were measured against conventional Muslim ethical standards.[24] Mahmud of Ghazna was, for him, as for so

22 Abd-al-Malek Esâmi, *Fotuh-al-salâtin*, ed. A.S. Usha (Madras, 1948); tr. by Agha Mahdi Husain as *Futūḥu's Salāṭīn or Shāh Nāmah-i Hind of 'Iṣāmī* (Aligarh, 1967–77); Hardy, *Historians*, pp. 94–95.

23 Ibid., pp. 97–98.

24 Ibid., p. 107.

many other Indo-Muslim writers, the epitome of the just Muslim sultan, but his picture of Mahmud is as stereotypical as his other portraits. Thus, "the *Futūh al-Salātīn* is, to sum up, not a critical history, not a theology, not an ethic, but an epic."[25]

The necessity of discussing the historiographical significance of Amir Khosrow and Esâmi is a direct consequence of the dearth of historians of the quality of Beyhaqi or the near contemporary Iranians, Joveyni and Rashid-al-Din. Neither Indian writer thought of himself as an historian and both are primarily significant because they reveal the vitality of Indo-Persian culture, another example of which was the Sufi discourse or *malfuzât* literature, which contain the aphorisms or teachings of Sufi pirs or shaikhs. As has been seen, Hojviri's combined *malfuzât* text and biographical dictionary, the *Kashf-al-mahjub*, was written in Lahore, the first extant example of what was to become a common Sufi genre in the Persianate world, and particularly in connection with the Cheshti *selsele*, which gained a large following among the Indo-Muslim population in the 14th and 15th centuries.[26]

4. The Afghan Interregnum: 1451–1526 and 1540–55

The Delhi Sultanate is generally regarded as ending when Timur, that is Timur-e lang or Tamerlane, invaded India and sacked Delhi in 1398. Following this catastrophe, Indo-Persian historical works continued to be written, although none of them are particularly original or notable—as chronicles or verse. Yahyâ b. Ahmad Serhindi wrote a history of a Sultanate ruler in his *Târikh-e mobârakshâhi* (ca. 1428).[27] Written to gain patronage of the Delhi monarch

25 Ibid., p. 110.

26 See e.g. the 14th-century Cheshti work, the *Siyâr-al-owliyâ* by Sayyid Mohammad b. Mobârak Alavi al-Kermâni (Delhi, 1885); Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden. Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany, 1992), pp. 71, 342.

27 Yahyâ b. Ahmad Serhendi, *Târikh-e mobârakshâhi*, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain (Calcutta, 1931).

of his day, it was based on Barani's history of the same name, as well as upon Amir Khosrow's *Qerân-al-sa'deyn*. To complete its derivative character, it also resembled Esâmi's work in tone and content, in the sense that it is primarily a literary or rhetorical work designed to flatter and entertain, rather than to investigate the past critically.

Afghans first came to power in north India in the power vacuum caused by Timur's destructive invasion. The first of these dynasties, the Lodhis, controlled northwestern India and the western Gangetic valley for three-quarters of a century (1451–1526) until the Timurid, Zahir-al-Din Mohammad Bâbor, defeated them at the Battle of Panipat in 1526. Afghans again briefly ruled this region when the Suris defeated Bâbur's son, Homâyun in 1540 and drove him from India for fifteen years (1540–56). Only a few historical works exist for this period, and none of the major histories were actually written under the brief Afghan dominance, but were composed during the Mughal era, principally in the reigns of Akbar (1556–1605) and Jahângir (1605–28). Nevertheless, there are significant numbers of these works, some of which provide important data about the two Afghan periods.

The Lodhis differed from their Turkic predecessors of the Sultanate period, in that they governed as tribal oligarchs rather than as Turkic military despots. The lack of significant historical literature produced in this period may have been the consequence of several factors: the absence of a Pushtun literary tradition beyond oral poetry, many Afghans' sketchy familiarity with the Persian language and Perso-Islamic culture and the instability and ephemeral nature of both dynasties. Whatever the influence of any of these factors, it is indisputable that with one exception, the most important histories of these two dynasties were written in the late 16th and early 17th century. The authors of these works wrote in different circumstances, so it is only possible to speculate on the explanations for their composition, but apart from the sympathetic nostalgia of some authors, who were Afghans or were personally connected to these dynasties, beginning with Akbar, the Mughal period not only initiated a period of relative stability in northern India, but in cultural terms the dynasty was a continuation of the

brilliant Persianate culture of Timurid Herat under Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ, including its historiographical tradition represented by the author Khʷândamir.

There are at least seven extant significant Afghan histories, only two of which will be mentioned here. The earliest and the only one to be written during Afghan rule is the *Tavârikh-e dowlat-e Shir Shâhi* (1548), written by Hasan-Ali Khan Bahâdor (d. 1550), who was the chief Sadr and close associate of Shir Shâh (r. 1540–45).[28] While only two chapters of this work have survived, it gives important information about the reign of Shir Shâh, the Afghan who defeated Homâyun and who was the most dynamic, creative and successful of all the Afghan monarchs. Between 1575 and 1612 several other authors wrote histories of both the Lodhi and Suri dynasties, but the one that stands out is the *Târikh-e Khân-jahâni va makhzan-e Afghâni* of Ne'mat-Allâh.[29] The author was the son of a scholar, who by the evidence of his *nesba*, came from or was connected to Herat. It is significant that Ne'mat-Allâh, who wrote this single most important history of the Afghans, was not, from all available evidence, an Afghan himself, but the son of an official of Akbar's court. Ne'mat-Allâh served as the librarian of Abd-al-Rahim Khân-e Khânân, the son of Akbar's *atâbeg* or guardian, the Qara Qoyunlu Turk, Beyrâm Khan, before acting as a news writer for the emperor Jahângir, and then finally becoming attached to Jahângir's Lodhi general, Khân-e Jahân Lodhi. Ne'mat-Allâh, therefore, was a man who wrote not as a nostalgic Afghan, but as one who inherited the Perso-Islamic cultural tradition of the Mughals and wrote in the relative security of imperial appointments. The sophistication of his history reveals him to be, not an untutored Pushtun, but instead part of the sophisticated Persian language scholarly tradition of Timurid Herat and Mughal India.

Ne'mat-Allâh's work represents a traditional Perso-Islamic court history, in this case a panegyric dedicated to a Mughal general who happened to be an Afghan with a Lodhi lineage. The po-

28 See *Medieval Indian History Quarterly* 1 (Aligarh, August 1950), pp. 1–15.

29 *Târikh-e Khân-jahâni*, ed. S.M. Imam al-Din (Dacca, 1960); see his "Introduction," pp. 1–93 for a survey Afghan historical writing; see also Chapter 11 for Afghan historiography outside India.

litical narrative of the history is not particularly original, most of it being taken from Nezâm-al-Din's Mughal account, the *Tabaqât-e Akbari*. The most original and therefore important part of the text is the author's attempt to compile the genealogical lists of Afghan tribes, his account of his patron's career, his description of various Afghan clans and tribes who settled in India in the early Mughal period and his information about the first eight years of the reign of the emperor Jahângir. The work, written by a scholarly man, who attempted in so far as possible to utilize original sources, "is the only complete history, which contains a detailed and systematic account of all the Afghan Kings of India from their rise to their downfall."[30] It also contains the earliest attempt by any author to compile a complete list of Afghan Muslim sufis and other influential religious figures. Nonetheless, Ne'mat-Allâh for all his efforts, combined legendary and historical information about Afghan tribes and their religious traditions in such a way as to make the history extremely difficult to use, except as an indication of 17th-century Afghan beliefs about their social and religious traditions. The style of the work is also curiously crude for a man who was an imperial librarian, a possible result of later copyists or interpolators of a work whose authorship has often been debated.[31]

5. The Mughals

Apart from histories written by Afghans or specifically devoted to Afghan history, several early Mughal works are useful as alternative sources for Afghan history, at the very least serving as antidotes to the panegyric exaggeration that characterizes all court patronized historical writing. Three autobiographical works in particular offer some insight into Afghan affairs, as well as providing a Mughal perspective on the conflict which Bâbor and his descendants had with their most tenacious early enemies, who were not finally defeated until Jahângir's reign. These are Bâbor's

30 Imam al-Din, ed., *Târikh-e Khân Jahâni*, intro., p. 28.
31 Ibid., p. 30.

autobiographical memoir, generally known as the *Bâbor-nâme*, or V*aqâ'e'*; the memoir and history of his Mongol cousin and younger contemporary, Heydar Mirzâ Dughlât (1499–1551), known as the *Târikh-e Rashidi*; and the memoir of Bâbor's daughter, Golbadan Begim (1523–1603), known as the *Homâyun-nâme*. These three works, along with the emperor Jahângir's later autobiography, represent a unique strain of Mughal historiography.[32] All but Bâbor's autobiography were originally written in Persian. He wrote in his native Turki, but it was translated into Persian in the late 16th century and became, in translation, the accessible literary monument of the dynasty's founder. These four memoirs discuss the Afghans only as their authors encountered them; none of them sought to compile a history of their opponents.

