

Introduction

The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900)

Nile Green

DEFINING THE “PERSIANATE”

By the fifteenth century, having gained written form as a fashionable patois of the court poets of tenth-century Bukhara, Persian had become a language of governance or learning in a region that stretched from China to the Balkans, and from Siberia to southern India.¹ As a lingua franca promoted by multi-ethnic and multi-religious states, and aided further by education and diplomacy, Persian reached the zenith of its geographical and social reach between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Then, from the early nineteenth century on, it was undermined by the rise of new imperial and vernacular languages. By around 1900, the language, which had once served to connect much of Eurasia, had retreated to Iran and neighboring pockets of Afghanistan and Central Asia, where it was refashioned into the national languages of Farsi, Dari, and Tajiki. The period between 1400 and 1900, then, marks an era defined by the maximal expansion then rapid contraction of one of history’s most important languages of global exchange.

By focusing its case-study chapters on these five centuries, *The Persianate World* aims to understand the reasons behind both this expansion and contraction of Persian by identifying what functions the language was able and unable to serve in the transformative early modern and modern eras of intensifying interactions across Eurasia. By looking at the various “frontiers” of Persian—in the linguistic, geographical, and social senses of the term—the following pages chart the limits of exchange and understanding between the diverse communities brought into contact by this language. In geographical terms, this book moves beyond a static model of Persian’s linguistic geography to trace the mobility of texts and text producers as far away as the British Isles and China, as well as the localization of Persian in Central Asia and India. By focusing on “horizontal” geographical frontiers and “vertical” social frontiers, on routes and roots, this book seeks to identify the limits—indeed, the breaking points—of Persian’s usefulness as a medium of information, understanding, and affinity. If scholars now take for granted the notion that Persian was a shared lingua franca, it is important to identify more precisely who shared it, and for what (and indeed whose) purposes they did so. In focusing on the five centuries that most densely marked both the making and unmaking of one

of Eurasia's greatest lingua francas, *The Persianate World* is an exercise in tracing the contours and constraints of the cosmopolitan.

As an exercise in world history, the aim is to decouple the study of Persian from both explicit and implicit methodological nationalisms. In recent years the promotion of the "Persianate world" based implicitly around competing cultural centers in India or Iran has at times carried the ideological baggage of formerly dominant secular nationalisms, whether Iranian emphases on a "cosmopolitan worldliness" distinct from the Islamic Republic or Indian emphases on a "composite culture" distinct from Hindutva. Yet however politically appealing or morally commendable such approaches may be, they are a methodological stumbling block for world historians. For this reason, the approach developed here is neither one of teleology nor unity, but rather one that emphasizes contingency and fault lines. The purpose is neither to promote Persian nor to champion its Persianate offspring, but rather to analyze them as a field of sociolinguistic contact, and in doing so recognize the roles of hegemony and competition that are easily downplayed in celebrations of "Persianate cosmopolitanism." By decoupling the language from the exclusive heritage of any particular people or place, the aim of this book is therefore to denationalize the study of Persian in order to recognize more fully the shifting social profiles of its users and the changing spatial contours of its locales. To this end, the selection of case studies aims to accentuate the non-Iranian spaces of Persian, while in no way depreciating Iran's already well-mapped contributions to the language. In order to lay a historical framework for this world-historical approach to Persian, Iran's contributions are contextualized in the historical survey that follows below.

In recent years, Persian has been rightly celebrated for its inclusiveness, bringing together Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, and even Confucians in a collective if disjointed conversation. Against this apparently cosmopolitan backdrop, this book identifies the spatial edges, social limits, and linguistic breaking points of Persian's usage and usefulness. By asking whether in its connecting of different communities, Persian served more as a language of coercive governance, educational opportunity, or literary humanism, we can assess the limits of the "cosmopolitanism" that has been much celebrated in recent scholarship. Over the past few decades, the expansion in Persian studies has seen scholars focus on previously neglected regions of its usage (particularly India and Central Asia) and previously overlooked genres (particularly lexicography and travel writing). While collectively such scholarship has made a strong case for the humanistic and administrative achievements of Persian, we have far less sense of its functional limitations and social fractures. It is a rule of thumb that the reach of learned lingua francas is geographically broad but socially shallow: one might speak Persian (or Latin) with a fellow scholar from afar, but not with the cobbler next door. Many core questions arise from this basic problematic. Was the wide expansion of Persian enabled but ultimately disabled by its close but constraining ties to the political geographies of ruling states? How did the Islamic affiliations of Persian shape the frontiers

of its republic (or empire) of letters? What forms of social interaction or organization could Persian not cope with? At the same time as pointing to the bridge-building achievements of Persian, this book therefore traces the political, social, and semantic fault lines that the language was unable to bridge, and which explain why so successful a lingua franca could dissolve so rapidly in the nineteenth century.

In conceptual terms, the discussion of Persian's scope and impact has been framed by the terminology of the "Persianate." Before proceeding further, it is therefore necessary to scrutinize this concept and its various derivatives. The term "Persianate" was first coined in the 1960s by the world historian Marshall Hodgson in his *Venture of Islam*. Hodgson explained and defined the term as follows: "The rise of Persian had more than purely literary consequences: it served to carry a new overall cultural orientation within Islamdom. . . . Most of the more local languages of high culture that later emerged among Muslims likewise depended upon Persian wholly or in part for their prime literary inspiration. We may call all these cultural traditions, carried in Persian or reflecting Persian inspiration, 'Persianate' by extension."²

This foundational definition has two core implications. Firstly, the "rise of Persian" was a direct cultural consequence of the rise of Islamic "civilization" (another key Hodgsonian term; he also called it "Islamdom"). Secondly, this had subsequent consequences for the development of other "more local languages of high culture." As a historian, Hodgson thus thought of the "Persianate" as a linguistic and literary process based on cultural imitation, and thereby, if only implicitly, on power. Other scholars might have spoken more plainly in terms of hegemony: Bruce B. Lawrence has noted of the concept that in it, "two elements are paramount: hierarchy . . . [and] deference."³ After a considerable lull of a decade or two, Hodgson's neologism (along with its counterpart "Islamicate") began to have impact as other scholars adopted the term, particularly since the late 1990s.⁴ Yet despite its widespread adoption, "Persianate" has rarely been more fully defined, let alone problematized as a concept or demonstrated as a process. In order to lay clearer conceptual parameters for the term, the chapters in this volume take on the empirical task of investigating the Persianate as process.

Because Hodgson's foundational definition conceives of Persianate culture as a product of contact between Persian and "more local languages," it is clear that the concept cannot be tested empirically by looking at Persian, or Persianate texts in other languages, in isolation. For this reason, the case studies brought together in this book share the basic methodology of looking at languages in contact. In different chapters, this linguistic contact is between Persian and a spoken vernacular, such as Punjabi; between Persian and an emergent written vernacular, such as Turki; between Persian and an established literary language, such as Chinese; and between Persian and an ascendant imperial language, such as English. These inter-Eurasian as distinct from inter-Islamic contacts were not what Hodgson

had in mind. For his Persianate model assumed two things: an Islamic (or at least culturally “Islamicate”) context in which Persian (and Islam) were in a position of cultural and political dominance; and, by extension, a geography confined to what used to be called the eastern Islamic world (or, as Hodgson himself preferred, the “Persian zone”). By contrast, this volume not only reflects the wider historical geography of Persian’s usage that reached ultimately from China to Britain. The studies of language contact presented here also show how Persian interacted with literary and linguistic cultures that both were and were not under the cultural or political dominance of Persian or Islam. It is only by questioning the two core assumptions of Hodgson’s model that we are able to examine the actual workings of scribal literary and sociolinguistic exchange, and in so doing trace the Persianate as process.

After Hodgson’s momentous venture in rethinking Islamic civilization in world-historical terms, several other scholars have since the late 1990s proposed amendments or alternatives to his concept of the “Persianate.” The first was Bert Fragner, who put forward a model of *Persophonie*, or “Persophonia,” based on the regions connected through a shared language, in which the basic conceptual distinction is between Persian as a “mother tongue” (*Muttersprache*) and as a “second language” (*Zweitsprache*).⁵ Traced in its evolution over several centuries, this carefully demonstrated distinction allowed Fragner to distinguish his wider arena of *Persophonie* from Iran and Iranians, both in their earlier manifestations as the Shu‘ubiyya movement of the ‘Abbasid period and in their later manifestations in modern Iranian nationalism.⁶ This basic but key distinction allowed Fragner to place emphasis on the Asian traditions of multilingualism among which Persian served as a “transregional contact language” (*transregionale Kontaktsprache*) between a variety of different peoples and their own local languages.⁷

The approach developed in this book accepts Fragner’s emphasis on Persian’s role as a transregional contact language. Through the aggregation of skills that collaboration affords, the following chapters subject that sociolinguistic contact to closer scrutiny. However, *The Persianate World* differs from Fragner’s implicit emphasis on spoken Persian by instead emphasizing the importance of written Persian so as to develop a model of “Persographia” in place of “Persophonia.” For as shown in more detail below, the scribal practices and manuscript-based exchanges that expanded and sustained the Persianate world across the length of Eurasia did not necessarily require the ability to *speak* Persian.

The approach developed here also differs from Fragner, and Hodgson before him, in terms of chronology. Fragner closed his conspectus in the late seventeenth century, which he saw as marking the “decline” (*Niedergang*) of *Persophonie* through “the emancipation of the Islamized daughter-languages [*Tochtersprachen*] from the Persian foundational pattern [*Grundmuster*],” devoting only five pages to the language’s subsequent three hundred years of history.⁸ By contrast, many of the case studies in this book focus precisely on this neglected period between

1600 and 1900, the period when Persian is usually assumed to have passed its high-water mark. This shift of temporal focus allows us to show instead how the language both continued and ceased to function as a *Kontaktsprache*. As noted earlier in relation to Hodgson's assumption of Islamic political power, this later focus also allows us to analytically separate Persian's role as a transregional contact language from conditions of Muslim political supremacy, thus allowing us to question their correlation. In spatial rather than temporal terms, the attention given here to Persian in the Chinese, British, and Russian empires performs a similar purpose.

Published thirteen years after Fragner's *Die Persophonie*, the next major re-assessment of Hodgson's model was provided by Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway's edited volume, *Literacy in the Persianate World*.⁹ As anthropologist and linguist respectively, Spooner and Hanaway developed a conception of Persian as a social practice and cultural technology that was, crucially, "anchored in stable forms of writing."¹⁰ This emphasis on written Persian as distinct from a spoken lingua franca was based on a core hypothesis that "written language has had a dynamic that is distinct from that of spoken language—essentially a culture of its own."¹¹ From this starting point, Spooner and Hanaway developed a conception of Persian as a stable written koine used by specific professional groups, which should be analytically distinguished from the more linguistically protean and socially diffuse spheres of spoken language.¹² This book's model of Persographia follows Spooner and Hanaway's focus on Persian as a *written* contact language. As such, the conception of the "Persianate" developed here is not that of an intangible cultural *Geist*. Rather, it is conceived as a set of specific skills and practices belonging to small, often professionalized, groups of people who were not connected by an immaterial common language or "culture," but whose contact and communication was based on tangible written documents and often limited to specific topics. An emphasis on the practice and material of writing and on the social and spatial locations of writers (whether literati, bureaucrats, or plain scribes) are therefore key constituents of such an approach.

Another recent vision of the Persianate world (or rather, an "Iranian world") is articulated in Hamid Dabashi's *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*.¹³ In contrast to Spooner and Hanaway's focus on material writing practices, Dabashi's emphasis is on literature as a transhistorical medium of "literary humanism." Dabashi proposes that the "subversive" and "flamboyant" profile of Persianate literary culture (*adab*), which had "an effectively feminine disposition," was always distinct from "the commanding doctrinal beliefs, strict juridical injunctions, expansive metaphysical mandates" of Islam.¹⁴ This is quite contrary, then, to Hodgson. Although he devotes parts of two chapters to the Mongols and Mughals, for Dabashi, the geography or "world" of Persian literary humanism remained focused on Iran as its "epicenter."¹⁵ Beginning and ending in the geography of modern Iran, Dabashi's survey charts the history of the Persianate world as a

nationalist teleology.¹⁶ Ever since Hodgson coined the term “Persianate,” world historians have struggled with the legacy of earlier nation-based frameworks of the kind that Dabashi monumentally resurrects. The richness of its textual readings, notwithstanding, Dabashi’s Iranocentric conception of Persian literary humanism therefore stands in stark contrast to the approach adopted here.

In contrast to this downplaying of the connection between Persian and Islam, the next major work of relevance is Shahab Ahmed’s *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*.¹⁷ In his discussion of the Persianate world, Ahmed reasonably questions the concept on the grounds that it “assumptively privilege[s] linguistic and ‘ethnic’ elements” and so risks “falling into service of the ever-re-crudescent appeal of conceptualizing Islamic history in terms of ‘Persian’ and ‘Arab’ nationalist readings.”¹⁸ Instead, Ahmed proposes what he calls a “Balkans-to-Bengal complex,” which was “locally polyglot,” but whose “producers of high culture, in particular, were, above all, ‘polyphone.’”¹⁹ This emphasis on multilingualism, to put it more plainly, is important. As noted earlier, this is the key but often missing link in the cultural process Hodgson originally defined as “Persianate.” Yet for present purposes, Ahmed’s approach is ultimately unhelpful, given the foundational emphasis signaled in the subtitle of his book. As Ahmed defines it, his Balkans-to-Bengal area is “most meaningfully conceptualized not in terms of the Persianate, Turkic, or Perso-Islamic, but of *Islam*.”²⁰ This is to reject nationalist particularism only to favor Islamic particularism, even if it is Ahmed’s appealing version of Islam.

While Ahmed’s model creates conceptual openings for the study of Islam, it forecloses the remit of the Persianate by that very emphasis. Because for world historians at least, the “Balkans-to-Bengal” region is a religiously pluralistic space, a pluralism that is even more prominent when we turn to the larger Eurasian spaces across which Persian was used. In trying to take seriously the Persianate world as process through Fragner’s notion of “language contact” (*Sprachkontakt*), non-Muslims become an important part of the enquiry. To reduce the “Persianate world,” or “Balkans-to-Bengal complex,” to a rebranded version of the “eastern Islamic world” is therefore to sidestep the crucial questions about cultural contact and exchange that make the concept of the Persianate worth investigating in the first place. As with nationalist models, this brings us again to the heuristic importance of recognizing and examining “frontiers,” whether they be linguistic, spatial, social, or, in this case, religious in form. For to test the limits of Persian is to trace its fortunes in the interstitial space of these various types of boundaries.

This brings us to the final major recent work of relevance which is Stefano Pellò’s *Tūṭiyān-i Hind: specchi identitari e proiezioni cosmopolite indo-persiane* (The Parrots of India: Mirrors of Identity and Indo-Persian Cosmopolitan Projections).²¹ Together with scholarship on Judeo-Persian, Pellò’s monograph allows us to factor Eurasia’s religious pluralism into our understanding of the Persianate world and thereby its socio-religious frontiers. More than any study to date, Pellò’s

makes an evidence-based case for conceiving of Persian (more specifically, Indo-Persian) as a “pluralistic literary culture [*cultura letteraria plurale*].”²² He makes this argument through a case study of Persian texts written by Hindus who were exposed to the language through their service in the Mughal imperial bureaucracy. As a result, he argues, Persian acquired functional social effects through serving as a “tool of intercultural communication [*strumento di comunicazione transculturale*],” with the poetic anthology (*tazkira*) in particular acting as a kind of virtual space for what he terms “literary interaction [*interazione letteraria*].”²³ Pellò has identified around a hundred and fifty Hindu Persian authors (mainly but by no means exclusively poets), whose number peaked in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.²⁴ However, the broad historical survey below suggests that we should be wary of generalizing Pellò’s carefully contextualized findings into a broader picture of Persianate “cosmopolitanism” in all times and places, or assuming that literary interaction was capable of automatically producing sociopolitical harmony. This is a question to which we will return in connection with Jewish, Sikh, and Christian producers and consumers of Persian texts. Rather than generalize from particular cosmopolitan contexts, then, we must scrutinize the fluctuating social reach and alternating political functions of Persian through attention to its multiple heuristic frontiers.

In order to trace connections and disconnections across Eurasia’s many social, ethnic, and linguistic frontiers, then, we need to analytically denaturalize Persian’s civilizational ties to Islam and denationalize its primordialist ties to Iran. After all, in religious terms, for many Jewish and Christian readers of Persian, it was Jami’s treatment of the biblical figure of Joseph (Yusuf) that held greatest appeal, while for Sikh and Hindu readers, Persian was as much the repository of stories of gurus and gods, and of the secular pleasures of the good life, as it was of Islamic ethics. And in geographical terms, for the Ottomans, it was Timurid Herat that served as the primary model of Persianate culture, while for the Mughals it was Timurid Samarqand. For the Qing Empire, it was relations with frontier states like Badakhshan and Ladakh that drove their ventures into Persian-based diplomacy, while for the British Empire it was relations with the Mughal Empire and its successor states. For centuries, people from across India, Central Asia, and even Siberia looked to Balkh-i Bami (Balkh the Ancient), Bukhara-yi Sharif (Bukhara the Noble), or Hazrat-i Dilhi (Delhi the Sacred), as the center of Persian learning, rather than to anywhere in Iran. Indeed, the literary middleman who popularized Hafiz throughout the Ottoman Empire (and thereby Europe via the German translation of Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall) was the Bosnian commentator Ahmad Sudi Busnawi (d. ca. 1600), who had never travelled to Iran and relied instead on the Persian-reading savants of Istanbul and Baghdad to decipher Hafiz’s more obscure verses.²⁵ Iran, then, was never the perpetual reference point, let alone the “epicenter,” of the Persianate world, any more than Islam was the whole story.²⁶

When focusing as this book's case study chapters do on the five centuries from around 1400 to 1900, there is even less reason to privilege Iran. With many of the people who produced written Persian moving between an inverted geographical triangle demarcating India, Central Asia, and China, Persianate culture in many ways flourished without direct contact with Iran. This is not to write Iran perversely out of such contacts—as discussed below, the Safavid era saw many “men-of-the-pen” migrate from Iran to India—but merely to question the perennial centrality of Iran to these Persian-based exchanges. Although medieval figures like Sa'di of Shiraz (d. 1292) long retained their importance as poetic and pedagogic touchstones, their writings had long been naturalized in their multiple spaces of reception and reproduction by the seventeenth century. The model of the Persianate world proposed here is therefore one in which the place (let alone the centrality) of Iran is less a given than a variable. Persian had no perpetual or primordial homeland, no *watan* to which it was destined inevitably to return, but instead charted a history that was contingent and contested across the multiple spaces that used and so claimed it.

In order to be an aid rather than an obstacle to exploring world history, the Persian language must similarly be understood as interacting with the other languages and writing systems of these areas of its use. In Fragner's formulation, Persian needs to be seen as a transregional contact language. Yet, crucially, it must also be recognized that such contact did not necessarily replace other languages, whether written or spoken, but rather connected their various users. And it is here that Spooner and Hanaway's emphasis on Persian as a spatially and temporally stable written language is important in pointing to the scribal practices, material implements, and trained personnel who were the agents responsible for creating and sustaining this contact. As a collaborative venture bringing together multiple linguistic skill sets, the focus of this book is therefore on written Persian in contact with other languages and, by extension, their own cultural or political frameworks; in short, it is a model of “Persian plus.” By following Spooner and Hanaway's attention to the distinct profile of Persian as a written language, the following chapters deal with the deployment of writing skills and their associated forms of literate knowledge. This marks a much broader domain than literature, or even than literary culture, or *adab*. Rather, the domain of writing skills and literate knowledge also includes such functional expressions of literacy as bureaucracy, lexicography, and diplomacy, as well as the inscribing of public monuments and private talismans. Building on Jack Goody's pioneering work on the uses of literacy, the emphasis here is on Persian as a tool—often a closely guarded one—rather than an aesthetic.²⁷ In this sense, the literacy-based model here is analytically distinct from Fragner's model of shared speech based on the *francophonie* of French-speaking Africa—it is a persographia rather than a persophonía. As a learned second (or third) language spread thinly across the wide regions it connected, in world-historical terms, Persian comprised a set of linguistic tools and practices

that were adopted by many different peoples across the Eurasian continent. In this regard, its “frontiers” should be seen as not merely geographical, but also social, ethnic, and linguistic.

