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Bâzgasht-i Adabî (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth
Century Iran, India, and Afghanistan

By

Kevin Lewis Schwartz

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Near Eastern Studies
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Shahwali Ahmadi, Chair
Professor Munis Faruqi
Professor Hamid Algar

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Abstract

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University of California, Berkeley

Professor Shahwali Ahmadi, Chair

The idea that some poets in eighteenth and nineteenth century Iran revived Persian poetry by returning to the styles of the classical masters, while poets outside of Iran did not, has left a deep impression on how Persian literary history has come to be written. This idea, known as *bâzgasht-i adabî* (literary return), has left much historiographical debris in its wake: the conflation of the writing of Persian literary history with that of Iran's own; the assertion of a greater proprietary right by Iran over the great "masters"; and the erasure from history of many facets of Persian literary culture occurring outside of Iran's borders. As influential as this concept has been, its impact has not been challenged sufficiently. This is equally true for how the idea of *bâzgasht-i adabî* developed and shaped the writing of both Iranian and Persian literary history, as it is for understanding the activities of Iranian poets who sought a "return" to the masters. This dissertation addresses this gap by revisiting the concept of *bâzgasht-i adabî* and the larger realm of Persianate literary culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Crucial to this endeavor is recognizing that *bâzgasht-i adabî* is an idea, movement, and category exclusively pertaining to Iran. Its inclusion within the narrative of *Persian* literary history signifies a special literary path for Iran, as distinct from other locales in the Persianate world. Those places, not subjected to a revival of the masters' styles, supposedly remained stagnant and therefore unimportant to the development of Persian literary culture. Thus *bâzgasht-i adabî* is an interjection in Persian literary history that at once revitalizes literature in Iran while effectively dismissing aspects of Persian literary history occurring outside of Iran. This omission is all the more glaring because the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a vital and transformative period in the Persianate world, not just in Iran, but in other places as well.

This work addresses the immense historiographical impact of *bâzgasht-i adabî*, and also the historiographies of Persian literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century India and Afghanistan. Analyzing the historiographies of Iran, India, and Afghanistan together provides a more integrated approach to Persian literary trends, a necessary corrective in the context of an era of global change. A wide-angle comparative approach offers the benefits of situating *bâzgasht-i adabî*-- as a conceptual category and historical movement-- in a larger geographical and chronological framework. This approach enables a fuller understanding of the shifting literary-cultural landscape in the Persianate world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Following a historiographical appraisal of Persian literary culture in Iran, India, and Afghanistan during these two centuries (Chapter One), this work focuses on three specific literary environments, one in each of these locales. Chapter Two examines the Isfahânî Circle of poets that sought to “return” Persian poetry to the styles of the masters and argues for a re-evaluation of their aims and aspirations. Chapter Three focuses on the Persian literary activity at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot (a ruler of a Mughal successor state in South India) and highlights how local poetic debates remained connected to similar issues vexing the larger nineteenth century Persianate world. Chapter Four explores a series of *jangnâmahs* (battle-poems) of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), composed in imitation of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*, and demonstrates how the circulation of these texts created a robust “marketplace of the masters” stretching across Afghanistan and South Asia, in both oral and print forms. All four chapters are based on a wide range of original source material in Persian, especially poetry and works of the *tazkirah* (biographical anthology) genre.

Chapters Two through Four each convey their own stories and geographically bound social and literary histories. Often these topics appear best understood as firmly grounded in events of a local nature and more relevant to the writing of Iran, Indian, or Afghan literary history. At the same time, they document a larger Persianate environment best characterized as a shared engagement with the work, ideas, and personas of the “masters” of Persian poetry. The Isfahânî Circle of poets in Iran, the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot, and the Afghan *jangnâmahs*, are instances of how various individuals in different locales looked toward the poetry and prestige of the masters and engaged with them at a time when the Persianate world was breaking apart. Their occurrence demands a reappraisal of the exclusivity of the idea of *bâzgasht-i adabî* as applicable only to Iran. With an expanded definition of *bâzgasht-i ababî*, one that encompasses other engagements with the “masters” outside Iran, we are able to rethink the categories used in the writing of Persian literary history and to confront the need to write a more integrative account.

for Holly and Sage

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don't bear mention, but all assuredly are less preferable and many, no doubt, significantly unsavory. Her pragmatism has kept me grounded and her lightheartedness has kept me sane. She has heard more than her fair share about *munshîs* and *bâzgasht* over the years, so much so that they are words that have now entered our private lexicon in ways we could not have imagined. It is to her and the newest addition to our family, Sage, my little peacock, to whom I dedicate this work.

All errors, whether great or small, are the responsibility of me alone.

Note on Transliteration and Translation

I follow the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES) system of transliteration for both consonant and vowels. Long vowels are marked as â, î, and û. Diacritics are omitted for consonants. All terms, proper names, and titles are transliterated with three exceptions: words that appear in a fairly recognizable anglicized form (e.g. *hadith*); author names appearing alongside a work published in English (e.g. Wali Ahmadi); and city names (e.g. Isfahan). Individuals whose name contains a geographic appellation, such as Mushtâq Isfahânî, however, are properly transliterated.

All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. The original Persian of many translations of poetry and prose appearing throughout the text can be found in the Appendix. Some times the Persian offered is only of the translated section; other times the entire poem from where the selection was taken is offered. Those translations for which a Persian equivalent appears in the Appendix are marked by a * or † in the text. A corresponding symbol appears in the footnotes to direct the reader to the proper place in the Appendix.

Figures

Figure 1. Network map of poetic connections in nineteenth century Carnatic according to *Tazkirah-yi isharât-i Bînish* (1265/1848-9)

Figure 2. Major *tazkirahs* and other works relevant to the reign of Muhammad Ghaws Khân A‘zam (d. 1855)

Figure 3. Chronology and geography of *jangnâmah* textual production following the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842)

Figure 4. Texts in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* in nineteenth century Afghanistan and South Asia

Introduction: Persian Literary Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but—mainly—to ourselves.¹

For several centuries, Persian literary culture shaped the socio-political and intellectual environments of the greater Islamic world, in particular in the territories and diverse societies of West, Central, and South Asia. Dynasties from the Samanids to the Mughals patronized Persian poets and men of letters, and made Persian the official language of their chancelleries.² Persian cultural traditions helped dynasties manage empires and enabled inter-imperial communication. Patronage of the Persian arts, particularly poetry, elevated rulers' legitimacy and authority. Interest in Persian language and culture promoted cross-regional fertilization among poets and *littérateurs* of this Persianate sphere.³ This common language and cultural focus allowed such groups to travel across borders in search of professional opportunities or personal enrichment.⁴ Over the centuries, despite political upheavals and dynastic conflicts, the position of Persian as the dominant cultural-linguistic idiom survived across large parts of the eastern Islamic world.⁵ This remained more or less true until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹ Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), 89.

² For a brief introduction to the spread of Persian throughout the Islamic World and the emergence of the Persianate sphere and what it entailed, see: Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, "Introduction: Persian as *Koine*: Written Persian in World-Historical Perspective," in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 1-68.

³ My understanding of the term "Persianate" follows the usage as articulated by Marshall Hodgson as referring to "cultural traditions in Persian or reflecting Persian inspiration," in such fields as literature, administration, history-writing, or the arts. Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 293.

⁴ For example see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵ For example, for two brief opinions on how political events did not affect the cultural and literary connections between Iran and Central Asia in the post-Timurid period see: Jiri Becka, "Tajik Literature from the 16th Century to the Present," in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), 486-487. Michel M. Mazzaoui, "Islamic Culture and Literature in Iran and Central Asia in the Early Modern

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the cohesiveness of this Persianate sphere began to undergo stark changes.⁶ The societies encompassed in this far-reaching region experienced a distinct cultural shift, due to the increasing use of vernacular languages and the onslaught of direct and indirect European colonial control. At this time, both inter-regional and localized trends and phenomena had a territorializing and fracturing effect on the Persianate sphere. As crucial as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are in the general history of the Persianate world, scholars have not adequately addressed the developments and transformations associated with Persian literary culture during this time.⁷ This dissertation is intended to help close this scholarly gap.

Bâzgasht-i Adabî (“Literary Return”) and the Problem with Persian Literary History

One factor limiting the scholarly understanding of Persian literary culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been the prevailing conceptual framework of Persian literary history. The customary classification of this history relies on a schematic devised by the Iranian critic and poet Muhammad Taqî Bahâr (d. 1951). As Wali Ahmadi has noted, this schematic remains a “significant intervention in Persian literary historiography.”⁸ Bahâr divided Persian literary history into four different styles (sing. *sabk*), each with its own distinct characteristics and each associated with a different time period: Khurâsânî (9th to 13th centuries); ‘Irâqî (13th to 15th centuries) *sabk-i Hindî* (Indian Style) (15th to 18th centuries); and *bâzgasht-i adabî* (“literary return”) (18th and 19th centuries).⁹ The first three categories have proven to be a somewhat satisfactory, albeit broad, rubric for delineating the major styles of poetry that dominated the Persianate sphere until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, the Khurâsânî style primarily refers to poems often expressed as an ode (*qasîdah*) in honor of a ruler and exemplified by poets like Farrukhî (d. 1037/8), Manûchihri (d. 1040), and Anvarî (d. ca.

Period,” in *Turko-Persian in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert L. Canfield (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 78-103.

⁶ Of course the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are crucial not just as a transitional period in the history of the Persianate world but for that of world history in general. See C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

⁷ The *Journal of Persianate Studies* included several articles under the heading “Symposium on the Eighteenth-Century Fracturing of the Persianate World.” For a brief description of its contents and the general framing of the symposium, see: Paul Losensky, “Introduction: Symposium on the Eighteenth-Century Fracturing of the Persianate World,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2.2 (2009): 145-147.

⁸ Wali Ahmadi, “The Institution of Persian Literature and the Genealogy of Bahâr’s ‘Stylistics’,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31.2 (Nov. 2004): 142.

⁹ Muhammad Taqî Bahâr, *Sabk-shinâsi-i zabân va shi‘r-i Fârsî*, ed. Kayûmars Kayvân (Tehran: Intishârât-i Majîd, 1377/1998), 261-289. For an excellent in-depth analysis of Bahâr’s *sabk* model see: Matthew C. Smith, “A Model of Linguistic History,” Chapter Two in “Literary Courage: Language, Land and the Nation in the Works of Malik al-Shu‘arâ Bahâr” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006), 42-78. Also see Ahmadi, “The Institution of Persian Literature and the Genealogy of Bahâr’s ‘Stylistics’.”

1189). The ‘Irâqî style, by contrast, highlights the poet’s meditative and mystical turn inward, most notably expressed in the *ghazal* (lyric). Poets like Rûmî (d. 1273), Sa‘dî (d. 1291/2), and Hâfîz (d. 1390) are considered its most exemplary practitioners. The *sabk-i Hindî* style, better known to its practitioners at the time as *shîvah-yi tâzah* (fresh style) or *tâzah-gû’î* (fresh speak), was particularly known for its intellectualism, challenging imagery, and intricate metaphors. Two of its most famous practitioners may be considered to be Sâ’ib Tabrîzî (d. 1676) and ‘Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil (d. 1721).

The geographic appellation referenced by the style titles of the first three categories often leads to a misguided impression that each applies exclusively to certain regions. In fact, their application is not geographically restrictive. Bahâr intended the titles to be used as temporal designations.¹⁰ The ‘Irâqî style of poetry, for example, can be found just as readily in the area of ‘Irâq-i ‘Ajam (to which “‘Irâqî” refers) as it can elsewhere. In this context, Bahâr’s first three classifications articulate the general cohesiveness of the Persianate world by identifying the predominant poetic style found throughout its sphere of influence.

Concerning the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Bahâr’s classification contains serious complications. While the Khurâsânî, ‘Irâqî, and Indian Styles refer to developments in the greater Persianate sphere, and bespeak its literary-cultural cohesiveness, the *bâzgasht* style or period refers to Iran alone. The result is the bifurcation of the Persianate world between Iran, on the one hand, and everywhere else, on the other. This conclusion stems directly from the way Bahâr defined the geographic applicability of the *bâzgasht* style. For Bahâr the *bâzgasht* period witnessed the renewal of Persian poetry in Iran where poets sought to “return” (*bâzgasht*) Persian poetry to the earlier styles of the Khurâsânî and ‘Irâqî periods.¹¹ Iranian poets accomplished this “return” by composing poetry in imitation of the classical masters, like Firdawsî (d. 1019 or 1025), Anvarî, and Hâfîz, whereas the remainder of the Persianate world did not. Poets outside of Iran, Bahâr tells us, continued to produce poetry in the *sabk-i Hindî* style. In this narrative, poetry defined as *sabk-i Hindî* is negatively viewed as abstract, abstruse, and overly complicated. The predominance of the supposedly deleterious *sabk-i Hindî* style in the Persianate world is offered as the *raison d’être* for the Iranian poets instigating a “return.”¹² Socio-political circumstances that may have influenced the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement are accorded a secondary role.¹³

¹⁰ That Bahâr’s categories were geographically restrictive is taken for granted as an inherent assumption. In his writings, he is quite clear that the Khurâsânî, ‘Irâqî, and *sabk-i Hindî* styles of poetry extended far beyond the places they reference and should be seen as temporal, not geographic, categories. See Muhammad Taqî Bahâr, *Bahâr va adab-i Fârsî: majmû‘ah-yi yeksad maqâlah az Malik al-shu‘arâ Bahâr*, vol. 1, ed. Muhammad Gulbân (Tehran: Shirkat-i Sihâmî Kitâb-hâ-yi Habîbî, 1317/1992), 46.

¹¹ Bahâr, *Bahâr va adab-i Fârsî*, 46-53.

¹² While Bahâr sees the transition from *sabk-i Hindî* to *bâzgasht-i adabî* in Iran as one primarily concerning stylistics rather than socio-political circumstances, it is worth noting that this is not the case concerning other transitions between styles. In the case of the transition from the primacy of the Khurâsânî style to the ‘Irâqî style, for example, Bahâr considers the Mongol invasion as being the major event precipitating this change.

¹³ According to Bahâr, socio-political circumstances that may have influenced the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement are accorded a very general role. He states that the wealth collected by the Safavids, which was later dispersed during the Afghan raids of Isfahan beginning in 1722, made its way back into the hands of Iranians during Zand times. Similarly, he notes that the plundered libraries of Isfahan, which included untold works of the various “masters,”

According to Bahâr and his successors, as Iranian poets renewed the work of the ancient masters and broke away from the *sabk-i Hindî* style, poets elsewhere in the Persianate world remained dedicated to *sabk-i Hindî*. With the exclusive applicability of the *bâzgasht* category to literary developments in Iran, a four-school classification that claimed to describe literary development *throughout* the Persianate world suddenly appears as one tailored to explain the development of Iranian literary history. Thus does the inclusion of *bâzgasht* as an exclusively Iranian category in Bahâr's classification signify the imposition of Iranian historiographical claims upon a narrative otherwise expressed as applying to a much larger geographic space. This not-so subtle shift in the dominant understanding of Persian literary development, where the description of Persian literary history easily slips into a description of the literary history of Iran, has seldom been recognized. Why this came to be the case continues to be an intriguing question. Part of the answer is likely found in the simple fact that Iranian literary historians, such as Bahâr, felt compelled to reassert the centrality of Iran in Persian literary history following a period that witnessed the flourishing of Persian literature outside of Iran. To offer an exclusively Iranian phenomenon as the next (final) stage in the development of Persian literary history would allow the primacy of Iran in Persian literary history to supersede that of other places.

The inclusion of *bâzgasht* as an exclusively Iranian category not only signifies a new literary direction for Iran, but also implies a stale and non-progressive one for other places in the Persianate world. Poetry in other regions, having not been subjected to such a renewal, supposedly remained stagnant, continuing to adhere to the negatively defined *sabk-i Hindî* style. In this context, *bâzgasht* may be understood as a development revitalizing literature in Iran while effectively dismissing Persian literary history occurring outside of Iran. Non-*bâzgasht* (or more aptly put non-Iranian) elements of Persian literary culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are ignored. Such are the two sides of the *bâzgasht* coin. As consequential as the notion of an Iranian *bâzgasht* movement is for the writing of Persian literary history, few studies have sought to understand how the *bâzgasht* style emerged in Iran beyond its juxtaposition with *sabk-i Hindî*.¹⁴ The social, political, and literary factors that helped foster the creation of this movement and the attitudes of those poets who helped shaped its emergence have been discarded in favor of more simplistic explanations connected to notions of "renewal" and "revival." Nor have studies sought to explore the variety of other non-Iranian literary trends, developments, and movements in Persian literary culture elsewhere concurrent with *bâzgasht*. This dissertation will attempt to redress this omission.

Aim and Scope of the Dissertation

This dissertation attempts to rectify the shortcoming of literary history writing that disregards non-Iranian trends in eighteenth and nineteenth Persian literary culture. It does so by

were eventually sold and reintegrated back into the book market, making them obtainable for poets. Bahâr, *Bahâr va adab-i Fârsî*, vol. 1, 48-49.

¹⁴ For two authors that address the role of social and political circumstances in the rise of the *bâzgasht* style and movement, see: Muhammad Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht: barrasî-i shî'r-i dawrah-hâ-yi Afshâriyah, Zandîyah, Qâjâriyah* (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz-i Isfand, 1375/1996); Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran, 1866-1951: Literary Criticism in the Works of Enlightened Thinkers of Iran--Akhundzadeh, Kermani, Malkom, Talebof, Maraghe'i, Kasravi, and Hedayat* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2002), 21.

looking across the Persianate world, specifically to Iran, India, and Afghanistan, to reassess neglected facets of Persian literary culture during this time and reincorporate them into the larger narrative of *Persian* literary history.¹⁵

No attempt at understanding Persian literary culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is complete without an assessment and re-evaluation of *bâzgasht*. But to do so in isolation from concomitant developments elsewhere falls into the trap of writing an Iranian rather than a Persianate literary history. As much as *bâzgasht* developed as a movement most specific to Iran, it is still no less a part of the greater Persianate environment that nurtured its growth. Treating the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Persian literary culture as one beholden to an Iranian-centric category constrains the exploration of variegated developments in Persian literary culture occurring outside of Iran. Did Persian literary culture outside of Iran simply stagnate during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Were places like India and Afghanistan simply committed to the *sabk-i Hindî* style and nothing else?

To address these questions, this dissertation widens its gaze to nineteenth century India and Afghanistan. By placing *bâzgasht* in a larger geographical and chronological context, thereby relating it to other major contemporaneous transformations, one may gain both a better understanding of the movement itself and a fuller view of the shifting literary-cultural landscape in the Persianate world as a whole. And so, two other topics will be explored alongside the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement in Iran: the poetic environment and debates at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot (d. 1855) in South India; and the composition of *jangnâmahs* (“battle poems”) written in Afghanistan in response to the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842).

In providing such a comparative perspective the dissertation does not seek to offer a comprehensive Persianate literary history of the period. Instead it seeks to highlight some of the multiple transformations of Persian literary culture as yet misunderstood or erased by many modern critics and authors. The hope is that a comparative analysis, especially where wide-ranging poetic trends and movements come into conversation with one another, will illuminate a moment in Persian literary history when the landscape becomes complicated by the impositions of modernity, nationalisms, and colonial endeavors. Such a comparative framework seeks to bring attention to what Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi refers to as the “vanished stories” and “homeless texts” of early Persianate modernity and contribute to reactivating this “concurring history that has been erased from memory by colonial conventions and territorial divisions.”¹⁶

¹⁵ This dissertation does not incorporate trends in Persian literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth Central Asia, in such places as Samarqand and the Central Asia Khanates. Especially in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Persian literary culture also underwent changes stemming from increased Russian cultural contact and control, and the influx of foreign capital in Central Asia. These factors helped increase the means of cultural production and began to give Central Asian poets and writers hope for reform and change. One of the results was a new type of poetry distinct from the dominant paradigm of the Indian Style and infused with a localized content. It concentrated on issues and developments facing urban cultural centers like Samarqand and Bukhara. For further information, see: Becka, “Tajik Literature from the 16th Century to the Present,” in *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), 512-524; Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Sadriddîn ‘Aynî, *Nimûnah-yi adabiyât-i Tâjik*, vol. 3 (Samarqand, 1925).

¹⁶ Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, “Early Persianate Modernity,” in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: The Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, ed. Sheldon I. Pollock (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 264.

This comparative framework becomes of additional use when it comes to questioning the historiographical legacy of *bâzgasht* in the Persianate world. A comparative look at the origins of the *bâzgasht* movement in Iran, the literary climate of the last Nawâb of Arcot's court in India, and the *jangnâmahs* in imitation of Firdawsî's *Shâhnâmah* in Afghanistan, all point to slightly different, yet relatable ways, in which individuals in the eighteenth and nineteenth century engaged with the "masters" in an ever-changing world. Such practices, when viewed alongside one another, indicate that the category of *bâzgasht* may be resilient and malleable enough to encompass a diverse set of trends in literary culture across the Persianate world at the onset of the modern period. As will be touched upon in the conclusion, the applicability of the category of *bâzgasht* to trends in eighteenth and nineteenth century Persian literary culture may be wider than previous imagined. Such an expanded definition of *bâzgasht* allows us to rethink the categories used in the writing of Persian literary history and the possibilities for writing a more integrative one.

At times these three topics will point to some of the continued ways in which various locales in the Persianate world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remained connected through literary debate or trends in poetry. At other times these topics will appear best understood as more firmly grounded in events and histories of a more local nature. But that is the nature of the Persianate world during a time of transition. The long-lasting and well-developed transregional trends in poetic production and poetic gatherings are of importance equal to local shifts in politics and social geography. The emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement in Iran, the court of the Last Nawâb of Arcot, and the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War are at once part of their own stories and geographically bound social and literary histories. At the same time, they are a part of the larger Persianate environment.

Organization

Chapter One focuses on the historiography of Persian literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Iran, India, and Afghanistan. It seeks to provide a general framework for the emergence of *bâzgasht* in Iran, the literary activity at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot, and the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War by examining the ways in which the history of each country's engagement with Persian literary culture during this time has been portrayed. In the case of Iran, Chapter One offers an in-depth look at how understandings of *bâzgasht* emerged, and its implications for the writing of Persian (and Iranian) literary history. It looks to historical sources from the Zand and Qajar periods as the formative texts in conceptualizing the accepted Bahâr-inspired narrative of *bâzgasht*. It then documents how modern scholarship uncritically engages with such texts to portray one particular view of *bâzgasht*. This process of narrative formation is crucial for understanding Chapter Two, which proposes a more complex story of the emergence of *bâzgasht* in Iran.

Chapter One also argues that nineteenth century Persian literary culture in India has remained a blind spot in South Asian historiography. The role of Persian during this time tends to be viewed either as a relic of a distant past connected to the decline of the Mughal Empire, or as a mere blip on the path to an expected future of colonialism and the increased usage of English, Urdu, or Hindi. Indeed, the narrative of Persian literary culture in the nineteenth century is dominated by the theme of decline, presenting British colonialism and the wider usage of Urdu and Hindi as developments that suddenly render Persian language and culture obsolete. While both of these factors had a significant impact upon the role of Persian in the post-Mughal

subcontinent, the nineteenth century was a not time when Persian suddenly disappeared because of colonialism or the rise of alternative languages. Instead, it was a time of flux and re-articulation. The way in which the literati of a South Indian Mughal successor state remained invested in Persian and connected to ongoing debates about poetry challenges this view and serves as the topic for Chapter Three.

Chapter One concludes with a discussion of the historiography of Persian literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Afghanistan. It provides background on Persian poetry during the formation of the modern Afghan state and the manner in which the state promoted the unique style of the poet ‘Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil. Bîdil remains a towering figure of Afghanistan’s literary heritage, often seen as the poet *par excellence* other poets sought to emulate. Other trends in Afghan poetry also are considered. Especially relevant are those affiliated with the Afghan court in the late nineteenth century, seeking to imitate the classical “masters” of Persian poetry, like Sa’dî, and Hâfiz. This trend has led Afghan literary historians to contemplate whether nineteenth century Afghanistan experienced a *bâzgasht* similar to that of Iran. Although literary historians have been divided over whether an Afghan *bâzgasht* occurred on such terms, overlooked in this debate is the role played by a series of *jangnâmahs* (battle-poems) composed in the wake of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) in imitation of Firdawsî’s famous *Shâhnâmah*. What these texts mean for re-thinking the likelihood of an Afghan *bâzgasht* as well as the greater geographic and conceptual applicability of the category of *bâzgasht* is the focus of Chapter Four.

Having laid the historiographical groundwork for each subsequent chapter’s focus, Chapters Two, Three, and Four delve into the material itself. The focus of Chapter Two is the *bâzgasht* movement in Iran. This chapter challenges the way in which the movement was thought-- by figures like Bahâr-- to have emerged as a response to the *sabk-i Hindî* style. Instead it offers a reappraisal more attuned to social, political, and literary contexts. While the so-called “Indian Style” provides a convenient literary (and national) foil for the emergence of a specifically Iranian movement, it was but a proximate cause of the movement’s rise, not the main cause. Of much greater importance was the environment of Safavid and post-Safavid Isfahan. This chapter argues that the *bâzgasht* movement was primarily concerned with reconstituting poetic community in the absence of patronage, the general plight of the poet, and the re-establishment of the poet’s role in society in post-Safavid times. In addition to offering a reassessment of the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement, the chapter contributes to scholarship dealing with Safavid poetic culture and the interregnum period between the Safavids and the Qajars, particularly in Isfahan.

Chapter Three focuses on one of the margins of the Persianate World in the nineteenth century-- the court of the last ruler of the kingdom of Arcot, a post-Mughal successor state located in south-eastern India. It explores characteristics of Persian literary culture there by looking at the personality and education of the Nawâb, the literary activities of his court and its surroundings, and poetic debates. The chapter seeks to show not just how Persian literary culture remained vibrant and productive in post-Mughal times, but also how the poetic debates in Arcot, steeped as they were in local politics and personal rivalries, remained connected to larger ongoing debates in the Persianate world at the time.

Chapter Four explores the question of an Afghan *bâzgasht* through a focus on the production and inter-relationships of three *jangnâmahs* that narrate the events of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) within the model of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*. This chapter argues that the widespread circulation of these texts in both Afghan and South Asian society created an

interconnected “marketplace” of texts composed in imitation of a “master.” The composition of these often-overlooked *jangnâmahs* and their integration into the oral and print culture of both Afghanistan and South Asia raise important questions about the category of *bâzgasht* for Afghan and Persian literary history. While the emergence of this “marketplace” of texts across Afghan and South Asian society does not fit the typical definition of *bâzgasht* as understood in the Iranian context, it nonetheless represents a possible way of enriching the category of *bâzgasht*. It allows us to re-assess the limits of the category of *bâzgasht* in Persian literary history and help explore whether such a category may be expanded to include trends in Persian literary culture outside of the Iranian context.

This introduction and the chapters that follow may best be understood as operating across three frames. The outer frame is that of the Persianate world of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, of which the three topics under exploration are all a part. The intent is to show that although the *bâzgasht* movement in Iran, the literary activity at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot, and the Afghan *jangnâmahs* occurred during a time of transformation and change, they are still very much indebted, in one way or another, to transregional factors in the development of Persianate literary culture carried over from previous centuries. Moreover, there are wider Persianate trends connecting and interweaving these three topics with each other. The middle frame addresses eighteenth and nineteenth century Persian literary culture as applied to the histories of Iran, India, and Afghanistan. Here, one sees the crucial ways in which Persian literary culture of that time fits within the specific historiographical matrices of Iran, India, and Afghanistan. This frame’s findings help to demarcate the manner in which Persian literary culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth century has come to be understood from a regional studies or national perspective. The innermost frame is grounded in the specific social, literary, and political context of each topic in question, making it the outcome of a particular set of factors coming into contact at one historical juncture. The goal is to demonstrate that all three frames enrich our understanding of the Persianate world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the place this period has in national and regional studies narratives, and the individual topics that make this period so intriguing and vibrant in the history of Persian literary culture.

Sources

This dissertation has drawn on a range of texts, including local and regional histories, chronicles, and *dîvâns* of poetry. The most important resource by far, however, has been *tazkirahs* produced between the mid-seventeenth and late-nineteenth century in the Persianate world.¹⁷ *Tazkirahs* are a crucial resource for reconstructing aspects of Persian literary and social history in the early modern and modern periods. The *tazkirah* is a type of text appearing throughout Islamic history in different languages and in slightly different formats, but adhering to the same basic aim: to provide biographical information on individuals deemed important to the particular class of individuals the author is seeking to “remember,” whether they be Sufis,

¹⁷ I was unable to access *tazkirahs* produced in eighteenth and nineteenth century Afghanistan or those primarily devoted to Afghan poets. This gap of research was slightly mitigated by relying on two commendable *tazkirah*-like works devoted to eighteenth and nineteenth century Afghan poets by Husayn Nâ‘il. The use of *tazkirahs* does, however, play a significantly larger role in my reconstruction of aspects related to eighteenth and nineteenth Persian literary culture in Iran and India, compared to the topic concerning Afghanistan explored in Chapter Four.

scholars, and poets—contemporaries or ancestors. The first Persian *tazkirah* of poets was completed around 1220 in Sind,¹⁸ while perhaps the most famous of all *tazkirahs* was dedicated to the lives of Sufi saints and produced about the same time in Nishapur.¹⁹ Taken together they demonstrate the genre's geographic reach and its diverse content.

The word *tazkirah* comes from the Arabic root “z-k-r” and pertains to the act of remembrance or recollection. The word alone can be translated in a variety of ways such as “biographical anthology” or “biographical dictionary,” but no translation aptly captures its wide-ranging formats and multi-faceted characteristics. To translate a title in which the word *tazkirah* appears, such as *Nasrâbâdî's Recollections* or *Nasrâbâdî's Remembrances* for *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, personalizes the work's scope to the sole proclivities of the author. Moreover, it intimates that the work may only pertain to a “remembering” or “recalling” of the past. Both factors limit a particular *tazkirah's* place within the long history of the genre and the way in which it interacts with other texts, such as by the borrowing of biographical information, poetic excerpts, and anecdotes. Consequently, in this dissertation, the titles of works that include the word *tazkirah* in the title will be left un-translated.

Some notable exceptions notwithstanding, the *tazkirah* genre as a whole has often been overlooked as a historical source rich with data. The *tazkirah* is perhaps the most fundamental building block for cataloguing and classifying trends and developments in social, intellectual, and literary life in the Persianate sphere. These texts include tens to hundreds of entries on poets, men of letters, and others, both contemporary to the author's own time and throughout history, ranging from several lines to several pages. More than just summaries of the basic details of one's life, entries often delve into an individual's literary talent and merit, professional affiliations, and associations with other men of letters, providing clues to the social geography of the interconnected world of Persian literary culture. As Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence have noted, *tazkirahs* are “not mere mnemonic repetitions.” Rather, they are “conscious remembrances, and therefore they are both cultural artifacts and cultural reconstructions.”²⁰ *Tazkirahs* can serve as “memorative communications” that “both memorialize individuals and communicate their legacy to a new generation.”²¹ Consequently, these texts can help point to the ways in which authors at different times sought to display individuals as members of a collective

¹⁸ This is the *Lubâb al-albâb* by Sadîd al-Dîn ‘Awfî (d. ca. mid-13th century). For more information on ‘Awfî, see: J. Matini, “Sadîd-Al-Dîn ‘Awfî,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 3, Fasc. 2 (1987): 117-118; An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/awfi-sadid-al-din>. For a brief overview of *Lubâb al-albâb* and its importance, see: Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 193-141.

¹⁹ This is the *Tazkirat al-awliyâ* by Farîd al-Dîn ‘Attâr (d. 1221). Farîd al-Dîn ‘Attâr, *Tazkirat al-awliyâ*, ed. Muhammad Isti‘lâmî (Tehran: Zavvâr, 1346/1967-8). For an abridged version of this work in English, see: A.J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya' ('Memorial of the Saints')* by Farîd al-Dîn ‘Attâr (London; New York: Arkana, 1990).

²⁰ Marcia K. Hermansen and Bruce B. Lawrence, “Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications,” in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, eds. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000), 150.

²¹ *Ibid.* 152.

group and help demarcate “common identity and a convergent legacy.”²² Mana Kia has emphasized the role of the *tazkirah* author and the ways in which *tazkirahs* can articulate notions of self and community, as filtered through an author’s various experiences, narrative concerns, and access to information. In this sense, she views *tazkirahs* as examples of autobiographical texts, but ones in which “the auto is not self-referentially defined, but accumulated in the context of different social relationships throughout a lifetime of learning, travel, and service.”²³ Whether the emphasis is placed on how *tazkirahs* help highlight the collective identity of a group of individuals or how an author’s own individual status fits within larger groupings of community, *tazkirahs* are far more valuable than the mere “biographical dictionaries” for which they are often credited as being. This project hopes to highlight the many ways in which *tazkirahs* can contribute to our understanding of literary, social, and cultural history and the particular benefit they provide in attempts at writing a more integrated Persian literary history, particularly in regard to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mana Kia, “Contours of Persianate Community, 1722-1835” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011), 264.

Chapter One: Historiography of Persianate Literary Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historiographical overview of some of the major shifts and developments in Persian literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Iran, South Asia, and Afghanistan. It highlights the formation and establishment of the *bâzgasht* narrative in Iran, the narrative of decline of Persian in post-Mughal South Asia, and trends and debates in Afghan literary historiography. By exploring the general historiographical matrices of Persian literary culture in these three separate locales, this chapter will elucidate some of the major ongoing debates in Persian literary history writing, point to various shortcomings of these frameworks, and highlight the gaps into which the topics of the three subsequent chapters will be placed. In short, the advent of such a panoramic framework allows for better understanding how the Isfahânî Circle of poets, the court of the last Nawab of Arcot, and the Anglo-Afghan War *jangnâmahs* fit into the larger gamut of Persian literary history, whether it be one constructed from a national, regional, or global perspective.

Bâzgasht and Nineteenth Century Persian Literary Culture

The Role of Zand and Qajar *Tazkirah* Writing

Rizâ Qulî Khân Hidâyat's (d. 1288/1871) six-volume *Majma' al-fusahâ (Assembly of the Eloquent)*, the most comprehensive and extensive Qajar-era *tazkirah* of Iranian poets present and past, included all the trademarks of what would come to define *bâzgasht-i adabî* ("literary return") as understood by twentieth century commentators and historians. Writing in the court of Nâsir al-Dîn Shâh (r. 1848-1896), Hidâyat articulated a clear notion of what would later be known as the *bâzgasht* movement. His depiction was in step with other nationalist representations taking shape at the time that sought to begin to codify Iranianess through centralizing narratives of history and identity.¹ In the introduction of his six-volume work he writes:

During the Turkmani and Safavid period reproachable methods became manifest. The well-considered manner of writing a splendid ode and the eloquent method of composing

¹ See, for example: Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008). Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

writings on admonition, advice, governance, pious devotions, and epics, which were the custom of our preceding writers, were entirely supplanted. Versifiers became inclined toward [writing] five-line [stanza poems] (*mukhammas*), six-line [stanza poems] (*musaddas*), *masnavîs*, *ghazals*, the outlining of riddles, and the conjuring up of misnomers [lit. a name applied to a person or thing lacking qualities applied by that name]. Because the *ghazal* lacked a fixed arrangement, they established [the style of] confused speech, idle prattle, and vain oratory after a manner of sickly dispositions and indirect style. In lieu of the acquisition of truths, frigid [i.e. cold, soul-less] meanings (*mazâmîn-i bâridah*) came about, and in lieu of rhetorical flourishes and pleasant rarities, detestable topics and opaque intentions were used. In particular during the end of the Safavid period and Afsharid periods, and the beginning of the Zand and Alvârîyah periods, the ascendant star of these poets' fortune was the cause of the setting star of excellence, wisdom, eloquence, rhetoric, philosophy, and knowledge. Every learned person chose a cell and every adept master hid in a corner [while] every prattler became renowned...Toward the end of the Alvârîyah period, several people settled on the restoration of old masters' method (*ihyâ-yi shîvah-yi mutaqqaddimîn*). They became aware of the tastelessness of the moderns' style (*bî-mazagî-hâ-yi tarz-i muta'akhhirîn*) and their contemptible fashion. They struggled to the utmost limit and donned the robe of earnest striving and forbade other people from the reproachable style of the moderns. They became inclined toward the pleasant style of the old masters. Nevertheless, despite their laborious efforts in doing this, they did not reach high ranks.^{2*}

In such a characterization one finds the basic outline of the *bâzgasht* movement as defined and understood by later generations of literary historians. First, Iran entered a period of decline, exemplified by poetic un-intelligibility and *ghazals* epitomized by “confused speech, idle prattle, and vain oratory.” This process began during Safavid times. Second, there came a period of renewal whereby “several people” broke free from the “reproachable style of the moderns” and “became inclined toward the pleasant style of the old masters.” Hidâyat was not the first to express such notions concerning the state of poetry in Safavid and post-Safavid Iran, nor its renewal by a group of poets who drew upon past poetic practices. In the best tradition of the *tazkirah* genre, Hidâyat built upon the ideas and language of those works from a slightly earlier time. His account may be regarded as the culmination of ideas expressed in earlier *tazkirahs* from the Zand and early Qajar period, which began articulating the idea of a poetic revival in Iran in the midst of literary stagnation, albeit in slightly different ways.

Authors such as ‘Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî³ (d. 1243/1827-8), a litterateur of the Zand and early Qajar period who remained as a hostage at the court of the Karîm Khân Zand, and Muhammad Fâzil Khân Garrûsî (d. 1259/1843), a poet and secretary of the Qajar court, also presented critiques of the state of Persian poetry and its revival. Garrûsî, in his *Tazkirah-yi anjuman-i Khâqân* (comp. 1234/1818-1819), not only criticizes the prevalent style of poetry as

² Rizâ Qulî Khân Hidâyat, *Majma‘ al-fusahâ*, vol. 1, ed. Mazâhir Musaffâ (Tehran: Mu‘assasah-yi Matbû‘ât Amîr Kabîr, 1336-1340 [1957-1961]), 9-10. * See Appendix 1.1.