Bâbor provides the greatest amount of information, and some of the most detailed accounts of Afghans in pre-British sources, because he frequently fought with Afghan tribes in and around the Kabul region while he ruled there from 1504 to 1525, and he also briefly discusses Lodhi history when he narrates his invasion of India in January 1526.[33] He writes of Afghan tribes in and around Kabul as troublesome highway robbers and fractious resisters of centralized control and civilized, that is, sedentary, life. Some of his descriptions of Afghan resistance to imperial control can be taken at face value, for they resemble later frustrated attempts of the Mughals, British, Soviets and Americans to subjugate the Pushtun tribes of the Gardiz region, south of Kabul. Regarding the Lodhis, he describes their internecine

32 Zahir-al-Din Mohammad Bâbor, *Bâbor-nâme (Vaqâ'e')*, ed. Eiji Mano (2 vols., Kyoto, 1995–96); Mirzâ Mohammad Heydar Dughlât, *Târikh-e Rashidi*, ed. Abbâsqoli Ghaffâri Fard (Tehran, 2004), tr. and annotated by W.M. Thackston as *Mirza Haydar Dughlat's Tarikh-i-Rashidi*: *A History of the Khans of Moghulistan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996); Gulbadan (Golbadan) Begim, *The History of Humâyûn (Humâyûn-nâma)*, ed. and tr. A.S. Beveridge (London, 1902; repr. Delhi, 1972); Nur-al-Din Mohammad Jahângir, *Jahângir-nâme/Tuzok-e Jahângiri*, ed. Mohammad Hâshem (Tehran, 1980), ed. and tr. by Wheeler M. Thackston as *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir*, *Emperor of India* (New York, 1999).

33 Stephen F. Dale, *The Garden of the Eight Paradises, Babur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India 1483–1530* (Leiden and Boston, 2004), pp. 189–200, 291–302, 321–35.

conflicts, ridicules their refusal to recognize his right as a Timurid to rule North India and describes in detail what he thought was their military incompetence when he faced and defeated them in April 1526 at the Battle of Panipat, north of Delhi. Neither Heydar Mirzâ nor Golbadan Begim devote comparable space to the Afghans, although Heydar Mirzâ's account of Shir Shâh's victories over Homâyun in 1539 and 1540 constitute important and unusually detailed descriptions of battles of this period. To the extent that Golbadan Begim discusses Afghans, she largely repeats information she gleaned from her father's memoirs. Jahângir offers some useful information on the Afghans of his day, when Mughal armies finally destroyed any significant Afghan resistance to their hegemony in India.

Mughal Autobiographical Literature

While these four memoirs offer usefully biased perspectives but only limited information about Afghans, they represent major historical sources for the Mughal era of Muslim rule in the Indian subcontinent. It is difficult, however, to relate Bâbor's or his daughter's and great-grandson's works to earlier genres of Perso-Islamic historiography, as none falls neatly into any existing category. These three might, though, be classified simply as personal variants of an annalistic history. This is especially true of Bâbor's and Jahângir's works. Bâbor refers his autobiography as a *Vaqâ'e'* and organizes it simply by the year. Jahângir's book is titled the *Tuzok-e* (*Tozok*) *Jahângiri*, and it also has an annalistic structure. In the literary history of the broader Islamic world there are examples of royal memoirs, but no known comparable examples of autobiographical texts in the New Persian historical tradition. Bâbor's cousin, Heydar Mirzâ, on the other hand, even while partly writing as an autobiographer, explicitly placed his own Persian-language text as a history in the Timurid historical tradition. Apart from the fact that the authors of all four works typify autobiographical literature the world over in their self-interested and self-justifying narratives, they show themselves, like the Sultanate-era writers discussed above, to be part of the Perso-Islamic cultural and political sphere.

This is especially true of Bâbor, for even though he wrote in his native Turki, later known to Europeans as Chaghatai Turkish, this Turkic language was itself highly Persianized and Bâbor implicitly reveals his immersion in Perso-Islamic culture with his repeated quotes and allusions to the works of such poets as Ferdowsi, Sa'di, Hâfez, Jâmi and Amir Khosrow Dehlavi. Bâbor's frequent citations of the *Shahname* is yet another indication, if any is really required, of the degree to which aristocratic or scholarly Indian Muslims had accepted the epic as their own cultural icon, although it is also worth pointing out that Bâbor never quotes the text to glorify kingship or his own legitimacy, but instead uses it for pithy aphorisms to make what he considers to be irrefutable observations about social or political life. Indeed, he cites the *Shahname* and the verse of the great Persian-language poets as the second source, after the *Qor'an*, which he used to justify or culturally sanctify his opinions and decisions.[34]

Bâbor's autobiography is an important text in Indo-Persian historiography for several reasons. First, as a work that contains more than 600 pages in the superb collated text of the Japanese scholar, Eiji Mano, it is a major source for the history of late Timurid Marwarannahr and early 16th-century Afghanistan and northern India.[35] It is a complex work that operates at several levels. Most obviously it is the political self-statement of an ambitious Timurid prince, whose confident, unstated assumptions of his own legitimacy permeate the narrative. Yet it also functions as an idiosyncratic 'mirror for princes' and as a gazetteer for the regions whose characteristics and history Bâbor relates. Perhaps more than all of these things it is a text that humanizes its author in ways and to a degree that, were it not for the autobiography of his great-grandson, Jahângir, would be unique. Second, even more than the works of his cousin and daughter, it reveals him to have been an articulate representative of the highly Persianized culture of the late Timurid

34 Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, pp. 177–79.

35 Mano, ed., *Bâbor-nâme* I (Kyoto, 1995) and II, *Concordance and Classified Indexes* (Kyoto, 1996).

period, as exemplified by the literature, arts and historiography of Soltân-Hoseyn Bâyqarâ's Herat (r. 1478–1506).

In the late 15th and early 16th century, Herat was the cultural center of the eastern Islamic world, and featured a vibrant Persian and Turki literary life, brilliantly executed Persian miniature painting, refined court music and a sophisticated historiographical tradition. Some of its well-known luminaries were the writers and Naqshbandi Sufis Jâmi (1414–92), Mir Ali-Shir Navâ'i (1441–1501), the painter Behzâd (ca. 1450–1535) and the historian Khʷândamir (d. 1538). Early Mughal court culture in Agra and Delhi was essentially the late Timurid court culture of Herat. Following Bâbor's victories in North India in 1526 and 1527, political, religious and cultural figures of the late Timurid world seeking royal patronage began arriving in India, the site of Bâbor's Timurid renaissance. Khʷândamir was one of these individuals, who came to India to serve Bâbor and became a court historian for Bâbor's son and heir, Homâyun.[36] Second, the *Bâbor-nâme* or *Vaqâ'e'*, especially in its Persian translation, directly or indirectly influenced the later autobiographical and historical account noted above, as well as serving as the revered source of information about Bâbor's career. Its distinctive gazetteer sections also may conceivably have informed the *Â'in-e Akbari*, the famous administrative text that Abu'l-Fazl Allâmi (1551–1602) prepared for Bâbor's grandson, Akbar.

Heydar Mirzâ was a young maternal or Chaghatai Mongol cousin of Bâbor. He never suggests that he was inspired by Bâbor's work, but he uses information from the *Bâbor-nâme*, and speaks warmly of his cousin. It is possible that he was partly inspired to write his semi-autobiographical *Târikh-e Rashidi* by Bâbor's example. His book, however, is quite distinct, in that Heydar Mirzâ consciously wrote as an historian, albeit at many times as an unreliable one. Thus even though he narrates much of his personal history, his work has few of the humanistic touches that enliven Bâbor's book. In fact, Heydar Mirzâ begins his work by quoting

36 Ghiyâth-al-Din Khʷândamir, *Qânûn-e Homâyuni*, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain (Calcutta, 1940), editor's intro., pp. i–xxxvi; see also Sholeh A. Quinn, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah 'Abbas* (Salt Lake City, 2000), pp. 128–29.

the introductory section of Sharaf-al-Din Ali Yazdi's Persian-language history of Timur, the *Zafar-nâme* (1425), a flowery, panegyric account of the Turkic conqueror. Heydar Mirzâ does so, he ingenuously notes, because he did not have the training to produce Yazdi's kind of allusive, baroque prose, which had become and was, largely to remain, a distinctive feature of dynastic Persian-language narratives. Fortunately for the reader, when he falls back on his own prose resources, he offers clearly expressed and crucial details about Bâbor's last campaign in Transoxania and unique information about Homâyun's reign, including his disastrous defeats at the hands of resurgent Afghan forces led by Shir Khân/Shâh Suri in 1539 and 1540.[37]

Golbadan Begim's autobiographical account is one of several works that were written in the late 16th century as a result of the emperor Akbar's order that anyone who was familiar with Bâbor should record their memory of the founder of the of the Mughal state. Akbar's order reflected his systematic attempt to document and legitimize the history of the state as an Islamic, Timurid and Chengisid enterprise. His aunt's memoir, written in old age but by a forceful and knowledgeable woman, is an altogether affecting personal document. It is notable as the recollections of an aristocratic woman in a pre-industrial Muslim society. Golbadan wrote or dictated her memoir in a simple, unaffected Persian, using none of the rhetorical devices that attracted Heydar Mirzâ to the *Zafar-nâme.* Golbadan's political narrative is brief and largely a précis of her father's autobiography, although in a few instances she adds crucial details that illuminate his career, such as her comment, undoubtedly obtained from an informant, that Bâbor had only about 8,000 battle ready troops when he defeated the Afghans in 1526.[38] Otherwise her memoir is valuable for the insight it offers into the life of a Mughal woman. No other source for the history of the dynasty enables readers to acquire a sympathetic understanding of her rich and complex life, one lived with considerable freedom and

37 N. Elias ed. and E. Denison Ross tr., *A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia* being *The Tarikh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat* (London, 1972), Pt. I, p. 2.