To this end, the case studies brought together in this book examine language contact in regions often presumed to be the edges of, or even entirely outside, the Persianate world. Unlike other studies that have emphasized either Iran or India as the core region of Persian or Persianate culture, the following chapters give equal attention to the Central Asian khanates and the Chinese, Ottoman, and British empires as spaces—and frontiers—of Persian. This in turn expands the spatial parameters of the Persianate world to the broader Eurasian geography of Persian-based language contact. The following sections of this Introduction provide a background and context for the subsequent case study chapters by outlining a general history for Persian that stresses the pluralistic and protean profile of its frontiers prior to the nationalizing reconception and retraction of Persian in the early twentieth century. This general history is based on a definition of the Persianate world as an interregional or “world” system generated by shared knowledge of religiosity, statecraft, diplomacy, trade, sociability, or subjectivity that was accessed and circulated through the common use of written Persian across interconnected nodal points of Eurasia.

FROM THE RISE OF “NEW PERSIAN” TO THE “TURKO-PERSIAN SYNTHESIS” (CA. 800–CA. 1200)

Developing in one of the most important crossroads of the Eurasian landmass, the Arabic-script Persian that underwrote the Persianate world emerged between the eastern edges of the Zagros Mountains in today’s western Iran and the trading oases on the western edges of the Tang Empire.²⁸ The rapid collapse of the Sasanian Empire during the Umayyad Islamic conquests of 632 to 651 brought a new imperial language to the vast fallen domains of the Sasanians. That language was Arabic. The Sasanian Empire is routinely classified as “Persian”—though its centers of power were in Iraq rather than Fars—but it also reached as far east as what are now Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and parts of Pakistan (that is, Harey, Kushan-shahr, and Sogdiana). For at least the next two hundred years, the prestige and power of written Arabic muffled the deposed literary Persian of the vanquished Sasanian order. Older literary and liturgical versions of Persian (known to specialists as Avestan and Pahlavi or “Old” and “Middle” Persian) survived chiefly as the language of the priesthood of a shrinking population of Zoroastrians. Through the migration of Arab settlers and the acculturation of local residents, Umayyad and then ‘Abbasid imperial rule gave written Arabic two centuries in which to embed itself in the bureaucratic and literary spheres of the former Sasanian Empire. The degree to which even the eastern former Sasanian provinces embraced Arabic is seen in the influence exerted in the ‘Abbasid capital of Baghdad by members of the

formerly Buddhist Barmaki family of Balkh and in the compilation by the Central Asian scholar al-Bukhari (d. 870) of one of the canonical Hadith collections of the Prophet Muhammad.

Yet this picture of Umayyad- and 'Abbasid-driven linguistic rupture overlay a contextual canvas marked by considerable social continuity, albeit of the linguistic complexity of pre-Arabized Iranian languages. In the countryside, the old Sasanian landholding aristocracy (*dihqans*) remained largely in place, supporting praise singers and bards who used different versions of Persian, while gradually introducing new styles, meters, and vocabulary inspired by Umayyad and 'Abbasid court culture into their verses.²⁹ In the towns, members of the partially hereditary former Sasanian bureaucracy adapted their scribal skills to the new imperial dispensation, in the process introducing many formerly Middle Persian chancery genres into Arabic.³⁰ The literary traffic was therefore two-way. Albeit only surviving in Arabic works by later litterateurs such as al-Jahiz (d. 868) and al-Tabari (d. 923), the earliest known fragments of Persian written in Arabic script are attributed to Arab court poets of the early 'Abbasid era, such as Yazid al-Mufarrigh al-Himyari (d. 688), for whom Persian possessed a flavor that was at once exotic and demotic.³¹ Whether by way of entertainers and courtiers, or of bureaucrats and scholars, the patronage of the upper and lower echelons of the state was crucial to the reemergence of written Persian through the borrowing from Arabic of a new script, vocabulary, rules of prosody, and repertoire of tropes and topics. Transformed through its encounter with Arabic, this emergent written vernacular is what linguists term "New" Persian (or up to the twelfth century "Early New Persian") as distinct from the Middle (Pahlavi) and Old (Avestan) Persian of the Sasanian and Achaemenian eras.³²

Though accurate in outline, this picture of imported literary Arabic infusing local spoken Persian to produce written New Persian is a considerable simplification. By glossing over the various versions of spoken and written "Persian" that survived through the early centuries of Islamic rule over the former Sasanian domains, it ever tends toward a teleology. For the imperial, top-down drivers of change necessarily engaged with underlying social and linguistic conditions. The Persian that persisted through the first centuries after the Umayyad conquests was no single vernacular. Instead, the geography of Persian marked out a fragmented linguistic map of spoken and written dialects. It was this more complex linguistic landscape that Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 757), who translated various Middle Persian works into Arabic, was attempting to comprehend when he described three languages—Pahlavi, Parsi, and Dari—as having been used under the Sasanians.³³ Of these (and other) regional dialects, only one would emerge as the dominant basis for the literary works in Arabic-script New Persian that appeared from the mid-ninth century on. This was a version of the vernacular Middle Persian (Dari) of the old Sasanian capital at Ctesiphon-Seleucia that had been exported east to Khurasan in the late Sasanian period and then consolidated by the Arab Umayyad conquests. The eventual ascent of this particular version of Persian was a highly contingent development.



FIGURE 1. The earliest New Persian text: Judeo-Persian inscription from Tang-i Azaq, Afghanistan, 751–52 CE. Photograph courtesy of the Hertford-Wadham Afghanistan Expedition, 1956.

This linguistic map of multiple spoken Persian dialects was echoed in the orthographic pluralism of the eighth and ninth centuries. Prior to the emergence of this new Arabic-script Persian, both Dari and other regional dialects of Persian were written in the other scripts used by the various non-Muslim communities that still survived in number across the Umayyad-ʿAbbasid domains and even beyond into China. Hebrew-script Persian (known Judeo-Persian) predated the emergence of Arabic-script Persian and survived into the twentieth century. The earliest written records of New Persian are in fact in Hebrew rather than Arabic script. They comprise a rock inscription from 751–52 in the high mountain pass of Tang-i Azaq some two hundred kilometers east of Herat in what is today central Afghanistan; and a letter from a Jewish merchant likely datable to 760 found in the Dandan-Öiliq oasis near Khotan along the Silk Road in what is today western China.³⁴

Other early dialects of New Persian were written in Syriac and Manichaean scripts.³⁵ As late as 874, Middle Persian in Pahlavi script was still being used for funerary inscriptions in the Tang imperial capital of Xi’an, where families of the former Sasanian Zoroastrian elite had settled as refugees two centuries earlier.³⁶ The different dialects of New Persian that were written down in Arabic script by Muslims of the ninth and tenth centuries, such as the Sistan dialect interlinear commentary on the Quran, emerged in what was still a deeply pluralistic social context.³⁷ Yet what should be clear is that this social pluralism was expressed in an orthographic pluralism—the use of multiple writing systems—that prevented Persian from serving as a written lingua franca in the way that spoken Persian did.

As John Perry has noted, the “spoken Persian of the time served as a vernacular for Zoroastrians, Jews, Manichaeans, Christians and Muslim converts in Iran.”³⁸ This was not yet true of Persian written in Arabic script, which would take several centuries—and several shifts across both geographical and social frontiers—to emerge as a written contact language for speakers of different languages and members of different religions.

Even so, in view of those later functions of written Persian, it is worth dwelling on the pluralist frontier rather than the national or even imperial geographies from which the particular forms of spoken Persian that were incrementally committed to writing and eventually to standardizing emerged. This highly pluralistic sociolinguistic landscape has led Bo Utas to claim a “multiethnic” origin for New Persian. Based on the “established fact that New Persian is a mixed language with regard to its vocabulary . . . [and] morpho-syntactic structure,” Utas has argued that its linguistic development “may be taken to betray a mixed origin,” such that “New Persian must be regarded as something of a multicultural construction.”³⁹ Certainly, the world glimpsed in the fragmentary New Persian documents that have survived from the seventh to the ninth centuries points to the emergence of a new vernacular in complex symbiosis with the imperial literary and political culture of Arabic. If Utas is correct, then the development of New Persian might well be regarded as what Sheldon Pollock has, in a different context, conceptualized as a “cosmopolitan vernacular,” which for many purposes eventually replaced its erstwhile Arabic model and rival.⁴⁰ As in other cases of literary vernacularization, local elites—the aforementioned *dihqans* and bureaucrats, but also breakaway dynasts—played the key role in the empowerment of their preferred dialect of New Persian. This forged a new pattern of patronizing New Persian literary texts, which were, crucially, written down in Arabic script, a development that took place in Khurasan and Transoxiana.⁴¹ These were by no means Persian’s linguistic homeland, but rather frontier regions where Persian had centuries earlier been imported and replaced the Soghdian language. Then, during the subsequent early centuries of Islamic rule, Persian had been reintroduced there by converted Muslim settlers. As Perry has explained, “Persian’s geographical expansion was initially due to the rapid advance of the Arab armies eastward, where they and their converted Persian auxiliaries from Pars and western central Iran settled in Khurasan and Transoxiana.”⁴² As local governors of the eastern frontiers of the ‘Abbasid caliphate formed their own breakaway polities by way of the Samanid (819–999) and Saffarid (861–1003) dynasties, it was here in Khurasan and Transoxiana that this particular transplanted then localized spoken dialect of New Persian began its rise to written prominence and, in time, dominance. Following the orthographic practices promoted by the chanceries of the Muslim-ruled Samanid and Saffarid states, this was New Persian in the Arabic script.⁴³

Although the Arabic-script New Persian of the Samanid court emerged in a broader Central Asian context of orthographic pluralism in which different

religious communities used different scripts (Hebrew, Manichaean, Zoroastrian Pahlavi), the sheer resources available to the Muslim-ruled court and chancery would eventually ensure that it was their Arabic-script Persian that would develop into a written lingua franca. Behind what Bo Utas has called the “panegyric argument” for New Persian’s birth in the sophisticated court literary setting around the new Samanid and Saffarid dynasts, we should therefore recognize the operations of hegemony.

As clusters of material and symbolic capital, the tenth-century courts of the Samanids and Saffarids produced a series of literary works in the New Persian dialect of their Khurasani surroundings. Yet the Samanid and Saffarid court poets promoted and preserved rather than invented poetry in New Persian. An oral tradition of poetry had already been fostered in the petty courts of the *dihqans*, the local gentry, of the region. The compositions of this first generation of New Persian poets, such as Hanzala Badghisi (d. 835?) and Mahmud Warraq (d. 836), survive only as fragments collected by later anthologists.⁴⁴ The self-conscious dynastic ambitions of the Samanids attracted such poets to their capital at Bukhara. The most notable of these Samanid-sponsored figures was Abu ‘Abdullah Rudaki (d. 941), court poet to the ruler Nasr II (r. 914–43) who, together with his patron, heralded a new era for Persian letters.⁴⁵

It was not only Persian poetry that developed under Samanid patronage. Persian prose too began to expand its previously minimal repertoire of vernacular interlinear Quran renderings. Analytically if not necessarily spatially, this marked the emergence of the chancery as a second key site of written Persian along with the court. While both Persian and Arabic were used in the Samanid chancery, after a lengthy and complex contest between the rival promoters of these languages and skill sets, by the late tenth-century Persian seems to have become the dominant bureaucratic language, at least for internal purposes.⁴⁶ As we will see below for other eras and areas, Persian’s role as a chancery language would have tremendous impact on the geographical and social expansion of Persographia, for this chancery and court model would subsequently be transferred from the Samanids to the Ghaznavids and their own successors. Here in the chancery the key figure was not the itinerant minstrel but the sedentary and often hereditary secretary known variously as the *dabir*, *katib*, or *munshi*. Such figures as the Saffarid secretary Muhammad ibn Wasif (d. 909) had also turned their training in Arabic epistolography and belles-lettres to composing poetry in the now fashionable written New Persian.⁴⁷

For reasons that remain unclear, the Samanids took considerably more interest than their Tahirid or Saffarid predecessors in the promotion of Persian from a spoken vernacular to a literary language. Court and chancery resources, both material and symbolic, then generated a momentum. In 957, the Samanid governor of the Khurasani trading cities of Tus and Nishapur sponsored a New Persian translation of the Middle Persian *Xwaday-namag*, which detailed the heroic deeds of Iran’s

pre-Islamic rulers. Overseen by the Samanid secretary Abu Mansur Ma'mari (d. 961), this New Persian "Book of Kings" or *Shah-nama* included a prose introduction explaining how Abu Mansur had commissioned the work. Despite his presumed education in Arabic, the Samanid secretary made minimal use of Arabic loanwords.⁴⁸ Under the Samanids, then, New Persian was still very much a language in a state of ongoing transformation. When, at the end of the Samanid period, Abu al-Qasim Firdawsi (d. 1020) composed his more famous *Shah-nama* in epic verse, his lexicon still made only limited use of Arabic borrowings.⁴⁹

Over the next few centuries, New Persian would absorb much more of Arabic vocabulary and prosody through the interactions of its creators—the secretariat especially—with the richer realm of Arabic letters. Such Arabization rendered New Persian an "Arabicate" language, so to speak, before it gained the prestige to foster its own "Persianate" offspring. However, the amount of Arabic vocabulary adopted by writers of New Persian during the tenth and eleventh centuries did not follow a simple chronological expansion and varied according to their sources, genres, and audiences. From the late Samanid period onwards, then, Persian prose writing began to be sponsored on a larger and more official scale, particularly by secretaries who were bilingual in Arabic—and now, crucially, biliterate—and New Persian.⁵⁰ The most important such figure was Amirak Bal'ami (d. 992–97), the vizier of the Samanid ruler Mansur ibn Nuh, for whom from 963 he made New Persian translations of al-Tabari's Arabic *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (History of the Prophets and Kings). Such bilingual secretaries as Amirak Bal'ami, used to switching between Persian and Arabic in their day-to-day professional lives, were crucial to this initial expansion of Persian's written repertoire from poetic entertainments to prestigious prose histories of prophets and kings.⁵¹ Around the time that Bal'ami's history was written, a Persian *Tafsir* (Quran Commentary) was undertaken by a group of *'ulama* in the Samanid realms. Persian also began to be used for more formal translations of the Quran, figuring in interlinear glosses that appeared from the late tenth or eleventh century.⁵²

The New Persian of Khurasan and Transoxiana was developed at the meeting point of several frontiers—ethnic and political, linguistic and orthographic—that would leave their permanent mark on the written language by way of the absorption of Arabic vocabulary, meters, and genres. New Persian also adopted from Arabic the system of numerical notation known as *siyaq*, in which the Arabic words for decimal numerals (rather than Indian-derived numerical symbols) were abbreviated into distinct graphemes.⁵³ By these means, as part of the package of secretarial education, numeracy became embedded in Arabic (and then in turn Persian) literacy.⁵⁴ The *siyaq* system of Persianate numeracy would prove durable: after being passed from Umayyad into Samanid usage, *siyaq* was in turn transmitted to the Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals, and did not disappear entirely until the script and educational reforms of the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁵ Yet despite the meteoric rise of Persian through so many dimensions of chancery



FIGURE 2. Instituting a language of state: the mausoleum of Isma'īl Samani (r. 892–907), Bukhara. Photograph by Nile Green.

practice and court patronage under the Samanids, coinage remained resistant to Persian. Indeed, it was not until the Safavid period, specifically the time of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76), that Persian as distinct from Arabic was regularly used on coins.⁵⁶ There was, then, in some sense a numismatic frontier that Persian would not cross for centuries, and in some regions not at all.

There were also significant inheritances from beyond Arabic, as seen in the case of the Middle Persian predecessors of the *Shah-nama* and the likely Sasanian prototypes of New Persian chancery documents. Even so, by the end of the Samanid period around 1000 CE, as a written language, the scope and functions of New Persian were still limited. Despite New Persian's expansion into prose under the Samanids, Arabic remained not only the dominant language of the sciences

(*ulum*) but also the preferred language for art objects such as ceramic ware. In terms of overall social impact, though, the Samanid chancery—and the provincial and local bureaucracy beyond it—was more important than court literature. It was only during the eleventh century, after the Samanids' fall, that New Persian's repertoire was expanded both in terms of literature and bureaucracy. The key patrons of this expansion were not ethnic Persians like the Samanids. They were Turks.

With the political ascent of Turkic former slave soldiers under the Ghaznavids (977–1186) and Great Saljuqs (1016–53), the role of the secretarial class became even more influential. For the secretaries served as administrative linchpins, political mentors, and propagandist encomiasts for the new Turkic dynasts. The contact between these different parties generated what Robert L. Canfield has called the “ecumenical mix” of “Turko-Persian Islamicate culture.”⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that although Persographic Hindu secretaries would rise to prominence only centuries later, under the Mughal Empire, the Ghaznavids already employed Hindus in that capacity, among them the powerful Tilak (fl. ca. 1000–1040).⁵⁸ Although New Persian was to be the dominant written partner of Turkic, spoken social interactions gradually led to the absorption of numerous Turkic words into written Persian.⁵⁹ The incorporation of Turkish vocabulary into New Persian would never rival its earlier Arabization in scale, however, and neither did these linguistic interactions and lexical borrowings follow a simple linear pattern. The amount of Arabic vocabulary writers of New Persian adopted during the Ghaznavid and Saljuq ascendancy of the tenth and eleventh centuries did not expand chronologically so much as vary synchronically according to authors' locations, sources, audiences and genres. Thus, the *Kimiya-yi Sa'adat* (Alchemy of Happiness), composed in 1105 by the erstwhile Saljuq employee Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), contains few Arabic words compared to the densely Arabized *Kashf al-Mahjub* (Revelation of the Hidden) that 'Ali ibn 'Usman al-Hujwiri (d. ca. 1075) had composed under the Ghaznavids several decades earlier and considerably further east.⁶⁰

Under the Turkic dynasties, written New Persian was increasingly endowed and empowered in both the court and chancery. The rapid expansion of both poetic and prose genres under the Ghaznavids created prestigious models of kingship and statecraft that would be imitated by many subsequent Turkic dynasties, a development that was arguably the most enduring cultural outcome of “Turko-Persian” contact.⁶¹ Persian prose would no longer be a derivative medium for earlier works translated from Arabic. Instead, through the efforts of such prominent Ghaznavid secretaries as Abu al-Fazl Bayhaqi (d. 1077), original dynastic histories were composed in New Persian to present Turkic dynasts in the grandiloquent and increasingly normative terms of Persian kingship.⁶² Even as a physical entity, the Ghaznavid court was Persianized through grand Persian inscriptions on palace walls.⁶³ Then under the Saljuqs, the language was adopted for formal manuals of statecraft in the “mirror for princes” genre, most famously with the *Siyasat-nama* (Book of Politics) of the influential secretary Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092).

These new Turkic dynasties, whose founders had first emerged under Samanid tutelage, would bring about the most important shift to ever occur in the historical status and function of New Persian. In Fragner's terms, it was the shift from a "mother tongue" (*Muttersprache*) to a "second language" (*Zweitsprache*). Only from this point would New Persian start to serve as a written lingua franca. But to do so, it would also need to be introduced to new regions beyond those in which it was a spoken vernacular.