³ For information on Dunbulî’s life as a hostage at the court of Karîm Khân Zand and the court at Shiraz more generally, see: Christoph Werner, “Taming the Tribal Native: Court Culture and Politics in Eighteenth Century Shiraz,” in *Court Cultures in the Muslim World: Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Jan-Peter Hartung (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 221-234.

being unsuitable compared to that of the past, but also points to the strivings of certain individuals he deemed responsible for “reviving” poetry from such a state. He writes:

Following the displeasing usages and unsuitable inventions of mediocre ones [i.e. mediocre poets], eloquence in language succumbed to disgrace, the transmission of pleasant oration was cut off, the splendor of great writers’ thoughts was extinguished, and the works from the ages of esteemed writers became unnecessary. He [Mushtâq Isfahânî] made, by his mental exertion, the arm of eloquence to be strengthened and the torn garments of poetry to be remade. Although his excellency, with respect to poetry, would not bestow this praise upon himself, in the revival of tradition and renewal of custom [his role] is unquestionable. Prior to this, first-rate noble contemporaries like Âzar, ‘Âshiq, Hâtif, and those like them were joined together as attendees of [his] assembly and confessors of [his] mastery.^{4*}

Likewise, Dunbulî, with perhaps one of the most often cited quotes by twentieth century authors concerning the rise of *bâzgasht*, noted in his *Tajribat al-ahrâr wa tasliyat al-abrâr* (*Experience of the Noble and Consolation of the Pious*):

When the carpet of poetry was trampled upon from the audacity of absurd ideas [put forth by] Shawkat and Sâ’ib and Vahîd [three poets associated with the so-called Indian Style] and others like them, together with frigid metaphors and bad similes, and fast fell from elegance and grace, Mushtâq came to the site of poetry’s rose-bed. He enveloped the volume of writings of that group like a rosebud. Instead, he spread a carpet of such poetry that he himself had been good at, and that was the method of Zamîrî [Kamîl al-Dîn Husayn “Zamîrî” Isfahânî, d. 973/1566] and Nazîrî [Muhammad Husayn “Nazîrî” Nîshâpûrî, d. ca. 1612-14]. At the head of the garden of speech he built melodies and constructed tunes [and] the mellifluous nightingales of the age followed him. His colorful poems adorned the melodies of Barbad-like minstrels of the time and his sweet songs graced the society of clever ones.^{5†}

It is not difficult to hear the echoes of both Garrûsî and Dunbulî’s remarks in Hidâyat’s own work. Unlike Hidâyat, however, Garrûsî and Dunbulî specifically related the events of Iran’s poetic transformation to the centrality of the figure Sayyid ‘Alî Mushtâq Isfahânî (d. 1757/8), later ensconced as the presumptive founder of the *bâzgasht* movement. Both authors offer their critical remarks about the decayed state of Persian poetry and its revival in biographical entries on Mushtâq. Hidâyat, by contrast, offers his comment in the introduction to his six-volume work. The difference is slight, but important. According to Hidâyat, the rise of a new style of poetry, based on the norms of the old masters, is not solely the domain of a particular poet like Mushtâq or even a small collection of poets. Hidâyat, rather, builds upon Garrûsî and Dunbulî’s comments

⁴ Fâzil Khân Garrûsî, *Tazkirah-yi anjuman-i Khâqân*, introduction by Dr. Tawfîq Subhânî (Tehran: Intishârât-i Rawzanah, 1376/1997-8), 606-607.

* See Appendix 1.2.

⁵ ‘Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr wa tasliyat al-abrâr*, ed. Hasan Qâzî Tabâtâbâ’î (Tabriz: Dânishgâh-i Tabriz, 1970-71), 213-214.

† See Appendix 1.3.

related to the personality and circumstances of Mushtâq by transferring them to the introduction of his six-volume work to describe the nascent *bâzgasht* movement in its entirety. His entry on Mushtâq, by contrast, is sparser than his predecessors and contains little of their fanfare.⁶ Hidâyat begins to see the shift in poetic styles less as the result of any individual poet, but rather the result of a movement. With more temporal distance than the others, and the activities of recent Qajar courts in providing patronage to *bâzgasht* poets, he feels confident in describing the movement in more abstract terms.

Unlike Garrûsî, there is no mention in Hidâyat's introduction of the role of Mushtâq's associates, like Âzar, Hâtif, and 'Âshiq, thereby diminishing the importance these relationships have for understanding the *bâzgasht* movement. Unlike Dunbulî, there is no mention of Mushtâq's poetic affinity for the style of Zamîrî (d. 1579) or Nazîrî (d. ca. 1612-14). This removes any semblance of continuity between Mushtâq and the poets of the preceding period, not to mention two poets who were known to engage with the poetry of the "masters."⁷ The absence of this type of information has diminished the narrative of *bâzgasht* to a story absent of its proper social, cultural, and political context. What remains is the structure of a narrative refined to fit a heightened awareness of being Iranian and Iran's superiority, in Persian, over other cultures. Some content has been adapted, some has been edited out altogether, and important social and cultural data has been elided until a more cohesive and digestible narrative is left standing- a narrative that is as much in tune with nationalist discourse of the Qajar court as that of today's Iran. The rise of the *bâzgasht* movement has been distilled and whittled down from its treatment in the Zand and Qajar era *tazkirahs* to a few interconnected and unquestioned truths.

The Narrative of *Bâzgasht*

The narrative that begins to take shape with Hidâyat culminates with the work of Muhammad Taqî Bahâr (d. 1951) and is carried well into the twentieth century. If the Qajar-era *tazkirahs* provided the material for understanding the *bâzgasht* movement, then Bahâr provided the foundation. It is in the work of Bahâr that a narrative strand found in the *tazkirahs*, as described above, reaches its full fruition.

In his various writings, most notably in his groundbreaking work *Sabkshinâsî* (Stylistics), Bahâr devised a schematic for understanding Persian literary history by dividing its development into four distinct categories, as noted in the introduction. Each category constitutes a different "school" or style of poetry, maintains its own special characteristics, and roughly corresponds to

⁶ Hidâyat's entry on Mushtâq is short and written in straightforward prose. He simply notes Mushtâq's preference for "follow[ing] the clear-speaking style of the eloquent ancients" and having "departed from the method [used by] the modern poets of the Safavid state and those like them." Hidâyat, *Majma' al-fusahâ*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 928.

⁷ For brief account of Nazîrî's life and poetry see: Rajeev Kinra, "The Stale 'Style of the Ancients'?: Mughal Poetry and Chandar Bhân's Attempt to Make it Fresh," Chapter Three in "Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhân Brahman" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008), 342. For further information see: Muhammad Abdul Ghani, *A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court*, vol. 3 (Allahabad: Indian Press, 1930). For information on Zamîrî see: Ahmad Gulchîn Ma'ânî, *Maktab-i vuqû' dar shi'r-i Fârsî* (Tehran: Bunyâd-i Farhang-i Iran, 1348/1970), 296-315.

different periods in history: Khurâsânî (9th to 13th centuries), ‘Irâqî (13th to 15th centuries), *sabk-i Hindî* (“Indian Style”) (15th to 18th centuries), and *bâzgasht-i adabî* (“literary return”) (18th and 19th centuries). It is through the work of Bahâr that the notion of *bâzgasht* takes shape. It is both given a name and classified as a category of Persian literary history. Moreover, as noted earlier, while the Khurâsânî, ‘Irâqî, and Indian Styles refer to developments in the greater Persianate sphere, and bespeak its literary-cultural cohesiveness, the *bâzgasht* style or period refers to Iran alone.

The crux of Bahâr’s and later historians’ understanding of *bâzgasht* rests on three points. First, *bâzgasht* renewed the styles of earlier poetic masters, by “returning” to the poetry of the Khurâsânî and ‘Irâqî styles/schools. Second, the movement was established by a cohort of poets in Isfahan led by Mushtâq Isfahânî. Third, the movement was a response to a “bad” poetic style, later understood as *sabk-i Hindî*. The story of the emergence of *bâzgasht* is often told in the following manner.

The movement for a “return” to the style of classical poets was instigated by Sayyid ‘Alî Mushtâq Isfahânî (d. 1757/8), who encouraged a group of poets to imitate the poetry of the Khurâsânî and ‘Irâqî periods, such as that of Anvarî, Sa‘dî, and Hâfiz. During the Afshar (1736-1796) and Zand (1751-1794) periods, Mushtâq gathered followers that would be influenced by his method and style of imitating the older Persian masters. Mushtâq established what has become known as “the literary society of Mushtâq” in Isfahan, where various writers, poets, and critics gathered to discuss matters of poetry and poetic composition. It was here that many of his companions and followers, who would later become influential in advocating a poetic “return,” learned from Mushtâq “the rules of poetry and prose,” founded upon the method and style of the old masters.⁸ According to Ahmad Khâtamî, Mushtâq not only advocated a “return” to earlier poetic methods and styles, but also promoted specific past poets to imitate, depending on the type of poetry one was composing. For example, Sa‘dî in the *ghazal*, Anvarî in the *qasîdah*, Firdawsî in depicting battles, Nizâmî in describing feasts, and ‘Umar Khayyâm in the *rubâ‘î*. According to Mushtâq, to not draw inspiration from past masters would lead one to “traverse the path of error.”⁹ The influence of Mushtâq’s literary society on his contemporaries and its role in connecting various like-minded poets of the age is cited as one of the major factors of the creation of the *bâzgasht* movement.¹⁰

The literary society of Mushtâq was later followed by a similarly designed literary society, once again in Isfahan, led by Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb “Nashât” Isfahânî (d. 1828/9). Along with Mushtâq, Nashât is considered one of the pioneers of the *bâzgasht* movement.

⁸ Ahmad Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî* (Tehran: Armân, 1374/1995), 293. For Mushtâq’s society also see: Muhammad Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht: barrasî-i shi‘r-i dawrah-hâ-yi Afshârîyah, Zandîyah, Qâjârîyah* (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz-i Isfand, 1375/1996), 48-51.

⁹ Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 294.

¹⁰ To take, but one example: Mahmud Shâhrukhî, in his introduction to *Dîvân-i Hâtif Isfahânî*, writes: “Mushtâq with eloquent efforts and great striving established a society, set about in the management and encouragement of talented youth, and as a leader of the initiative. A great crowd gathered in this society and they learned the art(s) of literature, the most famous of them begin ‘Âshiq Isfahânî, Muhammad Taqî Sahbâ, Lutf ‘Alî Bayg Âzar, Sayyid Ahmad Hâtif Isfahânî, Sabâhî Bidgulî, and Rafîq Isfahânî.” Mahmud Shâhrukhî, introduction to *Dîvân-i Hâtif Isfahânî*, by Sayyid Ahmad Hâtif (Tehran: Intishârât-i Mishkât; Daftar-i Tahqîq va Nashr-i Bahârân, 1371/1992), 20.

Writers and poets gathered at Nashât's house on a weekly basis in an effort to advance the style of the old Persian masters and compose like-minded poetry.¹¹ In his early-forties, Nashât, who was in the service of the future Fath 'Alî Shâh (r. 1797-1834), accompanied his employer to Tehran when the latter attained the throne. Nashât gained employment in Fath 'Alî Shâh's court, first serving as head of letter-writing and later accompanying the Shâh on his travels for the purpose of composing the sovereign's letters and edicts. With Nashât's move to Tehran, his literary society in Isfahan closed and the epicenter of the *bâzgasht* movement shifted north, to the Qajar court.

The movement gained an official sanction of sorts in its new home at the court of Fath 'Alî Shâh, a much greater patron of poetry than his predecessor. Considered by many to have fashioned his court along the lines of the "Seljuk Sanjar" or the "Ghaznavid Mahmud," Fath 'Alî Shâh re-introduced the office of the *malik al-shu'arâ* (king of poets) and established the *Anjuman-i Khâqân*¹² (Emperor's Society) around which gathered a great many poets that were key to perpetuating simple styles of poetry associated with the *bâzgasht* movement. Poets sought to imitate the rhythm and meter of a particular poet, whether Hâfiz or Manûchihri, sometimes even including a full line or half-line of those poets in their own poem. The language utilized by the *bâzgasht* poets was also clearly attached to the language of classical Persian poetry, so images of the "battlefield," "feast," "rose-garden," "hunter," and "prey" predominated. Most notable among them were *malik al-shu'arâ* Fath 'Ali Khân "Sabâ" Kâshânî, an imitator of Firdawsî's *Shâhnâmah*, and the aforementioned Nashât, who specialized in composing *ghazals* in the style of Hâfiz. In observing the literary activity of the Qajar court, Rizâ Qulî Khân Hidâyat no doubt determined that the poetic efforts he was witnessing constituted a cohesive literary trend and movement.

Bâzgasht and Sabk-i Hindî

The greatest impact the notion of *bâzgasht* has had on the writing of Persian literary history is the manner in which it conceptualized the distinction between *bâzgasht* and the prevalent style in poetry that came before it. In this regard, the formation of *bâzgasht-i adabî* is understood as a response to a poetic state of decline, one founded upon "idle prattle," "sickly dispositions," and "opaque intentions," to once again borrow the words from Hidâyat. Bahâr would also give this style of poetry a name and place it within his four-school schematic of poetic development: *sabk-i Hindî* ("Indian Style").

The "Indian Style," broadly speaking, flourished mostly from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in India by both Indian-born poets and Iranian-born poets who traveled to India and spent most of their creative life there.¹³ This is not to say that practitioners of this style did not

¹¹ Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 23. Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht*, 88.

¹² The penname of Fath 'Ali Shâh was "*khâqân*," meaning "emperor."

¹³ For some commonly held views about the "Indian Style" and its emergence in history, see: Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1964), 223-234.

appear elsewhere, such as in Iran or Central Asia, but simply that the epicenter of this style of poetry existed in India, which at this time was the epicenter of Persian literary culture more broadly. Even though it was in India proper that the “Indian Style” primarily flourished, and probably for this reason that the style earned such an appellation, many scholars assume that it was an exclusively “Indian” phenomenon, or at the very least, more pervasive in the non-Iranian eastern Persianate world.¹⁴ The ease with which *sabk-i Hindī* has been designated as a non-Iranian phenomenon allows for a clear contrast with the *bâzgasht* movement, which is conceptualized as solely an Iranian phenomenon. However, recent scholarship has demonstrated that the “Indian Style” was prevalent beyond India and has origins elsewhere in the Persianate world,¹⁵ including Iran.

The prevalence of the “Indian Style” and its dissatisfying elements is posited as the primary motive for writers and poets of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Iran to instigate a “return” to more classical styles.¹⁶ It was not only that Mushtâq advised his students to imitate the styles of poetic masters from earlier times in his literary society, but also that he supposedly did so in response to what was considered the debilitating characteristics of the

¹⁴ The terms “*sabk-i Hindī*” and “Indian Style” have been the subject of much confusion, particularly on account of the use of the signifier “Indian” and, as a result, the subject of much protest. Wishing to deemphasize the possible confusion over the term “Indian Style” with Indian ethnicity or the geographic space of India, some scholars have opted for other names instead. Paul Losensky in *Welcoming Fighani*, for example, opts to define the poetry that accords with the “Indian Style” period as “Safavid-Mughal Poetry,” as “the adjective ‘Indian’ gives a local designation to a movement that was international in scope.” However, it should be noted that Losensky does not view “Safavid-Mughal Poetry” as an exact equivalent to the Indian Style, but rather views the Indian style as simply one style of poetry, albeit the dominant one, that existed during the Safavid-Mughal period. See Paul Losensky. *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), 4. Some scholars, for their part, have opted for calling the poetry during this period “Safavi” or “Isfahani,” however, as Ehsan Yarshater and others have noted, scrapping the appellation “Indian” in favor “Safavi” or “Isfahani” simply replaces one ill-equipped term with another, no less restrictive in its construction. See Ehsan Yarshater, “The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress of Decline?” in *Persian Literature, Columbia Lectures on Iranian Studies No. 3.*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Albany, N.Y.: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 252; and Khusrau Farshîdvard. *Darbârah-yi adabîyât va naqd-i adabî*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Amîr Kabîr, 1363/1984-1985), 781. Rajeev Kinra advocates doing away with the term “Indian Style” altogether, as it carries too heavy a connotation of a particular (Indian) geography and heritage, which, in Kinra’s estimation, leads one to focus too heavily on the “influence” of the Indian realm upon the Persian language (e.g. from a philological perspective) and does little to define the style according to literary criteria or more historically-bounded phenomena present in the greater Persianate world. Kinra prefers the term *tâzah-gû’î* (fresh speak) instead. See Rajeev Kinra, “Fresh Words for a Fresh World: Taza-Gui and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry,” *Sikh Formations* 3.2 (2007): 131. For a longer discussion by Kinra, see: Rajeev Kinra, “The Stale ‘Style of the Ancients’?: Mughal Poetry and Chandar Bhân’s Attempt to Make it Fresh,” Chapter Three in “Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhân Brahman,” 285-366. While the term *sabk-i Hindī* “Indian Style” is problematic for the above stated reasons, I nonetheless opt for its usage when in reference to the *historiographical category* established by Bahâr and in referring to its use by later historians. In referring to the “Indian Style” of poetry that various poets were practicing, or that eighteenth and nineteenth century writers were responding to during the time of their writing, which will be seen in particular in later chapters, I will use the term *tâzah-gû’î*.

¹⁵ For example, see Rajeev Kinra’s brief, yet succinct, exposition on this point in Kinra, “Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian,” 342-345.

¹⁶ See, for example, Farshîdvard, *Darbârah-yi adabîyât va naqd-i adabî*, vol. 1, and ‘Abd al-Husayn Zarînkûb, *Naqd-i adabî: justjû dar usûl va ravish-hâ va mabâhis-i naqqâdî ba barrasî dar târikh-i naqd va naqqadân*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Amîr Kabîr, 1369/1990).

“Indian Style” of poetry. His society at once composed poetry of the *bâzgasht* style and criticized the poetry of the “Indian Style.” The *bâzgasht* movement, according to the standard narrative of Persian literary history, stemmed nearly entirely from poets’ weariness and displeasure with the “Indian Style,” viewing this style as the “decline” of Persian poetry.

It is striking how clearly modern historians’ interpretations of the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement replicate attitudes in Zand and Qajar *tazkirahs*. As Ahmad Khâtamî notes, many twentieth century critics followed the lead of such Qajar commentators in their assessments of the “Indian Style.”¹⁷ As seen above, the consolidation of the juxtaposition between what would be known as *bâzgasht* and *sabk-i Hindî* began in the Zand and Qajar period, at the hands of Iranian poets, critics, and anthologists. One can go even further back in history, prior to the commentaries of Hidâyat, Garrûsî, and Dunbulî, as seen above, to the work of Lutf ‘Alî “Âzar” Baygdilî (d. 1195/1781), whose life and poetry will be discussed further in the next chapter. Âzar, in writing about the prevalence of a style later to be codified as *sabk-i Hindî*, though more aptly known as *tâzah-gû’î*, notes:

Its presence in Isfahan achieved perfection and it had a great zeal for the construction of poetry and understood poetry well, however, because the method of the ancient writers was abolished during this time, there was no outpouring of excellent poetry from them.¹⁸

The above quote by Âzar and those cited previously by other authors from around the same period do not explicitly mention *tâzah-gû’î/sabk-i Hindî* by name. However, it is the comparison and juxtaposition between these two competing styles that would lay the groundwork for this discourse to take shape and be utilized by later historians.

There are two primary legacies bestowed upon twentieth Persian literary discourse by Zand and Qajar commentators regarding the effects of *sabk-i Hindî*. First, the “Indian Style” was considered to have caused a deleterious impact upon the composition of Persian poetry. In the words of Âzar there was “no outpouring of excellent poetry” from these poets. *Tâzah-gû’î* poets were inclined toward “the outlining of riddles and the conjuring up of misnomers” in a “contemptible fashion.” Such characterizations of the *tâzah-gû’î* style, namely, as one of “confused speech” and incomprehensibility, have become standard practice in assessing the style. Second, the “detestable” nature of the *tâzah-gû’î* style caused poets in Iran to rescue Persian poetry from its supposed inevitable decline by advocating the “return” to older poetic norms. The *bâzgasht* poets and critics, such as Mushtâq, were reacting to the *tâzah-gû’î* (later known as “Indian”) style of poetry.

These two legacies have severely impacted the Persian literary discourse that followed. Like their Zand and Qajar predecessors, many Iranian critics and literary historians have described the onset and prevalence of *tâzah-gû’î* as signifying the decline of Persian poetry.¹⁹ For many literary historians of Persian, this *tâzah-gû’î/sabk-i Hindî* style is the pinnacle of a

¹⁷ See Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 190-193.

¹⁸ Quoted in Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 199.

¹⁹ The below paragraph, while applicable to many Iranian commentators and critics, should not be seen to refer to all Iranian critics. Furthermore, it must be noted that critics adhere to this narrative to varying degrees, that is, they highlight certain aspects of this narrative, but do not bring attention to others. Nonetheless, the overall thrust and shape of the narrative is still apparent.

highly intellectualized, complicated, and abstract style of poetry that corrupted the classical Persian canon. The notion of “*sabk-i Hindî* as decline” fits quite nicely into the standard, somewhat nationalistic, narrative of Iranian literary history. As noted earlier, this narrative posits that with the rise and establishment of the Safavid state and their lack of interest in, and even animosity toward, poetry, poetic outlets were sought in other locales, particularly in India.²⁰ In India, poets then developed and accentuated the highly intellectualized “Indian Style,” which signified the decline of poetry, thus necessitating a “return” to the methods and styles of the classical masters of old, such as Hâfiz, Sa’dî, and Firdawsî. Defining the “*Indian Style*” as the *decline* of Persian poetry perhaps helps explain the necessary reassertion of the primacy and centrality of Iran in Persian poetry, with the “return movement” and beyond. It may also explain why India, and not Iran, served as the epicenter of Persian poetry and dominated the literary output of Persian for several centuries in the post-Timurid period.

Similar to more outspoken Iranian critics, analyses by Western critics and scholars have, accepted the verdict of Qajar writers and poets concerning the “Indian Style.” Like their Iranian counterparts, the “Indian Style” is chastised for being overly complicated, overly concerned with wordplay, and highly abstract. They posit that this not only made the poetry itself un-enjoyable and difficult to understand, but also led to the decline of Persian poetry. Annemarie Schimmel, for example, bemoans the last gasp of Persian literature in India (i.e. the “Indian Style”) as having “ended in the autumnal hopelessness of bizarre poetical expressions.”²¹ Jan Rypka described the “Indian Style” as being defined and obsessed with riddles and bizarre expressions, which in many cases led “attempts at originality, supported on too narrow a foundation...to the grotesque, to a lack of good taste and unity.”²² These types of statements echo Hidâyat’s claim that the *tâzah-gû’î* poets were more interested in the “outlining of riddles” or Dunbulî’s assessment that their poetry was rife with “frigid metaphors and bad similes.” Rypka does, however, recognize the merits of some of the more esteemed poets of the period.

It merits mention, however, that not all critics and scholars have derided the *tâzah-gû’î* style or assessed it in such a disparaging manner. Some scholars, such as Paul Losensky and Riccardo Zipoli, have questioned critics who demonstrate the (mis)use of language, faulty metaphors, or some other deficiency of the “Indian Style” by haphazardly offering a *bayt* here or a *bayt* there out of context.²³ Shafî’î Kadkanî has noted how some of the characteristics attributed to the “Indian style” (and the poetry of ‘Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil in particular), which exemplify the style’s supposed complication and deficiency, can be found in other styles of Persian poetry, whether classical and modern.²⁴ Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak has discussed the need to critique the prevalent disparaging views of the “Indian Style.”²⁵

²⁰ This notion will be refuted in the following chapter.

²¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Literatures of India* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), 23.

²² Jan Rypka, et al., *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), 296.

²³ See Losensky *Welcoming Fighani*, and Riccardo Zipoli, *Cherâ sabk-i Hindî dar dunyâ-yi gharb sabk-i bârûk khwândah mi-shavad?* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Farhangî-i Itâliyâ, 1363/1984).

²⁴ See Muhammad Rizâ Shafî’î-Kadkanî, *Shâ’ir-i âyinah-hâ: barrasî-i sabk-i Hindî va shi’r-i Bîdil* (Tehran: Mu’assasah-yi Intishârât-i Âgâh, 1366/1987). In regards to the poetry of Bîdil, Shafî’î-Kadkanî notes two major characteristics of the great Indian poet that can also be found in other styles: “paradoxes,” found in the mystical

Perhaps the most outspoken defender of the merit and quality of *sabk-i Hindî* is Shamsur Rahman Faruqi.²⁶ Instead of viewing the fascination of the “Indian Style” poets with language as a detriment (e.g. use of mixed metaphors or abstractions), Faruqi sees these techniques as examples of the ingenuity of the style. According to Faruqi, the “Indian Style” in many ways offers the most ingenious and inventive examples of Persian poetry. Rather than corrupting the classical tropes of Persian poetry, the style in fact expanded upon it and enriched it through a habit of “theme-creating” (*mazmûn âfarînî*). By highlighting the way in which the “Indian Style” built upon some of the traits of classical Persian poetry, Faruqi offers an apt reminder that the “Indian Style” cannot simply be relegated to the “foreign” or “strange.” Rather, it has a place within the connective history and development of Persian poetry. The “Indian Style,” accordingly, is seen as an innovative movement of poets and critics interested in pushing the aesthetic and cerebral elements of Persian poetry to the utmost limits. It also serves as a testament to the centrality of India in shaping the contours of one of the early modern period’s most pervasive world literatures.

Legacy of *Bâzgasht* in Iran

The impact of Zand and Qajar era *tazkirahs* upon depictions of *bâzgasht* in modern scholarship can be seen in subtler ways as well. The long quote by Rizâ Qulî Khân Hidâyât above is once again instructive in this manner. Moving beyond his general framework of the “why” (poetic decline) and the “how” (renewal of past poetic models) of *bâzgasht*, Hidâyât’s final sentence warrants special mention. “Despite their laborious efforts [in following the masters],” he writes, “they did not reach high ranks.” It should strike the reader as somewhat odd that following his passionate recounting of the brief history of *bâzgasht* he concludes by saying that in the end its poets did not really amount to much. The implication here is not that the *bâzgasht* poets failed to reshape the poetic landscape of nineteenth century Iran. On the contrary, the institutionalization of the *bâzgasht* style of poetry at the court of Fath ‘Alî Shâh, and the continued patronage it received at the Qajar court into the twentieth century, is suitable evidence to suggest the movement’s lasting impact. According to Sâdiq Rizâzâdah Shafaq, the influence of the *bâzgasht* style during the Qajar period spread to a great many poets and authors, perhaps one hundred, who sought to compose *qasîdahs* and *ghazals* in the styles of the old masters.²⁷ Hidâyât’s final comment is an aesthetic judgment concerning the merit of *bâzgasht* poetry, not the movement’s historical impact. Hidâyât’s analysis recognizes that *bâzgasht* poets revived past models and relieved Iran from a period of poetic decline. However, the quality of their poetry left

poetry of the ‘Irâqî style, and “synesthesia” (*hiss-amîzî*), found in the “new” poetry of the modern period. Also see: Hasan Husaynî, *Bîdil, Sipihri, va sabk-i Hindî* (Tehran: Surûsh, 1367/1988-9).

²⁵ Ahmad Karîmî-Hakkâk, “Pusht-i rang-hâ-yi khazân: ta’ammulâtî dar-bârah-yi zabân-i shî‘r-i Farsî dar Hind,” *Îrân Nâmâh* 8.2 (Spring 1369/1990): 225-245.

²⁶ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, “A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of *Sabk-e Hindî*,” *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004): 1-93.

²⁷ Sâdiq Rizâzâdah Shafaq, *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Iran* (Shiraz: Intishârât-i Dânishgâh-yi Shiraz, 1352/1973), 451.

something to be desired. So too is this particular criticism frequently repeated in modern scholarship.

The criticism of the merits of *bâzgasht* poetry in modern scholarship centers on the fact that style was imitative in nature. Although this is the presumed intention of the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement as a distinct historical period (the “return” to the masters), it is at the same time considered the reason for its unpleasant poetry. Modern critics note that the *bâzgasht* poets were so enamored in imitation, through the use of language, rhyme scheme, and meters of previous poets, that they disregarded the social conditions and concerns of their own time. Instead they steeped themselves in the world-views of the poets they imitated. This has led several scholars to claim that the *bâzgasht* movement achieved nothing more than glorified imitation, as it was detached from social concerns of the “existent world,” instead favoring a “frame of reference” more closely related to the Ghaznavid or Seljuk periods.²⁸ With a total disregard for the “existent world” outside of the court, these poets were more in tune with, say, the world of Manûchihri, focusing on such language as the “feast,” “battle,” “wine,” and “hunt,” and restricting their comments to praise.²⁹ While the poets they imitated were interested in the content of their poetry, and its relevance to a world-view contemporaneous with their time of writing, the *bâzgasht* poets were not. The *bâzgasht* poets praised the Qajars as if they were the Ghaznavids.³⁰ This impression is perhaps best summed up by one author’s comments that the *bâzgasht* period was nothing more than the appearance of “false-Sa’dîs” and “false-Manûchihri.”³¹

Hasan Sâdât-Nâsirî, in his article “Bâzgasht-i adabî,” provides an interesting appraisal of *bâzgasht* in this regard. After offering a nuanced look at the historiography of *bâzgasht*, including the impact of Qajar-era *tazkirahs*, and noting the prejudicial treatment of the “Indian Style” in scholarship, Sâdât-Nâsirî concludes in much the same way as Hidâyat. He notes that *bâzgasht* poetry, in the final analysis, was simply imitative and, perhaps as a result, did not use language and constructions to the same effect as the older poets being imitated. While the old poets properly placed words and heeded rules of grammar, the poetry of the *bâzgasht* poets is full of grammatical errors.³² The *bâzgasht* poets, while aiding the onset of a “literary resurrection” and providing a salve for Persian poetry, did little for the perpetuation of the “life” and “fecundity” of Persian poetry. They composed works wholly imitative in nature without the same effect of those poets they imitated.³³

Ahmad Khâtamî in his *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî* reaches a similar conclusion as Sâdât-Nâsirî about the impact of *bâzgasht*. He writes that one cannot refer to the poets of the *bâzgasht* movement as initiators of anything new, since their style and

²⁸ Yahya Âryanpûr, *Az Sabâ tâ Nîmâ: târîkh-i 150 sâl-i adab-i Fârsî*, vol. 1, 7th ed. (Tehran: Intishârât-i Zavvâr, 1379/2000), 16-19. Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht*, 48-51.

²⁹ Âryanpûr, *Az Sabâ tâ Nîmâ*, 16-19.

³⁰ Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 201-202.

³¹ Quoted in Âryanpûr, *Az Sabâ tâ Nîmâ*, 19.

³² Hasan Sâdât-Nâsirî, “Bâzgasht-i Adabî,” *Yaghmâ* 17.19 (1343/1964): 429.

³³ *Ibid.* 424-430

method relied upon an imitation of the language and structures from an earlier period, unrelated to their own social and political situations. Nonetheless, he continues, much like Sâdât-Nâsirî, these poets should be credited with protecting and preserving the language of classical Persian and freeing it from frailty and weakness.³⁴

The work of Sâdât-Nâsirî and Khâtamî, two scholars who look at Qajar-era authors and their *tazkirahs* in an incisive and skeptical manner, also highlight that while *bâzgasht* signified a historical shift, its poets came up short in terms of quality. Both Sâdât-Nâsirî and Khâtamî, like others, even take the criticism a step further by noting the *bâzgasht* poets' lack of awareness of their *own* contemporary surroundings. One can point to other overlaps between Qajar-era and modern criticisms of the *bâzgasht* poets, such as those concerning grammatical mistakes and misuse of language. Such errors and criticism were pointed out as early as Dunbulî in *Tajribat al-ahrâr wa tasliyat al-abrâr*, the very same book from which the above laudatory quote concerning Mushtâq appears.³⁵

Such examples are offered to help illustrate the complex relationship between modern scholarship and the *tazkirahs* regarding our understandings of *bâzgasht*.³⁶ Clearly the *tazkirahs* from the eighteenth and nineteenth century provide crucial information concerning *bâzgasht*. As seen earlier, the opinions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century *tazkirah* writers have served as the fundamental source for explaining the rise and formation of the *bâzgasht* movement. The opinions of authors like Âzar, Dunbulî, and Hidâyat may have been slightly refined by some modern critics, but for the most part their opinions have dominated the discourse for more than a century.

The clear commonalities between the criticisms of Qajar-era and modern authors point to the degree scholarly understanding of *bâzgasht* has persisted over time. The *bâzgasht* poets' place in literary history is defined by the fact that they did not initiate a style of their own or surpass the masters they imitated. Thus did *bâzgasht* poets neither upset the position reserved for the enshrined masters of the Persian canon (the Sa'dîs, Hâfîzes, and Firdawsîs of the world), nor were they attuned to their social surroundings enough to truly make a lasting impact. They were nothing more than a placeholder. They returned the poetic environment in Iran to its more "classical" practices, but left it in a holding pattern until the Constitutional period poets arrived to speak of social and political reform.³⁷

This dissertation seeks, in part, to complicate this accepted historiography of *bâzgasht* by shifting focus to the circumstances and literary output of the movement's early practitioners and followers in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Isfahan. In situating the movement in the social and political circumstances at the time of its inception and analyzing poetry of the

³⁴ Khâtamî, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 201-202.

³⁵ See, for example, Hasan Qâzî Tabâtabâ'î, introduction to *Tajribat al-ahrâr wa tasliyat al-abrâr*, by 'Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî, ed. Hasan Qâzî Tabâtabâ'î (Tabriz: Dânishgâh-i Tabriz, 1970-71), 13.

³⁶ Of course, this point should not be entirely over-stated: it is well within the rights of scholars and critics to offer both a positive and negative view of *bâzgasht* by at once noting its historical impact while at the same time demeaning its poetic prowess and merit.

³⁷ For information on the use of classical modes of poetry during the pre-constitutional and constitutional period in Iran and its impact, see: Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995).

period, it seeks to recover many aspects of the movement's rise, forgotten by later *tazkirahs* and literary historians. Based on edited-out information from the early *tazkirahs* and the poetry of the early *bâzgasht* poets, the result is a more complicated picture of the movement's early founding. It is a picture that, while colored by poets' disregard for the *tâzah-gû'î* style of poetry, is more fully framed by their attempt to reconstitute poetic community and re-establish the role of the poet in the uncertain times of post-Safavid Isfahan and Iran.

Persian Literary Culture in Nineteenth Century India

The insertion of *bâzgasht* as a conceptual category in Persian literary discourse has not only served the interests of Iranian nationalism. It has also had a devastating impact on understandings of trends in Persian literary culture occurring outside of Iran. For as much as *bâzgasht* creates an Iranian national imaginary by returning to the styles of the great "masters," it also willfully forgets trends in literary culture occurring elsewhere. Such amnesia is largely achieved by associating the nineteenth century non-Iranian Persianate world with stagnation and decline on account of the dominance of *sabk-i Hindî*.

In relegating the non-Iranian Persianate world during this time to one mired in a supposedly deleterious and stagnant style, an Iranian-centric Persian literary history is absolved of offering an explanation to the contrary that is willing to explore certain manifestations in Persian literary culture elsewhere. In the case of Persian literary culture in nineteenth century India, the amnesia created by the interpolation of *bâzgasht* in literary historiography has dovetailed rather well with the overall narrative of Persian's decline in the context of South Asian historiography. As will be seen in the following pages, Persian's role and prevalence in nineteenth century India was certainly reduced. However, its reduction and decline does not suffice in explaining other ways that Persian literary culture may have continued to function and manifested itself in post-Mughal times.

The narrative of decline of Persian in India is largely a by-product of its association with the much larger issue of political changes resulting from the downfall and break-up of the Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb (d. 1707). The causes for the disintegration of the Mughal Empire have long been the subject of debate and those arguments will not be repeated here.³⁸ More important for our purposes is the recognition that the strength of Persian literary culture in India in the nineteenth century had been tied to the withering political fortunes of the Mughals due to Persian's role as the primary language of imperial patronage and the chancellery. As went the Mughal Empire, it seems, so too did Persian literary culture. The rich corpus of administrative norms and practices, modes of patronage, literary models, and trends in poetry tied to the Persian language and nurtured over centuries from the time of Mahmud of Ghazna

³⁸ For debates and correctives concerning the notion of "Mughal Decline" and its historiography, see: Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1847* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Munis D. Faruqi, *Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) in particular "Chapter Six."

through the Sultanates in the North and South, is seen to have reached its apex and finally culminated with the Mughals.³⁹

Scholarship exists which utilizes Persian materials from the nineteenth century and reflects on how Persian literary culture functioned during this time. Such studies, however, tend to emphasize the explanation of a larger phenomenon, like the rise of the British and the increased use of Urdu. The analysis of the position of Persian literary culture in nineteenth century India, while not unconnected to these larger trends, can also be explored more fully. Doing so assists in efforts to better assess the myriad of other ways Persian literary culture continued to function in a place where it was an integral part of the Persianate world for the previous half millennium. Larger trends in South Asian historiography do not tell us, for example, how Persian literary culture continued to be connected to other phenomena existent in the Persianate world.