38 Dale, *Garden of the Eight Paradises*, p. 334.

independence. Like Bâbor's own autobiography, the *Homâyun-nâme* is also notable for the compelling emotional force of the narrative. It is an altogether different kind of text from another memoir that resulted from Akbar's orders, the military and political memoir of Bâyazid Bayât, whose *Tadhkere-ye Homâyun va Akbar* is a dry, error-prone work written by an elderly and apparently forgetful man.[39]

No such dryness detracts from the remarkable autobiographical memoir of the emperor Jahângir (r. 1605–27), which, like Bâbor's work, also exemplified the Perso-Islamic culture of the Mughal court in a number of significant ways, including his proudly proclaimed connoisseur's eye for the Iranian-derived miniature painting tradition of the Mughal atelier. Written by a man who inherited the fully formed empire of his father, Akbar, Jahângir may have been inspired by his great-grandfather's autobiography. At least he mentions reverently reading the *Vaqâ'e'* when he once visited Bâbor's gravesite in Kabul, assuring his audience, *inter alia*, that he could read the original Turki.[40] Jahângir's *Tuzok-e Jahângiri* was, nonetheless, a different kind of work, by a distinct individual written at a very different time from Bâbor's. A lively daily account of his rule, in which the emperor showed himself to be occupied with orders for continuous campaigns, administrative details, appointments, punishments, hunting and the artistic preoccupations of an aesthete, Jahângir's autobiographical memoir is distinguished by several characteristics. First of all, unlike the three earlier texts of Bâbor, Heydar Mirzâ and Golbadân Begim, it contains within its many pages a riveting if unintentional psychological self-portrait of an insecure individual who drank to excess, felt inadequate when compared with his father, Akbar, allowed himself to be dominated by his favorite wife and her family and never personally led troops into battle, as had all three of his predecessors. At the same time, Jahângir also shows himself to have been preoccupied with exhibiting the characteristics of a prototypical 'Just Sultan,'

39 Bâyazid Bayât, *Tadhkere-ye Homâyun-u Akbar*, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain (Calcutta, 1941).

40 Henry Beveridge ed. and Alexander Rogers tr., *The Tûzuk-i Jahângîrî or Memoirs of Jahangir* (Delhi, 1978), pp. 9–10.

perhaps responding to the Persian *akhlâq* literature well-known at his father's court, and informing other rulers, particularly Shah Abbâs of Iran, of his congratulatory self-image and wealthy empire, by distributing copies of his memoir. The *Tuzok-e Jahângiri* is as unusual a memoir as his great-grandfather's autobiography, not only for its emotional complexity, but for its demonstration of the generational differences of Mughal rulers, which would allow an emperor to abstain from military command, while spending five years on hunting expeditions away from his capital, while indulging his refined—and expensive—aesthetic tastes in painting and the production of finely designed coins, some with beautifully rendered astrological signs.

Histories of the Mughals

Bâbor and Homâyun

In the historiography of the Mughal era (ca. 1526–1739 and down to 1857) the reigns of Bâbor and Homâyun constitute a transition period between the Timurid historiography of Transoxania, whose most accomplished historian was Hâfez-e Abru (d. 1430), and the imperial era of Akbar (r. 1556–1605). Later general histories of the dynasty cover the reigns of both men, but these works have little original value, apart from their reflection of the time and place of their composition. Bâbor's *Vaqâ'e'* and his little known but personally revealing poetry remain the best sources for his life, and Khʷândamir, who exemplifies the transition from Timurid to Mughal historiography, based his account of Bâbor's early life on the emperor's autobiography.[41] In doing so, however, Khʷândamir showed himself to be a traditional scholarly narrative historian whose training in highly Arabized Persian literary style caused him to bleach out Bâbor's engaging humanism with simile and

41 See especially Jean Calmard's discussion of the *Habib-al-siyar* in his important essay, "Safavid Persia in Indo-Persian sources," in Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau, eds., *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture* (New Delhi, 2000), pp. 358–61; see also above, n. 36.

metaphor. One work that offers a minor but emotionally compelling footnote to Bâbor's life is the work by a Herat physician on hygiene, written in 1530, the year of Bâbor's death. This man, Yusof b. Mohammad Herâti Yusofi wrote the *Qaside dar hefz-e sehhat* and dedicated it to Bâbor, evidently because he was fully aware of and perhaps involved in treating the emperor's illness.[42]

As for Homâyun, Bâbor and his daughter, Golbadan Begim both discuss their son and brother; Bâbor critically and Golbadan affectionately. Bâbor's references to Homâyun reveal the well-known burdens of sons of dynamic and successful fathers, for while Bâbor occasionally praises his son, he more often than not censures him in lines obviously intended to be a kind of personalized 'mirror for princes.' Golbadan, in contrast, speaks admiringly and warmly of her brother. Homâyun himself left a *divan* of Persian verse, indicating both the power of the Persian literary tradition among the Timurids and also the early shift in Mughal history from Bâbor's Turki, the language of his memoirs and most of his poetry to Persian, the principal administrative and literary language of both the Delhi Sultans and their Afghan successors. Homâyun did not, however, write an autobiographical account. Several contemporaries of Homâyun described his life and reign, including Khʷând-amir in his brief *Qânun-e homâyuni*, the historian's stylistically complex survey of the second Mughal emperor's imperial regulations and buildings.[43]

Two much later works record depersonalized narrations of Homâyun's tumultuous political and military life between 1530 and 1555, as he first campaigned against an array of Afghan and other north Indian opponents, before losing two battles to Shir Khân/Shir Shâh Suri and being expelled from India in 1540—only to struggle for fifteen years to recover his throne, initially with Safavid aid, in 1555. The first of these two works was the political memoirs of his personal attendant, Mehtar Jowhar Âftâbchi, written or begun in 1586 and known variously as the *Tadhkerat-al-vâqe'ât* or

42 See Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 1912, iii.
43 See above, note 36.

Jawâher-e-shâhi; the second was written by his companion Bâyezid, completed in 1591, and entitled the *Târikh-e Homâyun*.[44]

A few years after Homâyun fled India, he made his way to Shah Tahmâsp's court in Qazvin, where his lavish gift of jewels and possibly some sympathetic comments about Shiʿi Islam prompted the Safavid ruler to loan him some troops to begin the reconquest of Afghanistan and India. One cultural consequence of the visit was the start of a stream of what became, under Akbar, a flood of Iranian artists, poets, scholars and administrators to India. A number of Safavid historians describe Homâyun's visit and his reception by Shah Tahmâsp. Amir Mahmud wrote the *Târikh-e Amir Mahmud* in 1550, a predictably pro-Safavid account of Homâyun's visit, just five years after the Mughal left Qazvin.[45] A second intriguing contemporary account is Khurshâh b. Qobâd al-Hoseyni's *Târikh-e ilchi-ye Nezâmshâh* by the Nezâmshâhi ambassador of Ahmadnagar, at that time one of India's independent Deccan sultanates. The author arrived at Shah Tahmâsp's court in 1545, while Homâyun was still in residence there, and provides a brief eyewitness account of the encounter between the two monarchs.[46]

Akbar

In the historiography of Akbar's period, the era in which Indian and Western historians alike agree that the Mughal state was formed into a major empire, there are two distinct categories of historiography which, broadly defined, include traditional narrative and annalistic histories and illustrated manuscripts. These two categories are: first, the works Akbar commissioned to reconstruct the history of the dynasty and articulate both its Islamic and its Turko-Mongol legitimacy; and second, the histories written about Akbar himself

44 Jowhar Âftâbchi, *Tadhkerat-al-vâqe'ât*, tr. Major C. Stewart (London, 1832); Bâyazid Bayât, *Târikh-e Homâyun*, ed. M. Hidayat Hosain (Calcutta, 1941).

45 Amir Mahmud b. Amir Khʷândamir, *Târikh-e Amir Mahmud*, see Marshall, I, 245, i.

46 Khurshâh b. Qobâd al-Hoseyni, *Târikh-e ilchi-ye Nezâm-Shâh*, ed. M.R. Nasiri and Koichi Haneda (Tehran, 2000), pp. 146–52.

by court historians and others, which glorify his remarkable political and military achievements and describe, admiringly or critically, his religious experiments. Several of the most important works that fall into the first category have already been described. These include the translation of Bâbor's memoirs into Persian, as well as the production of several copies of those memoirs as illustrated manuscripts that illustrate episodes—not all of them reverential—of his life, and his encouragement of Golbadan Begim and others who had known Bâbor to record their memories of him. In addition to explicitly documenting the early political and military history of his dynasty, Akbar, who was very probably illiterate and did not either write or dictate his own memoir, commissioned histories, many illustrated with Persian-style miniatures, which taken with the translation of Bâbor's memoirs and other documents, represent a carefully conceived and constructed imperial ethos. These histories include many illustrated manuscripts, which Akbar and later emperors used to remind themselves and the few who might be privileged to see such texts in the imperial library, of their Islamic and as well as their Timurid and Chengisid legitimacy.