THE EXPANDING SPACES OF PERSIAN LEARNING
(CA. 1200–CA. 1500)

Enabling this geographic expansion of the frontiers of the Persianate world were two key institutions that helped not only to publicize works by established practitioners of written New Persian (henceforth simply Persian), but also to produce new works. In doing so, these institutions also incrementally transformed Persian into a learned second language rather than a written mother tongue. The Turkic ascendance of the eleventh and twelfth century was, in processual terms, more influential for its institutional than its bibliographical innovations. For by way of the madrasa and the *khanaqah*—the school and the convent—the Ghaznavids and particularly the Saljuqs patronized two new types of enduring institutions that not only enabled the production of more Persian texts but, more important, reared new generations of producers and readers of written Persian. Funded by property endowment (*waqf*), these new institutions for the overlapping parties of *'ulama* and Sufis expanded through the new territories that were conquered by the Ghaznavids in India and the Saljuqs in Anatolia. Together with the royal court and the provincial courts and chanceries of local governors, the endowment of gradually increasing numbers of madrasas and *khanaqahs* spread the use of written Persian across new geographical frontiers. The later Ghaznavid capital of Lahore and the later Saljuq capital of Konya provide prime examples of Persian's new expanded geography by the twelfth century.⁶⁴ Then, from 1206, the establishment of the Delhi sultanate made Delhi a new regional hub of Persian learning. From there, within a century, a sequence of Persographic urban nodes irradiated as far as Gujarat, Bengal, and the Deccan.⁶⁵

The pedagogic reproduction of the secretarial classes through the madrasa system and other forces of education was further enabled by formal manuals of ornate prose (*insha'*) and epistolography (*tarassul*) intended to train recruits for chancery work. The earliest surviving such manual was the *Dastur-i Dabari* written by the Saljuq secretary Muhammad al-Mayhani (d. 1129?).⁶⁶ Many other such manuals would follow, educating secretaries in Persianate numeracy (*siyaq*) as well as literacy, while also in some cases serving as guides on prosody for more literary forms of composition.⁶⁷ William L. Hanaway has argued that these writings served later generations as templates for imitative pedagogy and composition.⁶⁸ Based in their

madrasas and *khanaqahs*, the overlapping circles of ‘*ulama* and Sufis who together with the secretaries and court poets formed the other major parties of text producers increasingly began to use Persian for religious works, both in poetry and prose. By around the mid-eleventh century, ‘Ali ibn ‘Usman al-Hujwiri (d. ca. 1075) had written his aforementioned pioneering handbook of the Sufi path, *Kashf al-Mahjub*.⁶⁹ By the early twelfth century, religious scholars from Samarqand such as Abu Hafs ‘Umar Najm al-Din al-Nasafi (d. 1142) were crafting increasingly sophisticated Quran translations in Persian rhyming prose.⁷⁰ Although Arabic retained its hold over certain religious disciplines (notably law), especially at the higher level, Persian’s religious ambit expanded enormously under the Turkic dynasties. The *Hadiqat al-Haqiqa* (Walled Garden of Truth) of Hakim Sana’i (d. 1131) showed the increasing literary sophistication of didactic poetry, and the *Tazkirat al-Awliya* (Lives of God’s Friends) of Farid al-Din ‘Attar (d. 1220) signaled the rise of a type of hagiography that would soon spread into Anatolia and India as part of the Persianate making of new Muslim sacred geographies.⁷¹

Across the expanding geography of their interconnected networks, the growing personnel of these madrasas and *khanaqahs* distributed, copied, and further contributed to this expanding corpus of Persian religious works.⁷² Together, such manuals and curricula, whether of the secretarial or Sufi life, forged a relatively standardized version of Persian that spread southwards into India, westwards into the Balkans and eastwards into the Tarim Basin. Intelligible to readers across this wide Eurasian space, this was what John R. Perry has termed a “homoglossic” Persian.⁷³

Undoubtedly, this dominant Arabic-script Persian—the last of the orthographically plural Persians of the post-Sasanian domains to emerge and be exported to the dar al-Islam—was a Muslim Persian promoted by powerful Muslim-ruled states and their administrative and religious establishments. Yet, however hegemonic, this Islamo-Persian never fully occluded other users of Persian, who survived (as with Judeo-Persian) or emerged (as with Hindu-Persian) through the social and political interactions of subsequent centuries. This point brings out the importance of the distinction between geographical and social frontiers. For the horizontal spatial expansion of Persian as part of the administrative and religious equipment of royal courts and Sufi lodges should not automatically be equated with the vertical social expansion of the language. The expanding new geographies of Persian were multilingual spaces in terms of both spoken and written language. The introduction of Persian added another layer to preexisting regional patterns of written multilingualism—whether in Sanskrit, Byzantine Greek, Armenian, or Georgian—that were the legacy of earlier religious and political institutions.

This becomes especially clear when we come to the interaction of Persian with Armenian and Georgian (Kartuli) literature of the twelfth century in the cultural and political frontier regions of the southern Caucasus. Here we are dealing with a different dimension and degree of the Persianate than in Hodgson’s original

model in which Persian generated new literary offspring in its imitative shadow. For both Armenian and Georgian were much older as written languages than New Persian, with Christian Armenian literature beginning around 405 with the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots (362–440), and Georgian after the evolution of the Old Georgian (Asomtavruli) script, first attested in the Bolnisi Sioni church inscriptions of 494.⁷⁴ As a result of Iranian influences going back to the Achaemenian Empire, around 60 percent of the Classical Armenian lexicon consisted of borrowings from Old and Middle Persian (largely Parthian). However, from the fifth century on, Mashtots's Armenian alphabet acted as an enduring barrier against further lexical borrowing from Persian, forming a kind of orthographic frontier that constitutes an important contrast with the more familiar Persianate languages that adopted the Arabic script.

Over the centuries after their alphabetization, both Armenian and Georgian developed, initially for ecclesiastical purposes, as literary languages, which continued to evolve after the early Arab Muslim conquests of the seventh century. Nonetheless, literary production sharply increased after the reestablishment of Christian rule by the Bagratid kingdom of Armenia in 885 and the Georgian Bagrationi monarchs of Abkhazia and Georgia in 978 and 1008, respectively. Under their aegis, Armenian and Georgian literature expanded their formerly ecclesiastical remit into the realms of historiography and court poetry, with Georgian acquiring its subsequently standard Mkhedruli script. From the eleventh and especially twelfth century, as Persian entered its own ascendance in the lands to the immediate south, the Armenian and Georgian courts did adapt aspects of Persianate court and literary culture (albeit less than they borrowed from Byzantium in other spheres). An early instance of this was the impact of Firdawsī's *Shah-nama*, the composition of which coincided with Leonti Mroveli's Georgian *Kartlis Tskhovreba* (Life of Kings), composed around 1070.⁷⁵ Yet over the next few centuries, what developed was less the emergence of new Christian Persianate literatures under the dominant shadow of Persian than a pattern of highly selective adaptations, even appropriations, of Persian stories and motifs by a series of poets and chroniclers associated with the independent medieval Armenian and Georgian courts. Compared with the Persianate literatures in Indic and Turkic languages, there were far fewer Persian loanwords in Armenian and Georgian, into which motifs or entire stories were adapted without taking on Persian's script or lexicon. Thus, what Peter Cowe has written of the Persian and more broadly Islamic literary impact on Armenian can equally be said of Georgian, namely, that after the initial stage of contact, the verse type or literary motif first becomes indigenized in its new setting and then begins to be employed creatively so as to explore aspects of its expressive potential that were untapped in its culture of origin.⁷⁶ Yet it is important not to overstate the point for, unlike Armenian, Georgian also absorbed hundreds of literary loanwords from Persian, whether basic terms for "love" (Georgian: *mijnuroba*, from the name Majnun) and songbirds

(Georgian: *bulbul*) or the name of a particular poetic form (Georgian: *shairi* from Arabo-Persian *shī'r*).⁷⁷

In this way, a series of major medieval Armenian and Georgian authors incorporated into their own works tales and motifs from Persian texts. The latter comprised not only the *Shah-nama* but more particularly the writings of Nizami Ganjawi (d. 1209) and the old romance cycle of *Vis u Ramin* (Vis and Ramin), via the eleventh-century version of Fakhr al-Din Gurgani (fl. 1040–54).⁷⁸ That Persian's impact on Georgian came via Nizami, who apparently spent his whole life in the city of Ganja in the southern Caucasus, is a further pointer to the multiple vectors centers and shifting centers of the Persianate world. In Georgian literature, the three most important such works are *Visramiani* (Vis and Ramin, ca. 1150), *Amiran-Darejaniani* (Tale of Amiran Son of Darejan) and Shota Rustaveli's *Vepkhistqaosani* (Knight in Panther's Skin, ca. 1189–1207).⁷⁹ The deliberate selectivity of these poets' appropriations from the Persian originals is perhaps most vividly seen in the way that *Visramiani* omits the long apology for Islam in its Persian source text by Gurgani.⁸⁰ Yet there is no doubting the self-consciousness with which the Georgian poets drew on Persian models. In the prologue to his *Vepkhistqaosani*, Rustaveli openly declared his 1,600-quatrain epic in the aforementioned *shairi* genre as a "Persian tale, translated into Georgian / Like an orphaned pearl, like a toy passed from hand to hand."⁸¹ For, if not necessarily hegemonic, in the Georgian royal courts of King David (Davit) IV ("the Builder," r. 1089–1125) and Queen Tamar (r. 1184–1213), where such literary works flourished, the prestige of Persianate and more broadly Islamicate culture was widely recognized, most plainly in the use of both Arabic and Georgian scripts on their coinage.

To some extent, this was a pattern echoed in Armenian in such works as the romance of Farhad (an unsurprising choice given that Shirin was long identified in Persian versions of the story as an Armenian princess). Yet while entirely Persianate in onomastic, atmospheric, and geographic respects, the romance of Farhad, like other Armenian works, was far more impervious to lexical imports from Persian. While medieval Armenian poets adapted motifs from Persian works, the more Byzantine orientation of the Armenian courts (in Cilicia especially) meant that there were no lengthy Armenian renditions of Persian *masnawi* romances to compare with the Georgian *Vepkhistqaosani*. There were oral epics, though, such as *Rustam Zal*, which offers a partial parallel to the literate Georgian versions of Firdawsi. However, the greatest impact of Persian on Armenian literature came via the motifs of the lyrical *ghazal*. This is best seen in the poetry of Kostandin Erznkač'i (d. ca. 1330), where the Persian imagery of the rose and nightingale (the latter as *bulbul* in a rare example of a loanword into Armenian) was adapted for the purposes of Christian devotional poetry.⁸² The later monks and abbots, such as Xaçatur (d. 1341), who subsequently followed Kostandin's model, further developed this Persianate imagery for their own distinctly Christian purposes in ways that, to quote Cowe again, found "expressive potential untapped in

its culture of origin.”⁸³ Persianate subtlety and refinement also characterized the poetry of Grigoris Aght’amarts’i (1485–1544), who is also notable for a series of Armeno-Persian macaronic verses.⁸⁴ Yet overall, having established its own alphabet, lexicon, norms, and concerns before the medieval ascent of Persian, Armenian literature made only selective adoptions of Persian motifs and loanwords, the latter being in any case mediated mainly through Turkish. (Conversely, what we might term “Georgianate” Turkish texts would later be written in the Georgian Mkhedruli script).⁸⁵ Indeed, it was probably in terms of book illustration rather than literary or linguistic content that Persianate models had their greatest impact on Armenian literary culture. Thus, one of the Persianate world’s most testing frontiers lay in the Georgian royal courts and mountain-ringed Armenian monasteries that stretched from Tbilisi in the Caucasus to Sis in Cilicia.

This perspective is amplified when we turn from the southern to the northern Caucasus (particularly what is today Daghestan), where Arabic was much more widespread than Persian from the thirteenth century right through to the nineteenth, when Arabic served as the state language of Imam Shamil’s imamate (1840–59).⁸⁶ Yet even in Daghestan, Persian served as a subsidiary language of Muslim learning. Medieval Persian classics by the likes of Firdawsi, Nizami, and Jami were read and inspired original works in Persian by Darghin poets such as Ibn Yusuf and Damadan of Mug in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which also saw the composition of Muhammad Awabi’s local history, the *Darband-nama* (Book of Derbent).⁸⁷ Many Persian inscriptions of this period are also extant from the northern Caucasus, as is Persian correspondence between local rulers and the Safavids, pointing to larger Persographic patterns of Persian as a written contact language. Persian thus embedded itself deeper in the Muslim than the Christian Caucasus.

Turning from the Caucasus to India, the medieval rise of Persian-using chanceries in Lahore, and then Delhi and beyond, coupled with the immigration of “Turko-Persian” Muslim settlers, generated new spoken vernaculars that would in time develop written forms that were more hegemonically Persianate. These notably included the various North Indian vernaculars generically referred to by medieval authors as Hindwi (“Hindi,” that is, Indian). Compared to the older Christian written literary traditions of Armenian and Georgian, these languages and their literatures were much more clearly “Persianate” in the dominant partner sense that Hodgson intended. Amid these spaces of local linguistic pluralism and across the isoglossic language borders that separated them, written Persian served to connect literati in a common cultural framework. To what extent that interregional Persographic culture affected local life worlds, though, was a variable function of the Persianate as a process of literary and broadly cultural bricolage. As a dynamic process, the Persianate, then, was always contingent and contested.

We should therefore be cautious about assuming that Persian became the sole language of the various courts, chanceries, and Sufi lodges of the medieval period of Turko-Persian supremacy, particularly in frontier regions with their

own earlier traditions of literacy. Even under Muslim rule in the Delhi sultanate and its regional heirs in Gujarat, Bengal, and the Deccan, both bilingualism and biliteracy seem to have been practiced. This certainly happened at the district (*pargana*) level, though there is every reason to see Persian as one linguistic (and especially written) stratum at the regionalizing courts.⁸⁸ This was a practical outcome of the demography of literacy: in many regions preexisting Hindu bureaucracies outnumbered immigrant Muslim secretaries. After Persian emerged as a lingua franca between senior officials and their employees, between the central chanceries and the districts, Persian did not stamp out other written languages but coexisted and ultimately interacted with them.⁸⁹ This was not merely an Indian aberration on a distant Persianate frontier: the Jalayirid bureaucracy in Baghdad, at the heart of the “Middle East,” issued documents in Arabic, Persian, and Mongolian.⁹⁰

In the expansion of these bureaucratic and in turn literary activities, we should also recognize the material profile of Persographia based on increasing access to the paper that had spread from China to Samarqand and then Khurasan by the mid-eighth century, into Armenian and Georgian monastic usage in the Caucasus by 981, then down into India by the thirteenth century.⁹¹ When paper technology reached Delhi, then Bengal and the Deccan, the Persian term *kaghaz* (a Soghdian word that was possibly itself a borrowing from Chinese) was loaned and adapted into many other languages of the subcontinent, from Bengali and Nepali to Marathi and Telugu, as well as further west into such languages as Georgian, Kurdish, the several varieties of Turkic, and Arabic (with early adoption into Arabic shaping the spelling of the word in Persian).⁹² Ottoman usage carried the word *kaghaz* even as far west as the Balkans, where it generated the modern Serbian term for “documentation” (*ćage*), part of the larger Ottoman-borne Persian lexicon that survives to this day in such other Balkan languages as Bulgarian and Romanian.⁹³

After the multifarious spoken versions of Early New Persian, what by the fourteenth century had transformed the written language into the stable and standardized form of New Persian was therefore its adoption as a shared language among various different groups of non-native users. That is to say, Arabic-script Persian only gradually became a written lingua franca as a consequence of its expansion by powerful Turkic (then Turko-Mongol) dynasties. This increasing orthographic standardization is best seen in the contrast between Judeo-Persian and what we might call Hindu-Persian. For as shown by the many surviving Jewish tombstone inscriptions from Jam (Firuzkuh) during the Ghaznavid and Ghurid periods, Persian-speaking Jewish communities were able to maintain their own Hebrew script for centuries after the Muslim conquest of their homelands.⁹⁴ In the case of Hindu adopters of Persian, however, being exposed to the language at a later stage of its history meant that Persian was adopted together with the Arabic script through Hindu exposure to the Islamo-Persian of the court, chancery, and *khanaqah*. The key difference between these two situations was that Hebrew-script Judeo-Persian

was a community language intended for use within the Jewish community whereas Arabic-script Hindu-Persian was a contact language across community boundaries, albeit on terms set by Muslim orthographic norms. The synthesis of Turkish military power with Persian literary hegemony thus ensured that, from the twelfth century on, Persian did not adopt the writing systems of its new geographies but instead exported what would become a standard set of orthographic norms.

Together, the court secretaries, in their dual roles in the political-administrative and cultural-literary arenas, and the madrasa and *khanaqah* institutions, in their dual roles in pedagogy and text production, created a set of specific but connected spaces: court and chancery, school and shrine. In the latter case, we see the Islamic dimensions to the expansion of Persian as the language became associated with the education of *‘ulama* (albeit, in theory at least, in secondary status to Arabic at higher levels of study) and especially the transmission of Sufi doctrines. Here it is important to bear in mind that, from the twelfth century on, Sufi Islam became normative Islam rather than a mystical fringe. This was particularly the case insofar as the spread of Islam into new regions in this period meant that the Islam introduced as normative religion was Sufi Islam, and its introducers were more often than not members of the Sufi orders, whose syllabi were increasingly in Persian.⁹⁵ These highly mobile Sufis extended both the spatial and social frontiers of Persographia.

It was this combined expansion of both the Persian language and the Arabic script that enabled it to emerge as a written lingua franca that was transportable, imitable, and durable through the very fact of being written, and copied, on paper. What this in turn points to is the importance of shared and transferred writing practices, the acquired skill sets, and standard repertoires that distinguish written languages like Persian from the spoken languages like Hindwi, Turki, or demotic Greek with which Persian co-existed and interacted. Since the sociolinguistic landscapes that Persian traversed and connected were locally multilingual and multiscriptural, this returns us to the importance of keeping these other languages in view. As Marshall Hodgson emphasized in his original definition of the term “Persianate,” it is this interlinguistic contact between Persian and its local subordinates that distinguishes the “Persianate” from the more narrowly “Persian.” By the fourteenth and especially fifteenth century, such contact fertilized a rich field of linguistic and literary exchange between Persian and a ripening harvest of new regional literatures.⁹⁶ Attention to such multilingual environments, to languages in contact, therefore helps us understand how the “Persianate” actually worked.

In the thirteenth century, the geography of Persian was massively restructured by the conquests and then conversions of the Mongols. Initially, the Mongol obliteration of such key Khurasani cities as Balkh, Merv, and Nishapur destroyed the institutional basis of Persian’s most important early region and dislocated its surviving personnel to places as distant as Delhi and Konya.⁹⁷ Yet inasmuch as the Mongols destroyed old geographies, they also created new political and cul-

tural geographies that, however short-lived in their greatest extent, reached from Central Europe across the Iranian plateau to the Sea of Japan.⁹⁸ The impact was felt not only in the arts of the book—via marbled papers and brushwork clouds—but also in new textual visions of that wider Eurasian world, most famously in the Persian survey of world history, *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (Compendium of Histories), written by the Mongol vizier Rashid al-Din (1247–1318).⁹⁹ Its author, a convert from Judaism, was only one of many Persographic secretaries employed by the various Mongol states of the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Through them, the Pax Mongolica afforded the expansion of Persian administrative practices further east across Eurasia as far as China and Mongolia. Despite claims to the contrary, Persian did probably not become one of the “official” languages of the Chinese Mongol (Yuan) bureaucracy.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the importance of Mongolian as an administrative language saw dozens of Mongolian loanwords appear in the Persian poetry of the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods, most fully in the verse of the panegyrist of the Mongols, Pur-i Baha (d. ca. 1284?).¹⁰²

Even so, the new diplomatic, commercial, and intellectual frontiers opened by the Mongols did see Persian carried further east than ever. Sufis expanded their activities across the Mongol domains, carrying Persian texts with them.¹⁰³ The Yuan (1271–1368)—and subsequent Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties—conducted part of their diplomatic and other political business in Persian. When the early Ming dynasty Muslim admiral Zheng He (1371–1433/35) led a trading mission across the Indian Ocean, Persian was one of the three languages—the others were Chinese and Tamil—selected for the stele he had erected in Galle on Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1409.¹⁰⁴ Whether or not Zheng He was correct to consider written Persian a lingua franca of maritime trade, the Galle inscription is certainly testament to the importance with which the Chinese themselves had come to regard the language by the end of the Mongol era.¹⁰⁵ Another linguistic trace of the maritime interaction between Chinese and Persian is the adoption of the Mandarin word for an ocean storm, *dàfēng* (great wind), into Persian as *tufan* (and thence, probably via Portuguese, into English as *typhoon*).¹⁰⁶

With the destruction of Khurasan, then the opening of China, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries show the Persianate world to have comprised an unstable, evolving, and contingent set of frontiers. The early Mongol destruction of so many of the important early communities, institutions, and presumably libraries that had reared written Persian in Khurasan and the Iranian plateau witnessed in some sense a hollowing out of the Persianate world that saw its former fringes in Anatolia and northern India emerge as the self-conscious “canopies” (*qubba*) of Perso-Islamic culture. As the Central Asian Timurids and then the Thrace-based Ottomans began to build their own imperial cultures in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the patronage of Persian poetical and historical works became a key part of their policies, particularly under Mehmet II (r. 1451–81) for whom Timurid Herat served as a model for his new imperial capital.¹⁰⁷ That Persian literary culture had a “natural”

or “primordial” home in Iran is a fiction of latter-day nationalism. The geography of Persian was therefore a changing one, based less around dense town-and-country “homelands” than around a networked geography of dispersed and usually urban institutions by way of courts, chanceries, colleges, and *khanaqahs*.¹⁰⁸

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this geography evolved again as new courts were established in places as distant as Edirne, Istanbul, Tabriz, Samarqand, Kazan, Tyumen, Pandua, and Bidar. Under mainly Turko-Mongolian rule—in claiming an ethnically Persian ancestry from the *Shah-nama*’s King Bahman, the Bahmanis of Bidar were unusual—these new capitals attracted Persographic poets, scribes, and mystics from as far as southeast Europe, Siberia, and southern India.¹⁰⁹ Aside from the paperwork of the chancery, the new texts composed in their courts and *khanaqahs* continued the characteristic genres established before the Mongol conquests. Chiefly they comprised epistolography, dynastic histories, hagiographies, mirrors of princes, and poetry in panegyric, epic, lyric, and narrative form. Though shared across wide regions, these conventional genres were adapted for local concerns and regional patriotisms.¹¹⁰ Like literary watermarks visible in text rather than paper, conceptions of space were an indelible feature of the texts produced in these expanding and competing new capitals. Whether in royal histories or saintly hagiographies, genealogical geographies were articulated so as to map time (biological or inherited descent) onto space (areas of migration or conquest). In such ways, these textual tools of cultural transmission helped naturalize Persian (and its users) into its new geographies, many of which were themselves given Persian names through practices of urban and architectural onomastics.¹¹¹ Text and territory were in such ways perpetually in play as individual words, prose or poetic descriptions, and book illustrations were used to physically and semantically shape new built environments being created in radically different physical environments from the Mediterranean to Bengal and beyond. It was this mirroring, both mental and material, of both text and territory that rendered Persographia more than an eastern Utopia. Rather, as the medieval period’s many migrant poets, mystics, and dynasts testify, its cities were intelligible to those who moved between them. Such cities could be far more navigable, linguistically, and thereby professionally, than the countryside around one’s hometown. Because small towns and especially rural areas lay off the Persographic map.