It is important to outline two major shifts occurring in post-Mughal times that deeply affect the position of Persian literary culture. Doing so will allow for a better framework to understand the general position of Persian literary culture and highlight the spaces where this framework falls short. The first is the language policies of the British in 1835, sealing the fate of Persian as the official language of the chancellery and imperial patronage by replacing it with English and vernacular languages for administrative purposes. The second is the growing usage of Urdu among the poetic intellectual elite as a means of literary expression. The cumulative impact of these two major shifts has been to relegate Persian in the nineteenth century to a transitional role. The history of Persian literary culture in the nineteenth century specifically, and in post-Mughal India more generally, is read back through the prism of these two hegemonic historiographies: the dominance of the colonial state, on the one hand, and the supremacy of Urdu, on the other. While each factor is not distinct from the other, as will be seen below, each one will be dealt with separately.

Persian and the British: The Transition to the “New *Munshī*”

Persian, of course, did find itself in transition in post-Mughal times. The impact of the British on informational networks wedded to Persian language and administrative norms is well known. The way in which the British used and manipulated aspects of Persianate literary culture and reconfigured existent networks to fit with their own political aspirations certainly represents a major turning point for Persianate culture in India. In their quest to achieve economic and political inroads into India, the British relied on informants, administrators, and secretaries versed in the Persian language and its cultural norms. One of the many ways in which to capture the larger trends working against Persian’s administrative dominance can be gleaned by looking at the figure of the *munshī* and how the British relied on this ever-dependable class whose

³⁹ For a good overview of Persian literary culture in South Asia, see: Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 131-198.

administrative and scribal skills derived from their placement within Mughal governmental structures.⁴⁰

During the early rise of the East India Company (EIC), especially from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, the *munshīs* were crucial in helping the British navigate the established set of cultural norms related to the use of the Persian language. These *munshīs*, skilled in the Persian language and Mughal administrative technologies, “were desperately needed by the British as they maneuvered their way through diplomatic exchanges and political intrigues in their rise to power.”⁴¹ Before 1830 in particular, the EIC used *munshīs* to “manipulate the information systems of their Hindu and Muslim predecessors” to their political advantage.⁴² Approaching the Persian language as a “pragmatic vehicle of communication with Indian officials and rulers through which...they could express their requests, queries, and thoughts, and through which they could get things done,” the *munshī* proved indispensable to the British rise to power.⁴³

The British tasked these *munshīs* with a variety of roles, ranging from administrator and secretary to language instructor and author. They served as administrative and cultural interpreters between the EIC and Mughal successor states, accompanied British diplomatic missions abroad, and composed works on various aspects of India’s history and culture at the behest of their British employers. Though no comprehensive work exists on the variety of roles occupied by the *munshī* class, a variety of studies have been devoted to individual *munshīs* and their role within British residencies and language-training colleges.⁴⁴ The reliance on the role of the *munshī* as Persian interlocutor was relatively short-lived. Between 1820 and 1850 a new type of *munshī* emerged, one whose ability to communicate and conduct business was equally, and increasingly more, important than their abilities grounded in Persian literary and cultural

⁴⁰ For information on the role of the *munshī* during Mughal times, their education, and general place within the nexus of Persian administrative practices at the Mughal court and beyond, see: Muzaffar Alam, “The Pursuit of Persian: Language in Mughal Politics,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32.2 (1998); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Making of the Munshī,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 24.2 (2004); Momin Mohiuddin, *The Chancellery and Persian Epistolography under the Mughals* (Calcutta: Iran Society, 1971); Ishtiyaq Zilli, “Development of *Insha* Literature till the End of Akbar’s Reign,” in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Francoise ‘Nalini’ Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2000), 309-349.

⁴¹ *The Great Indian Education Debate: Documents Related to the Orientalist-Anglicist Controversy, 1781-1843*, ed. Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999).

⁴² C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 8.

⁴³ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 18.

⁴⁴ For example, see: Simon Digby, “An Eighteenth Century Narrative of a Journey from Bengal to England: Munshī Isma’il’s *New History*,” in *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell*, ed. Christopher Shackle (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), 49-65; Simon Digby, “Travels in Ladakh, 1820-1821: The Account of Moorcroft’s Persian *Munshī*, Hajji Sayyid ‘Ali, of His Travels,” *Asian Affairs* 29.3 (1998): 299-311. For information on the *munshī* as administrator and employee in the British Residencies, see: Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). For information on the *munshī* as language tutor and instructor, see: Sisar Kumar Das, *Sahibs and Munshīs: An Account of the College at Fort William* (Calcutta: Orion Publications, 1978).

norms.⁴⁵ In 1835, following closely on the heels of Thomas Macaulay's famous minute on education and the idea that not "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia," Persian was abolished as the administrative language of India.⁴⁶ Thus, from the 1830s onward, it was not enough to be versed in Mughal diplomacy and Persian. The company now expected that the *munshîs* should also have a Western education or familiarity with Western office practices.⁴⁷ It was the "new *munshîs*" command of English, rather than Persian, that allowed them to keep up "traditional roles as cultural mediators for, and trusted assistants of, government officials."⁴⁸

The transition from the British reliance on *munshîs* skilled in Persian literary and cultural norms to "new *munshîs*" with English language skills offers an example of the shifting position of Persian in the nineteenth century. The prevalence and practice of Persian administrative norms were slowly being phased out, as the British sought to tailor the language politics of the India ecumene to its own evolving colonial policy. It is a story of out with the old and in with the new.

Persian and Urdu: Transition in Patronage Practices

The increasing relevance of Urdu has also been identified as the other reason for Persian's outright decline during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The rise of Urdu impacted literary culture, poetic expression, and patronage practices associated with Persian. The origin and rise of Urdu, the circumstances and places where it developed, and even confusion over the genealogy of the name itself are the subject of much controversy and debate.⁴⁹ Contrary to the linear narrative of its development, as nationalist and colonial constructions posit, the emergence of Urdu is the outgrowth of a long series of overlapping and crosscutting histories. Its emergence and use as a literary language can be related to far-flung phenomenon spread across India in the medieval and early modern periods, such as debates over literary acceptability to differing models of communication and patronage. Urdu's rise to prominence can best be seen as the cumulative impact of these many disparate factors, occurring in fits and starts in both North and South India over several hundred years. Urdu's emergence thus is as much the result of Sufis in early fifteenth century Gujarat using proto-Urdu to reach a wider audience or the dual

⁴⁵ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 229.

⁴⁶ Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Education," 2 Feb. 1835. Available online at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2014.

⁴⁷ Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 339-340 and 439.

⁴⁸ *The Great Indian Education Debate*, 18-19.

⁴⁹ For two recent examples, see: Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 1: Naming and Placing a Literary Culture," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 805-863; Muhammad Aslam Syed, "How Could Urdu Be the Envy of Persian (rashk-i-Farsi)!: The Role of Persian in South Asian Literature in Culture," in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. Brian Spooner and William Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 279-310.

linguistic pattern of Persian and Dakhani under operation at various courts, such as that of the Bahmanî Sultans and Qutb Shâhîs, as it is the outcome of debates among poets and literati concerning its merits as a replacement for Persian in later centuries.

It is in the early eighteenth century, however, that Rekhta-- a direct literary ancestor of Urdu-- experienced its “first great flowering,”⁵⁰ to borrow the words of Ralph Russell, and blossomed as a court language, in particular as a language of poetry, later in the century.⁵¹ It was during this time and later in the nineteenth century that one begins to see the displacement effect it was to have on various aspects of Persian literary culture in India. The earlier break-up of the Mughal Empire was a defining moment in this regard. The rise of various successor states in the wake of the empire’s disintegration, and new patronage opportunities, both at the court level and throughout society, had far-reaching impacts on Persian literary practice. A shift was already occurring in regards to Urdu and Persian at the Mughal court itself. Beginning around the reign of Shâh ‘Âlam II (r. 1759-1806), Rekhta (slowly coming to call itself “Urdu”) began to be used in the court of the Mughals. While Persian remained in place as the official language, the gentry in Delhi became less inclined to utilize it in their writings. They increasingly viewed Persian as a language most readily associated with the royal patronage practices of a strained imperial center. Instead, as Fritz Lehmann notes, they began to turn their attention to writing in Urdu, pivoting more directly to a local, rather than royal, audience.⁵² Such a shift certainly helped foster the growth in Urdu of *Shâhr-âshûb* literature, a genre that allowed writers to comment on local conditions in an easily understood medium for a more widespread audience.⁵³

Outside of the imperial center, cultures of newly emergent Mughal successor states were taking shape. This transition would also impact patronage opportunities for Persian. As Barbara Metcalf notes, while central authority in the eighteenth century waned, the rise of regional powers witnessed the emergence of “new cultural and institutional forms,” allowing for Urdu, like other regional languages, to be enriched by the “vocabulary and literary forms of Persian.”⁵⁴ In Awadh, for example, rulers beginning with Shujâ‘ al-Dawlah (r. 1753-1775) offered patronage opportunities for Urdu in addition to supporting the fine arts in general.⁵⁵ As Madhu Trivedi in *The Making of Awadh Culture* notes, while the Nawâbs of Awadh too offered patronage to Persian poets on a lavish scale, “Persian poetry did not flourish here to any great extent...primarily because of the growing vogue for Urdu as a poetic medium.”⁵⁶ Skeptical and

⁵⁰ Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1992), 21.

⁵¹ Syed, “How Could Urdu Be the Envy of Persian,” 297.

⁵² Fritz Lehmann, “Urdu Literature and Mughal Decline,” *Mahfil* 6.2/3 (1970): 126.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 127-130.

⁵⁴ Barbara D. Metcalf, “Urdu in India in the 21st Century: A Historian’s Perspective,” *Social Scientist* 31.5/6 (June 2003): 30.

⁵⁵ Akhtar Qamber, introduction to *The Last Musha‘irah of Delhi: A Translation into English of Farhatullah Baig’s Modern Urdu Classic, Delhi ki akhri shama‘* by Farhatullah Baig, Akhtar Qamber trans. (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979), 15.

⁵⁶ Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 91.

wary of the old Mughal elite, rulers such as Shujâ‘ al-Dawlah relied on local non-Persianized groups and imported others, like Shaykhzâdahs, Telingana Rajputs, and Gosain mercenaries, who were more inclined to offer patronage to Urdu poets rather than Persian.⁵⁷ Urdu also began to achieve a more prominent role in the realm of Islamic religious literature and its promotion. Beginning with the translation of the Qur’an into Urdu by Shâh Waliullah’s son, Shâh Rafi‘ al-Dîn (1749-1817), Urdu became an important medium for articulating religious thought and transmitting ideas in regards to *tafsir*, *fiqh*, and *hadith*, which would help solidify its use by other Muslims sects and sub-groups later in the nineteenth century.⁵⁸

The British also played an active part in promoting Urdu as evidenced by their educational activities at the College of Fort William in Calcutta in the early part of the nineteenth century. While Persian still remained relevant, as it did for some of the successor states, the British began to transition their educational and instructional activities from Persian to not just English (as seen above), but Urdu as well. Persian instructors continued to be hired both in Calcutta and at colleges in the United Kingdom,⁵⁹ but the transition to Urdu was on its way. Starting in 1800, the East India Company began hiring various writers at the College of Fort William to translate many popular Persian books into simple Urdu prose.⁶⁰ Persian still remained popular among students, but Urdu was more than keeping pace in regards to enrollment, course offerings, and publications.⁶¹

Alongside the shift in political tides and patronage practices stemming from the break-up of the Mughal Empire, Urdu emerged as a more readily acceptable medium of literary and poetic expression in competition with Persian. Crucial to this shift in perception was the work of “Vali” Dakhani (1667-1707) who elevated the status of Rekhta/Hindvi/Dakhani/Hindustani by demonstrating that its poetry “could rival, if not surpass, Indo-Persian poetry in sophistication of imagery, complexity and abstractness of metaphor.”⁶² This shift in perceptions led to the growth of poets choosing to write in Rekhta instead of Persian in the early 1700s. Along with it came the need for poets to find instructors to teach them, the rise of poetic assemblies where they could hone their skills, and the strengthening of teacher-student (*ustâd-shâgird*) relationships.⁶³

⁵⁷ Syed, “How Could Urdu Be the Envy of Persian,” 299.

⁵⁸ Tariq Rahman, “Urdu as an Islamic Language,” *Annual of Urdu Studies* 21 (2006): 105. Equally beneficial to this process, as Rahman notes, was the advent of modern techniques, such as the printing press and formal school chains. See Rahman 104.

⁵⁹ On the intriguing occurrence of Persian instructors being hired at colleges in the United Kingdom in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see: Michael H. Fisher, “Teaching Persian as an Imperial Language in India and in England during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth Centuries,” in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. Brian Spooner and William Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 328-358.

⁶⁰ C.M. Naim, “Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry: A Comparison,” in *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 270.

⁶¹ For these statistics see the comparative charts in Das, *Sahibs and Munshis*, 46-47, 69, 71, and 75.

⁶² Faruqi, “A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 1,” 848.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

The new world of Urdu poetics and poetic community put a premium on identifying with a master or lineage, viewing the association with a readily identified *ustâd* a major necessity. This meant that the new class of Urdu poets emerging in the eighteenth and nineteenth century would be more likely to identify themselves with a local and accessible *ustâd* for easier affiliation, rather than with an individual further afield or a historical poet to emulate.⁶⁴ Such a stark approach can perhaps be best seen in the Mughal court and the shifting terrain upon which the relationship between the courtier-poet and patron-ruler was now founded. Opposed to past practices where rulers sought poets to offer panegyrics in their praise and celebrate special occasions, rulers such as Shâh ‘Âlam II (r. 1759-1806) and Bahâdur Shâh II (r. 1837-1857), sought out poets to serve as their *ustâds*.⁶⁵ The result was a new configuration of poetic community for those composing in Urdu. With the growth of *shâgird-ustâd* relationships a whole new literary culture began to emerge, one in which poetic genealogy, status, codes, and poetic gatherings for Urdu poets rose in importance, accompanied by various feuds, loyalties, and competitions over patronage, either among royal patrons or poetic ones. “What began as a need,” Shamsur Rahman Faruqi writes “soon became fashion, and then a minor industry and source of patronage.”⁶⁶ On a more popular level, the *mushâ‘irahs* (assemblies) in the nineteenth century “enjoyed mass popularity as a most favorite form of cultural recreation among all strata of educated urban dwellers. They were held everywhere, so to say, ‘on different levels,’ to cater for poetic tastes and requirements of litterateurs and connoisseurs.”⁶⁷

The community, popular appeal, and networks amongst Urdu poets were growing stronger, reified in descriptions of lineages and *mushâ‘irahs* as told in such *tazkirahs* of Urdu poets, like of that Mîr Taqî Mîr’s (d. 1810) *Niqât al-shu‘arâ* and Sa‘âdat Khân Nâsir’s (d. ca. 1857-1871) *Khush Ma‘rakah Zibâ*. Perhaps indicative of the shifting tide in textual production, at least in regards to *tazkirahs*, was the language of composition of each of the aforementioned ones: Mîr composed his in Persian, while Nâsir composed his *tazkirah* in Urdu. By the 1840s, as Frances Pritchett notes, the grip of Persian prose was broken: over half the *tazkirahs* of Urdu poets produced in that decade were composed in a language other than Persian, a far cry from the first four decades of the century when the situation was entirely reversed.⁶⁸

Indeed, if the eighteenth century witnessed the “great flowering” of Urdu, then the nineteenth century witnessed its consolidation as a literary language. It was during this time that various individuals emerged as major exponents of Urdu literary theory and history and others as the “great poets” of the time. It was the time of individuals like Muhammad Husayn Âzâd (1830-

⁶⁴ Frances Pritchett, “A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 2: Histories, Performances, and Masters,” in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 886.

⁶⁵ Naim, “Mughal and English Patronage of Urdu Poetry,” 263.

⁶⁶ Faruqi, “A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 1,” 850.

⁶⁷ Ludmila Vasilyeva, “The Indian Mushairah: Traditions and Modernity,” 9. In “An Informal Festschrift in Honor of Shamsur Rahman Faruqi,” ed. Satyanarayana Hegde, Available online at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/srffest/txt_vasilyeva_mushairah.pdf. Accessed February 16, 2014.

⁶⁸ Pritchett, “A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 2,” 881.

1910) and Altaf Husayn Hâlî (1837-1914), along with other such poets as Zawq (1789-1854) and Ghâlib (d. 1869).⁶⁹ While the former two authors delineated the parameters of Urdu poetic composition, literary history, and its development, the latter two would soon be recognized as its greatest practitioners in prose and poetry.⁷⁰

Literary production and expression among the predominantly Muslim elite and literati of nineteenth century India is often viewed through the lens of Urdu's rise to dominance. Such a narrative is perhaps best observed in the introduction to *The Last Musha'irah of Delhi* by Farhatullah Bayg, itself a fictionalized account of a historical *mushâ'irah* that occurred in Delhi in 1845 at the court of the Mughal ruler Bahâdur Shâh II. In introducing the work, Akhtar Qamber writes:

It is now time to say that the language, that had a humble birth in Delhi, that was nurtured in the Deccan and refined, chiseled and enriched in Delhi and Lucknow, could by the time of Karim-ud-Din's musha'irah vie with Persian in all respects. In fact, the reversal of the fates of Persian and Urdu is brought dramatically at Karim-ud-Din's musha'irah when the one and only ghazal read in Persian had failed to interest or move the audience. Very few now took delight in the once popular king's language of the Mughal court. Karim-ud-Din's musha'irah recorded a high point in the story of the Urdu language as will be seen in the quality of the ghazals recited on this occasion. It also marks a high point in the Mughal temper, mood and culture of an era fast approaching its close.⁷¹

The position of Persian, whether in regards to administrative practices, educational instruction, or poetic expression, was undergoing a significant transition during the tumultuous times of the post-Aurangzeb Mughal world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As seen above, the rise of the "new *munshî*" as initiated under the British and the increase in Urdu as the primary language for poetic expression helped displace Persian from its political, cultural, and literary perch. But the ways in which Persian was displaced, and its transitional role and function during this period, is only part of the story. This is not to diminish any studies devoted to explaining the shift toward English and Urdu and their impact on Persian literary culture, but only to say that it is one driven by different historiographical aims. Exploration of the role of Persian in the emergence of new linguistic and cultural modes in the nineteenth century, even those based on non-colonial models, as noted above, have been accorded a largely transitional role.⁷² What

⁶⁹ Ghâlib also wrote prolifically in Persian, both in poetry and prose. While he himself claimed that his best poetry was in Persian, he was forced to write mostly in Urdu for patronage purposes. For a brief overview of his life and works, see: Munibar Rahman, "Mîrzâ Asad-Allâh Khan Gâleb," *Encyclopedia Iranica* 10.3 (2000): 258-259; An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/galeb>. Also see: Mîrzâ Asadullah Khân Ghâlib, *The Oxford India Ghalib: Life, Letters, and Ghazals*, ed. Ralph Russell (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷⁰ For the impact on Âzâd on the construction of Urdu literary theory and history, see Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry: Ab-e Hayat (1880) by Muhammad Husain Azad (1830-1910)," *Social Scientist* 23.10/12 (Oct.-Dec. 1995): 70-97; and Pritchett, "A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 2," 902-903.

⁷¹ Qamber, introduction to *The Last Musha'irah of Delhi*, 17.

⁷² For example, on the transitional role of Persian from *akhbârât* to English newspapers see: Margrit Pernau, "The Delhi Urdu Akhbar Between Persian Akhbarat and English Newspapers," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 18 (2003):

became of the many administrators, scholars, poets, and others versed in the world of Persian letters and practices? How might people have reconstituted and re-organized themselves around Persian literary community during the nineteenth century?

Persian literary culture in the nineteenth century may be a story of transition, but not one as simple as sudden disappearance or even linear decline, phased out by the British or the rise of Urdu. It is more a story of a series of re-articulations in different spaces, both old and new. For example, as Shamsur Rahman Faruqi notes, Persian still had a place in the gatherings devoted to the recitation of Urdu verse well into the twentieth century, where Persian poetry could be recited “without the audience or the poet feeling any incongruity.”⁷³ The analysis of Tariq Rahman is equally revealing for the post-Mughal (and even post-1835) life-span of Persian in India, as it points to how both the British and members of Indian society continued debating the role of Persian and its shifting position within various institutions.⁷⁴ As Nile Green has recently demonstrated in his multi-dimensional *Bombay Islam*, Persian production in nineteenth century Bombay had a sustained impact well beyond the religious economy of India. It made inroads into Iran as well, influencing its religious economy and national history through the circulation of texts that reflected the politically liberal atmosphere of Bombay and its services in printing technologies.⁷⁵ The Persian book market of Bombay also influenced the Khanate of Bukhara. Even today one finds Persian books printed in Bombay in the markets of Bukhara, Tashkent, Samarqand, and Kabul.

The most cursory look at Nabi Hadi’s *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* reveals the scope of Persian textual production in the nineteenth century, spanning such topics as religious sciences, history, poetry, botany, and medicine, among others.⁷⁶ Such a range of Persian literary production reveals not a singular world of textual practices, or one that can merely be tied to the patronage of the British or various princely states. Rather, it exemplifies the many worlds of Persian production, connected to greater bodies of literary and scientific knowledge, Persianate or otherwise, whether at the local, national, or international level. Many such works fall directly into the category that Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi refers to as the “homeless” texts of Persianate

105-131. For a similar role in regards to the office of *akhbâr-navîs*, see: Michael H. Fisher, “The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms,” *Modern Asian Studies* 27.1 (1993): 45-82. For the impact of Persian historical writing on British understandings of India, see: Kumkum Chatterjee, *The Cultures of History in Early Modern India: Persianization and Mughal Culture in Bengal* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009). For more general information, see: Bayly, *Empire and Information*.

⁷³ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). Quoted in Vasilyeva, “The Indian Mushairah: Traditions and Modernity,” 8 (ft. 12).

⁷⁴ Tariq Rahman, “Decline of Persian in British India,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 22.1 (1999): 47-62.

⁷⁵ Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840-1915* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁷⁶ Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Abhinav Publications, 1995).

modernity.⁷⁷ With a more transregional outlook in mind, engagement with such texts can evoke linkages between different transformations seemingly worlds apart.

Chapter Three serves as a contribution to the above-cited studies and seeks to explore one of the many variations of Persian literary culture and textual production in nineteenth century India. Its line of inquiry is the Persian poetic environment at the court of Muhammad Ghaws Khân Bahâdur (d. 1855), the last Nawâb of Arcot, the final sovereign ruler of the Carnatic state that emerged in post-Mughal India. It explores the nature of Persian literary culture through analyzing the practice of *tazkirah* production composed in and around the Nawâb's court. The chapter demonstrates at least one way in which a local expression of Persian literary culture persisted, re-articulated itself, and remained connected to the larger Persianate world in the nineteenth century, both in India and beyond. Most importantly, for the larger purposes of this dissertation, it will highlight how literary debates occurring at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot, while mired in local and personal rivalries, were nonetheless connected to larger debates concerning poetic styles elsewhere. Finally, the study of the Arcot court in South India and its lively Persian literary culture contribute to understandings about the British labor market for Persian littérateurs, the institution of the *mushâ'irah*, and the opportunities for patronage in successor states.

Persian Literary Culture in Nineteenth Century Afghanistan

The state of Persian literary culture in nineteenth century Afghanistan is perhaps what one would expect of a country located at the intersection of West, Central, and South Asia, a heritage equally colored by the richness of indigenous dynasties and courtly traditions as it is by interactions with outsiders. The historical development of Persian literary culture in Afghanistan has been *Persianate* in the fullest sense, accumulated over time as a result of Afghanistan's proximity to some of the most notable events and places in the region: Mahmud of Ghazna's foray into South Asia, the resplendent court of Husayn Bayqarâ at Herat, incursions undertaken by the Safavids and Mughals, proximity to Samarqand and Bukhara, and the oral traditions of Khurasan. Following the founding of the modern state of Afghanistan by Ahmad Shâh Durrânî, Persian literary activity at times displays coherence in its output due to state patronage of poets or as a result of the state's preference for a particular style. This is as much true for the state's rise under Ahmad Shâh Durrânî and his progeny as it is for poetic practice under the rule and patronage of 'Abd al-Rahmân Khan, and later in the early part of the twentieth century, with the state-sponsored poetic activities of Mahmud Tarzî.⁷⁸ Though certainly not the only factor affecting trends in Persian literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Afghanistan, the

⁷⁷ Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

⁷⁸ It is worth noting that while Mahmud Tarzî wrote only in Persian, he was an early exponent of "zabân-i Afghânî" (i.e. Pashtu). Later on, especially since the 1920's, the promotion of Pashtu as the "national" language of Afghanistan became of paramount importance to the State. The country is now officially a bilingual state. Prior to the 1920's, and throughout history, Persian was the only official language of Afghanistan, even if the Sadduzai and Muhammadzai rulers were of Pashtun ethnic origin.

impact of the state on Persian poetic practice was nonetheless a crucial factor. Nowhere is this better suggested than in the state's efforts to raise the poetry of 'Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil, and the style he followed, to prominence.

The Rise of the Durrânî State and Bîdilism

Similar to other dynasties in the Islamic world, the post-1747 Durrânî rulers of Afghanistan were active literary patrons. In an effort to bolster their regal and cultural bonafides, rulers sought to attract men of letters and artistic abilities. Literary activity, specifically related to Persian, was further bolstered by the fact that the early Sadduzai rulers of Afghanistan composed Persian poetry themselves. Ahmad Shâh Durrânî composed two divans, one each in Persian and Pushtu, establishing a tradition that would be followed by his Sadduzai heirs, such as his son Tîmûr Shâh (d. 1793) and grandson Shâh Shujâ' (d. 1842).⁷⁹

During the rule of Tîmûr Shâh (r. 1772-1793), with the initial turbulent phase of state formation in slight retreat and greater centralization of political and economic authority, the social and cultural activity of the bazaars, craft making, and the emergence of schools of learning blossomed.⁸⁰ Accompanying such changes was the emergence of state-sponsored poetry and literature. Profiting from a more stable courtly atmosphere than his predecessors, Tîmûr Shâh was able to attract a variety of poets, Sufis, history-writers and others to his court.⁸¹ Most notable was the pleasure displayed by Tîmûr Shâh for the poetry of 'Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil, solidifying Afghanistan's long-lasting relationship with the great Indian poet which still exists today. It was for the poetry of Bîdil and gatherings devoted to analyzing his work that Tîmûr Shâh reserved the utmost attention and time.

The spread and influence of the poetry of Bîdil may be considered one of the primary features of literary culture in eighteenth and nineteenth century Afghanistan. According to Husayn Nâ'il, the spread and popularity of Bîdil's poetry can be traced to scholars and poets returning to Afghanistan from centers of learning abroad, including Delhi, Samarqand, and Bukhara.⁸² Poets, such as Gul Muhammad Afghân (d. ca. 1250/1834-5), who spent time in Central Asia, brought back the poetry of Bîdil to Afghanistan.⁸³ Originally from Qandahar, Gul Muhammad Afghân left for Bukhara during the period of Shâh Murâd Khân (the emir of Bukhara), where he met poets like 'Îsâ Makhdûm Balkhî and 'Abd al-Qâdir Sûdâ Bukhârî (d. 1251/1873), two of the most prominent poets in understanding and imitating the poetry to Bîdil.⁸⁴ Makhdûm, whose knowledge of Islamic sciences and learning preceded him, is also

⁷⁹ Muhammad Haydar Zhûbal, *Târikh-i adabîyât-i Afghânistân* (Kabul: Mayvand, 1387/2008), 246-248. Shâh Shujâ' wrote only in Persian.

⁸⁰ Ghulâm Muhammad Ghubâr, *Afghânistân dar masîr-i târikh*, 2 vol. in 1 (Kabul: Mayvand, 2001), 377-378.

⁸¹ Husayn Nâ'il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sîzdahum* (Kabul: Matba'ah-yi Dawlatî, 1360/1981-2), 8-9.

⁸² *Ibid.* 146.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 73.

⁸⁴ Muhammad Akbar Sanâ Ghaznavî, *Târikh-i adabîyât-i Darî* (Kabul: Mayvand, 1385/2007), 271-272.

regarded as one of the most adept at understanding and deciphering the poetry of Bîdil during his lifetime.⁸⁵ Back in Afghanistan, Gul Muhammad Afghân remained committed to the style, word-choice, and overall demeanor of the poetry he honed abroad. Amongst the circle and gatherings of poets in Afghanistan, the poetry of Bîdil spread and gained popularity.

Tîmûr Shâh was not the first Afghan ruler to display an interest in the poetry of Bîdil, but rather built upon the precedent set by his father Ahmad Shâh. It has been posited that the founder of the modern Afghan state brought some collections of Bîdil's poetry from India to the Royal Library in Qandahar. When Tîmûr Shâh then moved the seat of his power from Qandahar to Kabul, the Royal Library accompanied him.⁸⁶ It was Tîmûr Shâh, however, who capitalized on the appearance of Bîdil's poetry and stylistics in Afghanistan and followed a path in which Bîdil's poetry was promoted above all else. The sponsored gatherings solely devoted to the reading of Bîdil's poetry, known as *majlis-i Bîdil-khânî*, were aided by individuals that witnessed such gatherings previously in other parts of Central Asia.⁸⁷

Tîmûr was assisted in his endeavors to promote and imitate the poetry of Bîdil by the poet Mîr Hûtak (d. 1242/1826-7), who was one of his closest companions. The influence of Bîdil's poetry on Mîr Hûtak's poetry can clearly be seen in regard to word choice, rhyme, and structure.⁸⁸ Notably, it was Mîr Hûtak's house that served as the venue for gatherings, further solidifying his status as the group's leader. At the gatherings, various poets read the work of Bîdil, analyzed it, and attempted to understand it in a communal setting.⁸⁹ The poets who came to be affiliated with this circle and benefited from the patronage of Tîmûr Shâh hailed from different places throughout Afghanistan, pointing to the power of the court to pull in poets from different locales. 'Aydâ Ghaznavî, for example, arrived at Tîmûr's court from Ghazna and was appointed as one of the Shâh's teachers.⁹⁰ 'Ishrat Khân 'Ishrat, who also hailed from around Ghazna, found his way to Tîmûr's circle of poets, recording some historical events, such the Shâh's coronation and death.⁹¹ Other poets who took part in such gatherings and court society at the time were La'1 Muhammad 'Âjiz, Mîrzâ Qaland Rizat, and Mîrzâ Ahmad Khân Ahmad.⁹² 'Âîsha Durrânî, a female poet, was also a member of Tîmûr's circle indicating that, at least in one instance, Tîmûr Shâh's gatherings were not solely restricted to male participants.⁹³ With the

⁸⁵ Ibid. 243-247.

⁸⁶ 'Iraj Shâhbâz. "Guftugû bâ ustâd-i Vâsif Bâkhtarî, shâ'ir va pizhûhishgar-i Afghân: Bîdil-girâ'î dar Afghânistân," *Shi'r* 29 (Winter 1380/2001): 16.

⁸⁷ Muhammad Sarvar Mawlâ'î, "Bâzgasht-i adabî dar Afghânistân," *Sukhan* 19.1 (Khurdâd 1348/June 1969): 61.

⁸⁸ Nâ'il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 58; Ghaznavî, *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Darî*, 258.

⁸⁹ Nâ'il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 59.

⁹⁰ Ghaznavî, *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Darî*, 261.

⁹¹ Ibid. 263.

⁹² Nâ'il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 62.

⁹³ Ghaznavî, *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Darî*, 265.

death of Tîmûr Shâh, and the battle for the throne that followed, poetry and literary activity at the court came to a standstill and the circle of poets around Tîmûr Shâh dispersed.⁹⁴ However, the poetry of Bîdil, to whom the court had dedicated its most directed care, did not disappear but continued in Afghanistan well beyond the poetic gatherings Tîmûr Shâh had sponsored. The imitation of his style and the spread of *Bîdil-khânîs* persisted throughout society. Indeed Bîdil's *dîvân* became the first collection of poetry printed in Afghanistan.⁹⁵ Many literary historians posit that the popularity of Bîdil in Afghanistan is on par with that of Hâfiz.

Afghan literary culture in the nineteenth century, however, was more than just the imitation and spread of the poetry of Bîdil, whether at the state level or throughout society. While many literary historians argue that the non-Iranian world was fixated on the so-called *sabk-i Hindî* style as evidenced by Bîdil's stature in Afghanistan, other trends in Persian poetic practice were also emerging. 'Âîsha Durrânî, for example, who lived during the reign of Tîmûr Shâh, the very same period that saw the rise of Bîdil's poetry at the state level, remained dedicated to following the poetic style of Hâfiz in the *ghazal* and Manûchihri in the *qasîdah*, two undisputed "masters" of the Persian canon.⁹⁶

Perhaps the best case to be made for the multiplicity of trends in Persian poetic practice in Afghanistan during this time is the work of a little known poet by the name of Vasfî. His corpus also complicates the notion that following the "ancients," on the one hand, and the *tâzah-gu'î/sabk-i Hindî* style, on the other, was somehow contradictory. Little is known about Vasfî's life outside of the poetry he left behind. Based on internal evidence it is likely that he was born some time during the early reign of Tîmûr Shâh and probably died around 1260/1844. Husayn Nâ'il, in an assessment of the variegated style of Vasfî, makes note of the fact that he sought to imitate and respond to close to ninety different poets, some known throughout Persian literary history and some less known.⁹⁷ Among those poets well-known to Persian literary history are Amîr Khusraw, Anvarî, Rûmî, Hâfiz, Khâqânî, Sa'dî, Sâ'ib, 'Urfî, Fighânî, and Kalîm, displaying a healthy mix of poets occupying different temporal and geographic spaces, not to mention ones often viewed as practicing different, seemingly opposed, styles of poetry.⁹⁸ However, Vasfî was also influenced by contemporary poetry, and sought to imitate and respond to such poets. This included many of the "*bâzgasht*" poets of Iran who will be referenced in the following chapter, such as Âzar, Mushtâq, Rafîq, 'Âshiq, and 'Abd al-Bâqî Tabîb.⁹⁹ How Vasfî became acquainted with the work of such poets is not known, but his engagement with their

⁹⁴ Ibid. 273.

⁹⁵ This occurred during the reign of Habîbullâh Khân (r. 1901-1919), however, this was not the advent of printing in Afghanistan. The first lithograph machine was brought to Afghanistan (from India) by the ruler Shîr 'Alî Khân, followed by the opening of printing houses and the first published periodical, *Shams al-nahâr* in 1873. See Zhûbal. *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Afghânistân*, 257.

⁹⁶ Ghaznavî, *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Dari*, 265.

⁹⁷ For information on the life and poetry of Vasfî, see the chapter "Tavajjuh bih nazîrah gu'î va iqtifâ-yi pîshînân," in Nâ'il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sizdahum*, 88-107.

⁹⁸ Nâ'il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sizdahum*, 104.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

work may point to the wider Persianate canvas on which a “return” to masters may have operated.

An Afghan *Bâzgasht*?

Indeed the idea of a “return” (*bâzgasht*) in nineteenth century Afghanistan is not unknown to literary history. Scholars have made note of the fact that various poets in nineteenth century Afghanistan attempted to move away from the poetry of Bîdil, and the style he represented, and instigated a “return” to the past styles of the “ancients,” Vasfî among them. As of yet, there is no consensus among literary historians as to the nature of this “Afghan *bâzgasht*” or even whether it occurred at all. What is abundantly clear nonetheless is the manner in which such scholars have sought to assess nineteenth century literary culture using the categories of *sabk-i Hindî* and *bâzgasht* established by Bahâr. This is especially true in regards to *bâzgasht*, where literary historians have sought to assess its occurrence based on whether or not it coheres to the model established in the Iranian case, discussed earlier in this chapter.

As is the case of *bâzgasht* in Iran, it appears that recognition of a possible *bâzgasht* in Afghanistan is as much the result of actual literary preference as it is an ex-post facto historiographic construction. The possible occurrence of an Afghan *bâzgasht* occurs later in the nineteenth century following the deaths of ‘Âîsha Durrânî and Vasfî. It is often considered to have occurred not only after the reign of Tîmûr Shâh, but also after the later reigns of Shâh Shujâ‘ and Dûst Muhammad Khân. Muhammad Zhûbal notes that the shift away from a *tâzah-gû’î* style to one more heavily focused on the *ghazals* and *qasîdahs* of Sa’dî, Hâfiz, Anvarî, Khâqânî, and others occurred in the late nineteenth century at the hands of several poets.¹⁰⁰ Among the poets accorded this role are those from the period of Shîr ‘Alî Khân (r. 1863-1865 and 1868-1879) and ‘Abd al-Rahmân Khân (r. 1880-1901). Many of these poets were located at the court of aforementioned rulers.

Most prominent among those listed is Ghulâm Muhammad Tarzî (d. 1900), the father of the famed Afghan poet, intellectual, and modernizer Mahmud Tarzî (d. 1933).¹⁰¹ According to Zhûbal, the elder Tarzî “re-instigated a new style and method in Afghan literature which was a return to the old styles,” particularly the *qasîdahs* of the Khurâsânî style. Scores more were to follow, led by the likes of Mîrzâ Muhammad Sâlik, Adîb Pishavârî, and Muhammad Hasan “Imzâ.”¹⁰² Later, at the court of ‘Abd al-Rahmân Khân, where a great many talented poets gathered at the ruler’s behest, the Afghan “return” movement is seen to have reached a new phase.¹⁰³ Continuing the trend of returning to the styles of the ancients were poets among the secretarial class, like Mîrzâ Muhammad Nabî “Vâsil” Kâbulî (d. 1891/2) and Sayyid Muhammad Muhsin “Shâmil” (d. 1891/2), who are seen as having promoted a return to the ‘Irâqî style and, in

¹⁰⁰ Zhûbal. *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Afghânistân*, 272.

¹⁰¹ On the life and impact of Mahmud Tarzî, see: Wali Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁰² Zhûbal. *Târîkh-i adabîyât-i Afghânistân*, 272.