The first such work was the *Târikh-e alfi*, commissioned in 1581, a history of Islam from the time of the Prophet to the Mughal era, commemorating the beginning of the second Islamic milllenium (in 1591), over which Akbar would preside in India.[47] It followed the anonymous *Târikh-e Khândân Timuriyye*, known as the *Timur-nâme* of 1584, a third of which is devoted to the Mughals.[48] In the same vein, an illustrated copy of Rashid al-Din's celebrated chronicle was commissioned, under the title *Chengiz-nâme*, in 1595. The paintings that illustrate the *Chengiz-nâme* are stylistically late Mughal, but in them the Mongols are distinguished from later Muslim rulers by their headgear as well as by having Chengis's wife, in one painting, sitting beside a very benign-appearing conqueror, who is dressed, anachronistically, as a Muslim sultan sitting on a typically Timurid octagonal-shaped throne.[49]

47 Qâzi Ahmad Tattavi, *Târikh-e alfi*, ed. Sayyid Ali Âl-Dâvud (Tehran, 1999).
48 Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 2076.
49 See Amina Okada, *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court* (New York, 1992), pp. 17–26.

In addition to Akbar's careful, incremental creation of an official Mughal dynastic historiography, which, in certain implicit ways, Jahângir perpetuated and embellished in his autobiography, the second strain of Indo-Persian historiography is represented by court histories. The most important of these works is the monumental historical and statistical work written by Akbar's minister and amanuensis, Abu'l-Fazl Allâmi. This is the two-volume *Akbar-nâme* (1596), and its third statistical gazetteer volume, known as the *Â'in-e Akbari*.[50] This history and gazetteer comprise the basis for evaluating the person of Akbar and, beyond that, for understanding the structure of the Mughal Empire in the late 16th century. The narrative section of the *Akbar-nâme* is a traditional, if massive, panegyric history written in the elaborate, often allusive and elusive Persian style favored by well-educated writers such as Khwândamir and Abu'l-Fazl. While it is less commonly read than its statistical volume and has never been published in a modern, critically edited translation, it contains a wealth of information on Akbar's life as well as on the political and military affairs of the empire. The *Â'in-e akbari* contains the greatest amount of extant statistics for the empire at any period, as nearly all of the Mughal administrative records were lost, destroyed evidently in the various 18th and 19th-century sieges of Delhi. Only occasional surveys of provincial revenue information are available for later periods. Therefore, virtually all later analyses of the administrative structure and economy of the empire are based on this text. Many are merely summaries of Abu'l-Fazl's work; others, particularly by members of the Aligarh University school of historians, are incisive and sophisticated analyses of that volume.[51]

Reading the *Akbar-nâme* it is essential to understand, however, that Abu'l-Fazl was not a journeyman historian, but wrote, in the apt words of the Mughal historian, John Richards, as "the

50 Abu'l-Fazl Allami, *Akbar-nâme*, ed. Gholâm-Rezâ Tabâtabâ'i-Majd, vol. 1 (Tehran, 1993); tr. H. Beveridge (3 vols., Calcutta, 1897–1939); *Â'in-e Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann (2 vols., Calcutta, 1866–67); rev. ed. and tr. D.C. Phillott (3 vols. Calcutta, 1939–49).

51 A recent example is Shireen Moosvi's careful work *The Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1595* (Delhi, 1987).

leading Timurid ideologue and propagandist."[52] The son of a religious scholar, as young man Abu'l-Fazl studied both traditional Islamic and Sufi thought, as well as Greco-Islamic texts. He portrayed Akbar not simply as the supremely successful emperor and administrator that he was, but as a semi-divine figure, someone who stood above the rest of humanity, a ruler who possessed *farr*, the charismatic divine quality of pre-Islamic Iranian monarchs, as well as the Sufi attributes of the "Perfect Man." In his elaborate construction of Akbar's imperial persona, Abu'l-Fazl also seems to have borrowed from Zoroastrian thought as well as the Neo-Platonic illuminationist ideas that the Muslim philosopher/theologian Sohrawardi (d. 1191), popularized in the Muslim world, and which became especially influential in Shi'i Iran. In his portrayal, Abu'l-Fazl seemingly connected these illuminationist ideas with the Mughal's Chengisid past by tracing God's divine illumination first from Adam, through the Biblical prophets to a Turk, eventually leading, two millennia later, to the miraculous impregnation of the Mongol queen, Alan Qoa, by a shaft of light. The ancestor of Chengis Khan was a son of this miracle, through whom the light passed ultimately to Timur and from him, eventually to Bâbor and Akbar. Ultimately, Abu'l-Fazl's complex ideology was as much an imperial as an Islamic one, for he accepted the legitimacy of other religions, including Hinduism, whose pantheism he, like Amir Khosrow Dehlavi in the 14th century, compared favorably with Islam. No other historian of Mughal rulers contrived such a complex legitimizing ideology for any member of the dynasty.

Akbar's religious experiments ultimately led him to form an imperial cult, perhaps based on the Sufi master-disciple relationship of *morshed* and *morid* (master and disciple) and to claim the status as the supreme arbiter of religious doctrine in Muslim India, very much like the *mojtahed* in Shi'i Islam. His claims triggered a strong reaction among many ulama of the period. One of these men, Abd-al-Qâder Badâ'uni (1540–c. 1615) wrote the *Montakhab-al-tavârikh*, an Indo-Muslim history from Mahmud of Ghazna's era to

52 John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India. Vol. 1.5 The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 45.

1596, in which he bitterly criticized Akbar's religious claims, and those who, like Abu'l-Fazl, supported them.[53] Badâ'uni was an impressive scholar, who had earlier, with the assistance of Brahmans, prepared a Persian translation of the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*. Primarily an orthodox Hanafi Sunni scholar and mystically-inclined Muslim, who also translated Arabic texts into Persian, Badâ'uni's history was in the tradition of the Sultanate historian Barani. Writing in secret, Badâ'uni bristled at Akbar's latitudinarian beliefs, and rejected the emperor's claim to unique religious status as a heresy. In doing so, he probably expressed the religious views of the majority Mughal ulama.

Regarding other Indo-Persian works that were written at this time or later, four are especially notable, although none have the substance or controversial nature of Abu'l-Fazl's and Badâ'uni's works. Two written in Akbar's time are Nezâm-al-Din Ahmad Haravi's *Tabaqât-e Akbari,* a largely annalistic account up to 1594, but the first devoted entirely to Indo-Muslim history,[54] and Mohammad Âref Qandahâri's fragmentary *Târikh-e Akbari*, written by a man who was a steward of Akbar's *atabeg*, Beyram Khan.[55] Important works written in the 18th century, covering the entire Mughal era, including Akbar's reign, are two biographical dictionaries of Mughal nobles: Shâhavâz Owrangâbâdi's *Ma'âther-al-omarâ'* and the Hindu author, Ray Kewal Ram's less complete *Tadhkerat-al-omarâ'*.[56] As is also true for the entire Mughal era and that of the Sultanate as well, the Persian texts relevant for a full understanding of Indo-Muslim society include regional histories, Sufi treatises, and biographical accounts of poets, religious scholars and Sufis, a few of which are noted below.

53 Abd-al-Qâder Badâ'uni, *Montakhab-al-tavârikh*, ed. and tr. George S.D.A. Ranking as *Muntakhabu-t Tawârikh of 'Abdu-l Qadir … known as Al-Badaoni*. Revised by B.P. Ambashthya (Calcutta, 1898; repr. 3 vols. Patna, 1973).

54 Nezâm-al-Din al-Haravi, *Tabaqât-e akbari*, ed. B. De and M. Hidayat Hosain (3 vols., Calcutta, 1913–40); tr. B. De and B. Prashad (3 vols., Calcutta, 1913–40).

55 Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 1119.

56 Shâh Nawâz Khan Owrangâbâdi, *Ma'âther-al-omara'*, ed. Maulavi Abdur-Rahim and Maulavi Mirza Ashraf Ali (3 vols., Calcutta, 1888–91). For Ray Kêwal Râm (Kêwalrâm), *Tadhkerat-al-omarâ'*, see Marshall, I, 880.

Jahângir

The historical works devoted to Akbar also contain information about his son, particularly the latter's rebellion against his father's authority, a legacy of the Turko-Mongol appanage system that the Mughals, unlike their Ottoman and Safavid contemporaries, never abolished in favor of harem-reared offspring. A near contemporary work that contains valuable personal information on Jahângir's early years is Gheyrat Khan Kâmgâr's *Ma'âther-e Jahângiri*,[57] but the principal source for his reign is Jahângir's Persian autobiography. Unlike a traditional historian, he makes no attempt to place his reign within a larger context. Nor does he explicitly legitimize himself in terms of either his Islamic or his Turko-Mongol identity. He praises his father's religious policies, thus implicitly siding with Abu'l-Fazl, rather than Badâ'uni, and indeed Jahângir conveys an imperial rather than a religious image of his rule, reminding his readers of his role as a "Just Sultan," albeit a Muslim one. Apart from the comments on the *Tuzok-e Jahângiri* as an autobiographical text made above, it is worth noting that in it Jahângir implicitly demonstrates how successful Akbar had been in establishing an almost uncontested Mughal hegemony in northwestern and northern India. Jahângir, unlike his father, never seems to have felt a need to demonstrate or illustrate his legitimacy, but instead revels in his power and wealth, enjoying the exercise of secure imperial authority.[58]

Apart from regional histories, some of which are discussed below, there are a number of other Persian historical works from the period of Jahângir's rule and era, among them another intriguing autobiographical account by an imperial officer of Persian descent, Ala'-al-Din Esfahâni, usually known as Mirzâ Nathan, whose *Bahârestân-e gheybi* not only gives first-hand information about Mughal campaigns in Bengal and Orissa in eastern India, but also

57 Kâmgâr Hoseyni, Gheyrat Khan. *Ma'âther-i Jahângiri*, tr. Thakur Ram Singh, *Journal of Indian History* 7/2 (August 1928), and following issues.