It is worth pausing here to take stock of the geography of Persographia that had emerged from the different institutional spaces of Persian, by way of court, chancery, school, and shrine by the fifteenth century. It is in this respect that Richard Eaton has delineated a Perso-Islamic “cultural axis” connecting the cities of Khurasan and Central Asia to their urban interlocutors in Delhi, Bengal, and the Deccan.¹¹² Useful as this notion is, we require more specific geographical models based on the movement of actual texts and their producers.¹¹³ In principle, these networked spaces could be mapped in a way that might mirror the “abstract models for a literary history” that Franco Moretti has developed in connection with Eng-

lish literature.¹⁴⁴ This would provide a much clearer cartography of written Persian than our current vague geographic notions of the Persianate world. Voluminous and diverse as the many textual products of these institutional spaces were, their connections should not blind us to the delineated geographies of their textual circulation. These Persian-producing institutions had very limited hinterlands in terms of the proximate reception and even comprehension of Persian texts. In many cases—notably the isolated semi-rural *khanaqahs* of India and the thinly populated Kazakh steppe—these institutions had no hinterlands at all. The reason for this is that the geography of written Persian was a networked geography. Rather than being dense and localized, the spaces of Persographia were sporadic and distant. This geographical formation shaped the profile of its linguistic medium. For Persian served as the shared written language of these courts, chanceries, madrasas, and *khanaqahs* precisely because of their spatial distance and distribution, which required a relatively stable, homoglossic, and transportable medium. These needs and functions are quite different from those of a locally dense spoken lingua franca, whether vernacular or not, suggesting again that Persographia is not identical with Persophonia.

This networked geography of written Persian contained its hubs as well as its nodes, that is, urban environments with larger numbers of Persian readers and writers as well as, in some regions, more or less dense or sporadic clusters of nodes around such a hub. These anchoring hubs were usually dynastic capitals (that is, sites of a court and chancery), where opportunities for education and employment combined with family- and kin-based forms of written language teaching to ensure relative density of Persian language use, or at least competence. Alternatively, hubs could be scholarly-cum-religious centers, such as Khuldabad in the Deccan, though as in the cases of Konya and Bukhara, such alternative hubs were often erstwhile dynastic capitals as well. The geography of Persian was then one of power, privilege, and authority, or at least proximity to them, taking us back to the hegemonic character of the “Persianate”. Yet these hubs were also for this reason exceptional: a given region can only support so many capital cities with their expensive courts, schools, and salons. Except among the comparatively few such hubs with dense clusters—say, around Bukhara or the interfluvial North Indian *doab* region with its many small *qasba* towns—written Persian was therefore more typically a medium of distant rather than close communication. Its written character was essential to its function in connecting small groups of people—whether politically or culturally, administratively, or emotionally—in specific spaces along the distant nodes of this networked geography. In hubs and densely clustered nodes of Persian usage, the use of written and spoken Persian sometimes co-existed: though not identical, the geographies of Persophonia and Persographia most certainly overlapped, if to different degrees, in the streets of Shiraz, Delhi, and Samarqand. But by the same token, in each of its spaces—urban courtly hub or rural *khanaqah* node—Persian also competed with the usage

of other spoken and sometimes written languages, whether Mongolian, Turkic, Indic, or Sinic. Across vast sections of Eurasia, Persian was often a literate island in a sea of spoken Turkic, a point that was no less true for large parts of post-Saljuq Iran.

Under the Saljuqs of Rum, and subsequently under the early Ottomans through the fourteenth century, the frontiers of Persian also expanded westwards across Anatolia and into the Balkans.¹¹⁵ Given that Greek literary culture had dominated the region for more than a millennium, there was interchange with Greek as well as other Christian language groups in the region, via not only paper documents but also in few cases far more costly public inscriptions and Greek-inscribed coinage issued by Anatolia's Turkic dynasts.¹¹⁶ This echoed the situation in India during this period, where the Gujarat sultans issued bilingual Sanskrit-Persian edicts on public monuments and steles.¹¹⁷ Back in Anatolia, while Persian was the main language of the Saljuq chancery, the latter retained smaller Arabic, Greek, and possibly Armenian departments.¹¹⁸ Even such influential Anatolian Persian literary figures as Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) and his son Sultan Walad (d. 1312) composed verses in Greek, albeit written in Arabic-script suggesting competence in vernacular spoken rather than written Greek.¹¹⁹ These Anatolian interactions with Christian languages were sufficiently esteemed as to be imitated as far south as Aden, where, under the Turkic-origin Rasulid dynasty, Sultan al-Malik al-Afzal al-'Abbas ibn 'Ali (r. 1363–77) composed a dictionary of Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Mongolian, Greek, and Armenian.¹²⁰ After the brief bureaucratic replacement of Persian by Arabic in Mongol-ruled Saljuq Anatolia, the Ottoman chancery retained Persian as its chief chancery language, along with a smaller (and less linguistically competent) Arabic department. After a transitional period in the fifteenth century, during which many chancery documents were composed in a mixture of Persian and Turkish, it was only over the course of the sixteenth century that the Ottoman bureaucracy moved more fully to Turkish, along with Arabic for the empire's Arab provinces.

At this point, it is worth turning away from this continental Eurasian geography toward the Indian Ocean and the question of a maritime Persographic geography. This helps us understand the geographies of written Persian's expansion as distinct from the expansion of Islam per se. For between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, Islam expanded across the Indian Ocean along both preexisting and expanding trade routes connecting coastal Iran, India, and crucially Arabia (notably Hadramawt) with the larger and smaller trading islands of the ocean. Yet, unlike some world-historical lingua francas, written Persian does not seem to have been significantly expanded by trade, except arguably where trade became linked to Persographic state diplomacy in the early modern period. There is some early evidence of the role of Persian-speaking traders from inland Fars and coastal Siraf in the spread of Islam through the western Indian Ocean. Twelfth-century Divehilinguage *lomafanu* (copper-plate) inscriptions from the Maldives contain Persian rather than Arabic loanwords for their religious vocabulary.¹²¹ But the written

language here was Maldivian Divehi and not Persian. As written Divehi further evolved, it did adopt more Persian words, but these were part of a larger oceanic lexicon comprising borrowings from Sinhala, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Arabic.¹²² Moreover, the earliest surviving history of the Maldives, *Tarikh Islam Diba Mahal* (Islamic History of the Maldive Islands) by Hasan Taj al-Din (fl. 1725), is in Arabic rather than Persian.¹²³ This does not rule out an earlier phase of “Persian” input, at least in terms of the spoken Persian of merchants and missionaries, but there is no evidence of Persian as a written contact language.

With regard to the expansion of Islam into Southeast Asia, there is a long academic debate about the importance of Persian vis-à-vis Arabic. It is true that when the North African Ibn Battuta (d. 1368) visited the court of Pasai on Sumatra, he found two Iranian experts in Islamic law in the sultan’s employment.¹²⁴ But as legal experts, their expertise was presumably (like that of Ibn Battuta himself) in Arabic *fiqh* texts, placing Persian potentially on the spoken level attested in the Maldives. Although Iranian or more likely Indian Persian manuscripts may have circulated in Southeast Asia between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, leading to locally produced Malay translations, the lack of surviving early manuscripts in Persian from tropical Southeast Asia makes it extremely difficult to trace the details of Persian’s reception in the region. While such limited evidence does not suggest a role for written Persian as an oceanic lingua franca, it does point to the importance of translation practices as the processual vector of the Persianate. The earliest significant case is a Malay translation of the *Tuti-nama* (Book of the Parrot) entitled *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* (Story of the Virtuous Parrot), which dates to 1371.¹²⁵ Through this and subsequent translations, the Persian *hikayat* (tale, narrative) laid the basis for what became the definitive classical Malay prose genre, pointing to a vector of “Persianate” influence according to Hodgson’s formulation. In the *Hikayat Bayan Budiman* and other translated texts highly regarded in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Malacca court, Persian terms and idioms were passed over into the Malay versions in a manner that echoes the cases of other Persianate vernaculars then emerging in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century India and Central Asia. Beyond such narrative prose works, excerpts from major Persian poetic texts, such as the *Masnawi* of Rumi and the *Bustan* and *Gulistan* of Sa’di, were included in Malay anthologies in which interlinear translations were incorporated into the original Persian text.¹²⁶ There is, then, evidence of Fragner’s *Sprachkontakt*, but not evidence of a sufficiently robust localization of Persian—comprising, say, the composition of Persian texts in Malacca—to suggest that the region had fully entered the domains of Persographia. There were also many cases in which Malay scholars accessed Persian literature via Arabic texts, as with the influential Malay work *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* (Story of the Two-Horned Alexander), which points to the larger and longer influence of Arabic rather than Persian texts in Southeast Asia.¹²⁷ Thus, while the current state of research allows us to point to the presence of short-lived corridors of Persian learning across the Indian Ocean, the

evidence nonetheless seems to show the limits of the language's reach in the Malay zone. Persian crossed Eurasian land frontiers very effectively, not least through its adoption by state bureaucracies, but its expansion across maritime frontiers appears at present to have been more restricted.

Although the debate over the relative importance of Persian or Arabic in South-east Asia is unsettled, certain things appear clear. Whatever the scale of early Persianate influence on the formation of Malay literature, written Persian was never an Indian Ocean lingua franca in the way that Arabic was, or even in the way written Malay subsequently became a "cosmopolitan vernacular" connecting peoples across peninsular and insular Southeast Asia. After all, the number of Persian loanwords in classical Malay stands at a little less than a hundred, compared to around a thousand Arabic words.¹²⁸ The maritime frontier of Persian in Southeast Asia, then, was not a uniquely (still less a hegemonically) Persianate space, but rather a space in which Arabic was a more important shared language of learning. In terms of the sheer number of surviving texts, there seems little doubt that, taken as a whole, the Indian Ocean appears more as an "Arabic cosmopolis" (in Ronit Ricci's formulation) than a Persian one.¹²⁹ Yet, as with regard to the Maldives, further research may find a more sequenced process of an early Persian-based influence on Malay court culture giving way to a greater expansion of Arabic usage that has bequeathed more surviving texts. The replacement of the generic notion of an "Indian Ocean world" by a more evidence-based and networked geography may reveal particular maritime corridors of Persian-usage that were distinct from those of Arabic. The Bengal-Burma and Iran-Gujarat axes across the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea seem to be two such smaller maritime spatial units in which Persian flourished in a way that is less apparent for the Arabia-Sumatra axis.¹³⁰

Even so, for the most part, Arabic does appear to have been considerably more important in the Indian Ocean than Persian. The role of written Persian across the vast spaces of the Indian Ocean in no way parallels that of Persian across the comparable overland distances of Eurasia. Until European merchants in India created new Persian-based connections with Europe, from the thirteenth century on, the geography of Persographia reflected the reach of Turko-Mongolian power across Eurasia. Within that networked geography, courts, chanceries, madrasas, and *khanaqahs* functioned as the mechanisms and markers of Persian's expansion.

BETWEEN COSMOPOLITAN VERNACULARS AND PERSOGRAPHIC EMPIRES (CA. 1500–CA. 1800)

From the early sixteenth century on, the emergence of the Safavid, Mughal, and Shaybanid dynasties provided many new opportunities for Persian-writing secretaries, savants, and Sufis. Echoing wider "early modern" patterns, this was a period of increased interaction and mobility, which was in considerable part enabled by the shared usage of written Persian. Over the course of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, for example, between 20 and 30 percent of Mughal courtiers were émigrés from Safavid Iran, particularly its eastern provinces.¹³¹ Even so, what can easily appear like the unassailable expansion of Persian between the late fifteenth and seventeenth centuries should not be overstated. In each of its hubs, Persian's users were necessarily in contact with the languages of their more proximate environments. While the "homoglossic" Persian texts described by John Perry may have neglected local languages because of the need to maintain a standardized lexicon that was intelligible "across the network," their writers were in varying degrees forced into familiarity with the spoken languages of their surroundings. Even that homoglossia was less apparent by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and was arguably undermined by deliberate literary policies arising from the increasing self-confidence of Persian-writing literati in India. Through his prose manual *Insha-yi Abu al-Fazl*, Akbar's chief secretary Abu al-Fazl 'Alami (1551–1602) promulgated a new secretarial style (*sabk-i munshiyana*) that promoted a distinctive "Indian usage" (*isti'mal-i Hind*).¹³² A great influence on the Mughal literati, Abu al-Fazl's manual contributed to increasing lexical and stylistic differences between Persian in India, Central Asia, and Iran.¹³³

This brings us back to one of the other core aims of this book: recognizing the multilingual environments from and between which Persian texts emerged. For long periods, these multilingual environments had been merely oral. But in the late fifteenth century and especially the sixteenth, Persian's local linguistic interlocutors began to be written down in a multitude of different regions, thus generating what Hodgson conceived as Persianate languages.¹³⁴ In Timurid Herat, this meant the Chaghatai Turkic promoted by court literati like Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i (1441–1501), which subsequently spread through much of Central and even South Asia, if very much as the junior partner to Persian.¹³⁵ For whatever the rhetorical claims of Nawa'i's *Muhakamat al-Lughatayn* (Contention of the Two Languages), the appearance of Chaghatai texts at the court of Sultan Husayn Bayqara (r. 1469–70, 1470–1506) never amounted to anything approaching a systematic Timurid program to promote Turkic at the expense of Persian: both the Timurid court and chancery remained wedded to Persian.¹³⁶ Indeed, the scope of Persographia expanded, since Persian began to be deployed as a language of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) under the late Timurids precisely after Bayqara's chief magistrate in Herat compiled *Mukhtar al-Ikhtiyar*, a legal textbook that remained in use till the twentieth century.¹³⁷

Nonetheless, several written varieties of Turkic were emerging as new literary languages that qualify as Persianate in Hodgson's original terms of definition, that is as languages that "depended upon Persian wholly or in part for their prime literary inspiration."¹³⁸ A generation or two after Nawa'i, over a thousand miles west, the corpus of Old Anatolian, Azeri, and then Ottoman Turkic poetry, and in time prose, was expanded. As with multilingual poets such as the Azerbaijani Muhammad bin Sulayman, called Fuzuli (1494–1556), and his many successors, this occurred through court patronage (or in Fuzuli's case, an unsuccessful bid for

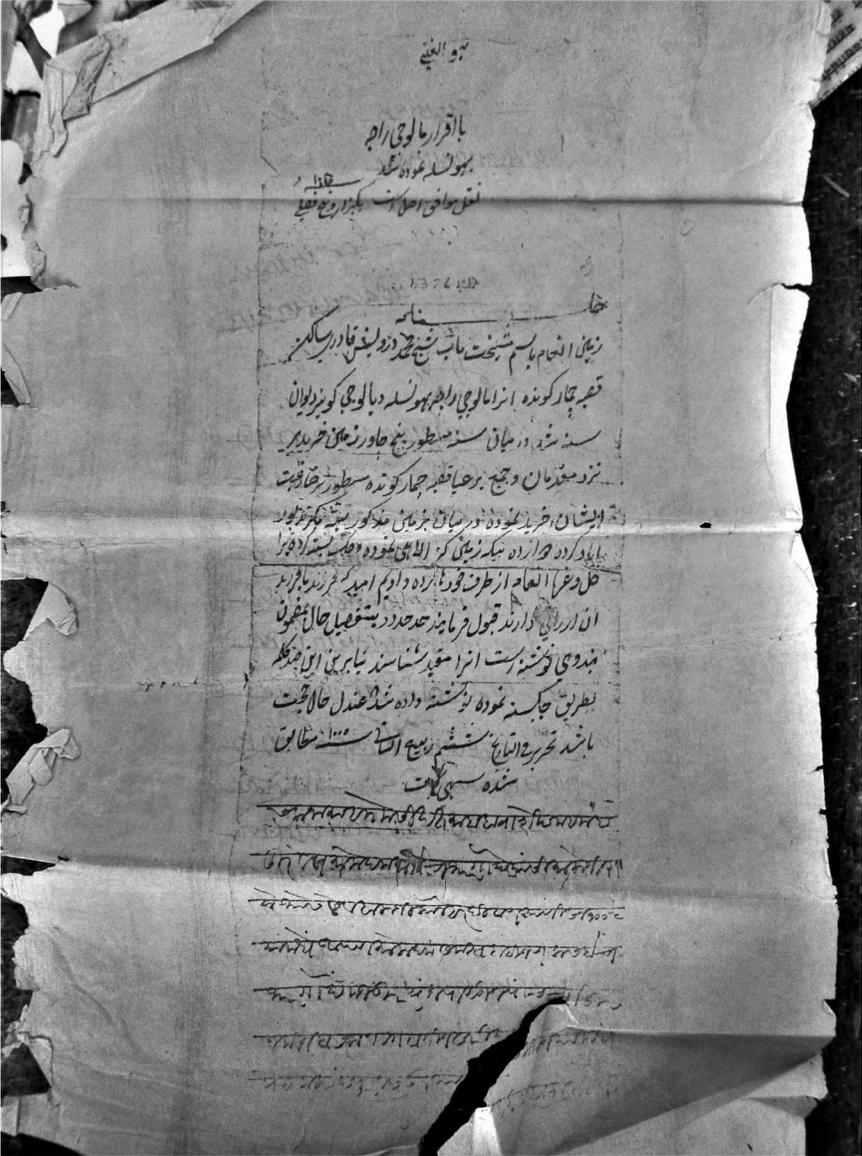


FIGURE 3. Mughal secretarial bilingualism: Persian-Marathi *In'am* document of Maloji Bhosle. Photograph courtesy of Dušan Deák and Riyaz Babasaheb Sekh.

patronage) in contexts in which, as in Timurid Herat, Persian literature remained a model of immense prestige.¹³⁹ These were not oral folk poets, then, still less nationalist or proto-national figures. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that Fuzuli spent most of his life not in Anatolia but in Aq-Quyunlu Turkoman-ruled Iraq, where

he learned Arabic and Persian in addition to his Azeri Turkic. It was only after the Ottoman sultan Sulayman I conquered Baghdad in 1534 that Fuzuli turned his poetic attentions to the Ottoman imperial literary economy.