¹⁰³ For a list see ‘Abd al-Qayyûm Qavîm, *Murûrî bar adabîyât-i mu‘âsir-i Darî az 1259 tâ 1380* (Kabul: Intishârât-i Sa‘îd, n.d.), 7.

particular, the poetry of Hâfiz. It is these two poets, and in particular Vâsil, who are primarily credited with motivating a “return” to the ‘Irâqî style of earlier poets. Vâsil, for his part, held various positions at the courts of Shîr ‘Alî Khân and ‘Abd al-Rahmân Khân, becoming a close companion of the latter and often offering the ruler stately advice. The death of Vâsil was to have such a profound effect on ‘Abd al-Rahmân Khan (the “Iron Amir”) that he wrote a heartfelt letter of condolence to Vâsil’s mother.¹⁰⁴ Vâsil, viewed as the paramount example of poets shunning the so-called *sabk-i Hindî* style in favor of following the “ancients,” begins his *dîvân* by welcoming Hâfiz.¹⁰⁵ Muhammad Sarvar Mawlâ’î in his article “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar Afghânistân,” likewise locates the moment of the Afghan “return” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Like others, he points to the examples of Sharar Kâbulî and Adîb Pishavârî as poets instigating a “return” to classical styles of the *qasîdah* and the ever-present Vâsil in following the ancients in the *ghazal*.¹⁰⁶

The idea of an Afghan *bâzgasht* has not been without its critics. Muhammad Akbar Sanâ Ghaznavî, while according a slot for *bâzgasht-i adabî* as one of the schools (*maktab*) in Darî literary history, nonetheless notes that the poetry of Bîdil and the *tâzah-gû’î* style remained dominant throughout the nineteenth century. He posits that only a few poets sought to model their poetry on that of the ancients, but not enough to justify a widespread movement and displace other styles.¹⁰⁷ Equally skeptical of the idea that a recognizable *bâzgasht* occurred in nineteenth century Afghanistan is ‘Abd al-Qayyûm Qavîm writing in *Murûrî bar adabîyât-i mu’âsir-i Darî*. While noting that there existed in the late nineteenth century some poets who would “not let the light of knowledge and literature in their country be extinguished,” such as Vâsil and his imitation of the poetry of Hafiz, the period was primarily dominated by the weak *ghazals* of the moderns (*muta’akhhirîn*) and odes of little value.¹⁰⁸

Other commentators on the issue are more direct in their criticism. Latîf Nâzimî notes that there was never a self-conscious recognition of a “return” project on the part of the participants who replicated the Khurâsânî and ‘Irâqî styles. Furthermore, the imitation of these styles itself was not prevalent amongst a wide enough class of poets to amount to any sort of trend.¹⁰⁹ Equally skeptical are Reza Chihriqânî Barchalûyî and Ismâ’îl Shafaq in “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shîr-i Afghânistân.” While poets like Sharar Kâbulî, Sayyid Mîr Hirâtî, and (above all else) Vâsil, tried to separate themselves by returning to the *qasîdahs* and *ghazals* of the ancients, in no instance were they successful in instigating “a literary return and revival of the styles of

¹⁰⁴ Nâ’îl, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 149-150.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 149-151.

¹⁰⁶ Mawlâ’î, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar Afghânistân,” 63.

¹⁰⁷ Ghaznavî, *Târikh-i adabîyât-i Darî* 255-256. Among those poets listed by Ghaznavî are: Vâsil, Shâmil, and Ghulâm Muhammad Tarzî.

¹⁰⁸ Qavîm, *Murûrî bar adabîyât-i mu’âsir-i Darî az 1259 tâ 1380*, 7-14.

¹⁰⁹ Latîf Nâzimî, “Darbârah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî Afghânistân,” *Pashtûn Zhagh* 36.1 (1355/1976-7). Quoted in Nâ’îl, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 148-149.

old.”¹¹⁰ Chihriqânî and Shafaq’s analysis is of particular note for the manner in which it seeks to compare the potential for an Afghan *bâzgasht* with how the *bâzgasht* style is purported to have evolved in Iran and its legacy there.¹¹¹

Many literary historians have looked to the Iranian model of *bâzgasht* to understand whether there was such a movement in poetry in nineteenth century Afghanistan. Whether in support or opposition to the occurrence of an Afghan *bâzgasht*, historians have sought to determine whether the poets undertaking such a project, firstly, did so in a self-conscious manner, and secondly, did so as a close and identifiable cohort of poets. Chihriqânî and Shafaq, as evidenced above, would note that a third factor is necessary as well, namely, the lasting impact of this trend in poetry as seen by its ability to wash away and supplant other poetic styles across society. For most literary historians of Afghanistan, adherence to the first two Iranian-centric criteria is ample enough to determine whether an Afghan *bâzgasht* occurred. Thus historians have looked to the Afghan State, and the courts of Shîr ‘Alî Khân and ‘Abd al-Rahmân Khân, as the most likely venues for a close cohort of poets carrying out a directed project to emerge, in belief that only the state could achieve such ends. Based on such strict criteria, the perception may be right. While some authors believe a *bâzgasht* was achieved by likes of Ghulâm Muhammad Tarzî, Vâsil, and Shâmil, implicitly aided by the state, others have been less convinced. In either case, the main problem with such a framework is that it does not allow any room for the appearance of “*bâzgashtian*” trends in poetry beyond those dictated by Iranian-centric criteria. Absent from this framework are trends in poetics at the hands of a select few, like ‘Âîsha Durrânî or Vasfî, that seek to “return” to the style of the masters, or trends occurring outside of the state in a less recognizable form at the society level.

Chapter Four seeks to assess Afghan literary history in the nineteenth century and, like the chapters before it, explore whether the accepted Iranian-centric historiography of *bâzgasht* not only holds but also has much relevance. The chapter looks beyond the state and the prevalence of the poetry of Bîdil to find trends in poetry in imitation of the “masters.” Chapter Four looks not to the period of Tîmûr Shâh, when the poetry of Bîdil was promoted by the state, or later in the nineteenth century when Vâsil, Shâmil, and others were active at the court of Abd al-Rahmân. Instead it focuses on the period in between: the time following the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842). For when the newly emergent modern Afghan state frayed through internecine fighting amongst Tîmûr Shâh’s progeny and entered a period of contestation, finally resulting in the first Anglo-Afghan War, the “masters” of Persian poetry (in this case Firdawsî) were once again summoned. The result: the creation of an interconnected marketplace of *jangnâmahs* (“battle poems”) composed in the style of Firdawsî’s epic *Shâhnâmah* to narrate the war’s events.

This *jangnâmah* marketplace cannot be found within the neat and tidy confines of court-sponsored poetry or any easily identifiable poetic collective or *anjuman* known to promote a particular style of poetry. Instead this trend in poetry is found amongst the oral tales and epic-texts permeating throughout Afghanistan, and surrounding areas, at a societal level. Though its appearance is at times less definable than those literary trends attached to the state or poets active in the court, it nonetheless constitutes an important trend in nineteenth century Persian literary

¹¹⁰ Rizâ Chihriqânî Barchalûyî and Ismâ‘îl Shafaq, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi‘r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân,” *Funûn-i Adabî* 4.2 (Fall/Winter 1391/2012-3): 54.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 65.

culture in Afghanistan. An assessment of these *jangnâmahs* composed in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* complicates the exclusivity of the category of *bâzgasht* to Iran and perhaps widens its applicability to larger trends occurring elsewhere in the Persianate world.

Chapter Two: The Isfahânî Circle and the Making of the *Bâzgasht* Movement in Iran

*Isfahan is the garden, and your munificence is the rain
Isfahan is the body, and your command is the soul!*¹
-Âzar

Introduction

Âzar Baygdilî must have written the above lines with a sense of relief. Isfahan in 1770 was no longer the seat of splendor it had once been under the Safavids, but neither was it the constant target of raids and attacks by various parties in search of political or material fortunes--at least for the time being. The reign of Karîm Khân Zand (r. 1751-1779) brought a relative stability to Iran, as did his mayoral appointee for Isfahan, Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb (d. 1184/1770-1).

Âzar was born into a family of officials who dutifully served the Safavids. His birth in Isfahan in 1722 nearly coincided with the city’s fall. His first decade of life was spent traveling with his father, who went in search of employment opportunities amidst the shifting political tides of the day. This sojourn would later be replicated by Âzar himself as he moved in search of his own employment at the hands of various factions and aspirant rulers. His early life reflected the socially chaotic and politically fluid times. No wonder he rejoiced at the stability of Isfahan in 1770. The dust of destruction and uncertainty had settled. Isfahan under the rule of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb, whose “command” Âzar praised as the “soul” of Isfahan, could be recast anew. Âzar’s tribute continues throughout the *qasîdah* in which the above lines appear, portraying the presence and rule of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb as the source of Isfahan’s reemergence as an “abode of happiness and security” (*bayt al-surûr va dâr al-amân*), the “envy of the garden of paradise” (*rashk-i gulzâr-i jinân*).²

Âzar’s enthusiasm for the mayor’s leadership and the city’s revival is not the first association made with the poet. First and foremost Âzar is the author of one of the most famous *tazkirahs* of Persian literary history. His *Âtishkadah* served as the template for many later *tazkirah* writers in Iran or elsewhere, and has been equally valued by modern authors who codify classes of poets and trends in poetry. Yet little attention has been paid to the circumstances under which this *tazkirah* was written. As Mana Kia notes, “the context of Âzar’s composition is the ruin of Iran, a perception that undergirds the *Atashkadah* as a whole and is an essential part of the rhetorical labor of the text.”³ Kia’s statement reminds us that influential texts cannot fully be understood apart from the circumstances that inspire their composition. A similar statement

¹ Lutf ‘Alî “Âzar” Baygdilî, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, ed. Hasan Sâdât-Nâsirî, Ghulâm Husayn Baygdilî (Tehran: Jâvidân, 1366/1987), 23.

² Ibid. 22-23.

³ Mana Kia, “Contours of Persianate Community, 1722-1835” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011), 105.

applies to the formation of the *bâzgasht* movement of which this text and Âzar are a part.

Despite this caveat, histories of the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement continue to be constructed according to its attributes as a category in the unfolding of Persian literary history, with little attention to the larger social, political, and literary environments nurturing its growth. As a category within the four-school development of Persian literary history (see Introduction and Chapter One), *bâzgasht* is naturally positioned and defined by its relationship to the other three schools, whether in a positive or negative fashion. As part of a developmental and chronological schematic devoted to explaining Persian literary history, *bâzgasht* is distinguished especially by its relationship to the previous category, *sabk-i Hindî*. In this context, *bâzgasht* is presented as inspiring the dismissal of *sabk-i Hindî* stylistics in favor of *its* stylistics. Other factors for understanding the formation of the *bâzgasht* movement are treated as an afterthought, or dismissed as non-factors altogether. Effectively, this approach presumes that the *bâzgasht* poets were detached from the social concerns of the existent world and instead entirely preoccupied with the blind imitation of previous styles.⁴ What then to make of Âzar and his clear celebration of the garden that is Isfahan and the presence of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb? Were he and other *bâzgasht* poets inattentive to their immediate environment and immune to their surroundings, save for the way they reacted to a particular style of poetry (i.e. *sabk-i Hindî*), swirling in their midst and directing their every move?

The stylistic opposition posited between *sabk-i Hindî* and *bâzgasht* is by no means unfounded. *Tazkirahs* from the Zand and Qajar eras plant the seeds for this genesis narrative of *bâzgasht* as a literary category. It is an impression that has been crucial for later authors, such as Bahâr, to define the movement’s primary characteristics and process of becoming (see Chapter One). These texts note the existence of a group of eighteenth and nineteenth century poets who sought to “return” Persian poetry to the style of the ancients (i.e. *bâzgasht*) based on their abhorrence for a particular distasteful style (i.e. *sabk-i Hindî*). Indeed evidence from the poetic verses profiled below demonstrates their insistence on imitating the styles of various masters.

However, many of these same *tazkirahs*, not to mention the poetry of the *bâzgasht* poets themselves, contain other impressions of the external environments shaping the movement’s early founding. These impressions reach back in history and expand beyond the notion of the poets’ mere distaste for a particular style of poetry. Most importantly, they reference Isfahan’s political, literary, and social environment. These references, factors so crucial to the formation of the *bâzgasht* movement, have received insufficient attention. Their absence undermines our understanding not only of the movement’s appearance but also the nature of early-modern Persian poetic culture in Iran and its place within the Persianate world.

The social and political context of Âzar’s poetic experience, such as Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s role in providing patronage to the early *bâzgasht* Isfahânî Circle of poets, is a crucial factor in the movement’s development. The patronage Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb provided to the Isfahânî Circle of poets is one of several social and political elements affecting the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement found in Zand and early-Qajar sources, but elided by later Qajar-era *tazkirah* authors and, more recently, by modern authors.

The aim of this chapter is to recover many of the forgotten or ignored circumstances under which the *bâzgasht* movement emerged. This corrective is undertaken in two ways: first,

⁴ For example, see: Yahya Âryanpûr, *Az Sabâ tâ Nîmâ: târîkh-i 150 sâl-i adab-i Fârsî*, vol. 1, 7th ed. (Tehran: Intishârât-i Zavvâr, 1379/2000), 16-19. M. Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht: barrasî-i shi’r-i dawrah-hâ-yi Afashâriyah, Zandiyah, Qajâriyah* (Tehran: 1372/1993), 48-51.

through close readings of Zand and Qajar era *tazkirahs*; second, by utilizing the poetry of the *bâzgasht* poets to understand their own self-perceptions, attitudes, and relationships with one another. Utilizing a variety of *tazkirahs* across space and time and placing them in conversation with one another, allows one to recover important aspects of literary history and culture. Poetry likewise will be used as an historical resource providing a narrative illuminating the poetic voices, inter-relationships, and self-perceptions of the *bâzgasht* poets themselves. An additional benefit is its ability to provide clues about the circumstances supporting the movement's appearance and meaning for its time. This chapter offers evidence that the driving force behind the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement was not a group of poets' disdain for a particular poetic style, but rather the more robust social, political, and literary circumstances of Isfahan, both during Safavid and post-Safavid times. While poets' distaste for the so-called "Indian Style" of poetry was not altogether absent from the movement's emergence, it may best be described as a proximate cause. More significant to the movement's rise was the socio-political and intellectual climate of Isfahan before and after its fall in 1722. For this reason the term "Isfahâni Circle" will at times be preferred in describing the collective of poets that would be known to history as the *bâzgasht* movement, as it more accurately captures the spirit of the movement at its inception.

The chapter is divided into four parts. Part I is an overview of poetic culture in Safavid times, particularly in the coffeehouses and elsewhere in Isfahan, and the inter-relationship between poetic developments in Iran and India. It establishes the literary, cultural, and social backdrop for the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement in post-Safavid times. It argues against the notion that Safavid Isfahan and Iran writ large was devoid of poetic developments. Instead it posits that Safavid Isfahan is the proper context for understanding the emergence of *bâzgasht* in post-Safavid Iran through its poetic gatherings, the types of individuals drawn to such gatherings, and the presence of the poetic style *maktab-i vuqû'* (realist school). Part II focuses on Sayyid 'Alî "Mushtâq" Isfahâni and his literary society. It reconstructs the membership, social relationships, and connections among the society's various members and affiliates, drawing on *tazkirahs* and the poetry and correspondence of three major literary figures: Âzar Baygdilî (d. 1195/1781), Sayyid Ahmad "Hâtif" Isfahâni (d. 1198/1784), and Sulaymân "Sabâhî" Bidgulî (d. 1207/1793). These materials reveal the deep social bonds among the poets, their praise of one another, often expressed through imitation of the masters, and the manner in which this created an inclusive poetic community. Deprived of a larger poetic community and patronage opportunities to shelter them, these poets directed their talents toward one another, acting as both patron and poet, supporting one another through their work in the *qasîdah* form, imitating a precedent set by one of the "masters."

Part III moves back in time to the Safavid-Qajar interregnum and the effects of the fall of Isfahan on poetic culture and the ensuing social and literary climate. Part III examines the intervening period between Parts I and II to better understand what rhetorical role this intervening period contributes to the *bâzgasht* narrative. Scholars have often portrayed post-Safavid Isfahan prior to the advent of the Qajar dynasty as a dark, destructive, and chaotic period. In so doing, these works imply that the emergence of *bâzgasht* occurred absent any discernible social and political context. Instead, while Isfahan's fall certainly led to disruptions, so too did certain continuities remain. This continuity is reflected in the symmetry to be found between poetic associations and stylistics in Safavid Isfahan with that of the Isfahâni Circle in post-Safavid times.

Part IV concentrates on the period after Mushtâq's death and the role of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb, mayor of Isfahan and patron of poetry. The support of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb allowed the Isfahânî Circle to transition from a community centered solely on poets and self-praise to one attached to a benefactor. The section returns to the poetry of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî to show that the *bâzgasht* movement was not simply determined to shift poetic styles, but more importantly dedicated to re-establishing a literary climate and role for the poet for future generations by looking to the past as a model.

Part One: Isfahan and the Poetic Climate of Safavid Iran

This section presents a description of the poetic environment in Safavid Iran and offers a context for the rise of the Isfahânî Circle of poets in a later period. Safavid Isfahan had a vibrant and diverse poetical environment. Poets enjoyed a variety of experiences, including travel and diverse professional prospects, or otherwise. This chapter seeks to dispel two common myths concerning the formation of the *bâzgasht* movement. First, that the preceding Safavid period was one absent of poetry on account of Safavid rulers' disinterest. Second, that the Safavid period merely witnessed poets from Safavid lands traveling to India. These myths project an image of the *bâzgasht* movement as one emerging from nowhere, with little context save a disdain for a particular style of poetry- *sabk-i Hindî*. In pre-*bâzgasht* Isfahan, instead, one finds evidence of a hotbed of poetical activity and poetic gatherings, providing a context and backdrop for the Isfahânî Circle of poets to emerge in the mid-eighteenth century.

The exact relationship of the Safavid court to poetry and poetic patronage is still much a matter of intense debate.⁵ Some scholars assert that the religious ideology of the Safavids eradicated poetic patronage or debilitated the poetic environment. Others claim that the Safavids displayed little taste for poetry and its promotion. These claims assume that the promotion of Shi'î religious ideology shaped or overran many cultural production activities, forcing many poets to flee elsewhere. In this view, the practice of poetic patronage was either neglected in favor of allocating resources to Shi'î institutions and 'ulama, or devoted to the panegyric praise of religious figures rather than the praise of Shâhs.⁶ In the latter case, Shâh Tahmasp's (r. 1524-1576) turn toward piety later in life is offered as the moment during which the Safavid monarchical institution sought to favor a more religious-minded poetry than its "secular" variant.⁷

Aziz Ahmad has convincingly argued in "Safavid Poets in India" that the Safavid court did not shun poetry altogether, or solely concern itself with "religious" poetry to the exclusion of

⁵ For example, compare the arguments offered by Ahmad Tamîmdârî, "Adabîyât-i 'asr-i Safavî, inhitât yâ taraqqî," in *Girdhamâyî-i maktab-i Isfahân: majmû'ah-yi maqâlât-i adabîyât*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Farhangistân-i Hunar-i Jumhûrî-i Irân, 1387/2008-9), 77-91; and Ishâq Tughyânî, "Isfahân va tahavvul-i shi'r-i Pârsî dar 'asr-i Safavîyah," in *Girdhamâyî-i maktab-i Isfahân: majmû'ah-i maqâlât-i adabîyât*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Farhangistân-i Hunar-i Jumhûrî-i Irân, 1387/2008-9), 37-50. That they both appear in the same 2-volume collection of articles points to the notion that the matter is far from settled.

⁶ Stephen Frederic Dale, "A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness: The Indian Poems of Ashraf Mazandarani," *Iranian Studies* 36.2 (2003): 199-200.

⁷ Ibid. 200.

the “secular.”⁸ Shâh Ismâ‘îl (r. 1501-1524), Shâh ‘Abbâs (r. 1588-1629), and some of Shâh Tahmasp’s brothers composed poetry, while other monarchs enjoyed panegyric praise of themselves, displaying an openness to praise works beyond “religious” topics.⁹ Even while the Safavids’ Shi‘i ideology shaped many activities associated with poetry and its promotion, “secular” poetry did exist, written by poets, Sufis, or members of the ‘*ulama* class.

Policies of ideological promotion, even following the religious reawakening of Shâh Tahmasp, had little effect on the later rule of Shâh ‘Abbâs, the Safavid monarch who most championed poetry. He had a strong interest in the *Shâhnâmah* and had several poets in his court that could eloquently recite Firdawsî’s work.¹⁰ Shâh ‘Abbâs’ interest in poetry is further exemplified by his practice of ranking poets according to their artistic and poetical skill, and having several poets among his circle of companions.¹¹ For example, he regarded Hakîm Shifâ‘î Isfahânî as something akin to his poet-laureate and “most excellent one of Iran” (*mumtâz-i Irân*).¹² He had a lasting relationship with Mas‘ûd Kâshânî, better known as Hakîm Ruknâ and by the pen name of “Masîh.” Ruknâ was among the ruler’s circle of companions (*halqah-yi nadîmân*) who traveled together and socialized at the Shah’s residence. The Shâh even visited the poet’s residence in Kashan, remaining as a guest for three days. There, Shâh ‘Abbâs requested that Ruknâ respond (*javâb guftan*) to the entirety of Bâbâ Fighânî’s (d. 1519) ghazals.¹³

Beyond the court, Shâh ‘Abbâs aided in the construction of several of the capital’s coffeehouses, the center of poetic activity. He even frequented them on occasion. Muhammad Tâhir Nasrâbâdî in his *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî* recounts a famous visit by the Shâh to the Arab Coffeehouse (*qahvah-khânah-yi ‘Arab*), located beside the *Naqsh-i Jahân Square* in Isfahan. There he saw Mulla Shikûhî Hamadânî among the patrons. The Shâh asked Hamadânî what he was doing there, and when he replied that he was a poet, Shâh ‘Abbâs asked him to recite something. Hamadânî said:

We are hopeless in this world’s garden, like a rose petal,
beside one another we are all sitting in blood.

Shâh ‘Abbâs applauded Hamadânî but then, perhaps signifying his interest in poetry and his ability to critique it, noted: “It is slightly unsuitable to compare the lover to the rose petal”

⁸ Aziz Ahmad, “Safawid Poets and India,” *Iran* 14 (1976): 117-132.

⁹ For Shâh Ismâ‘îl’s poetry, see: Roger Savory and Ahmet T. Karamustafa, “Esma‘îl I Safawi,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 8, Fasc. 6 (1998): 628-636; An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/esmail-i-safawi>.

¹⁰ Nasr Allah Falsafî, “Târikh-i qahvah va qahvah-khânah dar Irân,” in *Chand maqâlah-yi Târikhî va adabî* (Tehran: Intishârât-i Dânishgâh-i Tehran, 1342/1963-4), 270.

¹¹ Tamîmdârî, “Adabîyât-i ‘asr-i Safavî,” 87.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

(*‘âshiq-râ bih barg-i gul tashbîh-kardan andakî nâ-mulâ’im ast*).¹⁴ Following this exchange, Shâh ‘Abbâs then turned to the poet Mir Ilâhî, who had been sitting with Hamadânî, and asked the poet for his pen name. When Ilâhî told the Shâh it was “Ilâhî” (one devoted to God), Shâh ‘Abbâs placed his hand on Mir Ilâhî’s head and said “*ilâhî*.”¹⁵ The anecdote is offered in argument to rethink the Safavid monarchy’s distaste and disinterest in poetry.¹⁶ The precise relationship of the Safavid court to poetry, what “type(s)” of poetry it promoted, and how well poetry “fit” with its larger ideological project is a topic that still warrants further investigation.

Coffeehouse Culture

If the Safavid state and monarchy’s attitude and relationship toward poetry is still in dispute, the engagement and appreciation of poetry within society outside the realm of the court is clear and well-documented. Most notably in the coffeehouses, poetic practice and recitation was consistently diverse and vibrant in Isfahan.

The first coffeehouse in Iran likely appeared in Qazvin during the rule of Shâh Tahmasp.¹⁷ Coffee remained as a common drink in Safavid Iran from the rule of Shâh ‘Abbâs (r. 1588-1629) until the end of Shâh Sultan Husayn’s rule (r. 1694-1722).¹⁸ It served as a delectable drink among court circles, officials outside of the court, and the general public, though evidence suggests that the main consumers were the middle and upper classes of urban society.¹⁹ The most famous coffeehouses in Isfahan were attached to the city’s main causeways and centers-- *Naqsh-i jahân*, *Chahâr-bâgh*, and *Bâzâr-i qaysarîyyah*, meeting grounds for a variety of professions. Artists, writers, poets, and others passed time in conversation with friends, playing different games, watching dance performances, listening to poetry recitations (such as that of the *Shâhnâmah*), and reciting their own poetry.²⁰ The coffeehouses and their activities at times became the target of moral backlash from the court and the ‘*ulama*, but they never succeeded

¹⁴ Muhammad Tâhir Nasrâbâdî, *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, ed. Vahîd Dastgirdî (Tehran: Kitâbfurûshî-i Furûghî, 1361/1982-3), 239.

¹⁵ Nasrâbâdî, *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, 255.

¹⁶ For more information on rethinking the Safavid monarchy’s relationship to literature and intellectual output in general see Roger Savory, “Chapter 9: Intellectual Life under the Safavids,” in Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 203-225. For information and examples on Safavid kings’ less than pietistic behavior, see: Sir John Chardin, *Sir John Chardin’s Travels in Persia, with an introduction by Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes* (London: The Argonaut Press, 1927).

¹⁷ Mulûk Pahlavânzâdah, “Qahvah-khânah-hâ-yi ‘asr-i Safavî, farhang va adabîyât,” in *Girdhamâyî-i maktab-i Isfahân: majmû‘ah-yi maqâlât-i adabîyât*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Farhangistân-i Hunar-i Jumhûri-i Irân, 1387/2008-9), 30.

¹⁸ Rudi Matthee, “Coffee in Safavid Iran: Commerce and Consumption,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 37.1 (1994): 19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 19-20; quote from 23.

²⁰ Falsafî, “Târîkh-i qahvah va qahvah-khânah,” 275.

entirely in closing down coffeehouses in the capital city. Shâh ‘Abbâs II (r. 1642-1666) early in his reign attempted to ban activities in the coffeehouses deemed to contravene social, religious, and moral probity. A 1645 ban sought to end the “lewd dancing and music-making.”²¹ It is probable, however, that these bans were never fully implemented. Coffeehouses continued as places of intellectual and poetic gathering. One may speculate that these intellectual and literary pursuits became even more firmly established with efforts by the regime to restrain activities associated with vice.

The coffeehouses provided poets an outlet to gather outside of houses and shops to engage in literary activities. It is little wonder that Muhammad Tâhir Nasrâbâdî frequented them to collect information for his *tazkirah*, explored further below. Poets went to coffeehouses to mingle with their companions, to partake of literary activities and practices, to converse with one another about poetic composition and method, to recite their poetry, and to seek advice from their teachers.²² Mulûk Pahlavânzâdah notes several famous coffeehouses in Isfahan that served as rendezvous points for poets, including “*Qahvah-khânah-yi bâbâfarrâsh*” (located near *Naqsh-i Jahân*), “*Qahvah-khânah-yi tûfân*” (located near *Naqsh-i Jahân*), and “*Qahvah-khânah-yi jamb-i dâr al-shifâ*” (located by the Qaysariyyah Bazaar), where poets engaged in “investigation, conversation, poetical contests, and debate.”²³ Overall the coffeehouse provided a social niche for poets, striking “a happy balance between the mosque, which was a public space but lacked worldly entertainment, and the ubiquitous taverns.”²⁴

At Home and Away: Traveling Poets and *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*

Many poets of Safavid Iran did not simply live out their lives within the poetic confines of Isfahan and its coffeehouses. They often sought other outlets to test their poetic worth and talent, especially through travel to India. The prospect of greater fame, fortune, and wealth, in addition to the sheer volume of patronage opportunities available in Mughal India, provided motivation.²⁵ It was less the result of the non-existence of poetic opportunities or activities in Isfahan, as evidenced by the coffeehouse culture, noted above. Some poets did leave for India fearing bodily harm for their “immodest poetry” in a religiously observant environment, but these cases are few.²⁶

²¹ Matthee, “Coffee in Safavid Iran,” 32.

²² Zabîh Allâh Safâ, *Târîkh-i adabiyât dar Irân*, vol. 5 pt. 5 (Tehran: Intishârât-i Firdawsî, 1363/1985), 516.

²³ Pahlavânzâdah, “Qahvah-khânah-hâ-yi ‘asr-i Safavî,” 31 and 33.

²⁴ Matthee, “Coffee in Safavid Iran,” 24.

²⁵ Ahmad, “Safawid Poets and India,” 118 and 124.

²⁶ This was at least the case for Ghazâlî of Mashad, who was forced to flee to Mughal India after ‘ulama in Iran enacted a *fatwa* for his execution on account of his poetry. See Rajeev Kinra, “Secretary-Poets in Mughal India and the Ethos of Persian: The Case of Chandar Bhân Brahmân” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008), 297.

Well known poets who left Safavid Iran to go to India, such as ‘Urfî Shîrâzî (d. 1591), Tâlib Âmulî (d. 1626/7), Kalîm Kâshânî (d. 1651), and Sâ’ib Tabrizî (d. 1676), hailed from different places in Iran, equally drawn to opportunities in India and hoping to establish themselves there. The poet of Safavid Iran going to India to seek one’s fortune was a path followed by so many that it even became a trope in poetry. The poetry of Ashraf Mâzandarânî, for example, celebrates the “darkness” of the Indian night “transformed into an entrancing spectacle, almost like the Timurid-Mughal miniatures picturing the annual diwali festival of lights”:

Whoever comes from Iran to India imagines,
That in India gold is scattered like stars in the night sky.²⁷

Muhammad Tâhir Nasrâbâdî’s *tazkirah* documents the commonplace practice of poets migrating to India. The biographical entries that contain the sentence “he went to India” (*bih Hind raftah; dar Hindûstân raftah*), are reported in Nasrâbâdî’s sparse style, as a matter of fact much like the place of the poet’s birth, his pen-name, “pleasant temperament,” and death. The sheer number of these entries is so voluminous that one begins to expect that every poet mentioned would at some point or another “*bih Hind raft*.” More often than not the particular reasons of a poet going to India (and at times his activities there as well) are left unsaid, giving the idea of “going to India” even a greater sense of banality. One suspects that Nasrâbâdî’s readers knew what the phrase connoted, or at least he expected they did. Poets travelled to India from all parts of Iran: they left from Isfahan, Mashad, Kashan, Qum, Tehran, Shiraz, Hamadan, Mazandaran, and Tabriz. The calculus that more riches could be gained by going to India rather than remaining on Iranian soil was certainly correct. Patronage opportunities for poets under the Mughals far outweighed similar prospects in Safavid Iran. In this regard the Safavid state did have an impact on poets, not because the court shunned poetry altogether but rather because it did not offer as many patronage opportunities as did the Mughal court. In Safavid Iran competition for patronage was high while opportunities for patronage in Mughal India were far more bountiful. Furthermore, India may have been especially attractive for poets who did not possess the skill-sets to compose both “religious” and “secular” poetry.

The Mughal court maintained an interest in recruiting a large number of poets, in a somewhat ornamental fashion.²⁸ ‘Abd al-Qâdir Badâ’ûnî (d. ca. 1615), the famous scholar and historian situated at Akbar’s court, notes that 170 poets writing in Persian flourished during Akbar’s half-century reign (r. 1556-1605)—fifty-nine of them having lived at the court.²⁹ Poetic experience in India among poets coming from Iran was varied. Some found fame in the Mughal courts. Others received patronage from a particular member of the Mughal elite, as did Mîr Raff’

²⁷ Dale, “A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness,” 204. The association of India with “darkness” or “blackness” is not restricted to the lines of poetry by Mâzandarânî. The poet Jâmî, for example, also made the association when advising one of his colleagues to forego traveling to the “black land of India” in search of patronage. See: ‘Abd al-Vâsi’ Bâkharzî, *Maqâmât-i Jâmî*, ed. Najîb Mâyil Haravî (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1371/1992), 217.

²⁸ Ahmad, “Safavid Poets and India,” and Tamîmdârî, “Adabîyât-i ‘asr-i Safavî,” 90.

²⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Literatures of India* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), 26.

Dastûr, who was in the service of Âsaf Khân.³⁰ The poets Ulfatî and Mulla Sâlik Yazdî found employment in the service of Abdullah Qutb Shâh (r. 1626-1672) in the Deccan.³¹

The travel of Persian poets was not restricted to those traveling to India or those traveling from Iran. The second half of the fifteenth century witnessed the precedent of poets traveling to Istanbul for the sake of patronage by Sultan Muhammad the Conqueror, who sought to make his capital a center of literary and learning.³² A high level of cultural and literary interchange took place between Central Asia and India as well. For the most part, this facet of inter-regional travel and interchange primarily saw poets traveling from Central Asia to Mughal India.³³

For the Iranian poets coming to India, the connections and relationships they developed with poets who had undergone similar experiences were important. Like other professionals coming to India, these poets most certainly had an available network of other immigrants or similarly inclined professionals, at the court or elsewhere. Mulla Rawnaqî, for example, was in a poetic assembly with Tâlib, Kalîm and others.³⁴ Shaykh Shâh Nâzar was also in communication with the likes of Tâlib and Kalîm.³⁵ While in India, Mîr Faghfûr found poetic companionship with Mulla Nâdim and Muhammad Qulî Salîm.³⁶ Tâib Tafrishî maintained a poetic assembly with Mulla Faraj Allah.³⁷

Not all poets from Iran found fame in the manner of a Tâlib, Kalîm, or ‘Urfî. Nor did poets simply arrive to stay in India for their entire lives. Some went to India, then moved on for varying periods of time to Mecca, Iran, or elsewhere, before heading back to India to remain for good. Akhtarî Yazdî returned to Iran after his patron in India, Mîr Jumlah Sharistânî, died, but later returned.³⁸ Others travelled to India only to return to Iran for the rest of their lives. The reasons for poets’ returns are varied or unclear. Some returned to their place of birth; others made their way to Isfahan and became involved (or re-involved) with poetic activities there. Mîrzâ Razî Dânish had a long career in India in the service of Shâh Jahân (r. 1627-1658) and Qutb Shâh in the Deccan, but later went back to Iran.³⁹ Mulla Nâdim, who went to India and was a companion with a few other Iranian poets there (as seen above) returned to Isfahan, where he

³⁰ Nasrâbâdî, *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, 270.

³¹ Ibid. 326 and 329.

³² See volume two of E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (Cambridge: Published and distributed by the Trustees of the “E.J.W. Gibb Memorial,” 1963-1984).

³³ See chapter four of Richard C. Foltz, *Mughal India and Central Asia* (Karachi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³⁴ Nasrâbâdî, *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, 257.

³⁵ Ibid. 277.

³⁶ Ibid. 243.

³⁷ Ibid. 260.

³⁸ Ibid. 285.

³⁹ Ibid. 252-253.

remained until his death. Following his return to Isfahan, Mulla Nâdim's poetic activities continued as he once again maintained companionship with a great many versifiers (*mihrabâni bisyârî bih-mawzûnân kardah*).⁴⁰ Likewise Ulfatî, who was in the service of Abdullah Qutb Shâh, returned to Isfahan later in life and resumed participation in the coffeehouse culture.⁴¹ Kâmî Sabzivârî, who appears to have been originally from Khurasan, went to India only to return to Mashad on account of having "not liked the state of that country" (*az vaz'-i ân vilâyat khushish nayâmadah*).⁴² Likewise, all we hear in regards to 'Âmilâ, who hailed from Balkh, is that he went to India, but then soon moved on to Isfahan and then Shiraz.⁴³ Munsif, spent a short time in India, only to return to his homeland (*vatan*), perhaps for commercial interests (*madârish az tijârat mi-guzarad*).⁴⁴ These examples reveal the multiplicity of practices and geographic fluidity of the time, not solely defined by poets moving in a unidirectional manner (from Iran to India) and staying there for the rest of their lives. Some poets did not go to India at all, and the practice of poets traveling to India does not detract from the vibrancy of poetic literary culture in Safavid lands, especially in Isfahan's coffeehouses. Indeed the two are not mutually exclusive.

Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî certainly confirms the extensive practice of poets going to India. It also provides accounts of a number of poets who remained in all corners of Iran, living productive professional lives and engaging in its poetic climate. Some remained in the city of their birth, attaching themselves to a particular patron. Some never left Isfahan (if that happened to be their home), enjoying the vitality of the city's literary culture. Others made their way to Isfahan to take part in this culture. Âqâ Musayyab, for example, a cloth-maker (*chit-garî*) from Kashan, speaks of going to Isfahan "with the intention of keeping the company of versifiers" (*bih-qasd-i idrâk-i suhbat-i mawzûnân bih Isfahân âmadah*).⁴⁵ In addition to the coffeehouses, many different *anjumans* (sing. society) existed in Isfahan, enabling aspiring poets to sharpen their poetic talents and knowledge by attaching themselves to an instructor. The above-mentioned Hakîm Shifâ'î Isfahânî, a stalwart of Isfahan's literary cultural life during this time, had a circle of poets around him and served as an instructor to such poets as Fazalî Charpâdqâni,⁴⁶ Amîr Bayg Qassâb,⁴⁷ and Tab'î Qazvînî,⁴⁸ to name a few.

Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî is a testament to the diversity of experiences, life narratives, professions, and geography of poets during the Safavid-Mughal period. The table of contents of *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, divided according to both geography and according to title/profession,

⁴⁰ Ibid. 240.

⁴¹ Ibid. 326.

⁴² Ibid. 281.