58 Jahângir, *Jahângir-nâme*; see Stephen F. Dale. *The Muslims Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 199–202.

illustrate the ritualized ties of loyalty that bound many such men to Mughal emperors.[59]

Shâh Jahân

Jahângir provides many personal details about his successor Shâh Jahân's early, princely, history in his memoirs, including not only many proud, affectionate accounts of his dynamic, successful son, but also a record of the latter's rebellion against his father. One work supplements these references. It contains Jahângir's verse letters to his son when he was in rebellion, the *Goldaste-ye farâmin-e Jahângir.* Jahângir's frequent comments on his son's career and behavior are, unfortunately, the only source of information about Shâh Jahân's personal traits, as Shâh Jahân himself did not write an autobiography His grandiose building projects, nonetheless, constitute something of an architectural memorial, dramatically proclaiming the imperial assumptions of a man who preferred to be known as the Second Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction, the Second Timur. His historians were careful to praise Shâh Jahân's personal supervision of his monuments as a reflection of this carefully articulated imperial ideology, and a similar point can be made about court painting, for as the art historian Ebba Koch has cogently observed, "The emperor did not want to leave historiography to the historians."[60]

Shâh Jahân was a Hanafi Sunni Muslim, who, far more than his grandfather, publicly exhibited his commitment to a restrained orthodoxy, but formal histories of the reign, like his architecture and painting, emphasized his imperial identity more than his Islamic faith. The most important of these court histories is the three-volume work of Abd-al-Hamid Lâhuri and Mohammad Vâreth known as the *Pâdshâh-nâme*, a panegyric work in the imperial tradition, but not the legitimizing sophistication, of Abu'l-Fazl's *Akbar-nâme*,

59 Alâ'-al-Din "Gheybi" Esfahâni, Nathan (Mirzâ Nat'han), *Bahârestân-e gheybi*, tr. by M.I. Borah Gauhati as *Baharistan-i Ghaybi. A History of the Mughal Wars in Assam, Cooch Behar … by Mirza Nathan* (Assam, 1936).

60 Ebba Koch, *Mughal Art and Imperial Ideology* (New Delhi, 2001), p. 132.

but one that contains basic and important information on the conduct of the empire.[61] Lâhuri's work and that of other historians of Shâh Jahân's reign provide even less information about Shâh Jahân's personality than can be gleaned from Abu'l-Fazl's work on Akbar. The other general histories of the reign, such as a *Shâh Jahân-nâme* by Hasan Qazvini and another work of the same title by Mohammad Tâher Âshnâ, sometimes known as Enâyat Khan, add little to Lâhuri's work.[62] Two useful diplomatic sources supplement the political information in these histories. One, the *Ahkâm-e Shâh Jahân* by Bagwân Das, contains official letters from Shâh Jahân, while a second, Mohammad Tâher Vahid's *Enshâ'-e Tâher* is a Safavid source, which contains letters of the Safavid shahs to Shâh Jahân and his sons.[63] An intriguing description of court festivals and Shâh Jahân's highly ritualized daily routine is the work by Chandarbhan Barahman, a *monshi* of Shâh Jahân, entitled *Chahâr chaman*,[64] while an affecting short work, which describes the death of Momtâz Mahâll as well as verses by Shâh Jahân describing her tomb, is entitled the *Târikh-e rowze-ye Momtâz Mahâll*.[65]

Apart from histories focused on Shâh Jahân, there is a category of texts and documents connected with his favorite son and presumptive heir, Dârâ Shokuh. Most of this material is directly related to the typical Turko-Mongol war of succession that broke out between Dârâ Shokuh and his three brothers when Shâh Jahân fell seriously ill in 1657. The war culminated in Owrangzib's victory and the death of his three brothers, including the judicial murder for heresy of Dârâ Shokuh and afterwards, his sons. The typically bloody outcome of the war, which occurred even as Shâh Jahân recovered his health, is a major topic in Indian historiography, although more for historians who wrote in the 20th century during

61 Abd-al-Hamid Lâhuri and Mohammad Vâreth, *Pâdshâh-nâme*, ed. Kabir Al-Din Ahmad and Abd Al-Rahim, as *Bâdshâh Nâmah* (2 vols., Calcutta, 1866–72).

62 Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 240 and 273.

63 Bhagwândas, *Ahkâm-e Shâh Jahân*, see Marshall, I, 343. Mohammad Tâher Vahid Qazvini, *Enshâ'-e Tâher Vahid* (lith., Lucknow, 1844).

64 Chandarbhân Barahman, *Chahâr chaman* (ed. Bombay, 1853).

65 Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 1313.

the independence movement, than in Indo-Persian sources. In many of these later works, particularly in the writings of Hindu or secular Indian authors, the war is seen as a metaphor for the communal tensions that led to the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, a Manichean struggle between light, as represented by Dârâ Shokuh, a man with the latitudinarian interests and cultural attitudes of the later Akbar, and darkness, personified by the ruthless Owrangzib, an austere Hanafi Sunni legalist.[66] Owrangzib, who later discouraged the writing of history, as well as what he considered to be un-Islamic painting and music, wrote almost nothing himself, either before or after he came to the throne, but Dârâ Shokuh was an intellectual, and authored a number of Persian works that illumined his religious attitudes and help to explain why Owrangzib felt he could invoke Islam to legitimize the execution of his brother, who, like any loser in the Mughal wars of succession, would have been killed whatever his religious beliefs.

Dârâ Shokuh's single most important work was the *Majma'-al-bahreyn*, a treatise in which the prince argued that Indians should recognize the essential similarity of Islam and Hinduism.[67] In doing so, Dârâ Shokuh advanced a decidedly minority Indo-Muslim view, but not an original one, as Amir Khosrow Dehlavi had expressed essentially the same idea in his 14th-century verse, as did the Sikhs in their attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam before and during the Mughal era. Dârâ Shokuh's work is an important text in Indo-Persian religious historiography, as are his other writings on Sufism, his Persian *divan*, in which he used *Qâderi* as his *takhallos* or pen name, proclaiming one of his Sufi associations, and a series of questions, which he addressed to a Hindu ascetic, the *So'âl o javâb-e Dârâ shokuh va Bâbâ Lâl*.[68]

66 Jadunath Sarkar, "Aurangzib, his life and character," in Sarkar, *Studies in Aurangzib's Reign* (Calcutta, 1989), pp. 1–31 and Dale, *The Muslim Empires*, pp. 256–69.

67 Dârâ Shokuh, *Majma'-al-bahreyn*, ed. and tr. M. Mahfuz al-Haq (Calcutta, 1929); ed. Mohammad Rezâ Jalâli-Nâ'ini (Tehran, 1956).

68 *Divân-e Dârâ Shokuh*, ed. Ahmad Nabi Khan (Lahore, 1969); ed. M. Heydariyân (Mashhad, 1985); idem, *So'âl va javâb-e Dârâ Shokuh-u Bâbâ Lâl* (Delhi, 1885).

Owrangzib

The long reign of the last great Mughal emperor Owrangzib or, as he is also known, Âlamgir (r. 1658–1707) is recorded in a number of Persian sources, both formal histories as well as letters and other materials. Owrangzib is frequently and often favorably mentioned in the histories Shâh Jahân's reign, but perhaps the single most revealing source in terms of its insight into the prince's ambitions, motives and tactics is the collection of letters which Owrangzib wrote in the 1650s to his father, his brothers, officials and various commanders: the *Âdâb-e Âlamgiri*, compiled by his long-time *monshi*, Shaikh Abu'l-Fath, otherwise known as Qâbel Khan.

> These number more than 600 … and cover the entire period from 1650 to the dethronement and captivity of Shah Jahan … [and reveal] his hopes and fears, plans and movements during the war of succession, and his relations with his captive father.[69]

An intriguing eyewitness but dramatized account of the wars of succession is the *Âshub-nâme-ye Hendustân*, a poetic version by Beheshti of Shiraz, a court poet of Morâd Bakhsh, one of the defeated princes.[70] Several court histories of Owrangzib's reign are extant and predictably written in the service and from the viewpoint of the emperor. These include the *Âlamgir-nâme*, written by another one of Owrangzib's *monshis,* Mohammad Kâzem Amin, a son of Hasan Qazvini, cited above,[71] the *Mer'ât-al-âlam* by Mohammad Bakhtâvar Khan, a 'boon companion' of Owrangzib,[72] and the monumental history by one of the emperor's nobles, Khâfi Khan, the *Montakhab-al-lobâb*.[73] The first two histories cover

69 Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib based on Original Sources* (Calcutta, repr. 1925), I, p. 103. In his footnotes, Sarkar, one of the great 20th-century Indian historians, provides the single most complete set of references to Indo-Persian historical material for Owrangzib's life.