Crucially, given the court-chancery nexus that long empowered Persian, these new language policies affected bureaucratic as well as literary texts, particularly in regions with large non-Muslim populations that had their own written languages. In the sultanates of southern India, the Bijapur ruler Ibrahim 'Adil Shah I (r. 1535–58) had the language of judicial and revenue records changed from Persian to Marathi and Kannada, while in the neighboring Qutb Shah sultanate, public inscriptions were issued bilingually in Persian and Telugu, the latter including many loanwords in testament to a degree of Persian (if not hegemonically “Persianate”) lexical influence.¹⁴⁰ In the Buddhist-ruled kingdom of Mrauk U in Arakan, on the borders of South and Southeast Asia, in 1495, the earliest extant bilingual inscription was engraved in Arakanese and Persian as the frontiers of Persographia began to expand into the numismatic, diplomatic, and mercantile spheres of Mrauk U court life only to subsequently witness the rise of literary Bengali.¹⁴¹ For under the Bengal sultanate, and then in Mrauk U, a court literature in Middle Bengali was developed by such figures as Shah Muhammad Saghir and Ala'ol (fl. 1651–71), who translated poetic works from Persian into Bengali.¹⁴² Meanwhile, in the North Indian cities under Afghan Lodi control, Arabic-script Hindwi works that recast Persian idioms in more vividly vernacular forms were patronized by Indian Sufis such as Mir Sayyid Manjhan (fl. 1545).¹⁴³ In each of these cases, we see Hodgson's definition of “Persianate” in varying degrees of action and with varying degrees of dominance. Here Persianate was an unsteady, variable process, a set of literary developments shaped by social dynamics, political changes, and patronage fashions in what were quite distinct environments.

Although all of these newly written vernaculars qualify to varying extents as being “Persianate” in Hodgson's terms through their adoption of words, genres, and subject matter from Persian, from the sixteenth century on, they were developing as rich (and sometimes richly patronized) literary fields in their own right. They were becoming “cosmopolitan vernaculars,” in line with Sheldon Pollock's concept.¹⁴⁴ In addition to rival regional languages, the interregional hegemony of written Persian was also being threatened by literary Turki (whether what would eventually be termed “Chaghatai” or “Ottoman” Turkish), itself an increasingly interregional language, whose chefs-d'œuvre were read from the Tarim Basin to the Balkans.¹⁴⁵ Although Chaghatai was never nearly as widespread as Persian in Mughal India, it was arguably more socially and ethnically exclusive, being chiefly associated with elite families of *moghol* immigrants. Even so, a tradition of Chaghatai text production continued in the subcontinent during the entire Mughal era.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, even within empires, the politics of pluralism meant that Persian was not the only language being patronized, as Mughal support for Sanskrit treatises and Brajbhasha poetry shows.¹⁴⁷

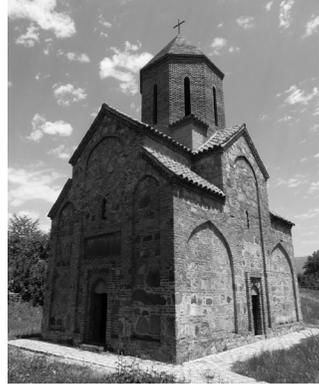
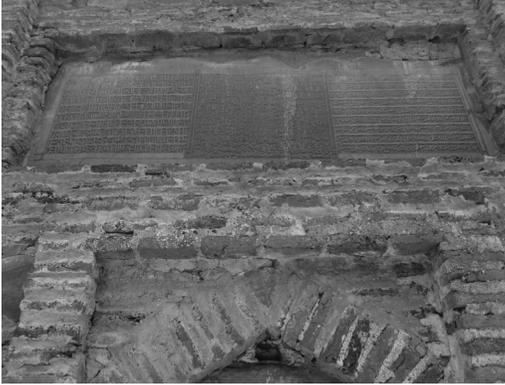
What is more striking—and less assimilable to Hodgson’s model of assumed Persianate hegemony—is Persian’s interaction with preexisting “classical” literary languages that had their own traditions, genres, and literary specialists. In differing degrees, such interactions occurred in each of the regions into which Persian expanded from the thirteenth century on, whether Anatolia, India, or China. In Anatolia, this was the case with Byzantine Greek. But while a few Greek texts were influenced by Persian, the prestige of Byzantine court culture also influenced the Rum Saljuqs and Ottomans in turn.¹⁴⁸ In India, this was the case with Sanskrit: by the sixteenth century, the Mughals supported both scholarship in Sanskrit and translations of Sanskrit works into Persian.¹⁴⁹ In China, this was the case with Chinese, for the bilingual inscriptions framed in Chinese decoration on the foundation steles of Ming-period mosques in no way suggest that Persian was the dominant partner.¹⁵⁰ Trade along the Silk Roads to China had led to the gradual emergence of a new community of “Persianate Chinese,” who eventually became known as the Hui, but it was Chinese rather than Persian literary culture that emerged as dominant.¹⁵¹ From the mid-seventeenth century on, Hui scholars began to create a new Muslim literature in Chinese based on translations from Persian texts. Known collectively as the *Han Kitab* (Chinese books), this new corpus was built on the foundations of four key Persian Sufi texts, *Mirsad al-‘Ibad* (Path of God’s Servants) by Najm al-Din Razi (d. 1256); *Maqṣad-i Aqsa* by ‘Aziz al-Nasafi (d. 1263); and *Ashī‘at al-Lama‘at* (Commentary on the Divine Flashes [of Fakhr al-Din ‘Iraqi]) and *Lawa’ih* (Gleams) by ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492).¹⁵² In each case, these translations had to adapt Persian Sufi vocabulary and concepts to the dominant Chinese literary and Confucian semantic order of the Ming imperial literati.

The linguistic traffic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not only one-way from Persian into other languages. In India, this is apparent from texts such as the *Qasida dar Lughat-i Hindi* (Panegyric on the Hindi Language), a versified vocabulary of Hindwi medical terms written by a physician who migrated to Delhi from Herat.¹⁵³ Sanskrit scholars also created their own dictionaries and teaching manuals of Persian, as well as absorbing Persian influences into their Sanskrit works.¹⁵⁴ As in many other regions of Eurasia, Jami was a key figure in this: in 1505, at the Kashmir court of Muhammad Shah (r. 1500–1526), Jami’s *Yusuf wa Zulaykha* was rendered into the Sanskrit *Kathakautuka* (Curious Story) by the poet Śrivarā.¹⁵⁵ Correspondingly, the Mughal elite sponsored large translation projects rendering Sanskrit works into Persian.¹⁵⁶ The desire of various other non-native speakers across the subcontinent to learn or master the Persian language—particularly its more recondite lexicons and technical jargons—led to the increasing production of pedagogic works. Having begun with the late thirteenth-century *Farhang-i Qawwas* (Dictionary of Qawwas), the production of such pedagogical and lexicographical works rapidly increased with the greater demand for mastery of Persian under the Mughals.¹⁵⁷ Many similar such works were written in Central Asia to enable Turki speakers to learn Persian, but also—reflecting the increasing status of Turkic

languages—for Persian-speakers to learn to read Chaghatai.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, in China, Hui Muslims prepared similar glossaries of Chinese-Persian vocabulary.¹⁵⁹

Whether in the Ottoman Empire or in post-Timurid Central Asia, literary Turkic expanded considerably in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman imperial chancery steadily replaced Persian with Turkish for all forms of administration (except in the Arab provinces, where Arabic was retained).¹⁶⁰ Even so, the Ottomans did continue to issue documents in Persian—as, for example, when Selim I (r. 1512–20) issued a decree to the citizens of Bursa in Persian—and so it was likely not until the reign of Suleyman (r. 1520–66) that the Ottomans fully replaced chancery Persian with Turkish, except for diplomatic correspondence.¹⁶¹ In Central Asia, however, although Muhammad Shaybani Khan (r. 1500–1510) and his successors sponsored an extensive program of translations from Persian into Chaghatai Turkish, Persian remained the paramount bureaucratic language under the Shaybanid dynasty. It also remained the chief literary and administrative language in the Safavid Empire, though Turkic literature was also written and patronized at the Safavid court, not least by its founder Shah Isma‘il (r. 1501–24).¹⁶² Even so, via the chanceries of the Safavids, Shaybanids, and Mughals, from the sixteenth century on, Persian was the preeminent language of state power across a vast region connecting Iran to Central Asia and India.

The Safavid conquest of the Georgian kingdoms of Kartli and Kakheti and the Armenian region of Erevan in the 1500s also deepened the reach of bureaucratic and in turn literary Persian in the Caucasus. Safavid mints issuing Persian coinage were established in Tblisi and Erevan (Yerevan), while for almost two centuries in Erevan and three centuries in Kartli and Kakheti decrees (*farman*) and other official documents were issued either in Persian or in a combination of Persian and either Armenian or Georgian.¹⁶³ Some such decrees concerned the patriarchal rights of the Armenian Catholicos and the landholding rights of Georgian monasteries. The state imperial status of Persian meant that various Georgian and Armenian poets continued either to adapt Persian motifs or to compose poetry in Persian alongside their mother tongues. For much of the sixteenth century, the main preoccupation of Georgian poets was to translate the first half of the *Shah-nama* into Georgian verse in the form known as *Rostomiani* (The Story of Rostam), as in the case of the monk of Khevi, Sogratidze Sabashvili (fl. 1530), and Parsadan Gorgijanidze (fl. 1610) almost a century later.¹⁶⁴ Aside from Firdawsi and Nizami of Ganja, the other major Persian poetic model during these centuries was the Timurid literary colossus Jami. The most celebrated of Jami’s transmitters into Georgian was King Teimuraz I (r. 1605–16, 1625–48) of Kartli and Kakheti, an erstwhile Safavid vassal turned rebel, who had been raised as a political hostage at the court of Shah ‘Abbas.¹⁶⁵ In creating his own rival court culture, Teimuraz went on to adapt Jami’s versions of the stories of Layli and Majnun (as *Leilmajnuniani*) and Yusuf and Zulaykha (as *Iosebzilikhiani*) before ending his days in a Safavid



FIGURES 4A and 4B. Safavid Christian borderlands: trilingual inscription in Persian, Georgian, and Armenian, Tarsa Church (1593–95), Gremi, Georgia. Photographs by Nile Green.

prison.¹⁶⁶ Yet, in the words of Donald Rayfield, Teimuraz had “made his enemies’ tongue an integral part of his own.”¹⁶⁷ Sharing Persianate tastes through such literary court cosmopolitanism was not, then, an automatic antidote to conflict.

King Vakhtang VI (r. 1716–24), Teimuraz’s successor as ruler of Kartli and resistor of the Safavids, continued to imbue his poetry with Persian metaphors and symbols, while his own successor Teimuraz II (r. 1732–44 in Kakheti, 1744–62 in Kartli) translated the tale of Sindbad (as *Timsariani*) from Persian.¹⁶⁸ Their coinage was also issued with both Georgian and Persian script. This too was the era of the celebrated court poet Harutyun Sayatyan, better known as Sayat Nova (Persian: *sayyad-i nawa*, ‘Master of Song,’ 1712–95), an Armenian by birth who composed verses in Armenian, Georgian, Azeri Turkish, and Persian and was put to death for refusing to apostatize by the invading Qajar shah of Iran, Agha Muhammad Khan.¹⁶⁹ But though even Sayat Nova’s Georgian songs were filled with Persian words and phrases, after his death, with the Russian conquest of southern Caucasia looming on the horizon, Persian would soon give way to the new imperial literary and intellectual lingua franca of Russian. With the opening of the Tbilisi mint in 1804 after the Russian conquest of 1801, the use of Persian also disappeared from the region’s coinage.

Armenian poets had also continued to incorporate Persianate elements into their literature during the Safavid era. In 1606, Shah ‘Abbas had deported over 150,000 Armenians from the old town of Julfa in Nakhchavan to the suburb of New Julfa in his capital at Isfahan,¹⁷⁰ and between the late seventeenth century and the 1780s, Armenian bards composed oral poetry (particularly in the *du-bayti* and *dastan* genres) in both Persian and the New Julfan dialect of Armenian, itself replete with Persian vocabulary.¹⁷¹ As in the case of Georgian, though, when writing in Armenian, there was only a selective incorporation of Persianate elements by adopting motifs and metaphors, rather than script. Even so, as late as

the eighteenth century, Petros Lap'anc'i (d. 1784) continued to use the imagery of the rose and nightingale.¹⁷² However, in the Safavid period, the impact of Persian on Armenian literature as a whole was still less than on Georgian. The Ottoman conquest of eastern Anatolia (including much of the historically Armenian region of Vaspurakan) at Chaldiran in 1514 and of the western half of the Caucasus in 1639 rendered imperial Turkish (and subsequently European languages) an important counterweight to Persian in the lives of the Armenians who fell under Ottoman dominion.¹⁷³ When western Armenian writers did adopt Persian motifs, they were more likely to be channeled via Ottoman Turkish writers, pointing to the imperious rising power of the Persianate languages themselves.

It was in Mughal India, east of the Ottoman and Safavid imperial realms, that Persian made its greatest advances in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Mughals' Persianizing turn occurred especially after the return to Delhi in 1556 from his Safavid exile of the emperor Humayun (r. 1530–40, 1555–56), bringing to India a cohort of artists and writers from the Safavid court in Qazvin. More important for the broader impact of Persian beyond the Mughal imperial courts in Delhi, Lahore, and Agra, the social frontiers of Persian were expanded by the introduction to Persographic norms of many Hindu secretaries. It was not in the central Mughal chancery but through the regional bureaucracy that knowledge of Persian offered employment to the largest numbers of people. The chancery systems that the Mughals inherited from their Lodi Afghan and Deccani predecessors in India appear to have employed Hindu scribes using local languages such as Hindwi and Marathi at the level of local administration, sometimes transcribing Persian into Devanagari script.¹⁷⁴ However, despite the close affiliation of the early Mughal rulers and immigrant elite with Chaghatai Turkish, the imperial Dar al-Insha increasingly promoted the use of Persian. In 1582, the emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) declared Persian the official language of the Mughal bureaucracy, expanding its domain to even the local levels of administration previously conducted in the vernaculars.¹⁷⁵

This increased state-driven demand for skills in Persian literacy, and particularly for mastery of epistolary forms, was the impetus for more and more Hindus to learn Persian in search of work in the imperial civil service. Echoing the importance of court secretaries in creating the earliest works of Persian prose during the Samanid period, six centuries later the larger Mughal Empire only increased the importance of bureaucracy as a vector of Persian literacy. The imperial elite in Safavid Iran had some Persian Jewish physicians, but they were far fewer than the numerous Hindus (mainly of the Kayastha and Khatri castes) who acquired literacy in Persian through the requirements of the Mughal bureaucracy. Although it was the rewards of regular employment that attracted Hindus to learn Persian, what actually enabled them to do so was the opening to them of madrasa education through another of Akbar's edicts.¹⁷⁶ By the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605–27), the number of Hindu scribes (*muharrir*) and secretaries (*munshis*) led Har Karan Das

Kambuh of Multan (d. 1625) to write his widely imitated epistolary manual *Insha-yi Harkaran*.¹⁷⁷ Within a generation, other Hindu munshis were writing Persian literary as well as administrative works. The most celebrated was Chandarbhan Brahman (d. 1662), the Lahore-born author of *Chahar Chaman* (Four Meadows) and several other works.¹⁷⁸ Far from disappearing with the retraction of Mughal rule, such Hindu Persian poets continued to flourish into the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries, particularly in the successor state of Awadh.¹⁷⁹ Stefano Pellò has calculated that between 1760 and 1819, up to 30 percent of the poets writing in Persian in the Awadh capital of Lucknow were Hindus.¹⁸⁰ However, as seen in the partial translation of the *Bhagavata Purana* into Persian verse made during the 1730s in Delhi by the munshi Amanat Ra'i (d. after 1750), a Vaisnava follower of the metaphysical poet 'Abd al-Qadir Bidil (d. 1720), this was not a one-way "Persianate" street,¹⁸¹ although the dominant direction was evidently what Pellò has termed "literary conversion to Islam [*conversion 'letteraria' all'islam*]."¹⁸² For while we know of Hindu secretaries and poets who converted to Islam through their exposure to Muslim texts in Persian (such as the Punjabi Khatri Diwali Singh who became Hasan Qatil), we do not as yet know of Muslims apostatizing as result of reading Persian translations of Hindu scriptures.¹⁸³ In most Muslim-ruled contexts, there were of course legal and social limits to heterodoxy, apparent in the brutal murder by his brother Awrangzeb (r. 1658-1707) of the Mughal heir-apparent Dara Shikuh (d. 1659), who supported religious engagement with Hindu mystics.

As in the Caucasus, Persographia flourished in South Asia even in the midst of conflict between religious groups. Thus, whether motivated by political or religious concerns, the Mughal persecution of the Sikh gurus did not prevent the latter's followers from adopting the official language of Mughal Empire. As the Sikh religion gradually emerged through the teachings of the ten gurus under Afghan Lodi and Mughal rule, not only did Persian verses find their way into the Sikh holy book but a subsidiary Sikh religious literature was also composed in Persian.¹⁸⁴ The last Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh (1666-1708), composed his *Zafar-nama* (Letter of Victory) to the emperor Awrangzeb (whose successor had him assassinated) in the imperial lingua franca, while Persian was also the language of the *Rahit-nama* (Book of Conduct) and *Bandagi-nama* (Book of Discipleship) of Gobind Singh's favorite disciple, the Ghazni-born Bhai Nand Lal (1633-1713). To recognize conflict is not, then, wholly to reject Pellò's view of Persian as the Mughal Empire's "inter-ethnic/ecumenical language [*lingua sovranazionale/ecumenica*]" but to recognize that this did not automatically lead to wider sociopolitical ecumenism.¹⁸⁵

The other important social frontier that Persian literacy increasingly crossed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was that of gender, because increasing numbers of elite women learned to read Persian, and in some cases composed works in that language.¹⁸⁶ Here it was the court and the sub-imperial elite households, rather than the bureaucracy, that were important. Timurid cultural

traditions of high female status and education found new expressions in India, most famously with the princesses Gulbadan (ca. 1523–1603) and Jahanara (1614–81). The imperial courts of the Mughals and Safavids also increasingly exposed other groups to Persian, particularly leading representatives of the “tribal” peoples who occupied the mountainous borderlands over which the Mughal and Safavid states sought closer control than their predecessors. The examples of the Kurds and Afghans show how two peoples with their own languages—Kurmanju and Pashto—chose to adopt the language and genre of the Persian chronicles (*tarikh*) favored at the imperial court for writing their earliest histories. This occurred in the case of the *Sharaf-nama* of Sharaf al-Din Bitlisi (d. 1599), an erstwhile Kurdish protégé of both the Ottomans and Safavids, and the *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani* of Khan Jahan Lodi (d. 1631), an Afghan courtier and companion of the Mughal emperor Jahangir.¹⁸⁷ Even when Pashtun tribal elites did begin patronizing texts in Pashto, being unable to write themselves, they had to make use of non-Pashtun secretaries who were only literate in Persian, a collaboration that resulted in Persian shaping the evolution of written Pashto.¹⁸⁸

Turning from the mountain to the maritime fringes of these empires, the “Parsi” Zoroastrians of Gujarat form another revealing case study of the Mughal social expansion of Persian. Having settled in India for many centuries, the descendants of Zoroastrian émigrés from the Iranian plateau had come to speak Gujarati and retained Middle (Pahlavi) Persian only as a liturgical language. However, in the wake of Akbar’s conquest of Gujarat between 1572 to 1584, members of the literate Zoroastrian priesthood learned New Persian so as to engage with the conquering elite. Echoing such works as the *Sharaf-nama* and the *Tarikh-i Khan Jahani*, the *Qissa-yi Sanjan* (Tale of Sanjan), written in 1599 by Bahman Kaikubad, a priest from Navsari, used the norms of imperial literary culture to tell the story of his own community.¹⁸⁹ A subsequent Zoroastrian work, the 1655 *Dabistan-i Mazahib* (School of Religions), likely by Mir Zu al-Fiqar Ardistani, drew the Zoroastrians of the Mughal coastal periphery more closely into imperial norms through an ethnography of the empire’s various religions that interpreted Zoroastrianism itself through the lenses of *ishraqi* (illuminationist) Sufi philosophy.¹⁹⁰

Far from Mughal Gujarat, as mentioned earlier, Persian texts also had an impact on the emergence of a Muslim courtly and religious literature in the Malay language during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This occurred through the roles of the itinerant religious teachers Hamza Fansuri (d. 1527 or 1590) and Nur al-Din Raniri (d. 1658). Born in Southeast Asia, Fansuri travelled west to Mecca, Baghdad, and even Palestine before returning to teach Sufi doctrines in his home region. This itinerary in itself suggests a more complex geographic movement than a simple center-to-periphery transfer of Persian ideas.¹⁹¹ On his return to Southeast Asia, Fansuri’s subsequent poetic and doctrinal writings in Malay saw him borrowing various key terms from the original Sufi lexicons of Arabic and Persian.¹⁹² But though Fansuri adapted into several of his Malay works extracts

from Persian works by such authors as Ghazali, ‘Attar, and Sa‘di, as well as from the *Lawa’ih* of ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami (which we have already seen being rendered into Chinese), Fansuri was probably more practiced in Arabic than Persian poetical composition, since his translations were based on Arabic rules of prosody, and replete with Arabic vocabulary.¹⁹³ His competence in Persian remains uncertain. Between fifty and a hundred years after Fansuri’s death, Nur al-Din Raniri migrated from the Gujarati port of Rander to the court at Aceh in Sumatra, where he attained the influential position of *shaykh al-islam* and, around 1638, composed his *Bustan al-Salatin* (Garden of Sultans), an encyclopaedic work in Malay that appears to have drawn even more than Fansuri’s earlier writings on Arabic rather than Persian sources.¹⁹⁴ As Paul Wormser has succinctly phrased the matter, “when Persian culture and literature was at the height of its international fame, it was often accessed in the Malay world through an Arabic filter.”¹⁹⁵ Even if Fansuri and Raniri did translate parts of Persian works into Malay, they did not produce Persian texts that genuinely linked Southeast Asia to Eurasian Persographia.