⁴³ Ibid. 410.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 251.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 369.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 263.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 419.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 304.

demonstrates the diversity of poetic experience during this time. The fact that Nasrâbâdî situated himself in Isfahan, frequenting the coffeehouses to solicit sources, meet poets, and hear recounted tales and reports points to the vibrancy of literary culture during Safavid times in that city. Equally instructive is the fact that Nasrâbâdî composed his work outside the court, rather than at the court itself.

During Safavid times, particularly in Isfahan, one sees a shift in the center of poetry from the court to elsewhere in society. This does not necessarily affirm that the Safavid state shunned poetry. For many poets (and others) who did not go to India, poetry was a social activity that found an outlet among the urban classes and bazaar.⁴⁹ Furthermore, many poets of this period who frequented the coffeehouses were not necessarily poets by trade, but had another “daytime” profession as well, whether cloth-maker, merchant, butcher, tentmaker, money-lender, goldsmith, glass-maker, or otherwise. In fact, one of the major trends in poetry during the Safavid period is that many poets arose from the workers and craftsmen.⁵⁰

The “Realist School,” Urban Poets, and a “Simpler Speech”

The unwarranted assumption that the Safavid dynasty constricted or opposed poetic activities has led to a social and literary narrative built on two threads to be challenged: that the poetry of the era was dominated by poets leaving Safavid Iran for India; and, as a result, the overwhelming poetic phenomenon of the period to be assessed is the growth, prevalence, and dominance of the style of poetry found there, namely, the so-called “Indian Style.” If this perspective is accurate, then the emergence of the Isfahânî Circle of poets and the *bâzgasht* movement could rightly be seen as predicated on a distaste for an “Indian” style of poetry. The previous section provided evidence that not all poets left Safavid Iran for India, but instead stayed put and took part in the lively poetic culture of Isfahan and elsewhere. This section shifts the discussion to that of a particular poetic style in Safavid lands, lending further contextual evidence for the emergence of the Isfahânî Circle later. It is the existence of this often forgotten literary style, *maktab-i vuqû‘* (realist school), that would help pave the way for the Isfahânî Circle of poets in post-Safavid times and their adherence to a “simpler style.”

The “realist school,” founded in the first quarter of the tenth/sixteenth century, is a poetic style examining “anew the amatory origins of the *ghazal*” and one that reduced “the idealization of the beloved in the interest of depicting the full range of psychological negotiations of

⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Husayn Zarrînkûb, *Naqd-i adabî: justujû dar usûl va ravish-hâ va mabâhis-i naqqâdi ba barrasî dar Târikh-i naqd va naqqâdân*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Amîr Kabîr, 1369/1990), 255. Ahmad Khatami makes a similar argument, as do other literary historians. See: Ahmad Khatami, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dûrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî* (Tehran: Ârmân, 1374/1995-1996), 186-187.

⁵⁰ M. Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht*, 10-11. While the emphasis here is on Safavid Isfahan, it is worth noting that the practice of artists and merchants composing poetry was not restricted to that locale. Rather, the practice can equally be witnessed in Herat during the time of the poet Jâmî (d. 1492) and later. Thus the practice may be seen as part of a larger trend. For the poetry of the craftsmen in Central Asia, see: Jan Rypka, et al., *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968), 508.

mundane love.”⁵¹ The appearance of *maktab-i vuqû‘* is “an instance when poets seem to have foregone their dealings with difficult mannerisms and enigmatic expressions to search for true human emotions and realistic human reactions. It took on the realities of existence without the buffer-zone of persistence on canonical methods of expression that in many instances lacked emotional intelligence and logic.”⁵² Stylistically it sought to express love and the lover in “a simple unvarnished poetry, absent of flowery language and hyperbole.”⁵³ Neither completely novel in its desire to speak of “real-world” implications of love, nor completely absent of the image of the idealized lover and its mystic undercurrents, the style nonetheless situates the topics of love, lovers, and amorous relationships in more earthly, rather than ethereal, contexts. In this regard poets sought to portray the relationships between “all too-human lovers” and their “mood swings, tantrums, evasions and elations.”⁵⁴

Ahmad Gulchîn-i Ma‘ânî in *Maktab-i vuqû‘ dar shi‘r-i Fârsî* (*The Realist School in Persian Poetry*) traces the advent of *maktab-i vuqû‘* to poets imitating the style of Bâbâ Fighânî, increasing the use of “realist” language in descriptions of “the lover” in the *ghazal*. The poets Lisânî Shîrâzî (d. 941-2/1535) and Sharaf Jahân Qazvînî (d. 968/1560-1) exemplify this approach. In his *Tazkirah-yi ‘arafât al-‘âshiqîn va ‘arasât al-‘arifîn*, Taqî al-Dîn Awhadî, for example, refers to Lisânî as one who pursues a “renewed style” (*ravish-i mujaddad*) and one that helped influence other major poets of the “realist school” like Muhtasham Kâshânî (d. 1588), Zamîrî Isfahânî (d. 973/1566), and Vahshî Baqfî (d. 991/1583).⁵⁵ Sharaf Jahân Qazvînî, also according to Awhadî, was responsible for the creation and invention of the “realist method” in the *ghazal* (*tarz-i vuqû‘ dar ghazal âfarîdah va ikhtirâ‘-i û ast*).⁵⁶ It is worth noting too that the “realist style,” as seen in the preceding quote by Awhadî, was indeed referred to as a style attached to a “realist method” (*tarz-i vuqû‘*), or elsewhere a “realist language” (*zabân-i vuqû‘*), in the *tazkirahs* of the time.⁵⁷

Ironically the experience of Muhtasham Kâshânî, an exemplar of the “realist style,” with the Safavid monarch Tahmasp has contributed to the narrative of the court’s disinterest in poetry and to the “realist style” being largely forgotten. Paul Losensky observes that the circumstances surrounding Kâshânî’s composition of a eulogy for Imam Husayn “ha[ve] been forced into the service of literary historians to argue that the sanctimonious and pietistic character of Shâh

⁵¹ Paul Losensky, “Vahshî Bâfqî,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2004, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/vahshi-bafqi> (accessed 12 December 2013).

⁵² Alireza Korangy, “*Yayan*: The Fifteenth Century, the Proto-thematic and the Proto-rhetorical ‘Split Second’ before the *Maktab-i Vuqû‘*,” transcript of talk presented at a one day workshop at the University of Exeter Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies entitled “Classical Persian Poetry and Poets: The Timurid and Türkmen Periods” Exeter, England (March 30, 2013): 4.

⁵³ Ahmad Gulchîn-i Ma‘ânî, *Maktab-i vuqû‘ dar shi‘r-i Fârsî* (Tehran: Bunyâd-i Farhang-i Iran, 1348/1970), 1.

⁵⁴ Paul Losensky, “Poetic and Eros in Early Modern Persia: *The Lovers’ Confection* and *The Glorious Epistle* by Muhtasham Kâshânî,” *Iranian Studies* 42.5 (2009): 749.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Gulchîn-i Ma‘ânî, *Maktab-i vuqû‘ dar shi‘r-i Fârsî*, 391.

⁵⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.* 206.

⁵⁷ Also see Gulchîn-i Ma‘ânî, *Maktab-i vuqû‘ dar shi‘r-i Fârsî*, 4.

Tahmasp quashed poetic creativity and initiative.”⁵⁸ Losensky traces this misguided perception to a famous anecdote found in Iskandar Bayg Munshi’s *Târikh-i ‘Âlamârâ-yi ‘Abbâsî* (*The World-Adorning History of ‘Abbâs*). In this story, Shâh Tahmasp rejected a panegyric ode Kâshânî composed in his honor and instead asked the poet to “look first for his reward to the holy spirits of the Imams, and after that to hope for a reward from me.”⁵⁹ When Kâshânî responded by composing his famous eulogy for Imam Husayn, known as *davâzdah-band* or *Karbalâ-nâmah*, and received a handsome reward for it, many poets took it as a cue to follow suit. But Kâshânî’s poetic output extended beyond the *Karbalâ-nâmah*, continuing to feature “all too human” lovers, relationships, and stylistic tropes such as *vâsûkht* (vindictive renunciation [of lovers]). These works “not only show that Muhtasham’s talents extend far beyond the field of devotional poetry, but also indicate the diversity and dynamism of literary life in the early Safavid period.”⁶⁰

Muhtasham was not alone in pursuit of this “realist style,” of course. Other notable poets, such as the aforementioned Lisânî Shîrâzî, Sharaf Jahân Qazvîni, and Vahshî, practiced this style of poetry, which represents a coherent trend in Safavid era poetics. Gulchîn-i Ma’ânî lists about fifty poets believed to have exemplified elements of this school. Many were not confined to Isfahan or even elsewhere in Safavid lands but saw their poetic careers flourish in India. Some of these poets returned to Iran at a later time.

The “realist” style of poetry did not supplant other styles in Safavid lands or elsewhere, nor did it overshadow the pietism of the Safavid court. Nonetheless, the existence of this neglected poetic trend instead exposes a blind spot in the literary-historical narrative of Safavid times.⁶¹ The existence of these “realist school” poets complicates understandings of the poetic environment and output in Safavid times. Their work indicates the need for a more encompassing framework for understanding the rise of the Isfahânî Circle and the *bâzgasht* movement.

The connection between the “realist poets” and the Isfahânî Circle is not a matter of the latter simply imitating certain defining features of the *maktab-i vuqû’* style, such as expressions of “real-world” love. Rather, the existence of the “realist school” points to the manner in which poetry was buttressed by social elements, coalescing to nurture an environment conducive to the emergence of the Isfahânî Circle. The presence of *matkab-i vuqû’*, particularly in Isfahan, helped foster an environment allowing everyday and simple speech to gain traction among the growing class of urban poets composing verse outside of the courts. The connective thread lies between the ability of poets like Vahshî “to turn the rhythms and language of everyday speech into a precise and elegant medium for capturing a wide range of emotions,”⁶² and the broader class of

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Iskandar Bayg Munshî, *History of Shâh ‘Abbas the Great (Târik-e ‘âlamârâ-ye ‘Abbâsî)* trans. by Roger M. Savory (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), vol. 1, 274. As quoted in Losensky “Poetic and Eros in Early Modern Persia,” 748.

⁶⁰ Losensky “Poetic and Eros in Early Modern Persia,” 761.

⁶¹ Ibid. 748.

⁶² Losensky, “Vahshî Bâfqî.”

poets composing poetry on a popular level, equally reliant on simple speech and the expression of everyday topics.

Shams Langarûdî attributes the surge in poetic activity outside the Safavid court to “the development and spreading of urbanization and the relative welfare of the middle class in comparison to previous periods.”⁶³ This, in turn, led to increased participation among urban classes composing poetry and caused what Shams Langarûdî terms the “bazaarization” of the ‘Irâqî School and its “masters,” like Sa‘dî and Hâfiz. Well-known and minor poets became more interested in presenting everyday love and lovers, more relevant to their surroundings, rather than presenting an image of an archetypal, ephemeral, and idealized beloved. They did so through a simpler style of poetry tied to the language of classical poets, such as Hâfiz and Nizâmî.⁶⁴ Langarûdî includes Zamîrî Isfahânî (d. 973/1566), Vahshî Bâfqî (d. 991/1583), and Nazîrî Nîshâpûrî (d. ca. 1612-1614) among renowned practitioners of this style.⁶⁵

Shams Langarûdî’s sweeping conclusion that social circumstances, above all else, resulted in the “realist style” is challenged by some scholars hesitant to rely on this explanation alone. Their preference is to explain origins of the “realist style” in relation to the development and themes of the lyric. Nonetheless, the growth of poetic composition among the urban classes did help foster an environment that made simple and everyday speech through imitation of the masters a more widely practiced and discernible trend. The fact that poets of Safavid Isfahan, whether well-known practitioners of *maktab-i vuqû’* or those among the urban classes, were using a simpler poetic style that built on the work of classical masters is crucial to rise of the Isfahânî Circle. It helps in understanding the poetry of those like Mushtâq and others that sought to “return” to the classical styles without presuming that their framework was one guided wholly by rejection of *sabk-i Hindî*. Even ‘Abd al-Husayn Zarrînkûb, who argues that the involvement of urban classes in Safavid poetry led to a *disavowal* of classical styles, acknowledges that poetry in imitation of the old masters did not discontinue altogether.⁶⁶ *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî* likewise describes other poets inclined to follow classic poetic styles.⁶⁷

To draw a positive link between the Isfahânî Circle of *bâzgasht* poets and those who relied on simpler speech and imitation of the masters is not mere speculation. A connection existed between poets of *maktab-i vuqû’* and some of the Isfahânî Circle poets whose activities were recorded by the historian ‘Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî. Mushtâq Isfahânî “built upon the method of Zamîrî and Nazîrî,” two exemplars of the *maktab-i vuqû’* style, creating a lineage connecting poetic practices between Safavid and post-Safavid times.⁶⁸ Many early *bâzgasht* poets studied Nazîrî’s *divân* closely.⁶⁹ Most important is that the poetry of Zamîrî and Nazîrî

⁶³ Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht*, 9.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 18-21.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 21-35.

⁶⁶ ‘Abd al-Husayn Zarrînkûb, *Naqd-i adabî*, vol. 2, 254-257.

⁶⁷ For example see Nasrâbâdî, *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî*, 257, 379, and 404.

⁶⁸ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 213-214.

⁶⁹ Shams Langarûdî, *Maktab-i bâzgasht*, 32-33.

clearly reflect a style guided by imitation of the masters. According to Abu al-Qâsim ibn Abî Hâmid Kâzarûnî in *Sullam al-samâvât (Ladder of the Heavens)*, Zamîrî not only “followed” the *dîvân* of Bâbâ Fighânî but also the *dîvâns* of many of the ancients (*bisyârî az dîvân-hâ-yi mutaqqaddimîn-râ tatabbu‘ nimûd*).⁷⁰ Nazîrî, whose pen name implies a penchant for responding to earlier poems in the same meter and rhyme scheme (*nazîrah-gû‘î*), modeled his *qasîdahs* after Anvarî and Khâqânî and his *ghazals* after Bâbâ Fighânî, Sa‘dî, and Hâfîz.⁷¹

Isfahan under the Safavids was a vibrant and diverse place for the composition of poetry. Much as the city was regarded as a center for other arts and activities, so too was it a center for poetry. Diverse poetic experiences existed in Safavid Iran and Isfahan as did different poetic styles. This history and image of Safavid Isfahan and its poetic climate forms the backdrop of the Isfahânî Circle’s arrival and elucidates some of the continuities between the Safavid and post-Safavid period.

Part Two: Mushtâq, His Literary Society, and the Isfahânî Circle of Poets

Mushtâq-i Isfahânî

Any story detailing the formation and germination of the *bâzgasht* movement naturally begins with the poet Sayyid ‘Alî Mushtâq Isfahânî. Mushtâq’s role at the head of the *bâzgasht* movement stems from a literary society he established in Isfahan, known as *anjuman-i adabî-i Mushtâq*. Many of the poets who attended this society would later become known as his students and considered the early pioneers of the *bâzgasht* movement in their own right. Husayn Makkî’s introduction to Mushtâq’s *dîvân* highlights the rich collection of tributes to Mushtâq offered by nineteenth and twentieth century writers affirming his importance.⁷² Seeing these statements, more than one hundred years removed from the original events, one can appreciate the lasting prominence accorded to Mushtâq and his literary society.

Few details are known of Mushtâq’s life outside of his perceived contributions to the nascent *bâzgasht* movement and his role as mentor and teacher to other poets of the period. He was born in Isfahan ca. 1101/1690 to a family of Sayyids and appears to have spent his entire life in that city. He had a propensity and interest in poetry from childhood and preferred the composition of *ghazals* and *ruba‘îs* above other poetic forms.⁷³ He most likely died in 1171/1757-8, though he may have died as early as 1165/1751 or 1167/1753.

Chapter One detailed how Zand and Qajar-era authors considered Mushtâq the head of a literary society that sought a return to classical modes of Persian poetry. Âzar noted his role in

⁷⁰ Quoted in Gulchîn-i Ma‘ânî, *Maktab-i vuqû‘ dar shi‘r-i Fârsî*, 299.

⁷¹ Paul Losensky, “Nazîrî Nishâpûrî,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2004, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/naziri-of-nishapur> (Accessed 12 December 2013).

⁷² See Husayn Makkî, introduction to *Dîvân-i ghazalîyât va qasâ‘id va rubâ‘îyât-i Mushtâq*, by Sayyid ‘Alî Mushtâq Isfahânî (Tehran: Intishârât-i ‘Ilmî, 1984), 1-10.

⁷³ Lutf ‘Alî “Âzar” Baygdilî, *Âtishkadah*, ed. Ja‘far Shâhîdî (Tehran: Mu‘assasah-yi Nashr-i Kitâb, 1337/1958), 416.

rebuilding “the structure of eloquent poetry of the old masters.”⁷⁴ Dunbulî noted that his poetry “adorned the melodies of Barbad-like minstrels,” while “his sweet songs graced the society of clever ones.”⁷⁵ Ahmad Bayg “Akhtar” in his *Tazkirah-yi Akhtar*, another Qajar-era work, states that Mushtâq deserves the name “master of poets” (*ustâd al-shu‘arâ*) and that “the renewal of the poetic methods of the ancient poets came from his perfection of taste” (*tajdîd-i qavâ’id-i sukhan-sarâ’i-i ustâdân-i mutaqaddimîn az kamâl-i salîqah-yi ust*).⁷⁶ Garrûsî perhaps best encapsulated Mushtâq’s influence, referring to Mushtâq as “the lord of the poets and master of men of letters” (*sayyid al-shu‘arâ wa ustâd al-udabâ*), noting the number of poets tied to his assembly and instruction.

Matthew Smith observes that “this perpetuation of the image of Mushtâq as a revolutionary force in Persian poetry stems as much from the widespread influence of Âzar’s *Âtishkadah* as from an appreciation of Mushtâq’s poetry itself.”⁷⁷ Smith singles out the *Âtishkadah* of Âzar as crucial for codifying the contribution of Mushtâq to the *bâzgasht* movement beyond his poetry. Nearly all the information about Mushtâq stems from *tazkirahs*, building on the information and template of the *Âtishkadah*, written by one of Mushtâq’s students, Âzar. This fact, however, should not necessarily make us question the role of Mushtâq in the early formation of the *bâzgasht* movement. That the *tazkirah* writers promoted his role and majesty so forcefully in their *tazkirahs*, while focusing little on his poetry, speaks to the unquestioning manner in which they viewed his leadership of the nascent *bâzgasht* movement.

The references to Mushtâq in the poetry of his literary circle confirms his central role in gathering poets around him and his image as a teacher of poets as presented in the *tazkirahs*. Âzar, who viewed Mushtâq as his mentor and teacher, praises him in one of his *ghazals* as such. Throughout the poem Âzar displays his admiration, recounting the way in which the master’s prowess consumed him. In the final *bayt* Âzar concludes:

Âzar, all my life, in the discipleship of Mushtâq,
I am happy that I didn’t see another master equal to his mastery.^{78*}

Hâtif Isfahânî’s elegy for Mushtâq also bears witness to Mushtâq’s esteem as teacher and master. Hâtif begins his elegy by declaring Mushtâq “king of the realm of poetry” (*khusraw-yi kishvar-i sukhan*) and “the pivot of princes who bestowed life on the form of wording with meaning”

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 214.

⁷⁶ Ahmad Bayg Akhtar, *Tazkirah-yi Akhtar*, ed. ‘Abd al-Rasûl Khayyâmpûr (Tabriz: Shirkat-i Châp-i Kitâb-i Âzarbâyjân), 168. Cited in Makkî, introduction, 5.

⁷⁷ Matthew C. Smith, “Literary Connections: Bahar’s *Sabkshenasi* and the *Bazgasht-e Adabi*,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2.2 (2009): 205.

⁷⁸ Lutf ‘Alî “Âzar” Baygdilî, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, ed. Hasan Sâdât-Nâsirî, Ghulâm Husayn Baygdilî (Tehran: Jâvidân, 1366/1987), 225 (Ghazal #125).

* See Appendix 1.4

(*qutb-i sâdât ân kih mî-bakhshîd // qâlib-i lafz-râ bih ma'nâ jân*).⁷⁹ He then commends the splendor of Mushtâq's poetic style, not atypical in praising one's poetic prowess: his poetry is from the "sea jeweled essence," which he brings forth as if "royal pearls were being scattered;" his verses reveal the hidden mysteries of the world, serving as the foundation of *irfân* for the mystic, and the remedy of sorrow for the lover. By the pen of Mushtâq, Hâtif continues, "new brides of meaning are dragged by the hair to the bridal apartment (*jilvah-gâh*) and revealed to the world." The image of Mushtâq as master and unparalleled voice of his time then reaches its apogee. After noting the wails, lamentation, and cries from men and women, young and old in response to Mushtâq's death, Hâtif remarks:

A pity, a hundred pities for that ornament of [his] age,
A pity, a hundred pities for that phoenix of [his] time.^{80*}

The influence attributed to Mushtâq as the teacher *par excellence* of other *bâzgasht* poets is perhaps best encapsulated by a short *rubâ'î* by Mulla Husayn "Rafîq" Isfahânî. Following Mushtâq's death, it was Âzar, Hâtif, and Âqâ Muhammad Taqî "Sahbâ" (three members of his circle) who collected and arranged Mushtâq's *dîvân*. So it is within this context that Rafîq, in jest according to Dunbulî, presented his companions with the following *rubâ'î*, intimating that now that the master has passed on, his students will seemingly assume his mantle, perhaps a little too eagerly:

When Mushtâq journeyed from this world,
After his death Hâtif, Sahbâ, and Âzar
Divided up his poetry among themselves,
They gave him a share, but smaller.⁸¹

Membership and Connections

The Zand and Qajar era *tazkirahs*, such as Âzar's *Âtishkadah*, Dunbulî's *Tajribat al-ahrâr va tasliyat al-abrâr*, and Hidâyat's *Majma' al-fusahâ* provide evidence for establishing the connections among individual poets that would later become known as the founders of the *bâzgasht* movement. In writing about a Central Asian *tazkirah* from the Safavid period, Robert McChesney commented that while the goal of *tazkirahs* is often "to explain in a formal and conventional way individual creativity rather than social relations of individuals and groups," they nonetheless offer a great deal of information regarding the social, cultural, and economic circumstances of the time. "In the attempt to convey the creative factors and impulses of the

⁷⁹ Sayyid Ahmad Hâtif, *Dîvân-i Hâtif Isfahânî*, ed. Mahmûd Shâhrukhî, Muhammad 'Alîdûst (Tehran: Intishârât-i Mishkât; Daftar-i Tahqîq va Nashr-i Bahârân, 1371/1992), 219-220.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 220.

* See Appendix 1.5

⁸¹ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 216.

individual's life," he continues, "his relations with others and the part he may have played in society had necessarily to be accounted for."⁸² The *tazkirahs* of the Zand and Qajar periods do just that, identifying the relationships and connections among poets later known as the founders of the *bâzgasht* movement. They provide a roster of the poets associated with Mushtâq's literary society, the affiliations among poets after Mushtâq's death, and the lineages of student-instructor relationships that stretch from the movement's early days in the mid-to-late eighteenth century to poets located at the Qajar court of Fath 'Alî Shâh (r. 1798-1834) later on.

While many of these poets were members of what became known as "Mushtâq's literary society," quite a few important poets were not. Instead their poetic connections reached beyond Mushtâq's personality and instruction. For this reason, the grouping of poets that would become known as the founders of the *bâzgasht* movement, whose associations reached beyond the scope of Mushtâq's literary society, are best described as the Isfahânî Circle.

As a student of Mushtâq, Âzar (1134/1722-1195/1781) in his *Âtishkadah* delineates many of the poets affiliated with Mushtâq and his literary society. Âzar cites in particular his friendship with Sahbâ⁸³ (d. 1191/1777), who like him was one of Mushtâq's early disciples, as well as his friendship with Hâtif⁸⁴ (ca. 1125/1713-1198/1784). Sahbâ owes his pen name to Mushtâq, and it was Âzar, Sahbâ, and Hâtif who would later organize Mushtâq's poetry into a *dîvân* after his death.⁸⁵ Among this circle of Isfahânî poets attached to Mushtâq was Âqâ Muhammad "'Âshiq" Isfahânî (d. ca. 1181/1767). 'Âshiq, who was a tailor by profession, appears to have spent most of his life in Isfahan. He became best known among contemporaries for his heartfelt *ghazals* as well as his crestfallen and despondent nature during their gatherings.⁸⁶

Another poet mentioned in connection with this early cohort attached to Mushtâq was Rafîq Isfahânî (d. 1226/1811), a vegetable seller from Isfahan, who became acquainted with Mushtâq, 'Âshiq, and Âzar in his youth. Rafîq's association with such poets allowed him to "acquire an appreciation of finer points, subject versification and poetry recitation" (*tarz-i nukta-dânî u mazmûn-bandî u shî'r-khânî*).⁸⁷ In the company of Sahbâ, Rafîq would leave Isfahan and travel to Shiraz in 1188/1775 to continue his poetic activities after conditions in Isfahan became inhospitable.⁸⁸ Rizâ Qulî Khân Hidâyat further notes of Rafîq's association with Âzar and Hâtif.⁸⁹

⁸² Robert D. McChesney, "The Anthology of Poets: *Muzzakir al-Ashab* as a Source for the History of Seventeenth-Century Central Asia," in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 58.

⁸³ Âzar, *Âtishkadah*, 402. Dunbulî also mentions the relationship between Sahbâ and Âzar. See Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 424.

⁸⁴ Âzar, *Âtishkadah*, 423.

⁸⁵ Hidâyat, *Majma' al-fusahâ*, vol. 2, part 2, 699.

⁸⁶ Âzar, *Âtishkadah*, 404; Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 239-248.

⁸⁷ 'Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî, *Nigâristân-i Dârâ*, ed. A. Khayyâmpûr (Tabriz: Mahall-i Furûsh; Kitâbfurûshî-i Tehran, 1963), 196.

⁸⁸ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 440.

⁸⁹ Hidâyat, *Majma' al-fusahâ*, vol. 2, part 1, 320.

Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Bâqî “Tabîb” Isfahânî (d. 1171-1172/1758-1759) is another member of Mushtâq’s literary circle. Tabîb provided medical services to Nâdir Shâh, served as the mayor (*kalântar*) of Isfahan for a short time (some time in the mid-12th/18th century after Nâdir Shâh’s death), and was a poet in his own right.⁹⁰ He hailed from a prestigious Isfahânî family, and his younger brother, Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb, played a crucial role in the *bâzgasht* movement after the end of Mushtâq’s literary society. Âzar in his *Âtishkadah* offers a positive opinion of Tabîb, noting that in addition to producing a *dîvân* of poetry “he was not lacking in excellence” and followed the poetry of the masters.⁹¹ He also produced a *masnavî* on *Mahmud va Ayâz*, the famous tale of the relationship between Mahmud of Ghazna and one of his slaves.⁹² Tabîb participated in Mushtâq’s literary society and knew many of the major poets, such as ‘Âshiq, Âzar, Sahbâ, Hâtîf, Rafîq, Sayyid Muhammad “Shu‘lah,” and Mîrzâ Muhammad Nasîr “Tabîb” Isfahânî (on the latter two, see below).⁹³ Tabîb does not refer to many of his contemporaries in his *ghazals*, but does have a reference to Mushtâq.⁹⁴ It is also of note that Nashât Isfahânî, a crucial figure in the later *bâzgasht* movement, was related to Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Bâqî and Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb.⁹⁵

While the activities of Nashât’s literary society and his later activities at the Qajar court fall outside of the scope of this study, it is nonetheless important to recognize how one particular family remained connected to the evolutionary growth of the *bâzgasht* movement. Nashât Isfahânî first rose to prominence by convening a literary society in Isfahan in early Qajar times. Like the literary societies of Mushtâq and the larger Isfahânî Circle that preceded it, Nashât’s gathering was dedicated to imitating the style of the ancients. Nashât attracted the notice of Fath ‘Alî Shâh in Isfahan and followed the future monarch to Tehran when he attained the throne. Nashât rose to the position of chief letter writer and served the court in a variety of other functionary roles.⁹⁶ He also continued to be an avid supporter of the Qajar ruler’s promotion of *bâzgasht* poets. In his own poetry he imitated the style of Hâfîz and wrote the introduction to Sabâ’s famous *Shâhanshâhnâmah*.⁹⁷

The most notable poet of the early group of *bâzgasht* poets who cannot definitively be associated with Mushtâq’s literary society is Sulaymân “Sabâhî” Bîdgulî (d. 1207/1793), even though he maintained close bonds with many poets of Mushtâq’s circle. His exact date of birth is

⁹⁰ Mujtaba Burzâbâdî Farâhânî, introduction to ‘Abd al-Bâqî Tabîb Isfahânî, *Dîvân-i Tabîb Isfahânî*, ed. Mujtaba Burzâbâdî Farâhânî (Tehran: Intishârât-i Sanâ‘î, 199-?), 9.

⁹¹ Farâhânî, introduction to *Dîvân-i Tabîb Isfahânî*, 4.

⁹² Mihr al-Zamân Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand* (Isfahan: Sâzmân-i Farhangî Tafrîhî-i Shâhirdârî-i Isfahan, 1387/2009), 186.

⁹³ Farâhânî, introduction *Dîvân-i Tabîb Isfahânî*, 16.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 11.

⁹⁶ Khatami, *Pizhûhishî dar nasr va nazm-i dawrah-yi bâzgasht-i adabî*, 23-24.

⁹⁷ Âryanpûr, *Az Sabâ tâ Nîmâ*, 29.

unknown. There is no precise reference that he participated in the literary society of Mushtâq or even met Mushtâq at any point during his life. It is perhaps revealing that while Sabâhî composed many elegies of his companions, having outlived most of them, he never composed one of Mushtâq. At some point, however, whether in Isfahan or his birthplace of Kashan, he met Âzar and Hâtif and those three became lifelong friends. Âzar mentions the vast amount of time spent in Sabâhî's company and it is Âzar whom Sabâhî credits for providing his pen name.⁹⁸

Dunbulî specifically lists the triumvirate of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî as Mushtâq's heirs in overthrowing the method of poetry whose meanings were masked with "frigid metaphors and bad similes," the first two having attended his literary society.⁹⁹ The strong bonds of friendship and close companionship between Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî are well recorded, both in *tazkirahs* and their poetry.¹⁰⁰ Their poetry, often in correspondence with one another, offers some of the best evidence of how these poets viewed themselves and their surroundings. Following the deaths of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sahbâ, Dunbulî in *Tajribat al-ahrâr va tasliyat al-abrâr* wrote that it became Sabâhî's turn to rise to prominence. From the "noble poets of the period he [Sabâhî] seized the ball with the polo-stick of eloquent rare speech" (*az fuhûl-i sukhanvarân-i 'ahd bih-chûgân-i balâghat gû-yi nâdirah gû'î rubûdah.*)¹⁰¹ Sabâhî, having survived the longest among this group of poets, wrote numerous elegies for many of his companions, including Âzar, Hâtif, 'Âshiq, and Sahbâ. Sabâhî also is credited for establishing an *anjuman* in Shiraz, frequented by members of Mushtâq's literary society, such as Rafiq and Sahbâ, some time in the last quarter of the twelfth/eighteenth century, but the veracity of this claim is questionable.¹⁰²

In addition to Mushtâq's teacher-student relationships with many members of his literary society, similar relationships developed among the Isfahânî Circle in the eighteenth century and among *bâzgasht* poets in the nineteenth century. Many great poets of the nineteenth century and affiliated with the Qajar court (e.g. Nashât, Sabâ, and Mijmar Isfahânî) were students of earlier eighteenth century *bâzgasht* poets.¹⁰³ Perhaps the most famous relationship connecting the Isfahânî Circle to the *bâzgasht* poets of the Qajar court was that between Sabâhî and his pupil Sabâ, who would later become the poet laureate of the Qajar monarch Fath 'Alî Shâh in Tehran.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Âzar, *Âtishkadah*, 388.

⁹⁹ See 'Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî *Hadâ'iq al-udabâ*, quoted in: Ahmad Gulchîn Ma'ânî, *Târîkh-i tazkirah-hâ-yi Fârsî*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Intishârât-i Kitabhânah-yi Sanâ'î, 1363/1984-5), 596.

¹⁰⁰ Also see: Hâtif, *Dîvân-i Hâtif* (Shâhrukhî ed.), 21.

¹⁰¹ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 373.

¹⁰² Hasan Imdâd, *Anjuman-hâ-yi adabî-i Shîrâz: az avâkhir-i qarn-i dahum tâ imrûz* (Shiraz: Navîd-i Shîrâz, 1388/2008-9), 47.

¹⁰³ Sa'îd Nafisî, introduction to Muhammad 'Âshiq Isfahânî, *Dîvân-i 'Âshiq Isfahânî*, ed. M. Darvîsh (Tehran: Sâzman-i Intishârât-i Jâvidân, 1343/1964), 7.

¹⁰⁴ It was also Sabâhî who provided Sabâ with his pen name. For an example of a poem by Sabâ in which he praises his teacher Sabâhî, see: H. Partaw Bayzâ'î, introduction to Sulaymân Sabâhî Bîdgulî Kâshânî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî Bîdgulî*, ed. H. Partaw Bayzâ'î; 'Abbâs Kaymanish "Mushfiq Kâshânî" (Tehran: Kitâbfurûshî Zavvâr, 1338/1959), 10-13.

Two other poets among this early cohort deserve mention: Sayyid Muhammad “Shu‘lah” (d. 1138/1725) and Mîrzâ Muhammad Nasîr “Tabîb” Isfahânî (d. 1191/1771).¹⁰⁵ While they cannot be tied definitely to Mushtâq’s literary society, both were pivotal members of the Isfahânî Circle. This conclusion is verified through the connections detailed in *tazkirahs* of the time and the reverence with which they were treated in the poetry of the circle’s members.¹⁰⁶ For example, Âzar said of Shu‘lah: “no person among the moderns was more acquainted with the method of the esteemed eloquent ancients” (*az muta’akhhirîn kasî az sayyid-i mushârun ilayhî bi-tarîqah-yi i’zâm-i fusahâ-yi mutaqaddimîn âshnâ-tar na-bûdah*).¹⁰⁷ Dunbulî in his *Nigârîstân-i dârâ* likewise treats Shu‘lah with reverence, referring to him as one of the “old contemporaries” (*az qudamâ-yi mu’âsirîn*). This term likely denotes a connection between Shu‘lah and Mushtâq (either personally or poetically), since the latter was “elder” (both in age and esteem) in the eyes of the Isfahânî circle.¹⁰⁸ Shu‘lah died in 1138/1725, when Mushtâq was most likely in his mid-thirties, so it is quite likely they were acquainted.¹⁰⁹

Mîrzâ Muhammad Nasîr “Tabîb” Isfahânî also can be connected to members of the Isfahânî Circle either through instruction or acclaim. A physician by profession, Nasîr “Tabîb” accompanied Karîm Khân from Isfahan to Shiraz and became the ruler’s special physician.¹¹⁰ Prior to leaving for Shiraz, however, Nasîr Tabîb instructed Hâtif in medicine and philosophy in Isfahan. Âzar displayed his admiration for Nasîr Tabîb in several poems, praising his exceptional knowledge of poetry, philosophy, and medicine. One of the poems is written in the same meter and rhyme scheme of Rûdakî’s famous poem in praise of Bukhara.¹¹¹

The connections among the Isfahânî Circle of poets and the esteem with which they regarded one another are not merely a matter of self-promotion. The example of Mir ‘Abd al-Latîf Khân Shûshtarî’s *Tuhfat al-‘âlam va zayl al-tuhfah* is a near-contemporary source detailing the poetic activity and works of the Isfahânî Circle, though not produced by a member of the cohort itself. *Tuhfat al-‘âlam* chronicles Shûshtarî’s travels and observations in the Persian Gulf and India. However, it also contains information on the contemporary poetic scene in Iran, offering a perspective from southern Iran on poets roughly contemporary with the author. In his brief section “in remembrance of the famous poets of ‘Irâq-i ‘Ajam who were the Imams of art and Lords of poetry,” Shûshtarî lists a mere eight poets.¹¹² Recorded neither in alphabetical order

¹⁰⁵ Nafisî, in his introduction to *Dîvân-i ‘Ashiq*, lists several poets that were involved in *bâzgasht*, or as Nafisî puts it, sought to return Persian poetry to a style of “naturalism” Nafisî, introduction, 7. However, the original sources depicting the interconnections and relationships among these poets are slightly more restrictive.

¹⁰⁶ Mahmud Shâhrukhî, for example, notes that Shu‘lah and Mîrzâ Muhammad Nasîr “Tabîb” Isfahânî, along with Mushtâq, were the founders of the *bâzgasht* movement. Hâtif, *Dîvân-i Hâtif*, (Shâhrukhî ed.), 20.

¹⁰⁷ Âzar, *Âtishkadah*, 385.

¹⁰⁸ Dunbulî, *Nigârîstân-i dârâ*, 212.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 213.

¹¹⁰ Imdâd, *Anjuman-hâ-yi adabî-i Shîrâz*, 51.

¹¹¹ Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 146-150.

¹¹² ‘Abd al-Latîf Khân Shûshtarî, *Tuhfat al-‘âlam va zayl al-tuhfah*, ed. Samad Muvahhid (Tehran: Kitâbkhânah-yi Tahûrî, 1363/1984), 192-237 (section 14).

nor according to geography, one may only speculate whether Shûshtarî organized these poets according to perceived talent, fame, or otherwise. Among the eight poets listed, Shûshtarî includes some of the most prominent names associated with the Isfahânî Circle: Mushtâq, Âzar, ‘Âshiq, Rafîq, Sabâhî, Sahbâ, and Hâtif. Shûshtarî’s opinions closely parallel those of other *tazkirahs* of the times. The poets mentioned were seen as a recognizable cohort and honored by others outside the Circle.