70 For Beheshti Shirâzi, *Âshub-nâme-ye Hendustân*, see Marshall, I, 362.

71 Mohammad Kâzem Amin, *Âlamgir-nâme*, ed. Khadim Husain and 'Abd al-Haiy (2 vols., Calcutta, 1865–73).

72 For Mohammad Bahtâvar Khan, *Mer'ât-al-âlam*, see Marshall, I, 314, ii.

73 Khâfi Khan, *Montakhab-al-lobâb*, ed. Maulaví Kabír al-Dín Ahmed and Ghulám Qádir as *The Muntakhab al-lubāb* (Calcutta, 1860–74); tr. Elliot and Dowson, VII, pp. 207–533.

only the first ten years of the reign, while the third encompasses the entire half-century period. Taken together these works provide a detailed political and military survey of Owrangzib's reign informed by the typical bias of court historians.

Among biographical texts we may note the work of a famous but not necessarily best educated Mughal princess in middle and late 17th century, Jahânârâ Begim, who belonged to the Qâderi order. Like so many other members of the Mughal family, she revered the Cheshti order as well, and wrote a Persian biography of Mo'in-al-Din Cheshti, the *Mo'nes-al-arvâh*.[74]

Bahâdor Shâh and the Later Mughals

Indo-Persian historical writing in Persian continued throughout the 18th century and even into the British period. The prevalence of Persian-language texts decreased, however, as the Mughal Empire began to unravel following Owrangzib's death in 1707, and ceased to exist as an empire in 1739, after Nâder Shah Afshâr invaded India, sacked Delhi and seized the imperial treasury, as well as Shâh Jahân's Peacock Throne. The impoverishment and political distraction of the dynasty and its successor states sharply limited patronage for court patronized writing of all kinds, and the Indo-Muslim literati's increasing use of Urdu in the 18th century also contributed to the gradual decline of writing in Persian. Initially, however, Indo-Muslim writers used Urdu primarily for composing poetry. It did not become a common historical language until the later 19th century.

Most of the Indo-Persian historians who wrote either prose or verse histories of the Mughal emperors in the early 18th century observed the narrative and panegyric conventions of traditional Indo-Persian narratives, even while the events they describe reflect the precipitate deterioration of the Empire during the first four decades of the 18th century. The works of this period are more notable for what their authors do not analyze—the causes of imperial decline. Unlike such Ottoman historians such as the late 16th-century writer and official Mostafâ Âli, who began to fret about their dy-

74 See Marshall, I, 770, i.

nasty's decline even while it was still aggressively expanding into Europe, 17th and 18th-century Indo-Persian writers do not seem to have detected, perceived, or commented on fundamental problems with the state until Nâder Shah's invasion and the subsequent disintegration of the Empire. At least they did not generate a genre of decline literature, which has spawned an historiographical cottage industry among modern Ottoman historians. A number of Mughal historians wrote annalistic histories, in which they describe and comment dolefully on the events of the early 18th century. Yet, beyond describing cataclysmic events and even sometimes conveying a profound sense of loss as events spiraled out of control, these writers do not offer overarching theories to explain the underlying problems of the dynasty. No Indo-Persian historian, for example, is known to have followed the Ottoman example and invoked the cyclical theories of the 14th-century philosophical historian Ebn-Khaldun (d. 1406), who offered a complex generational explanation for dynastic decline and collapse. A similar point can be made about late 17th and early 18th-century Safavid historians.

Indo-Persian works that record Indo-Muslim history in the early 18th century include several accounts of the typical wars of succession that in Mughal history erupted on the death of an emperor. These chronicle the struggle that led to the enthronement of the sixty-five year old Bahâdor Shâh (r. 1707–12), as well as the conflict precipitated by Bahâdor Shâh's death, leading to the enthronement of Jahândâr Shâh (r. 1712–13), who was deposed by his nephew Farrokhsiyâr (r. 1713–19) a year later. This instability was symptomatic of Mughal decline during the period. Eyewitnesses wrote the most interesting of these narratives, including Ali Mirzâ Nur-al-Din Mohammad's depiction of the war for succession after Owrangzib's death, the *Bahâdor Shâh-nâme*; Mohammad Khalil Khʷâje's *Târikh-e shâhanshâhi*, which narrates the history of the years 1707 to 1713; and Sayyid Mohammad Qâsem Hoseyni Ebrat's *Ebrat-nâme*, a chronicle of the reigns of both Bahâdor Shâh and Farrokhsiyâr.[75]

75 For Mirzâ Nur-al-Din Ali, *Bahâdor Shâh-nâme*; Khʷâje Mohammad Khalil, *Târikh-e shâhânshâhi*; and Sayyid Mohammad Qâsem Hoseyni Ebrat, *Ebrat-nâme*, see Marshall, I, 211, i; 1196; and 689 respectively.

The reign of Mohammad Shâh (r. 1719–48), the last Mughal who can be considered to have been an independent emperor, as least until 1739, is described in the valuable late 18th-century work by Mohammad Bakhsh Âshub, the *Târikh-e Mohammad Shâh Pâdeshâh* (1782), in which the author not only describes Nâder Shah's invasion, but lists earlier Persian sources for the history of the Mughal dynasty.[76] A useful administrative work of the type produced for most Mughal rulers is the Hindu Thakur Lal's *Dastur-al-amal-e shâhanshâhi*, which lists Indian provinces and their revenues. Another late 18th-century work, whose eyewitness accounts movingly convey the pathetic state of the Mughals from 1759 to 1791, is Kheyr-al-Din Mohammad Ilâhâbâdi's *Ebrat-nâma*, a work whose title, the "Book of Admonition," suggests that Indo-Muslim authors were beginning to respond to the collapse of Mughal sovereignty.[77]

Several manuscripts deal with Nâder Shah's invasion of India in 1739, an event that starkly revealed the ineptitude of the Mughal dynasty and also terminated the existence of the Empire *qua* empire. Two eyewitnesses described Nâder Shah's invasion. These are Abd-al-Karim b. Âqebat Mohammad Kashmiri, who wrote the *Nâder-nâme,* otherwise known as the *Bayân-e vâqe'*,[78] and the historian, lexicographer and poet, Ânand Ram Mokhles, a Hindu author of the important Khatri caste group, who wrote the *Badâ'e'-e vaqâ'e'*.[79] Mokhles personifies the mastery of Persian achieved by many Hindus during the Mughal period, and their participation in Indo-Persian scholarship and historiography. One especially important scholar, who wrote in the simple, direct style of a memoir rather than the florid language of the court history, not only covered these early years of the century, but also describes the reigns of the seven Mughal monarchs who reigned up to the early 19th cen-

76 Mohammad Bakhsh Âshub, *Târikh-e Mohammad Shâh Pâdeshâh*, see Marshall, I, 1143, i.

77 For Mohammad Ilâhâbâdi, *Ebrat-nâme*, see Marshall, I, 903, i.

78 Abd-al-Karim b. Âqebat-Mahmud b. Kashmiri, *Bayân-e vâqe'* or *Nâder-nâme*. Condensed tr. by F. Gladwin as *The Memoirs of Khojeh Abdulkurrem* (Calcutta, 1788 and 1813).

79 For Anand Râm Mokhles, *Badâ'e'-e vaqâ'e'*, see Storey, *Persian Literature* I, pp. 1319–20.

tury. This was Gholâm-Hoseyn Khan Tabâtabâ'i (1727–ca. 1814), who personified the political and cultural transition from Mughal to British rule in the 18th century. He served both the late Mughal emperor Shâh Âlam and the British; and in his history, the *Siyar-al-mota'akhkherin*, he actually criticizes his new masters for their policies in late 18th-century Bengal, which resulted in a devastating famine and a collapse of the economy in one of India's richest provinces.[80]

An important linguistic development that occurred during the tumultuous 18th century was the increasing use of Urdu in Agra and Delhi. Some panegyric poets began addressing the emperors in this language, literally the language of the 'ordu,' the Turko-Mongol camp. Written in the Arabic script, Urdu was and still is a highly Persianized language in its vocabulary and literary heritage. It developed first in the Deccan or central Indian sultanates of Bijâpur and Golconda, which Owrangzib conquered in the late 17th century, and by that time some members of the north Indian literati had begun using this vernacular. The acceptance of Urdu was coincident with and partly the consequence of the decline of the highly Persianized Mughal court. One individual whose literary career exemplifies this linguistic transition was Mir Mohammad-Taqi Mir (1723–1810), who in the *Nekât-al-sho'arâ* of 1752, defined this language, first pejoratively labeled as *zabân-e rikhte*, a mixed or mongrel tongue. Mir Mohammad-Taqi Mir was born in Agra, one of the Mughal capitals, but eventually moved to Lucknow, which became the center of Urdu high culture in the late 18th century. He wrote some verse in Persian, but his Urdu *ghazal*s made him famous, for their "luminous … intensity," "simplicitly" and "use of the vernacular, which he and his peers enthusiastically transformed into a powerful literary language."[81] High Lucknow Urdu initially contained as much as eighty to ninety percent Persian vocabulary, and Urdu poems often contained whole lines of Persian words, but with an Urdu verb. Its poetry was entirely based on Persian genres.