Turning to commercial rather than religious transfers across the Indian Ocean, while the poor survival of merchant records makes the picture unclear, it appears that non-Muslim merchant groups used their own languages, such as Gujarati and Julfan Armenian, rather than Persian, except presumably for their dealings with merchants who could only read Persian. Based on the small but significant set of surviving trade documents in Arabic and Persian, a case has been made for the existence of standardized mercantile “epistolary structures,” though the argument here has been expressly for the importance of the Arabic script rather than of any particular language, whether Arabic or Persian.¹⁹⁶ A counterargument could be made that many such commercial documents were in varying degree Persianate: Armenian trade documents from New Julfa were replete with Persian vocabulary, which also crept into the Ondaatje Letters (1729–37), Tamil correspondence related to the Chettiyar merchant Nicolaas Ondaatje (Tamil: Ukantacci).¹⁹⁷ Yet while non-Muslim merchant communities shared technical vocabularies and loanwords with Persian users, their commercial transactions appear to have been written in their own scripts and languages. When Persian was important for Indian Ocean trade, it was mainly as a diplomatic language, not a merchant lingua franca, as evidenced by a handful of surviving Persian documents from Southeast Asia, comprising a letter to the king of Portugal produced in Malaka in 1519; two letters written in Aceh during the reign of Sultan ‘Ala al-Din Ahmad Syah (r. 1725–35); and another diplomatic letter sent to Ottoman Istanbul in 1869 by the Burmese ruler, King Mindon (1853–78).¹⁹⁸ Only further research will allow us to speak with any certainty about these mercantile and maritime dimensions of Persographia but the discovery of such diplomatic documents does conceivably point to a greater knowledge of Persian in the chanceries of Southeast Asia than has previously been recognized.

The rise of the English East India Company (1600–1858), the Dutch Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (VOC; 1602–1799), the Danish Østindisk Kompagni

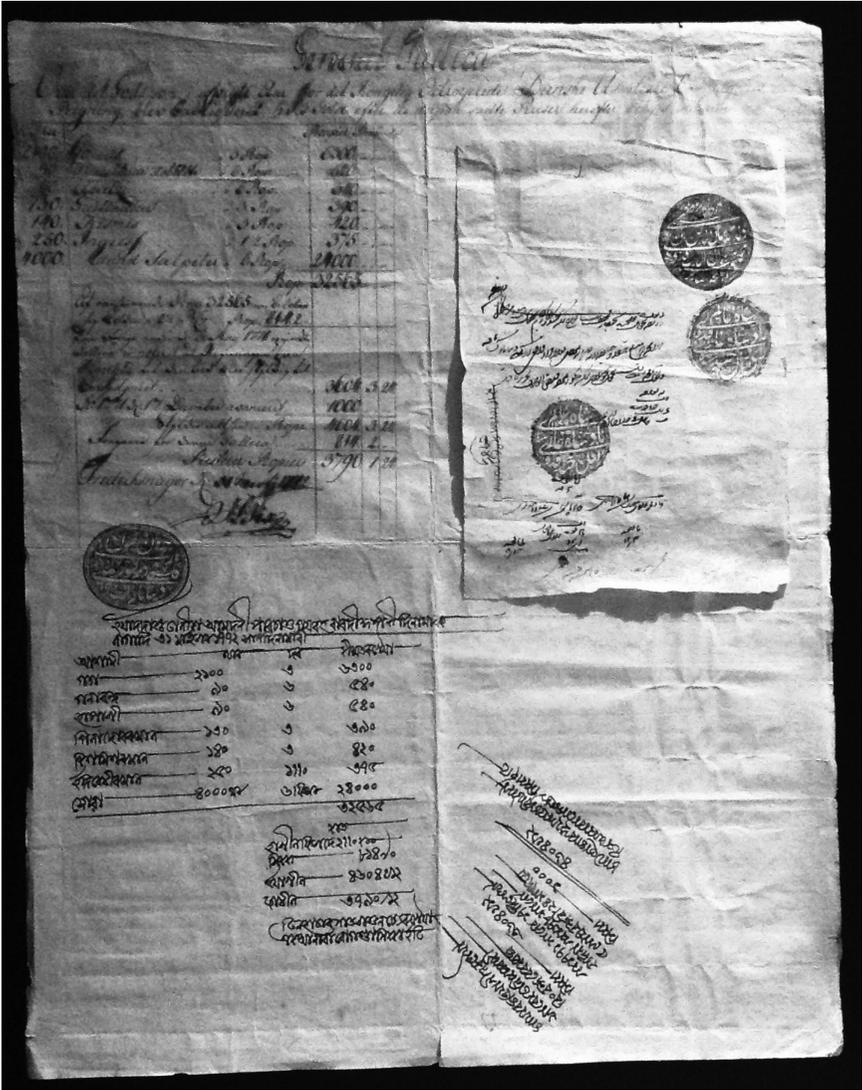


FIGURE 5. Mixed languages of merchants: trilingual Danish East India Company trade document in Persian, Bengali, and Danish. Photograph by Nile Green. Courtesy of the M/S Maritime Museum of Denmark, Elsinore.

(1616–50, 1670–1729), and the Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales (1664–1794) further expanded the geographical frontiers of Persian correspondence. In some such cases, a single document might feature Persian alongside Danish and Bengali. Thus, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, trade and diplomacy with European states and their trading companies also led to an expan-

sion of formal Persian correspondence east to the Burmese and Thai kingdoms of Pegu and Siam and west to Europe.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, Iranian trade with Siam resulted in the settling of Iranian and Indian traders in Shahr-i Nav (City of Boats), as the Siamese capital Ayutthaya was called in Persian. The city, its peoples, and its goods were described in the *Safina-yi Sulayman* (*The Ship of Sulayman*), Muhammad Rabi' ibn Muhammad Ibrahim's official record of the embassy sent in 1685 by the Safavid Shah Sulayman (r. 1666–94) to the ruler of Siam Narai (r. 1656–88).²⁰⁰ Increasing European engagement with the Safavids and then the Mughals produced an increasing amount of Persian-based diplomatic paperwork, beginning with the Republic of Venice and the Portuguese Empire and subsequently including France and England (while Russia developed its own diplomatic connections with the Central Asian khanates).²⁰¹ In its earlier phase, this involved the employment of various kinds of Persianate non-Muslim middlemen, particularly Armenians, who by the eighteenth century used Persian for communications between the English East India Company in Bengal and the Buddhist Konbaung dynasty in Burma.²⁰² But over the longer term the result was the production of new lexicographical works aimed at teaching Persian and its epistolary forms to Europeans, fostering a small cadre of Persian-trained European translators who were in some measure the latter-day heirs (and competitors) to the earlier Persographic munshis on the eastern half of Eurasia. A side-effect of this new intellectual axis was the creation, from around 1770 perhaps, of intellectual networks in which Persian-writing intellectuals in India and to some extent Iran translated and otherwise responded to recent developments in the “European sciences” (*‘ulum-i farangi*).²⁰³ Even so, the case should not be overstated, insofar as the major power of concern to Europe—the Ottoman Empire—conducted its diplomatic correspondence with Europe in Turkish, which generated a cadre of European linguistic middlemen more “Ottomanate” than Persianate.²⁰⁴

Thus, even at the peak of Persian's usage, the fortunes of written Persian were marked by contingent conditions and regionally variable patterns of diplomatic practice, elite patronage and administrative policy. This became all the more visible from the mid-eighteenth century on, as the collapse of Mughal and Safavid power diverted court patronage and chancery practice toward a series of alternative languages. In different regions, this promoted the fashionable Urdu of the successor state of Awadh; the Pashto briefly promoted by the ethnically Afghan new elite of the Durrani Empire; and the Modi-script Marathi of the Peshwa Daftar, the Maratha chancery whose officials also created the Marathi historiographical genre of the *bakhar* (the name taken from the Persian *akh-bar*, “news report”).²⁰⁵ In Central Asia, Chaghatai had by now similarly gained ground in both bureaucratic and literary contexts, though Persian works were still read, and sometimes written, in such regional hubs as Bukhara and Kashgar, the latter falling under Qing Chinese control by the 1760s. The age of the Safavid and Mughal empires that had so richly supported Persian was now over. The

successor states and new empires that replaced them would develop their own policies regarding the Persian language and its by now expansive and increasingly diverse personnel.

THE RISE OF NEW IMPERIAL AND NATIONAL
LANGUAGES (CA. 1800–CA. 1930)

Although the earlier expansion of Turkic bureaucracy under the Ottomans and the more limited patronage of Chaghatai literature under the Timurids and their successors in Central Asia had introduced Turkic into some of Persian's domains, the case for a vernacular ascendance in the eighteenth century observed by Bert Fragner and others should not be overstated. Even by the early nineteenth century, too many families, professional groups, and institutions were invested in Persian for its power to quickly crumble. In Iran, the founders of the new Qajar dynasty in the 1780s upheld Persian's status in spite of writing Turkic poetry themselves.

By this time, the southward push given by the Mughal Empire had also embedded the language deep in India, where it would continue to be important in such successor states as Hyderabad and Arcot.²⁰⁶ Despite Ahmad Shah Durrani's flirtations with founding a Pashto-based bureaucracy, when the capital moved from Qandahar to Kabul in 1772, Durrani and post-Durrani Afghanistan retained Persian as its chancery and chief court language.²⁰⁷ One key reason was the influence, and older skill set, of professional bureaucrats like Muhammad Taqi Khan (d. 1756) of Shiraz who were brought from Iran by Ahmad Shah Durrani to oversee his short-lived imperial administration.²⁰⁸ Even as the erstwhile Durrani provinces of Punjab and Kashmir fell respectively under Sikh and Hindu rule in the early nineteenth century, Persian remained an important language for the scribes and literati of the Sikh and Doghra courts.²⁰⁹ As late as 1849, when the East India Company conquered Punjab, the Lahore-based munshis who had served the Sikh Empire were only able to write in Persian and not in Gurmukhi-script Punjabi, which was the preserve of Sikh religious teachers.

Similarly, when the expanding Russian Empire annexed the Caucasus provinces from the Qajars during the Russo-Persian wars of the early nineteenth century, Persian was still an important bureaucratic language in a region with multiple spoken and written competitors.²¹⁰ Turning to Central Asia, in the khanate of Khiva, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the population spoke Turkic languages, Persian remained the chancery language until 1857, when the Qonghrat dynasty mandated its replacement by Chaghatai.²¹¹ Meanwhile, in the khanate of Qoqand, although the broader culture of the khanate was bilingual, Persian dominated its chancery later still. New Persian literary works also continued to be patronized in nineteenth-century Qoqand.²¹² And Persian remained the dominant bureaucratic language of the Manghit dynasty in Bukhara till the very end of the khanate in 1920. Beyond the realm of the state, even occult texts in Persian continued

to be used right up to the Sovietization of Central Asia, pointing to Persian-based intellectual continuities during a period usually understood as dominated by the Russian-influenced modernist Jadids who wrote in Tatar Turkish.²¹³ Even in the Russian-ruled Volga-Ural region and Siberia, as well as Chinese-ruled East Turkistan, small numbers of Sufis and scholars continued to read if not necessarily write Persian works until the early twentieth century.²¹⁴ As old hubs such as Bukhara retained their connections to Persian learning, in some cases Persian found new intellectual connections, as with the late renaissance of Judeo-Persian in Russian-ruled Bukhara through the reinvigorating contact with other Jews of the tsarist empire.²¹⁵

Even so, the new non-Muslim empires that were expanding through the old geographies of Persographia had little or no interest in Persian as a court, literary, or religious language. Their linguistic concerns were primarily practical and administrative. Except in India, whose post-Mughal states had upheld Persian bureaucracy, this was eventually—if less immediately and thoroughly than was once thought—to undermine the old lingua franca in favor of written vernaculars and new imperial languages, particularly English and Russian. Faced with this situation, the new Eurasian empires of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—British, Russian, and Chinese—were forced in different degrees to adapt to the literate status quo. These were pragmatic policies. Except when it seemed politically expedient to engage with the culture of native elites, the new imperial ruling class would not be Persianized like the conquering Turks of an earlier era. They dealt with the language situation—particularly the availability of literate bureaucratic middlemen—as they found it. As a result, imperial Russia required its officials and intermediaries to deal far more with Turkic and Mongolian languages than with Persian.²¹⁶ After the Qing conquest of what they called the “New Territories” (Xinjiang) of Eastern Turkistan in the 1750s, Persian was used by Qing officials as diplomatic correspondence increased with China’s new frontiers with Qoqand, the principalities of Badakhshan and the Pamirs, and Ladakh.²¹⁷ But in Chinese-ruled Xinjiang itself, by the time of the Qing conquests, written Turki had become far more important than Persian among the literate local population. Whether to their rulers in Beijing or their co-religionists in Bukhara and Kazan, by 1900, the Muslim inhabitants of Xinjiang were overwhelmingly writing in Turki (which, with some modifications, they renamed Uyghur).²¹⁸

It was, then, only Britain’s East India Company that made large investments in Persian, which remained the Company’s official language of law and bureaucracy until the administrative reforms of 1832–37.²¹⁹ Until this time, the employment of Hindu and Muslim munshis remained a necessity not only for administering the Company’s expanding empire, but also for training British officials competent in Persian paperwork.²²⁰ Residing in India for decades, some of these British Company servants wrote poetry in Persian and adopted Persian noms-de-plume (*takhal-lus*), among them the Reverend Bartholomew “Sabr” Gardner, as did some of the Armenian merchants who had settled in Calcutta and other Indian cities.²²¹ In this

respect, such members of the Company's administrative and commercial cadres were following the acculturating path taken by Hindu munshis over the previous centuries, whereby the acquisition of a practical skill set led to exposure to new aesthetic tastes. But the results of the Company's pragmatic policy of convenient continuity with Mughal administrative practices also charted new directions for Persian, with the establishment of the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781 and the Fort William College in 1800 as schools for British secretaries.²²² As a consequence of these educational policies, the geographical and social frontiers of Persian expanded as far as England through the teaching of Persian to hundreds of British students at the East India Colleges founded in England at Haileybury in 1806 and Addiscombe in 1809.²²³ Demand from the East India Company's colleges, students, and scholars led in turn to the beginning of Persian printing in Calcutta and London, with the earliest publications including such bureaucratic works as the Mughal-era epistolary manual *Insha-yi Harkaran* by the Hindu munshi Har Karan Das, and several successors to Sir William Jones's 1771 *Grammar of the Persian Language*.²²⁴ The beginning of Persian printing in Britain coincided with the minting of Persian coins there, and in 1786, the frontiers of Persian reached Birmingham, in the far west of Eurasia, when the pioneer of the steam engine Matthew Boulton (1728–1809) began using the new machinery at his Soho Foundry to produce Indian coinage with English obverse and Persian reverse inscriptions.²²⁵ In purely quantitative terms, minting far outstripped printing: in just a few decades the Soho Foundry issued over 220 million Persian-script coins for the East India Company.²²⁶

In the longer term, though, the largest consequences for written Persian came from print rather than mint technology. The diffusion of print followed the new imperial frontiers of Russian and British power as they skirted across Central and South Asia to surround Iran and Afghanistan.²²⁷ One direction of print diffusion followed a Russian imperial axis from Saint Petersburg to Kazan (where Turkic and some Arabic texts had been printed by Russian-ruled Tatars since 1797) and thence to Tbilisi and Tabriz, the latter a short distance beyond the new imperial Caucasian frontier with Qajar Iran.²²⁸ The other direction comprised a British imperial axis from London to Calcutta to Lucknow (whence to North India more generally), as well as to Bombay (whence to south India and Iran). Between 1817 and 1819, print technology thus moved out of European hands as the first printing presses reached Lucknow and Tabriz from Calcutta and Saint Petersburg respectively. The first Persian text printed in Tabriz was the *Jihad-nama* (Book of Holy War), a collection of fatwas legitimizing war against Russia as jihad.²²⁹ In Lucknow, the first printed text was the *Haft Qulzum* (Seven Oceans), a Persian dictionary and grammar. Even as more books followed from such Muslim-operated presses, for years to come the largest print runs for any Persian text remained those of the New Testament, issued by the British and Foreign Bible Society, which regularly ran to 5,000 copies.²³⁰ Since the missionary societies needed literate local helpers for their work in their evangelizing frontier outposts around Bengal, the

Caucasus, and the ports of the Caspian, Christian missionaries were also responsible for transferring the skills of the printer to Persographia's former "men of the pen" (*ahl-i qalam*).²³¹

This spread of printing was not a belated Persianate participation in the "Gutenberg Revolution," which had formerly been confined to Europe and a small number of its enclaves in the Americas and Asia. Instead, the spread of printing in the Persianate (and more generally, the Islamic) world was part of the truly global reach of the "Stanhope Revolution" based on the more portable, robust, simplified, mass-produced, and thereby inexpensive iron hand presses that emerged as a consequence of industrialization in Europe.²³² The earliest machines used to print Persian were typographic presses, which in locations like Tabriz and Lucknow presented their Iranian and Indian owners with the difficulty and expense of casting or purchasing imported Arabic-script type. With a few elegant exceptions, mainly works printed in London's typographic bazaar, Persian books printed in type looked unfamiliar to readers whose eyes were trained to pass over pages of flowing calligraphic *diwani*, *shikasta* or *nast'aliq*. Another by-product of the European industrial revolution, the invention of lithography by the German playwright Alois Senefelder in 1796, produced a method of printing that was able to overcome these problems.²³³ Thus, within around fifteen years, the technique that Senefelder invented for printing scores of theatrical music was adapted for issuing texts in Persian calligraphy. Fixed to the new iron presses, slabs of imported Bavarian limestone could be written on by hand by traditionally trained calligraphers using wax crayons. This not only produced more familiarly readable books, but it also solved the shortage of trained typesetters by employing former manuscript copyists to transfer their skills. After its initial introduction to Calcutta, then Bombay, where several Persian works were issued by Company scholars in the 1820s, lithography quickly reached Lucknow (from Calcutta) and Tabriz (from Russian-ruled Tbilisi).²³⁴ From both cities, the technique, combining local skills with imported presses and stones, spread more widely, particularly in northern India, from whose commercial printers Persian books were exported to Afghanistan, and thence Bukhara, and to Kashmir, and thence Kashgar.