Comparing membership lists from different sources, one concludes that the following poets were the most influential members of the Isfahânî Circle: Sayyid Muhammad “Shu‘lah” (d. 1138/1725), Sayyid ‘Alî “Mushtâq” Isfahânî (d. 1171/1757-8), Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Bâqî “Tabîb” Isfahânî (d. 1171-2/1758-9), Âqâ Muhammad “‘Âshiq” Isfahânî (d. 1181/1767), Mîrzâ Muhammad Nasîr “Tabîb” Isfahânî (d. 1191/1777-1778), Âqâ Muhammad Taqî “Sahbâ” (d. 1191/1777-8), Âzar Baygdilî (d. 1195/1781), Sayyid Ahmad “Hâtif” Isfahânî (d. 1198/1784), Sulaymân “Sabâhî” Bîdgulî (d. 1207/1793), and Mulla Husayn “Rafîq” Isfahânî (d. 1226/1811).

Poetic Perceptions I: Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî

One must be cautious about relying too heavily on *tazkirahs* written by one member of a poetic collection or cohort for information on that cohort’s members. *Tazkirah* authors may bestow upon their friends and companions an undue amount of prestige. Matthew Smith’s observation about how *tazkirah* authors use their works to insert their comrades into the canon of Persian poetry cannot be discounted.¹¹³ Authors like Âzar and Dunbulî, as seen above, were intimate with many of the poets they recorded in their *tazkirahs*. There certainly seems to be at least an element of biased promotion within their works as they often elevate the poetical status of their friends and uncritically compare them to the great masters of Persian poetry, the latter practice often drawing the ire of modern critics.¹¹⁴ The attitudes and perceptions of *tazkirah* writers must not be accepted uncritically or serve as the sole source of information on the quality and stature of these poets. To complement these sources, one must examine the poetry written by members of the Isfahânî Circle to determine the merits of their work and reputation. Unlike *tazkirahs*, which are in the first place directed toward both a contemporary and future public audience with the expressed inherent desire to place poets within their “proper” historical context, the poetry presented below is more private in content and intent. It includes notices written for a deceased companion or letters of longing directed to a companion, meant for their own personal consumption. These examples of friendship, expressions of esteem, and comments on poetic talent adds a more intimate and forthright assessment of a fellow poet’s worth.

The examples of poetry also demonstrate how, absent a larger poetic community and patronage opportunities to shelter them, these poets directed their talents toward supporting one another, acting as both patron and poet, often in imitation of a precedent set by one of the

¹¹³ See Smith “Literary Connections.”

¹¹⁴ See for example the manner in which Dunbulî compares the poet Sabâ to many of the great masters old, among them Anvarî and Khâqânî, and seeks to carve out a place for him in the canon of Persian literary history in Dunbulî, *Nigaristân-i dârâ*, 40-46.

“masters.” By praising one another, rather than a patron, they helped create and sustain a poetic community, one both founded upon deep social bonds and heart-felt praise.

These poems reveal that poets other than Mushtâq were applauded for their exceptional talent, perceived as masters or teachers of poetry, or whose deaths were mourned as a loss for the world of poetry. The poetry of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî serves as a prism through which to view the strong social bonds, friendship, and poetical affinity connecting the Isfahânî Circle poets to one another. One of the many elegies composed by Sabâhî for Âzar contains strong praise for Âzar’s poetical talent and the impact of his death on the greater world of poetry. Âzar is the “bird of clear speech” (*murgh-i fasâhat*) with whose death “the heavens of poetry became concealed underground” (*nihân bih zîr-i zamîn gasht âsmân-i sukhan*). With his death “probity and eloquence fell away from the river of excellence.” The world is a cruel, unfortunate, and an inexplicable place, Sabâhî writes, for how else can one explain the silencing of a poet whose “proof of poetry is in the clarity of speech,” from whom “caravans of poetry” flowed forth, “day and night, in both East and West?”^{115*}:

How full of sorrow [are we] that the tradition of poetry became abrogated in this world,
What use is poetry? When the arbiter of poetry has left.¹¹⁶

The esteem with which Hâtif viewed Âzar, his poetical talents, and his critical skill as a master of poetry closely coheres with the words of Sabâhî. In a *qasidah* that begins with the arrival of a heart-ravishing and heavenly breeze, carrying the scents of musk, amber, and the beloved (soon discovered to be emanating from Âzar himself rather than the gardens of paradise), Hâtif comments on Âzar’s incisive knowledge of poetry:

Toward problematic meanings, the fingertips of your thought
act like the Prophet’s fingers toward the moon.
Toward incorrect speech, the blade of your tongue
acts like the sword of Haydar toward non-belief.^{117†}

Later, commenting more specifically on Âzar’s own ability to compose poetry, not simply his opposition to “problematic meanings” and “incorrect speech,” he offers the following *bayts*:

The modes of art consigned to your thought,
the world of poetry subdued by your pen.
From the pen between your fingers, at every moment,
an image becomes a representation, as if painted,

¹¹⁵ Sulaymân “Sabâhî” Bîdgulî Kâshânî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî-i Bîdgulî*, ed. Ahmad Karamî (Tehran: Tâlâr-i Kitâb, 1365/1987), 170-171.

* See Appendix 1.6.

¹¹⁶ Sabâhî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî-i Bîdgulî*, (Karamî ed.), 171.

¹¹⁷ Hâtif, *Dîvân-i Hâtif*, (Shâhrukhî ed.), 136.

† For the entirety of this poem, see Appendix 1.7.

Such that a Chinese painter has never seen,
a painting with such a beauty, a form with such a delicacy.
Each one of your ruby-like poetic verses,
is a star shining more bright than Venus.¹¹⁸

Another instructive example of this poetic community's emotional bonds is seen when Âzar leaves Kashan for Qum. Âzar's departure affected his local cohort. Chief among those touched was his close friend Sabâhî, who composed a thirty-four-line poem describing the pangs of separation he felt on his friend's departure.¹¹⁹ The geographic separation of the two poets, however, did not prevent them from exchanging a series of poems. Sabâhî wrote two *qasîdahs* to his friend, while Âzar responded in kind with one poem. In the earlier *qasîdah*, Sabâhî compares himself to a nightingale in a cage, barred from the world of beauty and unaware of the surrounding "garden" and all it has to offer. Only with the assistance of Âzar, the sweet singing, and traveling nightingale with freedom of movement, does Sabâhî become educated on the world beyond the confines of the cage. The later *qasîdah* of Sabâhî has the advantage of Âzar's response. Sabâhî portrays himself as the unaware poet yearning for the companion so crucial for his own poetic development, much like he did in the first *qasîdah*. The work expresses the emptiness and loneliness resulting from his friend's departure. But that does not prevent him from once again heaping praise upon the poetic prowess and skill of his friend Âzar, whom he calls one of the preeminent poets of his day. Staying true to the stylistics of imitating the "masters," he writes this poem in the same meter and with the same rhyme scheme as Anvarî, who wrote his *qasîdah* in honor of Hâjib Nâsir al-Din.¹²⁰ Âzar maintained the same rhyme scheme and meter in his response.

The three *bayts* presented below illustrate the mutual esteem and respect in which they held each other. Of note is Âzar's method of responding to the praise of Sabâhî with the same imagery and language that was accorded to him. First, Sabâhî:

Oh you, before whom the teacher of knowledge
kneels in deference to learning.
Before you, the knot of the Pleiades undid its [neat] arrangement,
Before your [grandeur], the Red Sea spilled its [abundant] water.
The sun, which is the source of life,
performs ablutions with the dust of your door.^{121*}

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ This *masnavi* can be found in: Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 89-90 (of introduction); Sulaymân Sabâhî Bîdgulî Kâshânî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî Bîdgulî*, ed. H. Partaw Bayzâ'î and 'Abbâs Kaymanish "Mushfiq Kâshânî" (Tehran: Kitâbfurûshî Zavvâr, 1338/1959), 164-165.

¹²⁰ Sabâhî's *qasîdah* to Âzar can be found in Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 94-95 (of introduction) and Sabâhî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî Bîdgulî*, (Bayzâ'î and Kaymanish ed.), 40-41.

¹²¹ Ibid.

* See Appendix 1.8

And Âzar in his response,

Your poetry, [is] the knob opening the Pleiades,
Your prose, [is] the river stealing the (Red) sea.
It appears that Anvarî wrote this *qasîdah*,
but I see him planting barley, while yours is like grain!
In your company, poetry from others
means no more than dry ablution (*tayammum*)¹²² by the banks of the Tigris.^{123*}

The brief selections serve as a prism through which one can see the manner some of the Isfahânî Circle of poets perceived themselves and their relationships with one another. The praise and deference they display is indicative of their camaraderie and strong bonds of friendship. Notably, they directed their praise to their comrades, focusing on each other's poetic talents rather than the accomplishments or character of a particular ruler or patron. Other examples of this kinship of respect and praise exist. Sabâhî especially, having outlived most of Mushtâq's literary circle except for Rafîq, records the death of many of the Isfahânî Circle of poets, praising them and noting their talents along the way. At times such elegies, as seen above in Sabâhî's poem for Âzar, express not only loss but also a sense of hopelessness for how the larger poetic world can cope with the loss and move forward. Sabâhî and Hâtif demonstrate these themes (as will be seen below) in their exchange of letters after Âzar's death. During this transitional time, when the Isfahânî Circle turned *bâzgasht* movement was in its nascent stages, there was no doubt anxiety over a loss of a member or even a separation between members. Elsewhere Âzar in a short poem in the form of a letter, perhaps to Hâtif, asks the recipient to pass along his heartfelt words of separation to Sabâhî. Tell him "the domain of Paradise, without you, would be like hell to me; the pure water of *Kawthar*¹²⁴, without you, would be like scalding water."¹²⁵

Âzar displayed his admiration for Nasîr Tabîb by writing several poems of praise, one written in the same meter and rhyme scheme as Rûdakî's famous poem in praise of Bukhara. He was not alone. The practice of the Isfahânî Circle offering praise for each other is one of the major features of their collective experience. Their continued insistence on uplifting one another, even while composing other types of poetry, helped solidify their bonds and sense of community lacking the traditional support of patrons. This practice also reveals their anxiety at being separated (by relocation or death) and thus not able to carry out their poetical activities together, hinting at a shared sense of mission. Often the works used for this purpose reflect the poets' mutual commitment to following a classical Persian poet, as was the case in the letters exchanged between Âzar and Sabâhî and their desire to follow Anvarî in rhyme scheme and meter. The methods, attitudes and perceptions found in their poetry take us beyond simply

¹²² *Tayammum* refers to the practice of making ablution with dust, a permissible act when water is unavailable, impure, or hazardous to obtain.

¹²³ Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 91-94.

* See Appendix 1.9.

¹²⁴ A spring in Paradise from which all other rivers derive.

¹²⁵ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, 308.

defining the *bâzgasht* movement as an expression of Mushtâq's literary society and one committed to a particular style of poetry. Indeed many of these poems were likely written after Mushtâq's death. As will be seen below, the poetry of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî not only speaks to their relationships, style of poetry, and attempts at sustaining a tight-knit poetic community, but also to how they viewed their surrounding social conditions and the role of the poet within that milieu.

Part Three: The Safavid-Qajar Interregnum: Disruptions and Continuities

In many ways Isfahan of the late eighteenth century was the perfect place for the *bâzgasht* movement to take shape, and in other ways it was not so advantageous. From the fall of the Safavids in 1722 until the early nineteenth century Isfahan was a city in flux, ravaged by turmoil, natural disasters, famine, and sieges by different political factions. Isfahan was both geographically and figuratively at the crossroads of political actors competing for control of a country during a transitional time in its history.

During the mid-to-late eighteenth century, a changing cast of rulers and aspirants continually sought to control the city. Not surprisingly, Isfahan witnessed major periods of political instability. The number of groups attempting to gain control of Isfahan and the chaos and oppression ensuing from this jockeying for power are striking.¹²⁶ The policies of rulers and mayors did not help. For example, a drought in 1143/1740-1 was exacerbated by Nâdir Shâh's (r. 1736-1747) policies, which both adversely affected planting and led to problems for residents in procuring food.¹²⁷ The situation following the death of Nâdir Shâh (d. 1747) was by all accounts disastrous. Attacks, sieges, pillaging, and raiding by invading armies followed.

A slight respite from this mayhem resulted from Karîm Khân's rule (r. 1751-1779), appearing like "an island of relative calm and stability in an otherwise destructive period."¹²⁸ Even so, the Zand period did not protect Isfahan entirely from bouts of turbulence. Isfahan was still much ravaged during this time. For example, during the oppressive rule of Hajji Muhammad Ranânî, the city also faced a severe famine in 1189/1775 and an earthquake in 1192/1778.¹²⁹ Following the death of Karîm Khân, a serious power vacuum ensued, and jockeying for dominance began anew. The situation in Isfahan devolved into anarchy. Battles between the Zands and Qajars followed. Isfahan fell into a state of hopelessness once again.

Michael Axworthy sums up the tumultuous situation in Isfahan from its sack in 1722 until the turn of the century, when upheaval and destruction ruled the day. He writes:

By mid-century most of the built-up area of Isfahan, the former capital, was deserted; inhabited only by owls and wild animals. In the last years of the Safavids, it had been a

¹²⁶ See John R. Perry, *Karîm Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹²⁷ Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*, 51.

¹²⁸ Michael Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007), 168.

¹²⁹ Perry, *Karîm Khan Zand*, 126-127.

thriving city of 550,000 people, one of the largest cities in the world; a similar size to London at the time, or bigger. By the end of the siege of 1722 only 100,000 people were left, and although many citizens returned thereafter the number fell yet again during the Afghan occupation and later so that by 1736 there were only 50,000 left. It has been estimated that the overall total population of Persia fell from around nine million at the beginning of the century to perhaps six million or less by mid-century through war, disease and emigration; and that the population levels did not begin to rise significantly again until after 1800.¹³⁰

On the heels of the Afghan invasion, the fall of the Safavids, Nâdir Shâh's rule, and the maneuvering for power between the Afshars, Zands, and Qajars, the rise of a coherent literary movement in Isfahan seems hard to fathom.

The attention paid to Isfahan by factions contending for power in post-Safavid Iran demonstrates the way in which the city continued to be viewed as one of the preeminent seats for establishing political power and legitimacy. This speaks to Isfahan's centrality in the political consciousness of the time, and in repeated attempts to establish authority over the rest of Iran. As John Perry notes, the continued presence of Safavid pretenders and aspirants to the throne after that dynasty's fall is an indication of the persistence of Safavid-centered preconceptions among the populace, even in the face of an ever-shifting political landscape.¹³¹ For Perry, this fact undermines the notion that the period between the Safavids and the Qajars is devoid of continuities and therefore represents a clean break in Iran's history. Cultural continuities did exist, grounded in the city's image and historical place as the center of literary culture in Iran. Jan Rypka, for example, credits Isfahan with cradling the nascent *bâzgasht* movement precisely for this reason. On account of its recent history under the Safavids, Isfahan retained its reputation as the center of cultural production among *littérateurs* and poets in post-Safavid Iran as well, making it the natural locus for the emergence of a literary movement after the Safavids' fall, political and social turmoil aside.¹³² Sa'îd Nafisî expresses a similar sentiment: despite all the "unpleasant events" occurring in post-Safavid Iran, it was a near certainty that if any movement such as *bâzgasht* were to arise, then it would most certainly do so in the city that served as Iran's cultural and artistic heart during Safavid times.¹³³

Karîm Khân Zand's rule, that "island of relative calm and stability," is often credited with providing amenable conditions for the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement and the formation of Mushtâq's literary society. Âzar viewed the period between the fall of Isfahan and the rule of Karîm Khân Zand as one devoid of poetry. Likewise, Dunbulî saw the arrival of Karîm Khân Zand as returning Iran to a state of joy and happiness, where poetry could be produced and appreciated again. There is certainly some truth to this narrative, but it is not entirely complete. It overlooks some of the continuities that stretched across the Safavid and post-Safavid literary cultural landscape.

¹³⁰ Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind*, 168-169.

¹³¹ J.R. Perry "The Last Safavids, 1722-1773," *Iran* 9 (1971): 59-69.

¹³² Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, 307.

¹³³ Nafisî, introduction to *Dîvân-i 'Âshiq Isfahânî*, 6.

If the establishment of Karîm Khân's rule in 1751 allowed Mushtâq's literary society to take shape, then conditions must have come together quickly for him. Mushtâq most likely died in 1757-1758 (though perhaps as early as 1751) leaving him with a mere six or seven years to convene his literary society, attract a cohort of poets, and gain the reputation of his students. Rafiq, the youngest member of the circle who can definitively be tied to Mushtâq, was born in 1150/1737. He would have been in his late teens when he joined the literary society and studied under Mushtâq before the latter's death. Such a scenario is certainly possible, but not likely.

Based on the question of chronology and the inhospitable social conditions of Isfahan at the time, Shams Langarûdî argues that the literary society of Mushtâq could not have arisen suddenly to renew the classical style of poetry and shatter the primacy of the so-called "Indian Style." Shams Langarûdî goes a step further, saying that the "Indian Style" in post-Safavid Iran was nearly non-existent at the time. Instead, he argues, Mushtâq's literary society was building upon the work of the *maktab-i vuqû'* (see above) and the poetry of individuals like Zamîrî and Nazîrî.

Dunbulî agrees that Mushtâq "built upon the method of Zamîrî and Nazîrî," two poets associated with the "realist school" that composed poetry in imitation of the masters. He also connects those two Safavid poets with the poetry of 'Âshiq, stating that in 'Âshiq's poetry one finds the pleasant style of Zamîrî and Nazîrî.¹³⁴ This connection is not surprising. If anyone among the Isfahânî Circle would be receptive to the poetic styles of the Safavid period, then it would most likely be those two. Mushtâq and 'Âshiq were the two oldest members of the Isfahânî Circle and their lives spanned both the Safavid and post-Safavid periods. This points to the fact that the Isfahânî Circle was working within an accessible poetic framework. It was not operating in a void, but benefited from earlier poetical practices and social trends. Other continuities between the two periods are evident as well.

As drastically as the social conditions of Isfahan changed after the fall of Isfahan in 1722, the formation of Mushtâq's literary society and the larger Isfahânî Circle displayed characteristics reminiscent of poetical activities and gatherings during the Safavid period. Recall that Mushtâq and 'Âshiq were born in Isfahan ca. 1100/1689 and 1111/1699 respectively, roughly twenty-five years prior to the city's fall. Shu'lah, one of the "old contemporaries," well versed in classical Persian poetry and consequently highly regarded in the *tazkirahs*, died in Isfahan in 1138/1725. Shu'lah and Mushtâq may well have met one another. Shu'lah's lifespan, nonetheless, serves as a bridge between Safavid times and post-Safavid times, as do the lives of Mushtâq and 'Âshiq themselves, providing the Isfahânî Circle a fuller context of poetic development.

Furthermore, the poetry produced by the members of the Isfahânî Circle features diverse forms of poetical composition among these early poets in the eighteenth century. This also was true in Safavid times, which embraced a diversity of poetical practices and experiences. These early *bâzgasht* poets did not merely write *ghazals* or *qasîdahs* in imitation of a classical poet (whether Sa'dî, Hâfiz, or Anvarî), though this they did with frequency. They also composed a whole range of poetry, including poems offered in praise of various religious figures, in particular Muhammad and 'Alî. They did not view their literary society as one entirely focused on returning to the classical poetic style. They were equally concerned with their own social settings, writing poems that reflected their involvement in and awareness of community affairs.

¹³⁴ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 241.

Âzar, Hâtif, Sabâhî, and even Mushtâq all composed poetry that refers to their social and political surroundings. Mushtâq has a series of poems in praise of various rulers during the Afsharid period (including Nâdir Shâh), poems on the occasion of a ruler's coronation, elegies for historical figures, works in commemoration of victories in Qandahar and Hindustan, and histories of architectural works.¹³⁵ Likewise, Sabâhî composed elegies of renowned figures, poems in praise of collective enterprises such as schools, a bazaar, and a mausoleum.¹³⁶ Hâtif's corpus includes works in praise of the establishment of a mosque, a fountain, and gardens.¹³⁷ Some of these poems occurred later in the eighteenth century, in a slightly different social and political context than mid-century Isfahan. Nonetheless, this variation in their poetry points to a literary circle in its infancy and still searching for its footing—a cohort of poets not easily defined as a movement solely concerned with the imitation of classical masters, as they would come to be known.

The backgrounds of the Isfahânî Circle turned *bâzgasht* poets were equally diverse. Mushtâq's literary society in its early stage included members who held “daytime” professions and subsisted by other means, at least early in life: Raffiq was a vegetable seller and ‘Ashiq was a tailor. These poets of humble background and profession took part in a poetic gathering alongside the likes of Mushtâq, Sahbâ, Âzar, and Hâtif, who held no such professions, though the latter was trained as a physician. Their early society was a mix of men from humble beginnings and professions with men who benefited from more rigorous training in the arts and sciences.

Some members of the Isfahânî Circle, as in earlier times, came from elsewhere in Iran to take part in cultural activities in Isfahan. Even during this difficult period in the early-to-mid eighteenth century they made their way to Isfahan, once again reaffirming that the city maintained its identity as cultural center. Âzar made his way back to Isfahan, the place of his birth, after much travel around the country. Sahbâ came to Isfahan from Qum at the age of thirty. Sabâhî (if he made it to Isfahan during Mushtâq's life or at all) would have come from his birthplace in Kashan. The poet and calligrapher ‘Abd al-Majîd Darvîsh (d. 1185/1771-2), who is connected to many of the Isfahânî Circle poets but not Mushtâq's society per se, came to Isfahan from nearby in search of science and learning.¹³⁸ He most certainly arrived in Isfahan prior to the establishment of Karîm Khân's rule.

The case of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Bâqî “Tabîb” Isfahânî (d. 1171-1172/1758-9), friend of Mushtâq and briefly mayor of Isfahan, is intriguing. His precise relationship to Mushtâq's literary society is unknown. But the fact that he served Nâdir Shâh in an official capacity and later functioned as mayor of Isfahan hints that perhaps Mushtâq's literary society had more official backing and structure than previously recognized. Indeed members of Tabîb's family would be involved in the poetic activities of those later affiliated with the *bâzgasht* movement. While Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Bâqî Isfahânî may not have lent official backing to Mushtâq's literary society or the larger Isfahânî Circle of poets, his brother Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb (as mayor of Isfahan) most certainly did extend patronage to the Circle after Mushtâq's death. It is during the

¹³⁵ Mushtâq, *Dîvân-i ghazaliyât va qasâ'id va rubâ'iyât-i Mushtâq*, 158-176.

¹³⁶ See Sabâhî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî-i Bîdgulî*, (Karamî ed.).

¹³⁷ See Hâtif, *Dîvân-i Hâtif* (Shâhrûkhî/'Alîdûst ed.).

¹³⁸ Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*, 192.

time of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s rule and death that this group of poets truly transforms into a movement with official backing.

Although political conditions changed after the fall of Isfahan, the make-up of the early *bâzgasht* movement as expressed through Mushtâq’s literary society and the larger Isfahânî Circle displayed many social and poetic continuities with the late Safavid period. Its members came from different social backgrounds, either from Isfahan or elsewhere, and produced different types of poetry. This is not to say these poetic gatherings were no different than societies forming in Safavid Isfahan, but rather that the processes of their formation resemble one another. Just as the poetry of Safavid Iran cannot be defined in a singular manner, neither can the make-up and activities of the early *bâzgasht* movement be defined as solely focused on producing poetry in imitation of the masters. A process and development followed its formation. In its early stages, as exemplified by Mushtâq’s literary society, it was still taking shape. The major event in this developmental process was to occur only after Mushtâq’s death.

Part Four: The Early Bâzgasht Movement after Mushtâq

Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb: Patron of the *Bâzgasht* Poets

Crucial to the formation and coherence of the early *bâzgasht* movement is the patronage many of the early poets received from one of Isfahan’s mayors during the Zand period- Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb Mûsavî Isfahânî. Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s contribution to the formation of the early *bâzgasht* movement, while not altogether overlooked, is often only mentioned in passing and most certainly not emphasized. That the Isfahânî Circle of poets had a patron, let alone the mayor of Isfahan, sheds a different light on the formation of the *bâzgasht* movement as a whole following the death of Mushtâq. It is unclear when Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb was first appointed to rule Isfahan. As Mihr al-Zamân Shîrzâdfar notes in *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand (Isfahan in the Afshar and Zand Periods)*, it is possible that he served as mayor in 1172/1759, but, if so, it was only for a short time.¹³⁹ Known with more certainty was that he did serve as mayor of Isfahan from 1180/1767 to 1184/1770-1, the year of his death. Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb hailed from a family that settled in Isfahan (from Fars) and provided medical services to the Safavid kings for generations.¹⁴⁰ He was also the younger brother of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Bâqî “Tabîb” Isfahânî (see above).

As mayor of Isfahan Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb was well respected for the nature of his rule and management of affairs. Being from a respected Isfahânî family with a pedigree of government service certainly would have been beneficial, giving him latitude to gain the favorable opinions of the populace or making him a palatable choice as ruler, especially in the face of years of uncertainty and tumult. His pedigree and knowledge of Isfahan no doubt helped maintain the relative calm and stability in Isfahan during the period of Karîm Khân Zand’s rule.

¹³⁹ Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*, 67-68.

¹⁴⁰ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 437.

According to Dunbulî, Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb “rose to the office of mayor (*kalântar*) in the government of Isfahan, out of distinction, purity, generosity, intelligence, good taste, and unrivaled genius.”¹⁴¹ In the preceding period, for nearly thirty years from 1144/1732 to 1172/1759, more than twenty people had served as the mayor of Isfahan, but few were natives of the city.¹⁴² For almost the entire twenty year period from 1172/1759 to 1193/1779, corresponding to Karîm Khân’s suzerainty over Isfahan, the city was ruled by two individuals, both members of respected and reputable Isfahânî families: Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb and Âqâ Muhammad Mârbînî.¹⁴³ These two leaders contrasted with those appointed under the policy and practices of Nâdir Shah, who sought to limit the power of the mayor of Isfahan by both appointing non-Isfahânî natives and frequently dismissing them.¹⁴⁴

The general populace during the Zand period was “overwhelmed in joy and happiness,” and “calamitous misfortune was distant from the face of time,” says the historian Dunbulî.¹⁴⁵ The relative calm and stability in Isfahan and Iran throughout the rules of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb and Karîm Khân Zand respectively, helped create the conditions for increased literary activities and productivity. An added benefit for those writers and poets in Isfahan was having a ruler receptive to poetic activities, who maintained an interest in the arts and served as a patron of writing and poetry.¹⁴⁶ Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb was also a student of the famous calligrapher (and sometimes poet) Darvîsh ‘Abd al-Majîd, who came to Isfahan in search of science and learning.¹⁴⁷ Darvîsh ‘Abd al-Majîd, who was connected to the Isfahânî Circle of poets, was most famous for his copy of *Kullîyât-i Sa‘dî*.¹⁴⁸

Under Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb Isfahan continued to expand the image of its recent glories. According to Dunbulî, Isfahan under Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s rule was a “paradise-like garden,” which witnessed the gathering of “poets, geniuses, first-rate minds of every type, and masters of verse [who] every day upon the branches of poetry like nightingales and turtledoves, in exchange with one another, were constructing *ghazals* and *matla*’s.”¹⁴⁹ During his tenure as mayor Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb was well connected to the Isfahânî Circle of poets.¹⁵⁰ Dunbulî describes the relationship of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb to the poets of Isfahan:

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 241.

¹⁴² Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*, 78.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 79.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 50.

¹⁴⁵ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 270.

¹⁴⁶ Muslih al-Dîn Mahdavî, *Tazkirat al-qubûr, yâ, Dânishmandân va buzurgân-i Isfahân* (Isfahan: Kitâbfurûshî-i Saqâfî-i Isfahân, 1348/1969-1970), 398. Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*, 186.

¹⁴⁷ Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*, 193.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 194.

¹⁴⁹ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, 242.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 270.

Truly, during that time, the good fortune of esteemed masters arose from a deep sleep and the desire of people of learning was adorned with favors of various kinds. The realm of Isfahan in great blessings, easiness, and repose from grief was established as a piece of paradise—“Of the (city of) Iram, with lofty pillars, the like of which were not produced in [other] cities” [Surat al-fajr; 7-8]. The Iram-like glory of its poetry was adorned with the presence of wise men, scholars, miraculous rhetoric, and poets. Every day its joyful gathering, which included, Darvîsh ‘Abd al-Majîd, ‘Âshiq, Âzar, Sahbâ, Sâfî, Hâtif, Ghayrat, Nasîb, Nîyâzî, and Rafîq was the envy of holy gardens and the world of spiritual ones.^{151*}

The relationship of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb to many of the Isfahânî Circle of poets and his role in gathering these poets in a literary circle has not received due attention in scholarship. Rarely is his specific role as *patron* of poetry after Mushtâq’s death referred to in relation to the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement.¹⁵² As Dunbulî’s quote makes clear, under Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s patronage, the Isfahânî Circle of poets appears to have expanded. In addition to members of Mushtâq’s literary society, the list includes Ghayrat, Nasîb, Nîyâzî, and Darvîsh ‘Abd al-Majîd.

The significance of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s rule, and his positive impact on the poetic community, are evident in a poem composed in his honor by Âzar. In a *qasîdah* spanning nearly sixty *bayts* Âzar celebrates the mayor of Isfahan for restoring that city to its former place of glory and harmony. Finding himself in the midst of a garden resembling paradise, whose stream “flows forth from the fountain of *Kawthar*”¹⁵³ and trees are “bejeweled like the standard of Farîdûn,”¹⁵⁴ Âzar seeks out the gardener to inquire about the nature of the paradisaical place he has stumbled upon. This garden, where *huris* abound and whose residents have eternal life, he soon discovers, is “not Paradise, nor *Mushkhû* [Khusraw’s Palace],” but instead “the sacred garden of the world’s master, the auspicious slave of the Justice Giver, Wahhâb, who’s the master of the abode of Isfahan.”¹⁵⁵ Âzar then goes on to praise the magnanimity, justice, and wisdom of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb. He compares the mayor’s attitude toward his subjects as a shepherd guarding his flock. Under his trusteeship Isfahan is safe, secure, and prosperous. “From his temperament it is as though Isfahan is the abode of happiness,” he writes, “from his justice it is as though Isfahan is the abode of security.”¹⁵⁶ No one under his rule shall be at a loss or down on their luck, for he will be there to protect them:

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 241-242.

* See Appendix 1.10.

¹⁵² References to the role of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb as patron of the early *bâzgasht* literary society in Isfahan can be seen in Mahdavi, *Tazkirat al-qubûr*, 398; Shîrzâdfar, *Isfahân dar dawrân-i Afshâr va Zand*; and K. Amiri Firuzkuhi, “‘Âseq Esfahânî,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 1987, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aseq-esfahani-aqa-mohammad-kayyat-or-in-one-account-mohammad-khan-a-persian-poet-of-the-12th-eighteenth-century>.

¹⁵³ Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 22.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Isfahan is the garden, and your munificence is the rain
Isfahan is the body, and your command is the soul!¹⁵⁷

In Isfahan under the rule of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb, all is well and in order-- all, that is, but the certainty of Âzar’s recompense from his patron for composing such a wonderful ode. As the *qasîdah* draws to close, Âzar deftly reminds Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb of his position as poet, noting that in such auspicious and fortunate times, the debt owed to the poet should not be forgotten. It is a subtle reminder by Âzar of the professional role and institution of the poet in service to a patron. The ode itself is perhaps indicative of an effort by Âzar to bring greater formality to Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb’s patronage, beyond that of a “joyful gathering.”

Requesting recompense from a patron at the end of a *qasîdah*, after the obligatory praise, is certainly not atypical to the genre, but it is worth recognizing the social and political environment during which Âzar’s *qasîdah* was written. Âzar’s experiences and understanding of the times, both during his life and the immediate past, certainly shaped his attitudes toward the professional role of the poet and patronage. Âzar would have been in an excellent position to recognize a shift in his fortune (and those of poets in general) resulting from the renewed poetic environment in Isfahan and a more peaceful Iran. He would know to strike when the iron is hot, so to speak. As a central figure in the Isfahânî Circle and the historiography of the *bâzgasht* movement, both in relation to other poets and on account of the centrality of his *Âtishkadah*,¹⁵⁸ his brief biography is worthy of note.

Âzar was born into an Isfahani family that included officials who reached high positions under the Safavids. His birth in 1134/1722, however, occurred nearly simultaneously with the Afghan invasion of Isfahan, leading the entirety of his family to flee to Qum, where he spent fourteen years. Before returning to Isfahan his travels took him to Bandar ‘Abbâs (where his father was appointed to a position by Nâdir Shâh), ‘Irâq-i Ajam, Fars, Sham, Mecca, Mashad, and Azerbaijan. After the assassination of Nâdir Shâh he served various rulers: the Afsharids ‘Âdil Shâh and Ibrâhîm Shâh, and the Safavids Ismâ‘îl III and Sulaymân III.¹⁵⁹ In short, he experienced his immediate surroundings during a transitional time in Iran’s history, and was cognizant of the consequences that years of political upheaval and turmoil could have upon family and professional prospects. Âzar’s keen awareness of the shifting fortunes of Isfahan and his utmost admiration for that city can be seen elsewhere in his poetry. For example, in his poem in praise of Nâsir “Tabîb Isfahânî, Âzar acclaims the glory of Isfahan and its superiority in different ways over Baghdad, Sham, Greece, and China, while at the same time recognizing that it was not long ago that destruction and ruin dominated the city.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 23.

¹⁵⁸ For the importance of the *Âtishkadah* in the historiography of *bâzgasht-i adabî*, see Smith, “Literary Connections,” 204-205.

¹⁵⁹ N. Bland, “Account of the Atesh Kedah, a Biographical Work on the Persian Poets, by Hajji Lutf ‘Alî Beg of Ispahan,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 7.2 (1843): 382-383. Also see Âzar, *Âtishkadah* (Ja‘far Shâhîdî ed.), 433-434; J. Matini, “Âzar Bîgdeli,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 3, Fasc. 2 (1987): 183. An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Âzar-bigdeli-hajji-lotf-‘Alî-big>.

¹⁶⁰ Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 146-150.

In introducing the section dealing with the poetry of his contemporaries in the *Âtishkadah*, Âzar's understanding of the effect of Iran's recent history upon literary activities is on full display:

For many years, on account of the revolution of the time, at once the customs of poetic compositions are nullified and poets, from great anguish, are changed, and the resolve of poets is corrupted. The scattering of easy circumstances and [the] state of confusion [are such that] no one is in the state of reading poetry or composing poetry.¹⁶¹

He then describes the tumult of the times in further detail. For fifty years, he notes, the condition of his contemporaries (*mu'âsirîn*) was defined by the tyranny, oppression, and evil that reigned over all parts of Iran, once the paragon of the garden of heavens. During this torturous time Iran saw its "wealth plundered- her daughters massacred, or sold to bondage—and the denizens of the once-smiling gardens...exiled and wandering in a foreign clime."¹⁶² Âzar is not only adamant in detailing the sorry state of affairs in eighteenth century Iran, but also in justifying the poetry and position of his contemporaries, which must be viewed in consideration of these debilitating social and economic conditions. He juxtaposes the amicable social conditions of the ancient poets with the tumultuous times of his contemporaries in an effort to demonstrate that a comparison would not be fair. The ancient poets were "nurtured in the cradle of prosperity and peace, and obtaining every want and wish beneath the shadow of the protection of the monarchs of the age," while the contemporary poets were left at the mercy and whim of oppression and misfortune, heavily restricting their ability to compose poetry.¹⁶³

As Âzar describes the arrival of Karîm Khân Zand and the relative stability that accompanied his rule, he references the beneficial conditions more amenable to literary production, as witnessed in the case of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb in Isfahan and his patronage of poetic activities. But this did not mean that Âzar or his contemporary cohort were to be entirely immune to the social and political vicissitudes during the time of Karîm Khân Zand's rule, nor necessarily able to cope with the loss of their patron Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb and continue their poetic activities uninhibited. With the death of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb patronage for the Isfahâni Circle was disrupted and fractured.

Faced with uncertainly following the loss of their patron, many of the formative members of this literary circle traveled elsewhere in Iran in an effort to seek new opportunities. This interregnum between Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's death in 1184/1770-1 and the establishment of Fath 'Alî Shâh's *anjuman-i Khâqân* in Tehran, when the *bâzgasht* style achieved supremacy, is a crucial period for understanding how the early *bâzgasht* movement developed before its reconstitution under Nashât's literary society and at the Qajar court in Tehran. During this period, which witnessed the death of Karîm Khân Zand, one gains better insight into the understandings and perceptions of the *bâzgasht* movement, the social conditions of which they were a part, and the manner in which they viewed themselves. Several rich poetical sources from

¹⁶¹ Lutf 'Alî "Âzar" Baygdilî, *Âtishkadah*, lithograph ed. (Bombay: 1299/1881-2), 1 of section "zîkr-i ahvâl-i mu'âsirîn."

¹⁶² N. Bland, "Account of the Atesh Kedah," 372. His translation.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 374-375. His translation.

this time, including letters and elegies, capture some of the attitudes of the Isfahânî Circle during a period when the formative stage of their movement ended and a new stage was to begin.