80 Gholâm-Hoseyn Khan Tabâtabâ'i, *Siyâr-al-mota'akhkherin*, ed. Hukeem Abdool Mujeed (Calcutta, 1833).

81 C.M. Naim, ed. and tr., *Zikr-i Mir* (New Delhi, 1999), p. 5.

Yet, while helping to create a new literary language, Taqi Mir wrote all his prose works and his own autobiography in Persian, which, as the works cited above indicate, remained the language of choice for historians throughout the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. The continued use of Persian for all scholarly works and other compositions parallels the initial use of Arabic among Persian speakers after the Islamic conquests. It was not until after 1857 that Urdu supplanted Persian for scholarly purposes.[82]

6. The British and Indo-Persian Literature

The British came increasingly to influence north India after they gained control of Bengal in 1765, an event that, in retrospect, led inexorably to their expansion up the Gangetic valley towards Delhi. While many early officials carefully conciliated both Hindus and Muslims by patronizing their culture, during the early decades of the 19th century British policy gradually shifted to favor the use of English in administration and the support for English education and culture. Yet, even though the East India Company abolished Persian as its official language in 1835, Persian continued to serve Indo-Muslim historians, scholars and scientists as their principal language of expression and it became, briefly in Bengal, the language of modernity when the renowned Hindu intellectual Ram Mohan Roy published the Persian newspaper *Mer'ât-al-akhbâr* (1822). Indeed, in the first half of the 19th century a substantial number of Persian-language histories were written in India, many of them at the provincial courts that emerged as autonomous or independent states as the Mughals faded into penury and political insignificance. More Persian books were published in 19th-century

82 Marc Gaborieau has documented the shift from Persian to Urdu prose in the particular case of the so-called Wahhabi Movement in his article "Late Persian, early Urdu: The case of 'Wahhabi' literature (1818–1857)," in Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, ed., *Confluence of Cultures, French Contributions to Indo-Persian Studies* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 170–96.

India than in Iran during the same period.[83] These works included general histories, histories of the Timurids and histories of Indian regions. One, by a Mufti Ali-al-Din, yet another work titled *Ebrat-nâme*, is a history of the Sikhs written in an unusually lucid style in which the author cogently criticizes earlier works.[84] Perhaps the most intriguing of all the Persian histories produced during this period, though, is Din Mohammad's *Ferâsat-nâme*, the 'Book of Insight' or 'Perception.' This latter author evidently choose this title because he evaluates the relative strengths and weaknesses of Indians and the British, and criticized regional rulers, such as the Nawabs of Awadh for their lethargy and incompetence. This work is one of the few known attempts by a Persian-language historian to analyze systematically the decline of Indo-Muslim, that is Mughal power.[85]

It is difficult to trace the intellectual heritage of Indo-Persian authors such as Mufti Ali-al-Din and Din Mohammad, but in their works they exhibit a critical spirit, which suggests the possibility at least, of their being influenced by contact with British or European notions of historical scholarship. Certainly one of the intriguing cultural developments that occurred as the British established themselves and took control of the Indian economy was the shift in the perspective of some Indo-Persian authors from traditional notions of historical and literary production to a European tradition of scientific scholarship. Initially British officials, such as the judge and scholar Sir William Jones initiated this change, but later leading Indian Muslims such as Sir Sayyid (Syed) Ahmad Khan participated.

Sir William Jones, who wrote his *Grammar of the Persian Language* in 1771, before leaving for Kolkatta, arrived in India in 1783,

83 See Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi's revisionist essay on Persianate culture in late Mughal and early British India, "The Homeless texts of Persian modernity," in Ramin Jahanbegloo, ed., *Iran between Tradition and Modernity* (Lanham, MD, 2004), pp. 129–57.

84 Edited by Muhammad Bâqar as *'Ibrat-nâma* (Lahore, 1961).

85 Sharif Husain Qasemi, "Persian chronicles in the nineteenth century," in Alam, Delvoye and Gaborieau, eds., *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture*, pp. 410–14.

a time when many British officials still respected Indian culture, whether Islam or Hinduism, Persian or Sanskrit. He urged his compatriots to study Persian, the diplomatic language of north India, which he also praised as the language of a great civilization and for its rich literary culture, and by helping to found the Asiatic Society of Bengal, he institutionalized the analytical study of every aspect of Indian culture, including the Persian language. Jones himself published his famous essay on comparative linguistics, "The Sixth Discourse: On the Persians," in the Society's *Journal*, relying heavily on the work of traditional Brahmanical and Indo-Persian scholars.[86] The Asiatic Society published texts, translated histories, poetry and religious texts and gradually created an entirely a new field of 'oriental' scholarship. British officials who learned Persian for its practical use in the field sometimes became scholars and historians themselves to advance their careers or out of genuine interest—or a combination of these motives. An early product of these impulses was John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, published in 1815.[87] Malcolm, an ambassador of the East India Company to Qajar Iran, had learned Persian while commanding troops in and around Chennai/Madras in the late 18th century. Influenced by the tradition of British scholarship and the institutional patronage of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Indian Muslims began to produce 'modern' scholarship of their own.

One Indian Muslim who exemplified this trend was Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98), the son and grandson of men who had been mid-level officials at the Mughal court, but who himself later became one of the foremost modernizers of Indo-Muslim society. In 1847 Sayyid Ahmad wrote a book on the antiquities of Delhi in Urdu, the *Âthâr-al-sanâdid,* the 'Monuments of the Princes,' a work that was very likely inspired by earlier Persian histories of Agra and Delhi but which was presented as a work of traditional

86 Tavakoli-Targhi, "The homeless texts," pp. 141–42. Sir William Jones, "The Sixth Discourse: On the Persians,"*Asiatic Society Researches*, pp. 43–66. In 1897, a Persian language newspaper, the *Meftâh al-zafar* called for its readers to breathe scientific life into the language.

87 Sir John Malcolm, *A History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time* (2 vols., London, 1815).

Indo-Persian historical scholarship. While Sayyid Ahmad dedicated his book to Sir Charles Metcalf, then the British resident in Delhi, it was nonetheless recognizable as a traditional piece of *adab* literature. Seven years later, though, Sayyid Ahmad published a second edition of this text. By this time he had become a member of the British Archeological Society of Delhi, and in the Introduction he discussed the work within the context of western 'scientific' scholarship exemplified by articles in the Asiatic Society of Bengal.[88] Thus, if Mir Mohammad-Taqi Mir exemplifies the transition from Persian to Urdu, Sayyid Ahmad Khan personifies the later evolution of Indo-Persian historical and cultural scholarship from traditional Persianate models to the subjects of western-style study. As English and western-style scholarship took hold in India, many other Indian Muslims followed in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's path. The traditional literary *tadhkera* became, in the 1929 book of Mohammad Abdu'l-Ghani for example, a western-style history of Indo-Persian literature of the Mughal era.[89]

7. Provincial Histories

Many authors continued to compose important Persian-language histories and texts on Mughal administration during the latter half of the 18th century, even as the dynasty declined into a state of political impotence. These include some of the histories and biographical dictionaries cited above, and some literary scholars also continued to compose traditional *tadhkera*s of Persian-language poets. Iranian literati still migrated to India in this period, although in reduced numbers after the nearly contemporaneous collapse of both the Safavid and Mughal dynasties. Some of these émigrés found refuge and employment in relatively wealthy provincial courts of successor states, such as Lucknow. Well before

88 Monica Juneja, *Architecture in Medieval India* (New Delhi, 2001), "Introduction," pp. 10–13.

89 Mohammad Abdu'l-Ghani, *A History of Persian Language & Literature at the Mughul Court* (3 vols., Allahabad, 1929–30).

this, the Deccan sultanates had long been centers of patronage for both Persian literati and scholars, as well as for local writers and intellectuals. Bijapur and Golconda were the two most important provincial centers in this regard. Bijapur, a state with a Twelver Shi'i dynasty, was ideologically most closely connected with Iran. Originally a province of the Bahmani sultanate, whose rise dated from the early Sultanate era in 1294, Bijapur became a powerful independent state with the accession of Yusof Âdel-Shâh in 1494 and remained so until Owrangzib's conquest in 1686. Even if the Âdel-Shâhi dynasty did not control the lavish resources available to the Mughals, it attracted Iranian émigrés to its explicitly Shi'i court, who obliged with Persian-language histories.