With lithography, the manuscripts of former centuries could now be printed. But faced with centuries of backlog, only a small proportion were, such that only a fraction of Persian's literary heritage was printed. The selection of what was printed—and hence more readily available to future generations—was based on the demands, ideologies, and tastes of mid-nineteenth-century state and commercial publishers. The uneven transition to printing brought a great caesura in the history of Persographia and of the ideas Persian had carried through eight centuries of manuscripts.

Many of the major hubs of the precolonial geography of Persian did not participate in this early nineteenth-century transfer from manuscript to printed text. In Central Asia, printing did not begin in the main former Persian hub of Bukhara but

rather in Khiva, where the ruler, Muhammad Rahim Khan II (r. 1864–1910), employed a Russian-educated printer, Ata-djan Adbalov, in 1874. Khiva's first printed book—the first to be printed in Central Asia—was not issued till 1880.²³⁵ Similarly in Afghanistan, printing did not begin until the ruler, Shir 'Ali Khan (r. 1863–66, 1868–79), established his government press in Kabul in 1873, and even then only a few dozen texts were issued until the press was reestablished in the 1910s (though many postage stamps were printed, albeit in Arabic not Persian).²³⁶ Private printing and commercial publishing were slower to develop than printing by and for the state, be it tsarist or Qajar. Whether in Lucknow, Tabriz, Khiva, or Kabul, in all of these state-driven cases, printing was not equivalent to publishing: most of the books printed for Ghazi al-Din Haydar in Lucknow sat rotting in palace store-rooms for lack of the distributive mechanisms of publishing; the Khiva printed texts were intended only for circulation and consumption at court; and Kabul printing was of legislation or propaganda intended to be distributed by state employees.

Moreover, as printing empowered older literary languages, ascendant imperial languages, and newer vernaculars, outside of Iran and Afghanistan, most of the printing being done was not in Persian. After King Vakhtang VI set up the first printing press in Tbilisi on the shifting frontiers of the Safavid Empire in 1708, its books were printed in Georgian, a practice revived under Russian patronage after the destruction of Vakhtang's press during the Qajar invasion of 1795.²³⁷ Although in 1741–42 the final book issued by the pioneer Ottoman printer Ibrahim Müteferrika (1674–1745) had been the Persian-Turkish dictionary *Lisan al-'Ajam* (Language of Persia) of Hasan Shu'uri, with the revival of Ottoman printing in the early nineteenth century, his successors favored books in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, or regional languages of the empire. If there was a dominant language, it was Turkish, as with the Greek-script Turkish works printed by the Karamanli Greeks of Anatolia.²³⁸ Most of Central Asia relied on Turkic printed books imported from the vibrant private Tatar publishing houses of the Russian-controlled Volga-Ural region (chiefly in Kazan). Printing did not reach Eastern Turkistan until 1893, when the first press—for Turkic not Persian—was established in Yangihissar by a former tailor called Nur Muhammad Hajji, who had learned lithography on a journey through India *en retour* from the pilgrimage to Mecca.²³⁹ After printing two popular Turkic classics by Sufi Allahyar and Mir 'Ali Shir Nawa'i, Nur Muhammad was soon commissioned by the Qing government to print the Turkic translation of a morality text by the Qing Shunzhi emperor, followed by a translated military instruction manual. Whether in Tabriz or Lucknow, Yangihissar, or Kazan, non-Muslim empires played a part in each of the nodes of the new geography of printing. These empires' practical agendas saw them favoring more widely understood vernaculars than the old Persian lingua franca of the few. By the 1850s, only in Iran and eventually Afghanistan were there independent Muslim ruled-states that were committed to printing in Persian, and even then only for narrow statist purposes.

The new geography of print was therefore not at all the old geography of the former hubs and nodes through which Persian manuscripts had once circulated. Until the 1840s or 1850s, there were probably more Persian texts printed in London and Calcutta than anywhere else. By the end of the nineteenth century, even Jerusalem had become the chief center of Judeo-Persian printing through the efforts of the Bukharan émigré Shim'ôn Hakham (1843–1910). By the time print technology did spread to old hubs like Delhi and Shiraz in the mid-nineteenth century, the vernacularizing developments of the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries meant that in most of the former sites of Persian literary culture, demand was primarily for books printed in various former vernaculars that had by now become literary, and in some cases bureaucratic, languages in their own right.

In the second half the nineteenth century, only in Iran (and later Afghanistan) was Persian the hegemonic language of printing. To some extent, this reflected state policy, as when the East India Company replaced Persian with Urdu (and Bengali) as its bureaucratic language in 1832–37, a policy extended to Punjab after its annexation in 1849, with formally independent Hyderabad State following suit in 1885.²⁴⁰ In the tsarist and Qing territories, ever since their conquest, the more widely understood Turkic and Mongolian languages had been used for official purposes for similarly practical reasons (though various Iranian émigrés were able to print Persian works in tsarist Tbilisi).²⁴¹ Whether promoted by the colonial state, or by indigenous reformists exposed to colonial ideas, modern education increasingly came to mean education in literary vernaculars like Tatar and Urdu, or else in imperial languages like Russian and English. Even the literati and colonial munshis were now abandoning Persian for the written and now imperial vernaculars. Persian was able to hang on longer in the bureaucracies of some of India's princely states and as late as 1877, when Victoria was declared Empress of India (with the Persianate title Qaysar-i Hind), several princes sent as congratulatory gifts Persian local histories, such as Sultan Shah Jahan Begum's *Taj al-Iqbal* (Crown of Fortune, 1873) and Pandit Ra'i Narayan's *Siraj al-Tawarikh* (Torch of Histories, 1875). But in British India proper, Persian was by now disenfranchised by Urdu and other vernaculars, chiefly Bengali. The East India Company had established Delhi College back in 1823 to educate Indian bureaucrats, and by 1840 its syllabi were no longer Persian-based but instead consisted of Urdu textbooks translated from English.²⁴² This pattern was echoed by Muslim reformists, eager to seize on the wider social reach of the vernaculars for their own purposes. Thus, the Jadid and Aligarh movements, the main Muslim educational reformers in Russian Eurasia and British India, likewise favored what they saw as the more "modern" vernaculars of Tatar and Urdu over the "degenerate" medium of Persian.²⁴³ Even a self-consciously traditionalist institution like the great Dar al-'Ulum madrasa at Deoband, founded in 1867, dropped Persian to teach mainly in Urdu (and to teach more Arabic, albeit via Urdu).²⁴⁴ Its model was imitated by Deoband's countless ancillary schools across the subcontinent where Persian had once reigned supreme.

Yet such pervasive vernacularization of literacy, education, and thereby publishing was also a result of printing itself. Inherent economies of scale mean that, *ceteris paribus*, texts in languages without a sufficient number of likely readers are less likely to be printed. It is a striking echo of this general principle that a large proportion of the new Persian works composed in India in the second half of the nineteenth century were never printed and remained in manuscript.²⁴⁵ For the logic of mass-production required commercial printers to issue books in the languages that would reach the maximum number of purchasing readers. Both government and missionary presses followed parallel tracks of maximal outreach. This was quite the contrary of the model of manuscript production, in which expensive individual texts had been produced for small numbers of readers. In this way, a general pattern can be observed with the rise of printing, whereby texts in geographically dense vernacular languages were increasingly favored over texts in the geographically dispersed former *lingua franca* of Persian. In India, commercial publishers thus issued increasing numbers of books in Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, and other vernaculars.²⁴⁶ This was also the case across the vast sway of Central Eurasia controlled by the tsarist and Qing empires, where, from the Volga-Urals to Eastern Turkistan, the vast majority of printed books were in Turkic languages.²⁴⁷ It was even the case in Iran, where Armenians and Azeri Turks read books imported from the larger print market of the neighboring Ottoman Empire, and the early introduction of printing to Armenian and Assyrian Christians by foreign missionaries led to increasing literacy in Armenian and Syriac.²⁴⁸

Printing, then, had a paradoxical effect on the fortunes of Persian. On the one hand, it enabled the reproduction of Persian texts in larger numbers than at any point in history, pushing mass-produced and thereby cheaper texts across various spatial and social frontiers. Persian books printed by some of the many commercial presses that had spread across India since the 1840s were exported to Central Asia. India also exported many Persian books to Iran, where commercial publishing remained poorly developed until the early twentieth century.²⁴⁹ Whether as writers, readers, or simply listeners, women and broader groups of men gained increasing access to Persian texts. On the other hand, printing offered the same possibilities to vernacular languages, which had the vast comparative advantage of being more widely understood among Eurasia's masses. While the technological and political disruption of the printing revolution and Sino-European colonization combined to spread printing in Persian, these developments also spread printing in a far wider number of Persian's vernacular competitors.

By the turn of the twentieth century, these vernaculars—and arguably printing itself—became inseparable from the new ideology of nationalism, with its “modular” formulation of “one people, one language.”²⁵⁰ This powerful new ideology affected all of the languages of Eurasia. In the late tsarist era, Turkic languages were given new names like Tatar and Kazakh by local nationalists keen to create written successors to interregional Chaghatai that could be tied to local

populations. In the 1920s, this policy of literary fragmentation was taken further by Soviet ideologues. In the process, these policies undermined the legitimacy of older contact languages, whether Persian, Chaghatai, or Arabic.²⁵¹ Even in important former hubs like Bukhara, Persian was undermined by the Soviet promotion of Uzbek as the national language, while in the one case where Persian received official status, in Soviet Tajikistan, it was cut off from Afghan and Iranian Persian by the adoption of the Cyrillic script and large numbers of Russian loanwords.²⁵² In nationalist China, self-styled Uyghur nationalists printed books and journals in their “own” Uyghur language, while Hui Muslims rejected what ties they still had to Persian in favor of either national Chinese or transnational Arabic, both of which were more easily available in print than Persian works.²⁵³ In colonial India, competing nationalisms empowered a number of different languages—Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Marathi, Punjabi—but Persian was not one of them. In Afghanistan, influential nationalists like Mahmud Tarzi (1865–1933) even tried to break the hold of Persian in favor of Pashto in what had become its last stronghold as an interethnic lingua franca. Though the “Young Afghan” and then outright Pashtun nationalists failed to suppress Persian in Afghanistan, they did succeed in raising both the official status and literary infrastructure of Pashto, which from the 1920s on was taught and printed as never before.²⁵⁴ Even in twentieth-century Iran, the one nation-state that unambiguously promoted Persian as its national language, new literary orthodoxies among the intelligentsia and language policies by the state separated readers from the textual and even lexical heritage of Persian’s pre-national past.²⁵⁵ The literary ideology of *bazgasht-i adabi* (literary return) demoted the “Indian style” (*sabk-i Hindi*) in favor of poets with closer (if, for Afghans and Tajiks, far from contested) connections to the national geography of Iran.²⁵⁶ Echoing policies of linguistic purification in neighboring Turkey, in the 1930s, the Iranian Language Academy, or Farhangistan, promoted more than 1,600 “purely Persian” neologisms to replace words of Arabic or European origin in a deliberate policy of lexical divergence from pre-national Persian.²⁵⁷ As mass education brought this nationalized lexicon and canon to millions of schoolchildren, even in Iran, Persian as language and literary culture was transformed and separated from what were now the other national Persians, dubbed “Dari” in Afghanistan and “Tajiki” in Tajikistan for which similarly nationalist dictionaries and literary histories were being composed.²⁵⁸ Insofar as Persian ever had been “homoglossic,” from the 1920s on, it was no more, especially at the written level that had sustained its former interregional literary culture.²⁵⁹

Unlike the thinly spread, networked geography of written Persian as lingua franca, its new national geographies were dense with vernacular readerships on the scale of the nation rather than diffused on the scale of the transregional network. Whether court or chancery, madrasa or *khanaqah*, the old institutional spaces of Persian whose hubs and nodes had been staffed by a mobile personnel of text producers had been replaced by new national and imperial institutions, in which Persian had

little role outside Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. This reduced sphere of Persographia also sat on the economic, political, and cultural periphery of the globalized world of the late nineteenth century. By the turn of the twentieth century, imperial politics, the introduction of printing, and the ideology of nationalism had combined to redraw the frontiers of the Persianate world. Though new enclaves of Persian-use—nodes if not quite hubs—would emerge through the globalizing opportunities of the twentieth century (whether interwar Berlin or Southern California’s “Tehrangeles”), there is no doubt that by 1900, the “Persianate world” had gone: Persian was no more a language to be imitated. On contrary, through borrowed words and genres, writers of Persian in Kabul, Dushanbe, and Tehran alike imitated and adapted European literature, especially via the *roman* (Farsi) or *naval* (Dari) as the novel was differently dubbed. Not only was Persian no longer an aesthetic role model, it was also no longer a contact language or lingua franca. Except for small diasporic enclaves, the geography of Persian now only existed at the level of the nation, in Iran, Afghanistan, and (separated by the Cyrillic alphabet) Tajikistan.

CHARTING FRONTIERS: TWELVE CASE STUDIES AND AN APERÇU

In focusing on the five centuries between around 1400 and 1900, the following case-study chapters trace the geographical, social, and linguistic frontiers that existed during the period when the use of written Persian reached its greatest reach from Beijing to London and from Sri Lanka to Siberia. Collectively, what these chapters offer is therefore a critical as much as a celebratory approach to Persian drawn from the intersection of historical, sociolinguistic, and literary approaches. For the overall aim of this volume is to chart together both the reach and limits of Persographia, to assess not only its broadest extent but also its breaking points and fault lines. In this way, the book as a whole is intended as a problem-solving exercise focused on identifying the limits of Persian’s usage and usefulness over the four centuries or so that marked the maximal extent and then retraction of Persographia. At the same time as it maps the furthest expansion of Persian, *The Persianate World* therefore also serves as an exercise in tracing the constraints of the cosmopolitan. The implications of this networked geography of geographically broad but socially shallow linguistic frontiers has rarely been factored into scholarly understandings of the texts that this geography produced. Yet as Franco Moretti has shown, aggregate “maps” of literary cultures deepen our understanding of their individual literary components. A text is inseparable from its territory: each is inscribed on the other.²⁶⁰

The first section of the book, “Pan-Eurasian Expansions, ca. 1400–1600,” charts the widest reach that Persian usage achieved under the early modern empires and regional polities that followed the breakup of the Mongol and Timurid empires that had done so much to expand and promote the prestige of Persian. The first

chapter, by Murat Inan, turns to the westerly frontiers of Persian in the Ottoman imperial territories of Anatolia and Rumelia (that is, the Balkans). Inan's chapter surveys the study and teaching of Persian in the Ottoman Empire, with a focus on the reception of the language in imperial and mystical contexts. With an emphasis on the period from 1450 to 1600, the first part of the chapter explores how Persian contributed to the making of an Ottoman imperial language and identity as Persian learning flourished in venues ranging from the royal court and elite households to Sufi lodges. The second part then investigates the practices involved in Persian learning under the Ottomans with reference to teacher-scholars whose works were intended for readers and students alike. In the second chapter, by Thibaut d'Hubert, we turn to the southeasterly reaches of Persian in Bengal. Unlike the Ottoman Empire, where Inan shows a new Ottoman Turkish or *zeban-i Rum* ("language of Rum") emerging under the literary and orthographic shadow of Persian, this was a context in which Persian's chief linguistic interlocutor was a preexisting literary medium with its own distinct script. Pursuing Persian's various places—at the court as well as the village—the chapter addresses key questions about the history of Persian in Bengal that concern its links alternatively with the court culture of the Muslim sultanates and what are often presented as the antithetical lower, "vernacular" strata of society. After a general discussion of the study of Persian in Bengal, the first half of the chapter provides a historical interpretation of a celebrated poem by Hafiz of Shiraz that became emblematic of the assumed patronage of Persian poetry at the court of Bengal. This close inspection of the literary situation in Bengal shows that the region does not comply with predominant models of the patronage of Persian, pointing to the need to explore elsewhere in Bengal's cultural landscape. In response, the chapter's second half turns to the less well-known yet paradoxically better-documented spread of Persian literacy across the rural frontiers of Bengal as the era of the independent sultanate of Bengal gave way to that of the Mughal Empire.

The third chapter turns to Persian's northeastern frontiers in the capitals of the Ming Empire in China. Focusing on the *Siyiguan* imperial translation college founded in 1407 in the new Ming capital of Beijing, Graeme Ford examines the various records that describe the arrangements made for translating different kinds of documents between Persian and Chinese. Ranging from Sino-Persian exam papers from Beijing to a fifty-meter-long Buddhist scroll from Tibet and a trilingual stele from Ceylon, the documentary record of the Ming's use of Persian shows that the language was used for written communication not only within the empire itself, but with distant polities in Central, South, and Southeast Asia with which China sought diplomatic and commercial ties. Through a circuitous route via Beijing, the chapter shows how Persian reached the Malay royal ports of Sumatra as a language of Chinese diplomacy. With China's own rich literary heritage, the Ming made no attempt to adopt, still less imitate, Persian as a literary language. Rather, it served practical imperial purposes as a bureaucratic medium of

governance, diplomacy, and trade. The final chapter in the first part of the volume turns to the vast interconnected spaces of central and northern Eurasia, where from the Volga-Ural region to Siberia, Persian was in constant interaction with the increasingly written Turkic languages of the region. Here Devin DeWeese charts the northerly frontiers of Persian from the fifteenth down to the nineteenth century. His chapter argues that, despite the overwhelmingly Turkic-speaking Muslim population, and despite the steady increase in the production of literary works in Turkic, Persian continued to serve as a language of learned communication right across central and northern Eurasia, albeit increasingly in the shadow of Turkic as these regions fell under Russian domination. After a series of general observations about the gradual shift from Persian to Turkic, and a consideration of the clearer patterns of Persian's persistence in Central Asia to the south, DeWeese turns to a detailed survey of manuscript catalogues to reveal the character of both Persian literary production and consumption from the Volga-Ural basin to the villages of Siberia.

The second section of the book, "The Constraints of Cosmopolitanism," focuses more specifically on the period between around 1600 and 1800. While the main focus of this section is on the uses of Persian in the new Eurasian empires of the Mughals, Qing, and Romanovs, the section's last chapter turns to the frontiers of Chinese and Turkic rule in Eastern Turkistan, renamed Xinjiang (New Territory) after the Qing imperial conquest of the late 1750s. The section's first chapter, by Purnima Dhavan, examines the expansion of Persian scholarly networks in the Mughal province of Punjab during the seventeenth century. Dhavan examines the careers of four Indian-born scholars who used Persian literary skills to achieve great professional success to reveal how self-fashioning, professional rivalries and self-promotion animated both the acquisition and perpetuation of Persian learning in the Mughal Empire. Treating a milieu in which Hindu bureaucrats also acquired and displayed their mastery of both bureaucratic and literary Persian, the chapter focuses on the crucial importance to professional success of access to specific social networks. Showing how social and political contexts shaped the contours of literary production, Dhavan shows how the competitive provincial networks of Punjab turned toward prose and pedagogical works, which in turn helped perpetuate and expand Persographia across the Mughal domains.

The next chapter turns from Mughal India, where Persian had been made the official language of state under the emperor Akbar, to the contemporaneous Qing Empire in China. Looking across the broad multilingual domains of the Qing, David Brophy reconsiders the hoary question of the "decline" of Persian's status as a Eurasian lingua franca. His chapter argues that far from showing a straightforward picture of decline, the centuries of Qing rule saw an ongoing if limited role for Persian in various spheres, even including brief periods of increased significance. The chapter takes two perspectives on the uses of Persian in Qing China. The first, building on Graeme Ford's chapter on the Ming period, is that of the imperial

state and the translation infrastructure it inherited and adapted from the Ming in accordance with the evolving needs of communication with the Qing's expanding imperial frontiers in Xinjiang and Central Asia more generally. The second perspective is that of the status of Persian among the empire's own Chinese- and Turkic-speaking Muslim communities, which promoted efforts to vernacularize Persian texts into their own languages. Nonetheless, Brophy shows how Persian continued to enjoy considerable prestige in China's powerful Sufi milieu.

Turning to the west and north of the Qing territories, Alfrid Bustanov's chapter examines the circulation of Persian texts in imperial Russia. The chapter describes the multilingual and multiliterate contexts of imperial Russia, where the Persian language was often mixed in writing with other languages such as Chaghatai Turkish and Arabic. Bustanov covers the vast and varied territories of the Romanov Empire by means of three geographically distinct case studies. The first looks at the Volga-Ural region, where from the seventeenth century on, the Persian language became crucial to Quranic exegesis, Sufi writings, and jurisprudence. The second case brings to light the importance of Persian for the communities of "Bukharans" who settled around the Siberian city of Tobolsk in the early eighteenth century, while the third case study considers an exiled Sufi shaykh from the Caucasus who used Persian for his letters to fellow Sufis in the Russian-ruled towns of the Volga-Ural basin.