Dunbulî's account in the *Tajribat al-ahrâr va tasliyat al-abrâr* describes the break-up of the Isfahan literary circle after Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's death in the following way:

Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb died and in his place Hajji Muhammad Ranânî Isfahânî became mayor. He raised taxes for Karîm Khân and increased [them] upon the population of Isfahan. He had no interest in poetry and poetical composition, refinement, or perfection. He was barren, avaricious, evil thinking, and badly behaved...He destroyed houses, manifested unusual measures, kept the poor wretched, and collected riches. He forced the general populace and especially the wise men of Isfahan to emigrate and become homeless. He made matters so difficult on nobles and commoners that the pen cannot express it clearly. The elite and the masses were averse from that greedy wolf, hearts rebuked, and tears spilled. The days of his government continued as oppressive days. Great fear and terror befell the population...In the year 1188/1775 the grandees and nobles of Isfahan, from chief, vizier, plebian, noble, district magistrates, people of trade and commerce, using the excuse of putting-their-accounts-in-order, and with hearts full of grief, came to Shiraz. They became humbled under the shadow of the wall of abasement and complained to the court. Poets and geniuses emigrated from the heart of the capital and, like [disparate] lines of odes, were dispersed [in various] regions of Iraq. Âzar, Hâtif and some of the elegant ones traveled from Isfahan to the corners of Qum and Kashan [i.e. places of seclusion]. Âqâ Muhammad Taqî Sahbâ and Mawlana Husayn Rafîq came to Shiraz.^{164*}

Âzar, who earlier praised the just rule of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb, once again serves as a good observer of the changing fortune of Isfahan. He wrote several poems deriding the rule of Hajji Muhammad Ranânî. In one *qasîdah*, addressed to Karîm Khân Zand, Âzar describes the conditions in Iran as peaceful and secure. He declares that all of Iran "from the edge of Kirman to the Tigris of Baghdad, from the shore of Oman to the edge of Darband," is enveloped in light from the justice of Karîm Khân Zand.¹⁶⁵ In such a harmonious place, only Isfahan suffers on account of the "wolf" Ranânî, as Âzar reminds Karîm Khân in the final two *bayts*:

Helpless Isfahan that a wolf there
became the shepherd-- this year was the equivalent of ten.
Beware! Don't entrust a single caravan to a treacherous thief,
Beware! Don't allow the pain of the flock by the crooked wolf.¹⁶⁶

Âzar's reaction to the arrival and rule of Ranânî in Isfahan demonstrates that the early *bâzgasht* poets were aware of their surrounding social conditions. Indeed it was a political change in Isfahan that caused the break-up of their post-Mushtâq society, an event that would affect them and their understanding of the times. Ranânî's arrival caused the *bâzgasht* poets' separation from

¹⁶⁴ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, vol. 1, 270-272.

* See Appendix 1.11.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 273.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

one another and the movement's reconstitution elsewhere. What does it mean that the death of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb led the major poets of the early *bâzgasht* movement to leave Isfahan for elsewhere? If the primary event defining the formation of *bâzgasht* movement was the imitation of classical Persian poets in response to *sabk-i Hindî*, as initiated by Mushtâq's literary society, why were these poets so dismayed by Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's replacement by Ranânî? Why not just stay in Isfahan and continue the tradition of Mushtâq's literary society? After all, Mushtâq's literary society appears to have occurred at a time of instability in Isfahan, though it was still able to convene. For the poets who left Isfahan, was it solely a matter of convening and composing poetry in amicable social conditions or gaining a more professional role as a poet dependent on patronage? In an effort to answer many of these questions, we turn once again to the poetry of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî.

Poetic Perceptions II: Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî

In response to the rule of Ranânî, Âzar, Hâtif, Rafîq, and Sahbâ left Isfahan in 1188/1775. Rafîq and Sahbâ went to Shiraz in 1191/1888—Sahbâ eventually dying there.¹⁶⁷ They chose Shiraz because it was the seat of Zand power and perhaps because the poet Sabâhî was conducting his own *anjuman* there. According to Hasan Imdâd, Sabâhî's literary society included figures like Mîrzâ Muhammad Nasîr Isfahânî and Dunbulî, but this claim is unconfirmed. The exact dates of Sabâhî's time in Shiraz cannot be verified, though traces throughout his *divân* appear to place him there as early as 1176/1763 and as late as 1199/1784-5. It is unlikely, however, that he stayed in Shiraz for the entirety of that time.¹⁶⁸ The whereabouts of Âzar and Hâtif from the time they left Isfahan until their deaths, in 1195/1781 and 1198/1784 respectively (both in Qum), are also uncertain. It is also possible they went to Kashan and convened with Sabâhî in his hometown, reinforcing their lifelong bonds of friendship with one another.

These uncertainties make it difficult to date the poems explored below, so we do not know whether they were composed after the breakup of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's literary society following his death. Three of the four poems (Hâtif and Sabâhî's poems after Âzar's death and Sabâhî's letter to Rafîq) most certainly were written after Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's death in 1184/1770-1. The fourth poem, by Âzar, is harder to date. However, this poem, which details a conversation between himself, Hâtif, and Sabâhî, most likely *was* composed after the death of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb as well.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 434-435.

¹⁶⁸ Imdâd, *Anjuman-hâ-yi adabî-i Shîrâz*, 49.

¹⁶⁹ The reasoning for this is fairly straightforward. There is no reference to Sabâhî ever having met Mushtâq or participated in his literary society. Had Sabâhî met his lifelong friends Âzar and Hâtif by then, he would most likely been invited to attend Mushtâq's literary society. No such reference has been found. Mushtâq died in (d. 1171/1757-8), making it unlikely that the three poets met before then. Therefore, it is most likely the three poets met between 1171/1757-8 and Âzar's death in 1195/1781. This period includes the time of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's literary society in Isfahan and its break-up. Based on the contents of the poem itself, compared with the content of Âzar's poem in praise of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb, it is most likely this poem was written after the death of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb.

The roughly 120 *bayt*-long poem by Âzar details a conversation on poetry with his two friends Sabâhî and Hâtif.* It provides one of the richest sources to relate perceptions of the early *bâzgasht* poets. The poem begins with the poets discussing a *dîvân* of *ghazals*, under the shade of a tree in a garden square, when suddenly Sabâhî reveals from under his arm another *dîvân* of poetry. Intrigued by its appearance, Âzar takes the book from his companion, “its pages falling like the leaves of winter, scattered, diffusing an odor from an old smell.”¹⁷⁰ But “like paradise,” he writes, “the roses grown in it are abundant, where a single thorn harms the hand of no one.”¹⁷¹ He soon discovers that the *dîvân* is the work of Mu‘izzî, the “Amir of Samarkand.”¹⁷² Having made the discovery of the author’s identity, Âzar proceeds to extol the poet’s eloquence while at once recognizing the difficulty undertaken to create such a pleasant yet heart-rending work. Providing an opening for his companions to respond, the *dîvân* of Mu‘izzî sets in motion an intriguing conversation on topics including the current state and appreciation of poetry, the role of the poet in society, and the poetry, impact, and conditions of the great masters.

Sabâhî is the first to respond to Âzar, declaring that of all the gatherings of which he was a part, no one prior to Âzar had inquired about this *dîvân* of Mu‘izzî. He laments the lack of curiosity about Mu‘izzî’s *dîvân*, bemoaning his contemporary poets and the current poetic atmosphere in which they live and work. He declares that the poets of today that “gain fame from claiming the dominions of poetry are adversaries [of the true path of poetry].” “They don’t know the difference between sugar and colocynth//they don’t know who the Amir of Samarkand is?!” he writes. Nonetheless, whoever composes poetry or strings two *bayts* together “raises his head to the heavens in astonishment,” believing he has created dazzling verses. Sabâhî then turns his attention to the poetic climate of Iran, expressing despair that any good poetry could actually be appreciated in such a state of hopelessness. His admonishment of the market for poetry in Iran and the lack of an audience are striking. It is a theme that Sabâhî will dwell upon elsewhere. He says to Âzar:

Don’t you see how the sacred Huma in this land and country,
 is worth less than the owl of misfortune?!

There is no buyer of gems in this domain,
 the seller makes no profit from selling the goods.

After this may you too not suffer senseless pain,
 don’t deliver a fine speech for anyone.

What’s the use to put yourself through such trouble,
 just to put a few lines into verse.

When you begin to recite it
 they will signal with their fingers on the lips to stop.

And if you prepare something from pen and paper,

*The entirety of this poem can be found in Appendix 1.12.

¹⁷⁰ Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 418.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Amir Mu‘izzî (d. 1147-8) was the poet-laureate of the Seljuk ruler Sanjar. He died when the latter shot him with an arrow while practicing archery. Edward Granville Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928-1929), 327-330.

they'll value it as nothing, just like this book.¹⁷³

After a short interlude by Âzar, Hâtif picks up the thread of Sabâhî's thoughts. His comments are the longest of the poem, some 70 *bayts*. Hâtif weaves his way through a variety of topics: the current state of poetry in Iran, the beneficial role of the poet in society, the glory of the old masters, and praise for Âzar's role in preserving the masters' legacy. These verses offer a nuanced insight into the early *bâzgasht* poets' view of their surroundings and their role within this culture. Hâtif, like Sabâhî, bemoans the forlorn state of poetry, declaring the time "when it was only his [Mu'izzî] name and nothing else" (*gâhî dar jahân nâm-i u bûd u bas*), now over:

Since he left, no one took his place
no speaker, poet, and intelligent ones remained [to take his place].¹⁷⁴

Hâtif is more optimistic about the future of poetry than Sabâhî. Just as the "standard of Farîdûn" and the "portico of Jam" reemerged after 1000 years of Zahhak's tyranny and oppression, so too, he predicts, will poetry rise again. Much like Rûdakî, who "strung the pearls of Darî from childhood" and thereby allowed "eloquent speakers" to step from nothingness into "the banquet of knowledge," so too will poetry return and renew the world of listeners.

For Hâtif, the necessity of the poet is unquestionable. The poet reveals the world's mysteries, and the poet makes the garden bloom. Hâtif outlines the necessity of poets for life itself, comparing a life without them to one in which they reign free. He reminds his companions that as bad as the situation may be, spring will come again and restore poets and poetry to their rightful place in the world:

If the universe, one day, measures for Zayd and 'Amr
a little rice wine instead of grape wine
The seed of the vine will not be dry
and the same smell of musk will flow from the wine house.
If now no poet remains in the world,
and no flower blossoms all over the garden.
If there is not a sign of the nightingale in the rose garden,
and Hindustan is [now] empty of parrots.
If the garden crows will not let out their crooked cry,
and they will not seek the smell of flowers and taste of sugar.
If winter emptied the meadow of trefoils,
and branches and canes are emptied of flowers and sugar.
Don't be sad: it is tomorrow that spring
will lift the parasol of clouds from the mountainous land.
The Zephyr will bud a flower on the edge of the branch,
to the cane will come an open collar for sugar.
The nightingale will let out its cry in the rose garden,
the parrot will sip sugar in its beak.
Poets will make their way to the garden,
in one hand a book, and in the other a goblet.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 419.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 421.

Flowers will gladly remove the veil from their cheeks,
and nightingales will gleefully cry out in song.¹⁷⁵

Hâtif clarifies his comments about the reemergence of the poet in contemporary society by advising Âzar specifically on *his* role and contribution as a poet. It will be someone like Âzar who will enable poetry to regain its rightful place in the world. Âzar himself, according to Hâtif, will continue the tradition of the masters and play no small part in this revival. He will follow the path laid out by the masters of old:

You too, praise be to God, are today
in the fortress of poetry, mighty like Mu‘izzî.
Both he and other poets of yore,
were attuned to the work of poetry.
On account of you, their name will become alive in this world
even though they are at rest in the earth.
From your efforts, their efforts will not be in vain,
since you bring out gems from their treasure.¹⁷⁶

Hâtif’s comments display an earnest commitment to the imitation of the classical masters, representative of one of the aims ascribed to the early *bâzgasht* movement. But Hâtif’s comments on the role of the poet in society and specifically the role of Âzar in a renewed poetic environment do not end here. Nor are they solely couched in terms of praise. He also offers Âzar some stern advice, displaying a particular view of what the societal role of Âzar (and the poet in general) should be:

Don’t praise kings when they do not deserve it
for inevitably you’ll end up writing him a satire.
What’s the point of you coming like Firdawsî from Tus
to Ghaznî to kiss the Shâh’s foot?!
You’ll uselessly suffer for thirty or forty years
so that the Shâh can scatter some treasure upon your hem?!
From a life of thinking you’ll receive a slap,
you’ll not see fidelity from its promise.
Why like Nizâmî will you intentionally
praise the Shâh of Ganja day and night out of sincerity?!
In order to become the leader of those who offer praise,
[how long] will you sit aside from the corner of contentment?
What do you want with offering praise
like Anvarî they’ll put a chain around your head like a women’s scarf?!
Out of jealousy, they’ll make you ride a donkey in Balkh
you’ll be sweating and crying!
If from the tree of wisdom you must have fruit,
you must pass through the rose-garden of Sa‘dî.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 420-421.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 421.

Where every type of flower you want has blossomed,
for Shaykh [Sa'dî] had something to say on everything.¹⁷⁷

Hâtif's comments add to our understanding of the attitudes of the early *bâzgasht* poets. On the surface, his advice for Âzar seems clear: follow the masters of Persian poetry and spread their style, but do not praise kings; instead follow the path of Sa'dî. His choice, however, to cite Firdawsî, Nizâmî, and Anvarî, three classical masters of Persian poetry, as examples of why not to praise kings seems to undercut his argument. How should one strive to follow the masters, but at the same time avoid being like Firdawsî, Nizâmî, and Anvarî? Were they not great masters worthy of imitation? Of course they were. As evidenced by voluminous examples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these three poets were greatly imitated. Hâtif even praised Sabâhî in a letter by comparing the luminosity of his wisdom to that of Anvarî.¹⁷⁸

Hâtif's references to Firdawsî, Nizâmî, and Anvarî are directed toward the social circumstances surrounding their poetry, and the manner in which they were treated, not the poetry itself. Firdawsî's disappointment at receiving what he considered to be inadequate recompense from Mahmud of Ghazna for his labor on the *Shâhnâmah* is well known. Anvarî's misfortune, one of several which he had in his life, stems from an accusation that a book or several verses satirizing the people of Balkh was written by him. He was paraded in the streets of Balkh by an outraged mob, while wearing a woman's headdress.¹⁷⁹

If this poem relates a conversation between Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî after the break-up of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's Isfahânî Circle, then it takes on the added meaning of hopelessness based on recent events. In Hâtif's estimation, Ranânî's treatment of poets and lack of concern for poetic affairs must have seemed no different than how these three masters were treated by their patrons and by their audience more generally. A poet should not praise kings or strive to be like Anvarî, Firdawsî, and Nizâmî because in the eighteenth century no adequate audience or patron exists for a poet to establish himself in society. In such unfortunate times, better to be like Sa'dî and not concern oneself with ungrateful patrons or an uninterested audience. Hâtif's words not to praise kings may be meant for all times, regardless of the specific circumstance of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb's death and the arrival of Ranânî. If that is the case, his words are equally revealing. They constitute a voice among the early *bâzgasht* poets not just interested in actively promoting poetry through patronage, but through a more quietist approach, letting poetry speak for itself. This view counters the notion that *bâzgasht* poets were simply interested in promoting their poetry and that of their companions in the most earnest way possible.

In any case, Hâtif's words emphasize the interplay of social circumstances (in the eighteenth century or at all times) with poetical production and the interest of one's audience. His comments, along with those of Sabâhî, illustrate the early *bâzgasht* poets' understanding of their social surroundings and the role of the poet within them. They are as concerned with the non-existence of an adequate environment for poetical production and an audience for poetry as they are with the proliferation of unskilled poets. Âzar dramatizes the situation well in a letter to Sabâhî: "I am a mute and my listeners are deaf, from mute speech, what benefit comes to the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 422.

¹⁷⁸ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, 352.

¹⁷⁹ Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, vol. 2, 382.

deaf?”¹⁸⁰

Their views on these topics, however, are not monolithic. Instead, they present diverging opinions,¹⁸¹ as evidenced by Âzar’s response to Hâtif’s advice. After praising Hâtif for his wisdom and understanding, Âzar responds to this advice directly:

I am one who collects treasures
and doesn’t sell it to the bazaar merchants for free.
I choose pearls and rubies and gems
in order to adorn the horseshoe of Khusraw’s horse.¹⁸²

Âzar spent his early life in the service of various Shâhs and clearly appreciated his relationship with Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb. His opinion is perhaps not exactly what Hâtif wanted to hear. But as the composer of the poem, he reserves the right of the final word and, in essence, tells Hâtif that earning money for his poetry is exactly the path he will continue to follow.

Other poems by Hâtif, Sabâhî, and Âzar, whether letters or elegies, corroborate many of the ideas and opinions found in the above poem. So too do these poems reflect the poets’ continued awareness of their social surroundings and willingness to engage in topics on the current state of poetic affairs in eighteenth century Iran and the role of the poet.

Following Âzar’s death Hâtif and Sabâhî exchanged letters sharing their grief. While bemoaning the heavens and the fate of their friend, they soon shift their conversation to the latest state of poetic affairs in Iran.

Hâtif and Sabâhî together portray a composite picture of the poetic environment facing them: the “decline of the times,” the under-appreciation of their art, and the prevalence of less than skilled poets. Under such circumstances they question their labor of poetry and whether it is worth all the trouble. With the loss of their esteemed companion Âzar and his contributions to poetry as the backdrop, their remarks are tinged with anger, hopelessness, and despair-- anger resulting from the poetic climate of the times; despair because their poetry may be in vain. They express their derision of the base people of the bazaar (*sufliġân-i bâzârî* for Hâtif; *furûmâyigân-i bâzârî*, for Sabâhî), blaming them for much of what is wrong. This unappreciative audience is unaware of good poetry when they hear it. For Hâtif, these people made this land in which the high-flying dove is mocked:

The heavens made me deal in my helplessness
with base people of the bazaar.
Sometimes from their curses
affliction comes to me and sometimes heart-rending.
Damn the land where the crow of the plain
makes fun of the mountain dove.

¹⁸⁰ Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 94.

¹⁸¹ There is an interesting poem by Âzar, addressed to Hâtif, in which there seems to have been a rift between the Sabâhî and Hâtif. In this poem Âzar sides with Sabâhî against Hâtif, admonishing the latter to accept Sabâhî’s apology and put aside their differences. One can only speculate on what the particular rift was about. Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 298-299.

¹⁸² Âzar, *Dîvân-i Âzar*, 423.

I and this base labor and such partners
accepted it all in helplessness.
What is my profit from this lowly work, do you know?
-to bear the burden of misery from dear ones.^{183*}

Sabâhî depicts the base people of the bazaar in even more vitriolic terms. If it weren't bad enough that they had little taste for poetry, what is worse is their belief that they are connoisseurs of art:

If a group of the base people of the bazaar,
boast as if they're equal to you,
They may be conspicuous in striped cloaks but,
they're naked of the ornament of art.
They argue with Jesus,¹⁸⁴
but not even the donkey of the antichrist would accept them as a veterinarian.
They are hostile like Qipchâqi¹⁸⁵ warriors,
coquettish like Farkhârian¹⁸⁶ idols
They have no crown on their head but tax collectors nonetheless,
no blade in the palm but bloodthirsty nonetheless.^{187†}

Hâtif and Sabâhî continue by fretting over their place as poets among such distasteful listeners. Hâtif, who was trained as a physician, couches his role as a poet in medical terminology, as helping "sick" patients.¹⁸⁸ But he sees little reason for hope. As much as he tries to cure his "patients," feeling one hundred pangs of sorrow in his attempts to cure just one of them, they may be considered dead nonetheless. Sabâhî, for his part, has lost all taste for poetry. To his ear "the sound of the starling and the melody of the turtledove" is one and the same as the "lament of the owl."¹⁸⁹ His pen has forgotten both "shameless insults and pleasant-speaking."¹⁹⁰ During this time of despair, in a world full of poetic know-nothings and one deprived of his companion Âzar, Sabâhî sees little value in maintaining an interest in composing poetry.

¹⁸³ Dunbulî, *Tajribat al-ahrâr*, 353-354.

* See Appendix 1.13.

¹⁸⁴ The implication being that these poets are full of both ignorance and obstinacy if they are willing to argue with Jesus, known for accomplishing many miraculous cures.

¹⁸⁵ The Qipchâq are nomadic people of Central Asia, to the north of the Caspian Sea, famed for their lightning raids.

¹⁸⁶ Farkhâr is a city in Central Asia, renowned for its idol temples.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 356.

† See Appendix 1.14.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 354.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 356.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

The example of Âzar's poem and the letters between Hâtif and Sabâhî should not be taken to mean that the early *bâzgasht* poets felt sympathy for poets writing in a style not in line with their own. Sabâhî's assessment of the poetic environment was disparaging not only of his audience, but also his contemporary poets. In a letter to his friend Rafîq, Sabâhî complains about his fellow poets' lack of knowledge, bad-composition, and vanity. Hasan Sâdât-Nâsirî in his article "Bâzgasht-i adabî" treats this letter as confirmation of the existence of poets who resisted the shift in style to the imitation of the old masters. Sâdât-Nâsirî concludes from this that "breaking the foundation of the *sabk-i Hindî* style of writing was not easy."¹⁹¹

Sabâhî words his letter of complaint against his contemporaries (*abnâ-yi ruzgâr-i marâ*) in explicit terms, lodging four charges against them: their disrespect for their "elders," their lack of clarity and knowledge of poetic composition, their lack of knowledge in poetic composition, and their misuse of terms.* Sabâhî bitingly describes his contemporaries as follows:

[They] didn't pursue the path of the right way, but stood there pointing the direction
they didn't find the way to truth, but sat there [pretending] to investigate it.
They trumpet their learning all the way to the sky, but don't know,
Suhayl from Suhâ and neighing from braying.¹⁹²
[They] cursed Khizr and it is they who wander lost in the desert,
[They] laughed at Noah and it is they who are drowning at sea.
They curse the old masters,
[when] even two of their lines are of the highest order.¹⁹³

Sabâhî reassures Rafîq: "Our path was in imitation of the masters//the masters of the way will not be harmed by nonsense."¹⁹⁴ The establishment of *Anjuman-i Khâqân* of Fath 'Alî-Shâh at the Qajar court in Tehran, where the *bâzgasht* style of poetry was heavily promoted, lends truth to Sabâhî's words.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an alternative understanding of the emergence of the Isfahânî Circle of poets, historically known as the founders of the *bâzgasht* movement. This understanding builds on the *tazkirahs* of the Zand and early Qajar period to recover some of the

¹⁹¹ Hasan Sâdât-Nâsirî, "Bâzgasht-i Adabî," *Yaghmâ* 17:19 (1343/1964): 427.

* For the full letter from Sabâhî to Rafîq see Appendix 1.15.

¹⁹² The star Suhayl (also known as Canopus) is one of the brightest stars in the southern sky and was often used for navigation purposes and possibly also associated with wisdom. Suhâ (also known as Alcor), alternatively, is fainter in brightness and one's ability to see it was often considered a test of good vision. It is perhaps for this reason that the two stars are juxtaposed here by Sabâhî to say that those whom he criticizes cannot even observe the obvious distinction between the two in the night sky.

¹⁹³ Sabâhî, *Dîvân-i Sabâhî-i Bîdgulî*, (Karamî ed.), 193-194.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 194.

social, political, and literary circumstances leading to the formation of this poetic circle, factors often overlooked by later Qajar and modern critics. The poetry of the Isfahânî Circle of poets serves as another resource, adding to our understanding of the social connections among poets, the formation of their poetic community, and their self-perception as artists in an uncertain time. If the *tazkirahs* of the period assist greatly in reconstructing the social and political environment of the time, then the poetry of the Isfahânî Circle helps situate its members within it.

The chapter recounts the vibrant literary environment of Safavid Isfahan, the proper social and literary backdrop for understanding the rise of the *bâzgasht* movement. This environment displays important continuities with post-Safavid Isfahan despite the deteriorating social and political situation between the fall of the Safavids and the rise of the Qajars. Mushtâq's literary society demonstrates remarkably similar traits to *anjumans* in Safavid Iran. Poets like Âzar, Sahbâ, and perhaps Sabâhî, continued to come to Isfahan and connected with like-minded poets. They shared ideas and honed their skills, even without the benefit of the coffeehouses, which were the center of poetic activities in Safavid Isfahan. Several members of Mushtâq's early circle came from humble beginnings and had "day-jobs" just like the poets of the "urban classes," who occupied the Safavid poetic landscape. The "realist" style utilized by poets of Safavid times and the poetry of the early *bâzgasht* poets display similarities with one another. This can be seen through the equal attention both groups of poets devoted to imitating the "masters" and the Isfahânî Circle's familiarity with the work of the poets Nazîrî and Zamîrî.

The poetry of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî served as a window into the perceptions and attitudes of the early *bâzgasht* Isfahânî Circle. Their poetry demonstrates that as much as they concerned themselves with the promotion a particular style of poetry, they were equally concerned with and consciously aware of the role of the poet in society. Early on, in the absence of patronage, they praised one another through the composition of *qasîdahs*, often in imitation of the masters. By doing so, they helped create a poetic community of like-minded poets who, in the absence of patronage, turned to one another for support. Their actions, along with those of other early *bâzgasht* poets like Sahbâ and Rafîq traveling to Shiraz later on, demonstrate the manner in which they sought to reestablish the role of the poet—their roles as poets—in a fluid, fast-changing time. They soon benefited from the patronage of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb, giving them a first taste of official patronage and beginning the process of re-institutionalizing the practice of deference to a patron. When Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb died, these poets moved elsewhere, especially to Shiraz to seek out the patronage of the Zand court. Having had the experience of a renewed and reinvigorated role for poetry, they would not let the chance easily slip away.

The Zand and Qajar-era *tazkirahs* contain an element of self-promotion through their over-emphasis of certain poets' importance and their insertion in the Persian literary canon. These works likely also oversold some of the deleterious effects of social conditions in post-Safavid Iran on the poetic climate. The more post-Safavid Isfahan could be shown to be tumultuous and hopeless, the better could it be juxtaposed with the peace and stability of Zand (and later Qajar) Iran in an effort to present a more powerful creation narrative of the *bâzgasht* movement arising from the ashes of destruction.

Although this chapter did not focus on the manner in which the Isfahânî Circle imitated the styles of the masters, or reiterate existing evidence of this approach, there is no doubt these poets did imitate earlier poets with great frequency. Their many *dîvâns* serve as testaments to the way in which they sought to imitate the classical masters of Persian poetry. Scattered throughout this chapter are examples of different poets engaging with the poetry of one master or another in

different ways and contexts. Yet, although the *bâzgasht* poets may have been concerned with the use of a particular style, both their actions and their poetry demonstrate that they shared other concerns, in particular the role of the poet in the post-Safavid landscape and re-establishing the role of the (“*bâzgasht*”) poet. Thinking through what it meant to be a poet in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Iran and how to reassert their roles as poets was an important first and necessary step in the formative process of the *bâzgasht* movement. That process involved first establishing their poetic community based solely on their own membership and social connections. They then attached themselves to a mayor in Isfahan. When he died, some of their lot went to Shiraz to reconvene at the Zand court, initiating a process that would eventually see the *bâzgasht* style fully realized in Tehran and promoted by the Qajar court by the likes of Fath ‘Alî Shâh and his administrator Nashât Isfahânî.

By seeking to re-establish their role as poets in an official capacity, the *bâzgasht* poets not only gained stylistic dominance in nineteenth century Iran, but also inspired the later-Qajar era *tazkirah* writers of the nineteenth century to promote their tale as one of utmost importance and necessity: the breaking of the so-called “Indian Style” and re-establishment of the role of the eloquent ancients. But before such a story could be told, the *bâzgasht* poets needed to resurrect the poet’s central role and secure the necessary patronage to be in the position to promote a particular style. As the poetry of Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî demonstrates, they were well aware of the task at hand.

Chapter Three: Rivalry, Debate, and Persian Literary Culture on the Margins of *Bâzgasht* in Nineteenth Century India: The Case of the Last Nawâb of Arcot (d. 1855) and his Poetic Society

Introduction

One of the more curious aspects of *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A'zam*, a work dedicated to recounting the lives and works of Persian poets of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic, is that the entry on the local poet Maulavi Muhammad Mahdî “Vâsif” (d. 1290/1873) spans more than twenty pages. The author of this work, who may or may not have been Muhammad Ghaws Khân Bahâdur “A'zam,” the last Nawâb of Arcot¹, clearly had a great deal to say about Vâsif, who, incidentally, was still alive at the time of its writing. This is especially true when compared to the length of all other entries, which at most amount to no more than a page or two.

The initial portion of the entry follows the long-established template of *tazkirahs* by noting Vâsif’s birth, education, and employment: he was born in 1217/1802-3, studied Persian poetry with his father, and taught at an East India Company (EIC) school for seven years. The entry remains positive in nature. The author notes that Vâsif entered the Nawâb’s exclusive Persian poetic society in 1262/1846 (its inaugural year) at the urging of one of its presiding heads, and that among the attendees his “face shone with reverence.”² On account of his many scholarly works, the author continues, Vâsif reached a position of honor. There was, however, one work that the author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* viewed with the utmost disdain: Vâsif’s *tazkirah* of poets entitled *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* (*Mine of Jewels*). “It is not a secret,” the author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* writes, “that in his own *tazkirah* Vâsif had offered rejection and objection in complete mockery and impudence regarding the words of poets.”³ So does the assault upon Vâsif and his work begin.

The author proceeds methodically to list the errors found in Vâsif’s *tazkirah* on a variety of topics. He accuses Vâsif of misunderstanding certain points of prosody (*'arûz*). He mentions that Vâsif erroneously stated the death date of a certain poet, when it is well known that the poet was alive and well after that date. He notes that Vâsif misstates the number of Arabic works of Mîr Âzâd Bilgrâmî as two, when in fact Bilgrâmî wrote seven. He even notes that Vâsif was wrong to state a certain poet’s largesse from a particular ruler as being 3,000 rupees, when in fact

¹ While the English and Persian sources of the time refer to this successor state as “the Carnatic State” and those who ruled over it as the “Nawâbs of Carnatic,” the region of Carnatic is significantly larger than that which the Nawâbs actually controlled. Therefore, when referring to later Nawâbs, such as Muhammad Ghaws Khân Bahâdur, I have opted for the “Nawâb of Arcot,” as it more accurately reflects the scope of the Nawâbs’ domains. Carnatic will be used when discussing trends in the larger region around the court and state and also in reference to the general class of individuals who served as Nawâbs as in “Nawâbs of Carnatic.”

² Muhammad Ghaws Khân Bahâdur “A'zam,” *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A'zam*, Aligarh Muslim University Oriental Manuscript Collection, Aligarh, India, yûnîvirsitî number 20 Fârsî tazkirah, zî al-hijja 1270/1854, 398. The work was composed in 1269/1852-3.

³ Ibid. 398.

the actual sum was 2,000 rupees. The author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* goes to great lengths to nitpick over some very minute details of Vâsif's work, challenging him wherever it can be determined that Vâsif misstated a fact, no matter how small.

On the surface the quibbling is clearly an effort to present Vâsif's general scholarship as careless, inattentive to details, and generally unworthy. A much larger purpose, however, seems to motivate these critiques: the author was trying to undermine Vâsif's trenchant criticism of the great Indian-born poet 'Abd al-Qâdir "Bîdil" (1644-1721), whose work would later be considered the apogee of the so-called *sabk-i Hindî* style in Persian literary history. After presenting Vâsif's opinion on Bîdil, the author articulates his own argument and that of a few other prominent writers in support of the maligned poet. The author, as may be expected, has several problems with Vâsif's depiction of Bîdil and what his poetry represented.

This entry is not the first we hear of Vâsif or his *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* in *Gulzar-i A'zam*. In fact, the introduction to the text states that it was Vâsif's work that inspired this *tazkirah* in the first place:

I inspected the *tazkirah Ma'dan al-jawâhir* by Vâsif and I concluded clearly that the aforementioned work in many places did not penetrate the depths of poetic intricacies. His pen importuned upon the words of the able masters with unwarranted objections. Thus, the ocean of [my] temperament once again raged [and] the pearl of the sea of [my] contemplation boiled; the pure answers of which I encased in [this] *tazkirah*.^{4*}

Tazkirah-yi Gulzar-i A'zam was not the first *tazkirah* attributed to the name of Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân, nor the only *tazkirah* of its time dedicated to the Persian poets of his court and its environs. Nor can it even be claimed that *Gulzar-i A'zam* provides the most insightful account into the scope and nature of Persian literary activity at the Nawâb's court. For that, one must turn to *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, discussed below. Rather, the value of *Tazkirah-yi Gulzar-i A'zam* is found in the manner by which it frames the issue of the *tâzah-gû'î* style, the preeminent debate facing the greater Persianate literary world of the time, with local politics and personal rivalries among poets of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic. This debate cuts to the heart of how the Persian poetic culture of Carnatic is situated within the larger Persianate world at the time, of India and beyond.

The introduction of *Gulzar-i A'zam* begins with the justification that it was written as a rejoinder to another locally produced *tazkirah*, Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir*. But by its conclusion, fittingly in its entry on Vâsif himself, the work widens its lens beyond the local rivalries and specific errors of Vâsif's text to a larger topic facing the legacy of Persian poetic development, one that was being discussed elsewhere in the Persianate world. That this should be taking place enriches our understanding of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic's literary climate-- at once exceedingly local yet still connected to the greater Persianate world. How such a situation unfolded is the story of this chapter.

We begin with a brief history of the Nawâbs of Carnatic after which we examine the personality and early education of Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân, the last Nawâb of Arcot. The focus then turns to the literary activities of the Nawâb's court, the local network of Persian poets, and the general Persian literary climate of his environs. The chapter concludes with a

⁴ Ibid. 6.

* See Appendix 1.16.

discussion of poetic rivalry in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic, and how this competition relates to the debates of the larger Persianate world.

Brief History of the Nawâbs of Carnatic (1698-1855)

The history of the Nawâbs of Carnatic is essential to understanding the cultural atmosphere in which Persian poetry was produced and debated in post-Mughal times. In general, the conditions related to the emergence and development of Mughal successor states can often best be understood on a case-by-case basis. This is certainly true for the rise of the Arcot state in Carnatic. The state's advent is defined by its early rulers' successes in gaining greater control over the flow of external commerce and local ports of entry, and the consequent political and fiscal dynamic these efforts created between themselves, the English, and the French.⁵ To set the full context for the cultural and literary activities of the later Nawâbs, what is offered here is a general sketch of the state's development and its rulers, rather than just the intersection of politics and trade.

The political history of the Arcot state in Carnatic includes two phases. During the first, from 1698 until 1801, the Nawâbs obtained and maintained varying degrees of political power and sovereignty, first as Mughal-appointed governors and later as more independent rulers. In the course of the second phase, from 1801-1855, the political and military power of the Nawâbs diminished under the suzerainty of the British.⁶ Its unique commercial and geographic aspects notwithstanding, the rise of the Nawâbs of Carnatic and the formation of the Arcot state reflect some of the major themes one expects of successor states emerging during the fluid and chaotic times of post-Aurangzeb Mughal India. This is especially evident in the maneuvers of Mughal imperial elites, and the manner in which imperial rivalries and intrigues helped shape new political dynamics on the periphery.⁷

Zûlfiqâr Khân, the son of Aurangzeb's chief vazir, gained the right to administer the Carnatic territory as *subahdar* (governor) following his capture of the Fort of Gingee (Senji) on behalf of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1698. Zûlfiqâr Khân most likely prolonged the siege of Fort Gingee to ensure his position there once the fort fell. He maintained his role as the imperial authority in Carnatic for the next twelve years, but only as a nominal figure based in Delhi, where he continued to accrue further titles and involve himself in the intrigues of the court. His various maneuverings and dealings at the court led to his execution by Farrukh Siyar, the then ruling Mughal Emperor in 1713.⁸ It was Sa'adatallah Khân, appointed *subahdar* in 1710, who

⁵ Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Trade and Politics of the Arcot *Nizâmat* (1700-1732)," in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics*, Alam and Subrahmanyam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 340-395.

⁶ N.S. Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawâbs* (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1984).

⁷ See, for example, Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Munis D. Faruqui, "At Empire's End: The Nizam, Hyderabad, and Eighteenth-Century India," *Modern Asian Studies* 43:1 (Jan. 2009): 5-43.

⁸ Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawâbs*, 11-14.

was able to secure for his successors dynastic control over the Carnatic territory. Borrowing a page from Zûlfiqâr Khân's playbook, Sa'adatallah Khân utilized his more favorable position of an "on the ground" provincial office-holder, living in Carnatic rather than Delhi, to garner greater independent control, wresting it from imperial oversight. As Susan Bayly notes, the Carnatic proved an ideal setting to establish a Mughal successor state as "the subah was a new and unstable frontier zone, and despite the presence of Mughal garrisons and revenue takers in the region, it had never acquired secure links to the imperial centre."⁹

Sa'adatallah Khân capitalized on his position in Carnatic, consolidating his rule by constructing towns, building a base among the populace, and attracting artisans and military men. He established his capital city at Arcot, which became a center of learning known as "Shâhjahânâbâd [i.e. Delhi] the small," exploiting its ability to attract poets, scholars and Sufis, largely as a result of the "disruption of patronage at other Muslim court centres."¹⁰

Sa'adatallah Khân's successors proved less able to maintain stability over their territory. From the year of his death in 1732 until 1749, chaos and instability ensued, with the British, Nizâm al-Mulk Âsaf Jâh (the newly emergent ruler of the post-Mughal state of Hyderabad), and the Marathas seeking to influence the direction of the territory's rule and administration. Finally, Anwar al-Dîn Khân, a North Indian soldier, became the new Nawâb in 1746, followed shortly thereafter by his son, Muhammad 'Alî Wâlâjâh I, in 1749. Under his rule, the Wâlâjâhî line took firm control over the office of the Nawâb. This family would continue in power until the territory's annexation by the British in 1855.