Two examples are the *Tadhkerat-al-moluk* (ca. 1612), a history of the Âdel-Shâhis, including a survey of the Mughals, written by Rafi'-al-Din Ebrâhim Shirâzi and Fozuni Astarâbâdi's *Fotuhat-e Âdel-shâhi* or *Târikh-e Fozuni* (ca. 1645), a more limited history of just the dynasty.[90] Both works are traditional Persianate dynastic histories. The close connection between these two Shi'i states generated a considerable number of Persianate texts, including the piquant late 17th-century work of one Mohammad Mahdi Vâsef, the *Mazhar-al-e'jâz,* a collection of revealing anecdotes about everyday life in Bijapur and Iran.[91]

As for the Qotb-Shâhi rulers of Golconda, they were the subject of contemporary Persian-language histories, such as the anonymous *Târikh-e Soltân Mohammad Qotb-shâhi* (ca. 1616), and works by later authors who lived in the still highly Persianate culture of the 18th-century Hyderabad successor state, such as the Hindu Girdhari Lal, who in his *Târikh-e zafre* wrote a history of the dynasty, the later Mughals and the rulers of the principal Deccani successor dynasty, the Nezâms of Hyderabad.[92] The Qotb-Shâhi rulers were especially known for their literary interests and patronage. Abd-Allâh Qotb-Shâhi (r. 1625–73) himself wrote *divans* in both

90 Rafi'-al-Din Ebrâhim Shirâzi, *Tadhkerat-al-moluk*, abridged tr. of an extract by J.S. King as *The History of the Bahmanî Dynasty …* (London, 1900); for Fozuni Astarâbâdi, *Fotuhât-e Âdelshâhi*, see Marshall, I, 473.

91 See Marshall, I, 1874.

92 Ibid., I, 535A (p. 547).

Persian and Deccani Urdu. Persian continued to be the most prestigious historical and literary language during his reign, but he and earlier members of the dynasty were, in fact, directly responsible for the initial development of Urdu as an accepted Indo-Muslim literary language, which only later gained acceptance in Agra and Delhi.[93]

Apart from such independent states as Bijapur and Golconda, Persian-language historical, literary, religious and other texts were composed in virtually every region of India over which Persian speaking Muslims extended their control, dating from the early years of the Ghaznavid era until the late 19th century. Two regions or provinces of particular importance, due to their wealth and strategic location, were Bengal and Gujerat.[94] Both regions, which had experienced long periods of Muslim domination during the Sultanate period, were brought under Mughal control in the late 16th century. During the Sultanate era, the independent sultans of Bengal, one of the single wealthiest provinces in India, patronized a variety of Muslim religious institutions, as well as encouraging Persianate literary and historical writing. They did so partly to demonstrate their ties to the distant Perso-Islamic world and its prestigious, culturally legitimizing traditions. The same was true of Gujerat, whose coastline put its rulers and merchants in direct sea-borne contact with the Persian Gulf and Iran. Two genres of texts that constitute important historical sources for both regions are those devoted to *malfuzât* and *tadhkera* literature, the records of the sayings and admonitions or biographical notices of Sufi *pir*s or *morshed*s, who played pivotal roles in the Islamization of both regions. An example of such literature, especially plentiful for the Cheshti order in Bengal, is Abd-al-Rahman Cheshti's *Mer'ât-al-asrâr*.[95]

93 For a brief description of some illustrated Persian literary manuscripts from the Deccan courts see Francis Richard, "Some sixteenth-century Deccani Persian manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France," in Alam, Delvoye and Gaborieau, eds., *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture*, pp. 239–49.

94 Valuable references to regional Persian histories can be found in such modern studies as Tapan Raychaudhuri's *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir* (Calcutta, 1953).

95 See Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 65, i.

There are numerous Persian language histories for Bengal, such as Ali b. Tofeyl Ali Khan Belgrâmi's *Târikh-e Mansuri*, a history of the province down to the 19th century, or Gholâm-Hoseyn "Salim" Zeydpuri's *Riyâz-al-salâtin*, the latter a carefully organized work, which begins with a 'moqaddema' (introduction) on geography.[96] Specialized texts include the previously cited early 17th-century memoir by Mirzâ Nathan, the *Bahârestân-e gheybi* and Heydar Hoseyn Khan's biography of a Mughal governor of the province during Shâh Jahân's reign, the *Târikh-e ahvâl-e Eslâm Khân Mashhadi*.[97]

Almost as many Persian histories are extant for Gujerat. Two especially important examples are Abu-Torâb Vâli's *Târikh-e Gujarât*, the author of which was a Sayyid, who welcomed Akbar's conquest of the province in 1584, and a fine example of a traditional professional history, Sekandar b. Mohammad Manjhu b. Akbar's *Mer'ât-e Sekandari* (1611). The latter author, whom Jahângir praises in his memoirs, usefully cites six earlier Persian historical works on Gujerat that he studied in compiling his own history of the Muslim kings of the region from 1411 to 1591.[98]

The degree to which even distant provinces generated Persian-language histories is the case of the Karnâtak, a province, which Owrangzib formed in 1698, in the extreme southeastern region of the subcontinent. The Karnâtak province, with its capital at Ârkât (Br. Arcot), was originally subordinated to Mughal Hyderabad, but during the 18th century, it became a region contested by the Nezâm of Hyderabad, and the British and the French, whose hundred year's war was played out in India along the southeastern coast. The first *navâb*s of the Karnâtak, the *Navâyat*s, were members of a trading community from India's west coast, but by the mid-18th century a Mughal officer of Bukharan origin displaced this family. At least five Persian-language histories were devoted to the tumultuous events of this region, of which the most comprehensive is Borhân b. Hasan's

96 Ibid., I, 202 and 518.

97 For Nathan, see above, n. 59; for Heydar Hoseyn Khan, see Marshall, *Mughals in India* I, 574.

98 Abu-Torâb Vâli, *Târikh-e Gojarât*, ed. E. Denison Ross as *A History of Gujarat* (Calcutta, 1909); Sekandar b. Mohammad Orf Manjhu, *Mer'ât-e Sekandari*, ed. S.C. Misra and M.L. Rahman (Baroda, 1961).

Shi'i-oriented *Tuzok-e vâlâjâhi*.[99] By far the most intriguing and unusual work written in the region at this time, however, is Abd-al-Hâdi Karnâtaki's *Nasihat-nâme* (1754), a piece of advice literature in which the author pleads with local Hindus and Muslims to unite and make a common defense against Europeans.[100] Few other authors, apart from Din Mohammad in his later *Ferâsat-nâme*, cited above, are known to have written so openly and critically about the European menace to Indian and Indian Muslim sovereignty.

8. Conclusions

As was indicated in the Introduction to this chapter, Indian Muslims and especially Indian Muslims of the Mughal era, were full participants in Perso-Islamic culture. As has been implied by the greater weight given here to the Mughal period, bibliographical resources are far richer for these centuries than are available for the Delhi Sultanate era. This partly reflects the real volume of Indo-Persian historical texts that were written from the 16th through the 19th centuries, but it also is a function of the greater scholarly attention given to the later Indo-Muslim era. There is not, for example, a bibliographic work on the Sultanate period equivalent to Dara Nusserwanji Marshall's *Mughals in India*, and the lack of such a work is felt even more acutely when it comes to identifying and discussing specialized genres, such as *akhlâq*, *enshâ'* and *nasihat* literature, all of which can contain important insights into the history of the time, although these are not the topic under discussion here.[101] Nonetheless, this survey at least hints at the richness of Indo-Persian histories and related cultural works in Persian, which scholars of Indo-Muslim society and Persianate societies have only begun to exploit.

99 S. Mohammad Nainar, ed. and tr., as *Tuzak-e Vâlâjâhi* (Madras, 1934).

100 For Abd-al-Hâdi Karnâtaki's *Nasihat-nâme*, see Marshall, I, 16, i.

101 See for example, Muzaffar Alam, "Akhlaqi norms and Mughal governance," in Alam *et al*., eds., *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture*, pp. 67–98, and Ishtiyaq Ahmad Zilli, "Development of Inshā literature till the end of Akbar's reign," in ibid., pp. 309–49.

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As was indicated in the Introduction to this chapter, many of the works cited here have neither been published nor translated. Scholars interested in Indo-Persian texts should begin by consulting D. N. Marshall's superb reference work, *Mughals in India: A Bibliographical Survey, Vol. I and Supplement*, which is cited for works mentioned that have not been published in printed editions. Many translated selections from Indo-Persian histories are available in Elliot and Dowson's compendium, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians,* but these need to be checked for accuracy by comparing them with S.H. Hodivala's meticulously detailed commentary, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History. A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson's History of India as Told by its Own Historians* (Bombay, 1939). While there is no bibliographical work on the Ghurids and Sultanate equivalent to Marshall's book, Peter Jackson provides an excellent introduction to Indo-Persian historical texts dating to the Sultanate in his excellent study of its military and political history, *The Delhi Sultanate* (Cambridge, 1999). The single important historiographical analysis of Indo-Persian historians is Peter Hardy's *Historians of Medieval India* (Lonodn, 1966), one of the best studies of Muslim historians ever written. In his *Eternal Garden* (Albany, 1992), Carl Ernst offers a useful bibliography on Sufism, whose orders played such an important role in Indo-Muslim culture, and Muzaffar Alam, Françoise 'Nalini' Delvoye and Marc Gaborieau have reinvigorated Indo-Persian studies with their collection of valuable essays on many aspects of Indo-Persian culture in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture* (New Delhi, 1995). All these guides, as well as the standard bibliographies of Charles Storey and Ahmad Monzavi, are cited in the bibliography. For a useful bibliography of Mughal India, see Sri Ram Sharma, *A Bibliography of Mughal India, 1526–1707 A.D.* (Philadelphia, 1977). Finally, it should be mentioned that Aligarh Muslim University has been and remains perhaps the single most important institution for the study of Indo-Persian history, both because of its manuscript holdings and erudite faculty.

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