In the final chapter in this section, Alexandre Papas considers the evolution of Persian learning in Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang), where spoken and written Turkic came to dominate from the eighteenth century. Yet rather than making the facile assertion that Persian declined into a dead language by the nineteenth century, Papas reveals a more complex scenario through an analysis of manuscript catalogues and a case study of several talismanic scrolls. By these means, the chapter moves from the early modern period, when Eastern Turkistan's elite mastered Persian, to the nineteenth century, when Persian texts were still sometimes written, but only in simplified forms. Through a close inspection of seven talismanic scrolls, Papas shows how the social prestige of Persian combined with the waning linguistic competence of its users to transform Persian from a lingua franca to a lingua magica, a magical language that was widely used but that was limited to specific and supernatural linguistic functions.

The third section of the book, "New Empires, New Nations," moves on to the rapidly changing period between around 1800 and 1920. In line with the preceding history given in this Introduction, rather than reiterate a conventionally simplistic model of Persian's collapse in the face of new imperialisms and nationalisms, the chapters in this section show how Persian continued to be read, and valued, throughout the nineteenth century, and indeed crossed new geographical frontiers to reach Britain through its connection to the East India Company's empire. In the first chapter of the section, Michael H. Fisher leads us through the long transition between the Mughal Empire and the British Empire. when the Persian language

and Persianate culture continued to enjoy great prestige in India. But as the British East India Company replaced the Mughals, Persianate culture acquired conflicting meanings, at once valorized and denigrated. To trace this complex shift in status, Fisher's chapter considers the career of D. O. Dyce Sombre (1808–51). The doomed, mixed-race heir to a North Indian principality, Dyce Sombre struggled to maintain his identity in both the old Mughal imperial world as it fragmented and the rising British one as it expanded. Fisher reveals, through his private manuscript diary and correspondence, how, even during his decades living in London, Dyce Sombre clung to Persian, appraised others by Persianate standards, and was measured by the British by them as well.

The next chapter moves from the waning principalities of India to the khanates of Central Asia during their parallel transition to Russian imperial rule. Here Marc Toutant shows how both before and after the Russian conquest of Khiva in 1873, its court culture underwent a process of “de-Persification” by means of a translation program into more readily comprehensible Chaghatai Turkish. Toutant argues that, unlike in India, where the Company and then British Empire was instrumental in the vernacular replacement of Persian, Khiva's translation program was promoted less by the Russians than by cultural competition between the Qonghrat dynasty and its rival local khanates. After centuries in which Central Asia remained a key outpost of Persian—exporting and maintaining the language as far away as Siberia, as Bustanov's chapter shows—in the nineteenth century the situation rapidly changed. Toutant's chapter traces this monumental retraction of what was arguably Persian's core Eurasian territory by means of a case study of Khiva's extensive translation program from Persian into Chaghatai Turkish. In this way, the chapter examines the major cultural shift that brought to an end the era of Persian as Central Asia's main language of the arts and sciences.

Examining another of the longtime frontiers of Persian, the next chapter turns to the Caucasus. After outlining the earlier history of Caucasian Persian, Rebecca Gould focuses on the century after the region was conquered from Qajar Iran by imperial Russia. In this way, echoing Fisher's chapter, Gould explores, not so much the outright disappearance of a Persianate frontier, as its transformation into a new imperial and intellectual environment. The chapter follows the career of the Iranian reformer 'Abd al-Rahim Talibuf (1834–1911), who spent the last decades of his life in Daghestan after his initial migration from the Iranian city of Tabriz to the Russian-ruled Caucasian *carrefour* of Tbilisi. Despite the stronger traditional hold of Arabic in the region, Talibuf wrote eight books in his highland refuge in Daghestan that shaped the subsequent trajectory of intellectual history across the border in Iran. In this way, Gould traces the effects and circumstances of “dissidence from a distance,” the process by which diasporic Iranian communities used Persian to influence political events in their homeland.

The final chapter in this section by Abbas Amanat continues this theme of border-crossing in the new imperial and national contexts of the late nineteenth

century with a study of the migrant Indian poet Adib Pishawari. Having been born and raised in precolonial Peshawar, Adib was forced into exile as a result of his family's involvement in an anticolonial rebellion. After travelling, and studying, across independent Afghanistan, Adib settled in the Iranian cities of Mashhad and then Tehran, where this Indian émigré made his name as one of the last living repositories of the old literary culture that had formerly sustained Persian learning for centuries. With a new nationalist literary culture taking shape in Iran, however, Adib became an increasingly marginal figure, living out his last years in the Iran of Riza Shah as a survivor of, and transmitter from, the Persianate world of old. In this way, Amanat's chapter captures through a single life the travails of Persian's retraction from a Eurasian lingua franca to a national language that by the 1930s was preserved by just three modern nation-states.

By way of a concluding epilogue, the book's final chapter returns to the big picture of Persographia laid out earlier in this introduction. Here Brian Spooner takes a macrohistorical and structural approach to both the expansion and retraction of Persian across the *longue durée* of what he terms the "Persianate millennium." Moving from Old Persian's initial use as a language of administration in the sixth century BCE, Spooner follows the expansion of Persian through the cuneiform, Aramaic, and then Arabic scripts of its multiple incarnations as a *koine* used from China to the Balkans, before its retraction in the face of the official vernaculars of new nation-states. Focusing on the processes at work in the previous chapters, Spooner emphasizes Persian's standardization and stability as a written language that underlay its continued importance for a full millennium. In the final sections of the book, he brings us through developments in the twentieth century that saw an esteemed yet abandoned language become the forgotten Latin of a formerly Persianate world.

Before finally turning to the chapters that explore the various frontiers of Persian during its main centuries of expansion and retraction, it is worth taking stock of the scale of that literary eclipse by way of a bibliographical statistic from the library of a twentieth-century South Asian Muslim. Among the several thousand books collected by Jamal al-Din 'Abd al-Wahhab (1919–2012), 55 percent were in Urdu, 30 percent in Arabic, 10 percent in English, and a mere 5 percent in Persian.²⁶¹ Even for this religious scholar, educated in the great Farangi Mahal madrasa founded under Mughal patronage, Persian had been sidelined by other, national, religious, and imperial languages.

NOTES

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2. Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 2: 293.
3. Bruce B. Lawrence, "Islam in Afro-Eurasia: A Bridge Civilization," in *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (London: Routledge, 2009), 157–75.
4. Abbas Amanat, ed., *The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).
5. Bert G. Fragner, *Die "Persophonie": Regionalität, Identität und Sprachkontakt in der Geschichte Asiens* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1999), 33–36.
6. *Ibid.*, 6–8, 16–21.
7. *Ibid.*, 33.
8. *Ibid.*, 100–104, with the quotation at 101.
9. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012).
10. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, "Preface," in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, xi.
11. *Ibid.*, xiii.
12. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, "Introduction: Persian as *Koine*: Written Persian in World-Historical Perspective," in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, 1–69.
13. Hamid Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 42.
14. *Ibid.*, ix and 2.
15. *Ibid.*, viii.
16. Ironically, aside from a few pages on Ghalib, Iqbal, and the Tatar Jadids, Dabashi's emphasis on "cosmopolitan worldliness" ignores the past three centuries of contributions to Persian literature and culture by non-Iranians. See *ibid.*, chaps. 7 and 8, with the quotation at 302.
17. Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).
18. *Ibid.*, 84.
19. *Ibid.*, 84–85.
20. *Ibid.*, 85. The italicized emphasis is Ahmed's own.
21. Stefano Pellò, *Tūjīyān-i Hind: specchi identitari e proiezioni cosmopolite indo-persiane (1680–1856)* (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 2012).
22. *Ibid.*, 33.
23. *Ibid.*, 18, 169.
24. *Ibid.*, 83.
25. I am grateful to Domenico Ingenito for this point. For a detailed study of Sudi's career, see Murat Umut Inan, "Writing a Grammatical Commentary on Hafiz of Shiraz: A Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Scholar on the Divan of Hafiz" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2012).
26. This seems to have been particularly the case after the Safavid promotion of Shi'ism in the sixteenth century. This is not to say that Shi'ism created an unsurmountable "barrier of heterodoxy," for Shi'i Islam created its own networks between India and Iran, albeit often based on Arabic rather than Persian learning. See Juan R. I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722–1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), and Robert D. McChesney, "'Barrier of Heterodoxy?': Rethinking the Ties Between Iran and Central Asia in the Seventeenth Century," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).
27. *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. Jack Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
28. For a standard, if somewhat dated, general survey, see Gilbert Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 595–632. More recently,

see John R. Perry, "The Origin and Development of Literary Persian," in , *A History of Persian Literature*, ed. J. T. P. de Bruijn, vol. 1, *A General Introduction to Persian Literature* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

29. Mary Boyce, "The Parthian *Gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 89, nos. 1–2 (1957): 10–45, and Rahim Shayegan, "Old Iranian Motifs in *Vis o Ramin*," in *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, ed. Alireza Korangy, Wheeler M. Thackston, Roy Mottahedeh, and William Granara (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

30. William Hanaway, "Secretaries, Poets and the Literary Language," in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, 100–101.

31. Gilbert Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1963), 32.

32. Ludwig Paul, "Persian Language: i: Early New Persian," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/persian-language-1-early-new-persian.

33. Gilbert Lazard, "*Pahlavi, pārsi, dari*: Les langues de l'Iran d'après Ibn al-Muqaffa," in *Iran and Islam, in memory of the late Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 361–91. Ibn al-Muqaffa mentioned five languages in total, the other two being non-Iranian-group languages.

34. W. B. Henning, "The Inscriptions of Tang-i Azao," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 20, 1–3 (1957): 335–42, and Bo Utas, "The Jewish-Persian Fragment from Dandān-Uliq," *Orientalia Suecana* 17 (1968): 123–36.

35. N. Sims-Williams, "Early New Persian in Syriac Script: Two Texts from Turfan," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74, 3 (2011): 353–74, and W. Sundermann, "Ein manichäischer Lehrtext in neupersischer Sprache," in *Persian Origins: Early Judaeo-Persian and the Emergence of New Persian*, ed. Ludwig Paul (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 243–74.

36. Hassan Rezaï Baghbidi, "New Light on the Middle Persian-Chinese Bilingual Inscription from Xi'an," in *The Persian Language in History*, ed. M. Maggi and P. Orsatti (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 105–14.

37. Ela Filippone, "The Language of the Qor'ān-e Qods and Its Sistanic Dialectal Background," in *The Persian Language in History*, ed. Maggi and Orsatti, 179–235, and Gilbert Lazard, "Lumières nouvelles sur la formation de la langue persan: Une traduction du Coran en persan dialectal et ses affinités avec le judéo-persan," in *Irano-Judaica II*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1990), 184–98. On conversion rates to Islam in Khurasan, see the classic study by Richard W. Bulliet, *The Persians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

38. John R. Perry, "New Persian: Expansion, Standardization & Exclusivity," in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, 72.

39. Bo Utas, "A Multiethnic Origin of New Persian," in *Turkic-Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects*, ed. Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 241–51.

40. Sheldon Pollock, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, 1 (1998): 6–37. By way of response, see Pnina Werbner, "Vernacular Cosmopolitanism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, 2–3 (2006): 496–98.

41. On the context for these developments, see Rocco Rante, "'Khorasan Proper' and 'Greater Khorasan' within a Politico-Cultural Framework," in *Greater Khorasan: History, Geography, Archaeology and Material Culture*, ed. Rante, Nathalie Gandolfo, Pascale Richardin, and Antoine Zink (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), and D. G. Tor, "Importance of Khurasan and Transoxiana in the Persianate Dynastic Period (850–1220)," in *Medieval Central Asia and the Persianate World: Iranian Tradition and Islamic Civilisation*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock and D. G. Tor (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015).

42. Perry, "New Persian," in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, 73.

43. Bosworth concluded that the Tahirids (r. 821–73) "were indeed highly Arabized in culture and outlook, and eager to be accepted in the Caliphal world where the cultivation of things Arabic gave social and cultural prestige. For this reason, the Tahirids could not play a part in the renaissance of New Persian language and literature." See C. E. Bosworth, "The Ṭāhirids and Persian Literature," *Iran*

7 (1969): 103–6, citation at 106. See also Richard N. Frye, “The Sāmānids,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Frye, vol. 4, *From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, 136–61.

44. Gilbert Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans (IXe–Xe siècles)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient Adrien Maisonneuve, 1964), 1:10 et seq.

45. W. B. Henning, “Persian Poetical Manuscripts from the Time of Rudaki,” in *A Locust’s Leg: Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, ed. Henning and Ehsan Yarshater (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1962), 89–104.

46. A. C. S. Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Bal’ami’s Tarikh-namah* (London: Routledge, 2007), 36–37, and Lutz Richter-Bernberg, “Linguistic Shu’ubiya and Early Neo-Persian Prose,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, 1 (1974): 55–64. My thanks to Andrew Peacock for these references.

47. The source for Muhammad ibn Wasif as a poet is the thirteenth century *Tarikh-i Sistan*, cited in William Hanaway, “Secretaries, Poets and the Literary Language,” in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, 105.

48. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments*, 36–37, and Vladimir Minorsky, “The Older Preface to the Shāh-nāma,” in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* (Rome: Istituto per l’Oriente, 1956), 2: 159–79.

49. Ludwig Paul, “The Language of the *Šahnama* in Historical and Dialectal Perspective,” in *Languages of Iran: Past and Present. Iranian Studies in Memoriam David Neil MacKenzie*, ed. Dieter Weber (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005).

50. Bert Fragner has also observed Persian’s importance as an administrative language (*Verwaltungssprache*). See Fragner, “*Persophonie*,” 76–78.

51. Julie Scott Meisami, “Why Write History in Persian? Historical Writing in the Samanid Period,” in *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2: 348–71, and Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography*, chaps. 3–4.

52. Travis Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur’an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chap. 6.

53. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, “*Siyāq*: Numerical Notation and Numeracy in the Persianate World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Mathematics*, ed. Eleanor Robson and Jacqueline Stedall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 429–47.

54. *Ibid.*, 437.

55. *Ibid.*, 438.

56. I am grateful to John E. Woods for this information.

57. Robert L. Canfield, “Introduction: The Turko-Persian Tradition,” in *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert L. Canfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1.

58. S. Jabir Raza, “Hindus under the Ghaznavids,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 71 (2010–11): 213–25.

59. Gerhard Doerfer, “The Influence of Persian Language and Literature among the Turks,” in *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and John R. Perry, “The Historical Role of Turkish in Relation to Persian of Iran,” *Iran & the Caucasus* 5, 1 (2001): 193–200.

60. My thanks to Domenico Ingenito for this point.

61. C. E. Bosworth, “The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznavids,” *Iran* 6 (1968): 33–44.

62. C. E. Bosworth, “The Titulature of the Early Ghaznavids,” *Oriens* 15 (1962): 210–33. and id., “An Oriental Samuel Pepys? Abu’l-Faḍl Bayhaqī’s Memoirs of Court Life in Eastern Iran and Afghanistan, 1030–1041,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd ser., 14, 1 (2004): 13–25.

63. Alessio Bombaci, *The Kufic Inscription in Persian Verses in the Court of the Royal Palace of Mas’ud III at Ghazni* (Rome: Ismeo, 1966); Viola Allegranzi, “Royal Architecture Portrayed in Bayhaqī’s *Tārīḥ-i Mas’ūdī* and Archaeological Evidence from Ghazni (Afghanistan, 10th–12th c.),” *Annali*

dell'Istituto orientale di Napoli 74 (2014): 95–120, and id., “The Use of Persian in Monumental Epigraphy from Ghazni (Eleventh–Twelfth Centuries),” *Eurasian Studies* 13 (2015): 23–41.

64. Saïd Amir Arjomand, “Evolution of the Persianate Polity and Its Transmission to India,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009): 115–36, and A. C. S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız, “Introduction: Literature, Language and History in Late Medieval Anatolia,” in *Islamic Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia*, ed. Peacock and Yıldız (Würzburg: Ergon, 2016).

65. Hasan Anusha, *Danishnama-yi Adab-i Farsi*, vol. 4 *Adab-i Farsi dar Shihqara (Hind, Pakistan, Bangladish)* (Tehran: Mu’assasa-yi Farhangi wa Intisharat-i Danishnama, Wizarat-i Farhang wa Irshad-i Islami, 1383/2005); Syeda Bilqis Fatema Husaini, *Critical Study of Indo-Persian Literature during Sayyid and Lodi period, 1414–1526 A.D.* (New Delhi: Syeda Bilqis Fatema Husaini, 1988); Nargis Jahan, *Tarikh-i Adabiyat-i Farsi-yi Hind dar Dawrah-i Khaljiyan* (Dehli: Anjuman-i Farsi-yi Dihli, n.d. [199–?]), Muhammad Kalim Sahsarami, *Khidmatguzaran-i Farsi dar Bangladish* (Dhaka: Rayzani-yi Farhang-i Jumhuri-yi Islami-yi Iran, 1999); and M. H. Siddiqi, ed., *Growth of Indo-Persian Literature in Gujarat* (Baroda: Department of Persian, Arabic and Urdu, M.S. University of Baroda, 1985).

66. Hanaway, “Secretaries, Poets and the Literary Language,” in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*, 108.

67. Spooner and Hanaway, “*Siyaq*,” in *Oxford Handbook*, ed. Robson and Stedall, 444–47.

68. Hanaway, “Secretaries, Poets and the Literary Language,” in Spooner and Hanaway, eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World*.

69. ‘Ali ibn ‘Uthman al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf al Mahjûb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sûfism*, trans. R. A. Nicholson (London: Luzac & Co., 1936). For context, see Hamid Dabashi, “Historical Conditions of Persian Sufism during the Seljuq Period,” in *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khanaqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993).

70. Zadeh, *Vernacular Qur’an*, 279.

71. Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), and Jawid A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The ‘‘tabaqât’’ Genre from al-Sulamî to Jâmi* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001).

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80. Rayfield, *Literature of Georgia*, 81, 85.
81. Translated in *ibid.*, 91. For a fuller linguistic analysis of the text, see Farshid Delshad, "Studien zu den iranischen und semitischen Lehnwörtern im georgischen Nationalepos 'Der Recke im Pantherfell'" (PhD diss., Friedrich-Schiller Universität, Jena, 2002).
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90. Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 157.
91. Jonathan M. Bloom, *Paper before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). Recent excavations at the erstwhile Soghdian town of Sanjar-Shah have found the earliest evidence (from between ca. 720 and 780) of the transmission of Chinese-made paper to Muslim usage. See Ofir Haim, Michael Shenkar, and Sharof Kurbanov, "The Earliest Arabic Documents Written on Paper: Three Letters from Sanjar-Shah (Tajikistan)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 43 (2016): 141–91.
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98. Saïd Amir Arjomand, "Unity of the Persianate World under Turko-Mongolian Domination and Divergent Development of Imperial Autocracies in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9, 1 (2016): 1–18.

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103. Tommaso Previato, "Pre-modern Globalization and Islamic Networks under Mongol Rule: Some Preliminary Considerations on the Spreading of Sufi Knowledge in Gansu-Qinghai," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 36, 2 (2016): 235–66.

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105. I am grateful to David Brophy for this astute observation.

106. Frederick Hirth, "The Word 'Typhoon': Its History and Origin," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 50 (1880): 260–67.

107. Michel Balivet, "La conquête ottomane comme vecteur de l'expansion de la culture persane (XIV–XVI siècle)," in Balivet and Homa Lessan Pezechki, *Études turco-iraniennes: Anatolie–Iran du Moyen-Âge à l'époque moderne* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2017); Murat Umut Inan, *Ottomans Reading Persian Classics: Literary Reception and Interpretation in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (forthcoming); and Sara Nur Yıldız, "Ottoman Historical Writings in Persian, 1400–1600," in *Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 436–502.

108. I am grateful to James Pickett for encouraging me to more carefully consider this "networked geography." See James R. Pickett, "The Persianate Sphere during the Age of Empires: Islamic Scholars and Networks of Exchange in Central Asia, 1747–1917" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2015).

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