The full development of the Carnatic state, and its place as a successor state in post-Mughal India, largely resulted from the activities and relationships undertaken during the forty-six year reign of Muhammad 'Alî Wâlâjâh. His long rule had two main features: the continued consolidation of the kingdom's bureaucratic apparatus and courtly patronage activities, and conversely, the increased British involvement in the kingdom's state of affairs, leading to its precarious financial and political position. According to Jim Phillips, the policies and rule of Muhammad 'Alî solidified Wâlâjâhî rule thanks to the development of administrative structures, the absorption of subordinate vassals, and the imposition of revenue collection upon the populace.¹¹

The establishment of Wâlâjâhî rule witnessed an influx of people seeking to attend to the state.¹² Government servants, soldiers, jurists, literary men, and Sufis came in search of employment and patronage. Many of them, like the Wâlâjâhîs themselves, were among the north Indian urban gentry.¹³ In this respect, the Carnatic state under the Wâlâjâhîs helped harbor and grow an Urdu-speaking Muslim elite, which, as will be seen below, nonetheless remained tied to traditional literary and educational norms of the Persianate world.

⁹ Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South India Society, 1700-1900* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 152.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 153-154.

¹¹ Jim Phillips, "A Successor to the Moguls: The Nawâb of the Carnatic and the East India Company, 1763-1785," *The International History Review* 7.3 (Aug. 1985): 366.

¹² It is perhaps worth mentioning that like Sa'adatallah Khân and his successors, the Wâlâjâhîs were Shia.

¹³ Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings*, 155.

Aside from providing patronage and employment opportunities to different classes of Muslims, the Nawâbs also employed groups of non-Muslims to fit their needs as a burgeoning state in South India. Among them were the Niyogis, whose variegated linguistic skills allowed them to act as “social and economic intermediaries between the local world of the village and the cosmopolitan world of the court.” These polyglot and “secular Brahmins” also provided assistance to famed British orientalist and epigrapher Colin Mackenzie and the production of colonial knowledge.¹⁴ Equally adept in Persian (the official language of the court) and local vernaculars, the Niyogis helped the Nawâbs manage internal affairs and to maintain connections with the local populace. Furthermore, the Nawâbs continually sought to incorporate and co-opt non-Islamic religious symbols, such as patronage of Hindu places of worship, thereby practicing a statecraft that transcended communal and religious boundaries.¹⁵

In 1766, Muhammad Ali Wâlâjâhî moved his court from Arcot to a lavish residence at Chepauk next to Fort St. George, Madras. The move to Madras marks a symbolic turn in the development of the Arcot state and is indicative of the further enmeshing of the activities of the court with that of the EIC. The employees and attendees of the court now found themselves in closer proximity to EIC officers, offices, and institutions potentially in need of their services. This proximity allowed such individuals to better service both the Nawâb’s court and the EIC, which many would do later in the century and beyond. Local Muslim poets and scholars easily found employment teaching Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani at the “Company Madrasah,” and at its replacement (Fort St. George College, opened in 1812), or served the Company in other capacities, such as private language tutors, interpreters, and assistants.¹⁶

More importantly, through the move to Madras, the Arcot state became more embroiled in financial dealings with the EIC, its officers, and private individuals. The Nawâb’s practice of borrowing large sums of money from outside sources proved detrimental to the long-term sovereignty of his successors. The debts the Nawâb accumulated with both the EIC and private individuals increasingly came to define many of his relations with the British. His lenders worried whether they would ever see repayment. The longer his debts remained outstanding, the greater the pressure and intrusion of the EIC into the state’s financial affairs.¹⁷ As long as the prospect remained that he would repay his loans, his ability to stay in power was relatively secure, owing to the parties having a vested interest in his authority to draw on state revenues and remain financially solvent. Once it was determined that Muhammad ‘Alî was unable or unwilling to repay his loans, the EIC looked for a way to redefine their relationship with him and his court, further injecting themselves into the state’s political, military, and financial affairs.

The final justification for the EIC to take greater control of the state’s military affairs and revenue collection, however, was made on political, not financial, grounds. The EIC accused the Nawâb of collusion with one of their archrivals, Tipu Sultan of Mysore, alleging an attempt to

¹⁴ Phillip B. Wagoner, “Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.4 (Oct. 2003): 769.

¹⁵ Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings*, 168.

¹⁶ Sylvia Vatuk, “Islamic Learning at the College of Fort St. George in Nineteenth-century Madras,” in *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India*, ed. Thomas R. Trautmann (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 49-50.

¹⁷ Phillips, “A Successor to the Moguls,” 366.

form an alliance with Tipu Sultan against the British or sharing information concerning British activities and maneuvers. The British leveraged these claims eventually to allow them to select and recognize the next Nawâb, offering a stipend in exchange for handing over rule of the Carnatic.¹⁸

In 1801 the proclaimed heir to the Wâlâjâhî throne, Tâj al-Umarâ ‘Alî Husayn Khân “Majîd,” refused to sign the treaty that would recognize the new British suzerainty over his domains. When he refused, the British backed another candidate. In July 1801 the newly installed Nawâb ‘Azîm al-Dawlah signed the treaty, agreeing in essence to British oversight and control.

From this point forward the Nawâbs of Arcot become little more than titular heads of state, guaranteed by British protection. Ironically, as the political and financial fortunes of the state began to wane, the Wâlâjâhî court rose to new heights of princely splendor and lavishness, with a greater attention to “the sacred and ceremonial functions of kingship and on rituals which exalted the status of the ruler and his kin.”¹⁹ This certainly proved to be true in the case of Nawâb Ghaws Khân Bahâdur (1239/1824-1272/1855), the last Nawâb of Arcot, who succeeded his father A‘zam Jâh in 1825. At the time he was a little more than a year old. For the next seventeen years a regent ruled in his name.

Pivot of Persian: The Education of Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân “A‘zam ”

*It is the time of learning for the prince of our age,
From his splendor the night of enjoyment like luminous morning rage.
He is the elegance of the throne and the beauty of the Wâlâjâhî crown,
A shining candle has he become to this house of renown.*²⁰

-Râ’iq on the occasion of the Nawâb commencing his studies

Due to his age at the time of his father’s death, the young Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân’s uncle ‘Azîm Jâh was appointed regent. He would not rule in his own right until he reached the age of maturity at eighteen years old. More than half of his life (he died at age 31) was spent under the regent’s control and devoted to educational activities that included, among other subjects, the study of Persian literature. His early engagement with Persian poetry in particular proved crucial in defining the cultural parameters of his court, his later literary activities, and overall poetic outlook. These early experiences were crucial. They informed and inspired his later rule as a Nawâb invested in the promotion of Persian literary culture and as a participant in that culture as “A‘zam” (his pen name).

The young Nawâb’s early education followed established curricular norms and practices found throughout the Persianate world at that time. The curriculum was based on the study of

¹⁸ Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawâbs*, 375.

¹⁹ Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses, and Kings*, 223.

²⁰ Cited in Muhammad Yosouf Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960* (Madras: Ameer & Co., 1394/1974), 277. All extended quotes cited in Kokan are translated by me from the original Persian or Arabic.

Islamic sciences, Persian literary texts, and *adab*, where the degree of formality of one's instruction depended on one's resources, associations, and the societal position of one's family. As a member of a royal household and heir to the throne, the Nawâb's education was a procedural formality and necessity, not unlike the Mughal nobles and elites of a previous period. With devoted tutors dedicated to his educational prowess and advancement, he studied Arabic, the Qur'an, and some of the traditional religious sciences, such as *hadith* and *fiqh*. He then studied the Persian language and calligraphy, followed by instruction in the great classics of Persian poetry and the art of Persian composition. In addition to reading works like Sa'dî's *Bûstân* and Jâmi's *Yûsuf va Zulaykhâ*, he also became acquainted with other collections of poetry, such as that of the great Indian poet 'Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil, and works dedicated to *inshâ*.²¹ On the surface, his education was not altogether exceptional compared to previous princes or the contemporary poets later active in his court, but this formative education would have a lasting impact.

The Nawâb's early association with the poet and scholar Sayyid Abû Tayyib Khân "Vâlâ" (d. 1264/1848) would affect the direction of literary developments and debates years later at his court. The young Nawâb met Vâlâ around the age of twelve and appointed him his teacher in poetry in 1251/1835.²² Under Vâlâ's tutelage, he read a variety of Persian texts and was guided through the intricacies of poetic composition and stylistics. Vâlâ became influential in poetic activities and debates during the Nawâb's reign not only because he was the Nawab's teacher but through his teaching of many other poets at the Nawâb's court. Vâlâ would later be accused of being the real author of the *tazkirahs* bearing the name of the Nawâb, a charge that became the concluding act of a much broader ongoing debate concerning literary activities conducted at the Nawab's court. This accusation, however, occurred long after the Nawâb and Vâlâ were deceased.

The Nawâb's early education was also influenced by his introduction to the poetry of Nâsir 'Alî Sirhindî (d. 1696), one of the great Indian-born poets of the late Mughal period. The Nawâb's admiration for the poetry and style of Sirhindî left a deep impression. He sought to imitate Sirhindî's style and recognized him as his model (*muqtadâ*) in his later writing.²³ The poet Bînish observed that the foundation of the Nawâb's poetry (*pâyah-yi sukhan*) was based upon that of Sirhindî's.²⁴ Sirhindî's poetry would be a central part of the literary affairs that consumed the Nawâb's court and would continue to shape his own poetry.

As much as the development of the Nawâb's literary and cultural taste was defined by his studies it was equally defined by the subjects he did not pursue. Much to the dismay of the EIC, Muhammad Ghaws Khân took little interest in the study of the English language or in the EIC's recommendations for what his education as a future ruler should entail. Even though the Nawâb of Arcot had become no more than a titular position by the time of Muhammad Ghaws Khân's

²¹ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 351. Also see Sayyid 'Alîrizâ Naqavî, *Tazkirah-navîsî dar Hind va Pâkistân* (Tehran: 'Alî Akbar 'Ilmî, 1373/1964), 547.

²² Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 368.

²³ *Ibid.* 351.

²⁴ Sayyid Murtazâ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, ed. Dr. Sharîf Husayn Qâsimî (Delhi: Indo-Persian Society, 1973), 44.

lifetime, the EIC nonetheless sought to influence his educational development. The Court at Madras, through its government agent at Chepauk, encouraged the Nawâb to take his study of English and the “branch[es] of Science” more seriously. The agent even attempted to coax the Nawâb and his handlers into allowing him to spend the final years of his education at Calcutta, where the “qualifications which were calculated to throw a lustre over the throne of his ancestors would be most readily acquired.”²⁵ This suggestion, along with others, met with resistance, and the British authorities in Madras were forced to abandon their overtures. In their estimation, the Nawab’s resistance was indicative of an individual indifferent to the future duties of his rule and of the overindulgent relatives charged with his care.

This view of the young Muhammad Ghaws Khân as a disinterested and lackadaisical prince at the center of a disorganized court was only the initial formulation of the British impression of the Nawâb. This impression persisted and developed further beyond his childhood with only slight modification. Later on, he was increasingly seen as the profligate ruler mired in debt and inattentive to his financial affairs. The Court of Directors in London was most critical of the Nawâb, formulating their criticism of the Nawâb’s financial affairs as both a consequence of his own actions and his advisors, the same factors referenced in their earlier criticism of his education. In response to a series of political letters in 1849 detailing recent financial developments, the Court of Directors expressed its “regret that extravagance and bad advisers have already involved this young Prince in heavy pecuniary embarrassments.”²⁶ There was evidence of the Nawâb’s financial mismanagement and woes. He often found himself in arrears and seeking out assistance from the EIC or private citizens to lift him out of debt. In one memorable case, a group of Kashmiri merchants blocked the gate of the Nawâb’s *divân* to prevent him from making the pilgrimage to Mecca until he paid them money he owed.²⁷ In the realm of learning and education, however, the British assessment could not be further from the truth. Whereas the British saw a disinterested prince making little progress in his studies, the Nawâb was engaged in a more rigorous study of Persian poetry and literature. Under the penname “A‘zam,” the Nawâb began composing Persian and Urdu poetry with increasing ease during his youth.

The response of the Nawâb and his court toward EIC efforts to chart the heir’s cultural and political education is indicative of the larger dynamic that overshadowed their relationship. In the face of British suzerainty and increased management over military and political matters, the Nawâb and his court sought to protect whatever was still in their control. In specific terms, this concerned the Nawâb’s upbringing and education as an heir to the throne; more generally, it involved the cultural direction and composition of court activities. Throughout his short fifteen-year reign, the Nawâb would define himself in terms of his court’s cultural activities, exercising greater control than other areas such as foreign affairs and finance. He did this most prominently through his engagement with and promotion of literary activities. The Nawâb collected books in Arabic and Persian on a wide array of topics and his royal library “contained almost all of the eminent works in all the three languages [Arabic, Persian, Urdu] on the various branches of

²⁵ Madras Letter to Court, Foreign Department, 14 February 1837, no. 3.

²⁶ Madras Letter from Court, Foreign Department, 6 February 1849, no. 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

learning.”²⁸ He established several printing presses to publish classical works in Arabic and Persian.²⁹ He oversaw construction of a State Library in 1267/1850 to house books and manuscripts collected from across India and abroad.³⁰

The realm of Persian literary-cultural activities firmly anchored the Nawab’s court. He provided patronage and bestowed titles on poets, composed his own verse in Persian, wrote several Persian *tazkirahs* (or had them commissioned in his name), and presided over a society devoted to discussion of Persian poetry. Such activities, of course, all had historical precedents within the Persianate sphere. But the Nawâb was not simply following established practice. He was heavily invested in the direction of Persian literary culture at his court.

His literary society was not an informal gathering of poets, but an officially sanctioned assembly that closely guarded its membership, sought to establish standards of Persian poetry, and to delineate its proper composition. The Nawâb took such deep pride in its establishment that he sent thirty-one copies of *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, a work devoted to recording the literary society’s activities and participant members, to the Madras Court for distribution, the sole work sent by him to local British authorities.³¹

Similarly, the two *tazkirahs* appearing under his name were not merely a catalog of the Persian poets of Carnatic, but an endeavor to amend information contained in other *tazkirahs* deemed insufficient or inaccurate. The Nawâb’s *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan* (completed 1258/1842-3), which his teacher Vâlâ was accused of writing, was written as a corrective to *Guldastah-yi Karnâtik (Bouquet of Carnatic)*, a work composed by the poet Ghulâm ‘Alî Mûsâ Rizâ “Râ’iq” (d. ca. 1248-9/1832-4) in the previous decade. The introduction indicates that the *tazkirah* was written after the author had closely investigated Râ’iq’s *Guldastah* and determined that some of its entries were lacking like a “paper flower, without scent” (*gul-kâghaz bî-bû*).³² The other *tazkirah* bearing the Nawâb’s name, *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A‘zam* (completed 1269/1852-3), was also in response to a recently completed *tazkirah* (Vâsif’s *Ma‘dan al-jawâhir*), deemed unsatisfactory. Notably, the introduction to this work includes a grandiose appraisal of A‘zam’s effect upon the poetic community of Carnatic through his poetic society. Thanks to this society, the author writes, “Persian poetry (re)attained a position of grandeur during this time.”³³

Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân was not only a patron of Persian literary activities but also an active participant devoted to shaping their development. He was viewed as such by

²⁸ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 359.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 352.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 359-360.

³¹ Madras Letter from Court, Foreign Department, 18 October 1854, no. 3. Unfortunately, the Political Letter from the Madras Court to the Court of Directors (3 June 1854, no. 1) recording the receipt of the copies of *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish* and their associated comments could not be located at the National Archives of India in New Delhi. All that is known from the transaction is a response of the Court of Directors to the Madras Court stating: “We presume that this work, of which thirty one copies have been presented to your Government by the Nuwaub, has been compiled under the directions of His Highness. We approve your having thanked His Highness for those copies and having distributed them in accordance with his wishes.”

³² See “Tazkirah-yi Subh-i Vatan” in Naqavî, *Tazkirah-navîsî dar Hind va Pâkistân*, 549.

³³ A‘zam, *Gulzar-i A‘zam*, 6-7.

others. The dictionary *Bahr-i 'Ajam (Sea of 'Ajam)* by the poet and scholar Maulavi Muhammad Husayn Qadirî “Râqim” (d. 1303/1888) exemplifies this opinion.³⁴ Râqim dedicates the work to the Nawâb, not by celebrating his just rule, powers, and beneficence, but by praising his poetic voice, critical discernment, command of language, and comprehension of difficult topics.³⁵ More than being commended as the Nawâb of Arcot, he is admired as the poet A‘zam.

From childhood until death, the Nawâb engaged with Persian literary activities. He served as their promoter, protector, and arbiter, both as the Nawâb and as the poet A‘zam. He helped sustain their vibrancy at his court through a variety of activities, even in the face of British suzerainty and disapproval. The details and nuances of such a vibrant Persian literary culture, how it functioned, who participated in it, and how it was positioned within the post-Mughal Indian landscape and beyond, are best seen by looking at his literary society, the fulcrum of Persian literary activity at his court.

The Poetic Society of Muhammad Ghaws Khân and the Persian Poets of Carnatic

*Persian in Madras was like a body without a soul,
Like the Messiah the sublime A‘zam brought it to life.*³⁶

The poetic society of Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân, established in 1262/1846 and lasting for roughly ten years until the Nawâb’s death, was an officially sanctioned affair that met once a week at the royal residence. Here professional poets, scholars, and court administrators congregated to recite their own verses, critique the poetry of their peers, and engage in discussion. Even though several poets in attendance were known to compose both Persian and Urdu verse, including the Nawâb himself, the society restricted its work to the composition and discussion of Persian poetry alone.

Most of the extant information relating to the Nawab’s poetic society³⁷ comes from Sayyid Murtazâ “Bînish” (d. 1266/1849) and his *Tazkirah-yi ishârat-i Bînish* (completed 1265/1848-9). The purpose of this work was to document the poetic society as well as the lives of other contemporary poets in the area of Carnatic. Bînish died in 1266/1849 and consequently was only able to witness the first years of the Nawâb’s poetic society; his *tazkirah* nonetheless provides a wealth of information. It includes information on the poetic, familial, and employment backgrounds of the society’s members as well as other poets in Carnatic who died prior to the

³⁴ Râqim, who will be met further below, also presided over the Nawâb’s literary society and for a short time served as headmaster of *Madrasah-yi A‘zam*. See Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 411.

³⁵ Muhammad Husayn Râqim, *Bahr-i 'Ajam*, College of Fort William Collection, No. 527 (New Delhi National Archives of India), 2.

³⁶ By the poet Ahmadî, cited in Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 417.

³⁷ The poetic society is variously referred to in contemporary sources as *mahfil-i A‘zam* (A‘zam’s society), *mushâ‘irah-yi A‘zam* (A‘zam’s poetic gathering), or simply *mushâ‘irah* (poetic gathering) or *mahfil* (society).

society's formation or did not attend. By situating the society in the larger historical and literary context of Carnatic, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish* catalogues the various inter-relationships among poets, administrators, and elites composing Persian poetry during this time. In doing so, Bînish provides a rare glimpse into how Persian literary culture continued to be relevant in mid-nineteenth century India in the decades immediately following Macaulay's famous minute on education and the British decision to replace Persian in 1835, supposedly sealing its fate once and for all.³⁸

The location of the poetic society at the Nawâb's court made it an exclusive affair. The attendees were rigorously vetted, only being accepted by the Nawâb or one of the assembly's leading figures. As a result, it consisted predominantly of well-known poets, scholars, and administrators employed at the court, who were the key figures in the debates shaping the scope and direction of Persian literary activity during the Nawâb's reign.

At the head of the poetic society was Maulavi Muhammad Husayn Qadirî "Râqim" (d. 1303/1888), the revered master of Persian poetry of Carnatic, who served as the instructor in poetry for many individuals during the time and received the title of *shîrîn sukhân* (mellifluous) from the Nawâb. Râqim was the star pupil of the poet Vâlâ, the Nawâb's instructor in poetry. Vâlâ eventually appointed Râqim to read and correct the poetry of many of his students.³⁹ When Vâlâ died in 1264/1848, Râqim also became the Nawâb's instructor in poetry.⁴⁰ Râqim served as the headmaster of *Madrasah-yi A'zam*, appointed to that position in 1268/1851-2.⁴¹ At the poetic society, however, his role was largely ceremonial. The actual managing of the society's meetings was left to two judges (*hakamayn mushâ'irah*), the poets Mîrân Muhay al-Dîn "Vâqif" (d. 1270/1854) and Muhammad Quadratallah Khân Gûpâmavî "Quadrat" (d. 1281/1864), who were appointed to their roles by the Nawâb as first and second judge, respectively. Quadrat, who was a companion of the Nawâb's father A'zam Jâh, gained fame as the author of a *tazkirah* entitled *Natâ'ij al-afkâr* (*Consequences of Thoughts*; completed 1258/1842). Vâqif taught Persian at the State Madrasah in Carnatic and was responsible for training in poetry many of his contemporaries.⁴²

Every poet present at the society had the ability to challenge the words of their peers by deeming them unacceptable and "without proof from the words of the masters of language" (*bidûn-i istidlâl az kalâm-i asâtidah-yi ahl-i lisân*). These challenges could result in possible embarrassment, erode the poet's confidence in presenting verses again, or cause the accused to stop attending the society's gatherings in the future.⁴³ Vâqif and Quadrat were responsible for

³⁸ Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Minute on Education," 2 Feb. 1835. Available online at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/meaac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html. Accessed 18 Feb 2014.

³⁹ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 411.

⁴⁰ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 85.

⁴¹ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 411.

⁴² Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 391-392. Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 120.

⁴³ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 39.

keeping order.⁴⁴ If a debate arose that two participants could not resolve themselves, the matter was referred to the two judges to settle the dispute. According to Bînish, the two judges' mediation would end by sending the "deficient one" on his way with "his ignominy consigned by [their] resplendent thinking and sound reason."⁴⁵ In fact, however, the record of Vâqif and Qudrat's dismissals is less definitive. The poet Maulavi Sayyid al-Dîn "Valâ," not to be confused with his father (the Nawâb's erstwhile teacher Vâlâ) got into a difficult dispute (*mubâhisah-yi sakht*) with Vâqif. It is not clear what led to the dispute in the first place, but only that Valâ ceased attending afterward. Whether he was banned for challenging Vâqif's authority or decided on his own not to return is uncertain. A participant could, however, most certainly be dismissed for breaching accepted decorum, as in the case of the poet Ghûlam Dastgîr Ghîyâs "Lâ'iq." He was prevented from continuing to attend on account of his hasty temper (*âkhirish az tund mizâjî mamnû ' shud*).⁴⁶

Among the society's members were the Nawâb's petitioner (*'arz-bigî*),⁴⁷ his English translator,⁴⁸ and the individual who recited⁴⁹ Persian books for the pleasure of the Nawâb. Also in attendance were several individuals whose fathers had attained positions of distinction at the Nawâb's court or previously, bolstering the society's elite and courtly status further. It did not matter if such participants had little to contribute other than family name. Nearly all of those present were born and raised around Madras, and many had studied poetry with teachers like Vâqif and/or Râqim, which may in itself have led to their admission to the society. The most notable exception to this local profile was the Baghdad-born poet Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Bâqî al-Sharîf al-Rizvî "Vafâ" (d. 1273/1856), whose travel and employment opportunities took him to Madras. Like many others he participated in the society at the Nawâb's invitation. Due to his previous travel in Iran, the Nawâb also requested that Vafâ participate in the society and serve as arbiter of Persian discussions (*dar mahfil-i mushâ'irah sharîk, dar guftgû-hâ-yi muhâvarât-i fârsiyah hakam bûd.*)⁵⁰ Interestingly, also present was Maulavi Muhammad Mahdî "Vâsif," introduced above, whose publication of a controversial *tazkirah* would initiate personal rivalries and poetic clashes at the Nawâb's court, and set this author on a path to challenge the ethics and practices of the Nawâb's Persian literary activities.

⁴⁴ The official structure of the poetic society was rounded out with the appointment of Khâlis, a student of Râqim, who served as the society's *munshî-garî*. See Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 72.

⁴⁵ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 39.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 108.

⁴⁷ See "Shâ'ir," Ibid. 91.

⁴⁸ See "M'âwin," Ibid. 108.

⁴⁹ See "Akram," Ibid. 51.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 123.

Mapping Persian Poetic Culture in mid-Nineteenth Century Carnatic

The poetic society of Muhammad Ghaws Khân was an exclusive affair, but it did not encompass all Persian literary activity in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic. The literary society, firmly located at the court, may have been the center of Persian literary culture in Carnatic and represent its greatest expression, but it also was part of a more extensive literary landscape.

Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish, the window into the members, affairs, and structure of the poetic society of Muhammad Ghaws Khân, serves an additional purpose. It enables one to map a world of Persian poetic culture beyond the Nawâb's court-sponsored activities and to identify a constellation of individuals for whom Persian poetry remained a continued outlet and means of expression. The *tazkirah* highlights the lives and careers of professional poets, scholars, elites, secretaries, administrators, judges, revenue collectors, and teachers whose similarities in education and professional experience, not to mention the inter-relationships among them, reveal a social network of individuals for whom Persian poetry remained relevant in post-Mughal times. These individuals, no matter their particular career choice, moved in many of the same social, literary, and scholarly circles.⁵¹ Bînish's *tazkirah* provides a view of these circles and trends from the ground up, expressed through the poetic activities of various elites.

Of the roughly seventy poets recorded in *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish* about two-thirds did *not* attend the poetic society, but nonetheless entered the purview of the author as men who continued to compose Persian poetry, particularly in and around Madras in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, to earn a spot in *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, one's presence in Madras or its environs seems to have been a prerequisite. Except for a few cases of poets situated in Hyderabad, whose presence Bînish became aware of through his brother Mir Mahdî al-Husaynî "Sâqib" (d. after 1304/1886-7), the poets included in Bînish's *tazkirah* are restricted to the Nawâb's domain and its immediate environs. This city and its vicinity was home to the Nawâb's court and the seat of British power, a vibrant metropolis providing an array of employment and poetic opportunities. Such opportunities attracted men from near and far and drew them into local bureaucratic and literary networks. Not unlike their predecessors (and in some cases their direct ancestors) who served as administrators and in other professional capacities for the Mughals, these men held a variety of professions but continued to compose Persian poetry

Many Persian poets active during the Nawâb's reign were born or raised in and around Madras. Some poets were affiliated with the court of the Nawâb; others employed by the East India Company. The poet Maulavi Tâj al-Dîn "Bahjat" (d. after 1271/1854-5), for example, grew up in Madras and held various judicial positions under the British. He also composed a tract on the science of prosody (*ilm-i 'arûz*) used by local students.⁵² Maulavi Muhammad Irtizâ 'Alî Khân Gûpâmavî "Khûshnûd" (d. after 1265/1848-9) served as chief justice of the superior court in Madras (*qazi al-quzat sadr-i 'adâlat*), yet still found time to engage himself "day and night" in *zîkr* (remembrance of God) and the composition of poetry that tended to be *'irfânî* (mystical) in nature.⁵³ The poet Ghulâm Qâdir "Azhar" (d. after 1265/1848-9), who hailed from Arcot,

⁵¹ Vatuk, "Islamic Learning at the College of Fort St. George in Nineteenth-century Madras," 51.

⁵² Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 51.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 70.

worked for a time as an instructor to English officers and then entered Madras to serve as a district judge (*munsif*).⁵⁴

Men also came to Madras from afar, looking for opportunities and “people of government” (*ahl-i hukumat*) for whom they could put their skills to use.⁵⁵ The poet Maulavi Abd al-Vudûd “‘Âshiq” (d. 1268/1852), for example, from near Allahâbâd and a family of administrators, headed to Madras in accordance with the request of Europeans (*hasb al-talab-i ahl-i firang*.) He achieved positions in district tax collection (*zila’*) in Natharnigar before attaining the post of *sadr-i amînî-i zila’* in Changalpât.⁵⁶ ‘Âshiq’s father had served as an instructor at a Company school in Calcutta, an aid to his son’s ambitions. Maulavi Muhammad Hasan ‘Alî Mahilî “Hasan” (d. 1258/1842-3) came to Madras from Benares in search of employment, gaining appointment as instructor of Arabic and Persian to English officers at the Company school in Madras.⁵⁷ Likewise, Muhammad Sharaf al-Dîn Hyderâbâdî “Sa’îd” entered the Nawâb’s domains in 1255/1839-40 for the sake of subsistence (*bih-taqâzâ’-yi âb va dânah*).⁵⁸

By coming to Madras these men were not just entering a local network of administration and employment, but also one of poetry. If it was the possibility of employment that drew them to the Nawâb’s domains in the first place, then it was their commitment to the composition of Persian poetry that brought them together and earned them a spot in Bînîsh’s *tazkirah*. The conjunction of ample job possibilities and the presence of a literary culture allowed such a community to thrive. Participants could co-mingle with like-minded men of letters, engage in debate, and even instruct others in poetry. The local network of poets welcomed newcomers from beyond the region, as did the poetic society.⁵⁹ Such chances for individuals outside of the Nawâb’s domains were made possible because of the existence of a developed circle of local elites committed to the use and practice of Persian poetry.

The nature of this local network is available due to Bînîsh’s absolute insistence to provide the details of one’s educational and poetic backgrounds. His entries weave through an individual’s poetic life, identifying with whom each studied the educational Persian books (*kutub-i darsîyyah-yi fârsî*), had their verses corrected (*az nazar-i [kasî] mi-guzarânid*), was trained in poetry (*mashq-i sukhân*), and generally came into contact during the time of their development as poets.⁶⁰ His information describes the connections among the individuals listed, enabling an enmeshed network of not just poets, but brothers, sons, uncles, administrators, and other elites to emerge. It is not uncommon for a *tazkirah* to note such information, but Bînîsh’s

⁵⁴ Ibid. 49.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 67-68.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 95.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 67-68.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 89.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 72.

⁶⁰ Other variations of this phrase are: Persian study books (*kutub-i darsîyyah-yi fârsî*), Persian schooling books (*kutub-i tahsîlah-yi fârsî*), and the customary Persian and Arabic books (*kutub-i mutadâvalah-yi fârsî va ‘arabî*).

listing of one's Persian educational and poetic background in such a deliberate and consistent manner results in more than a simple recording of basic biographical details. It gives his *tazkirah* its structural backbone and internal organization, and allows it to become a ledger of collective memory. His *tazkirah* appears equally as an effort to record those individuals that composed Persian poetry in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic as it is to emphasize an individual's Persian "credentials" and poetic lineage. *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, by its sheer focus on the array of individuals composing Persian poetry and their traceable poetic roots, stands as testament to the strength and position of Persian poetic culture during that time. It is not surprising that the Nawâb sent copies of this work to his British counterparts, revealing as it was of the strength and maintenance of Persian poetic culture in his domain, a project that he valued above all else.

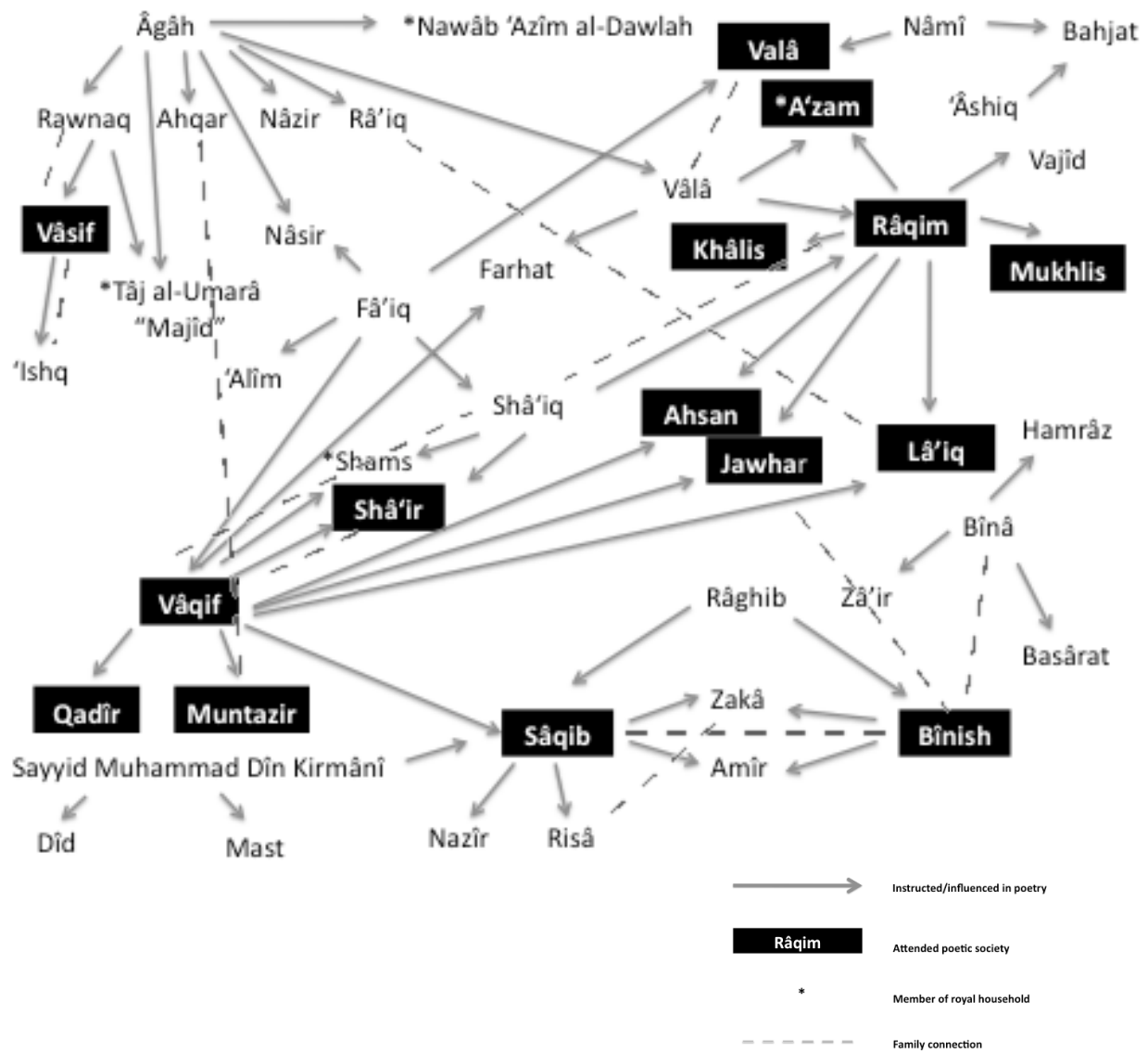
The intricate connections between the Persian poets of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic through their education, instruction, and training in poetry (as well as family connections and those who attended the poetic society) are traced in Figure 1. This map allows one to see with greater clarity just how enmeshed a network existed among these poets. One can see how the poetic society of the Nawâb, exclusive as it was, was situated and entangled among a much larger literary landscape and network of elites, whether they be members of the court, teachers, employees of the British or otherwise. Situated within this larger literary landscape, the poetic society of Muhammad Ghaws Khân takes on a slightly different color.

The poetic society was only one piece of a much more vibrant and interconnected surrounding poetic environment. Within its orbit were other authors of Persian poetry connected through blood or poetic instruction. Although themselves not members of the poetic society, they nonetheless were connected, both horizontally and vertically, to individuals who were. These connections are important to gain a fuller understanding of the general position and environment of Persian poetry and those composing it. This is equally true for the Nawâb's reign as it is for the previous period. Many individuals active in composing Persian poetry during the Nawâb's time held positions of prominence during the reigns of his forefathers or entered his domain before he came of age. Tracing the poetic lineage of poets during the Nawâb's reign, one can see the layers of this network stretching back in time and place prior to the Nawâb's promotion of Persian literary activities. It serves as a reminder that the reigns of previous Nawâbs in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century also had benefitted from an influx of scribes, poets, administrators and scholars.

Râ'iq, the author of the *Tazkirah-yi Guldastah-yi Karnâtik*, for example, had a long history of serving the Nawâb of Carnatic well before Muhammad Ghaws' reign, but remained active during his rule. He served as a *munshî* during the reign of Umdat al-Ûmarâ' (d. 1216/1801), court physician to the Nawâb's grandfather 'Azîm al-Dawlah (d. 1234/1818), and private secretary to the Nawâb's father A'zam Jâh (d. 1241/1825).⁶¹

⁶¹ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 272.

Fig. 1 Network map of poetic connections in nineteenth century Carnatic according to *Tazkirah-yi isharât-i Bînish* (1265/1848-9)



Ghulâm Muhay al-Dîn “Shâ’iq” (d. 1249/1833), the elder brother of Vâqif and uncle of Râqim, did not attend the poetic society himself but helped train someone that did -- the poet “Shams,” one of Muhammad Ghaws Khân’s uncles and a member of the society.⁶² Shâ’iq was also in the service of the Nawâb’s father A’zam Jâh and served as a Persian instructor at the state *madrasah*. The poet Râghib (d. 1269/1852-3), scion of a family that held a large *jâgîr* outside Madras worth one lakh of rupees, instructed both Bînish and his brother Sâqib in poetry.⁶³ Both Bînish and

⁶² Ibid. 239.

⁶³ Ibid. 375.

Sâqib attended the poetic society. The poet Maulavi Turâb ‘Alî Khayrâbâdî “Nâmî” (d. 1243/1827), though unaffiliated with Muhammad Ghaws’ predecessors, had prior experience working with the British before coming to Madras. The poet from Khayrâbâd, U.P., first served as a travel companion to Captain Lockett, with whom he traveled from Calcutta to Iran, before seeking a living in Madras. Moving to that city, he gained appointment as a teacher at the EIC *madrasah* in Fort Saint George where he instructed several local poets.⁶⁴ Such cases help widen the frame of Persian poetic culture in Carnatic during this time. They may have been a layer or two removed in both time and space from the Nawâb’s poetic society, but were nonetheless part of the variegated literary landscape.

For all the crosscutting familial and poetic connections, the centrality of the Nawâb’s poetic society is still striking. One can easily see how Vâqif and Râqim, the leaders of the poetic society, came to serve as the two most prominent instructors in poetry during this period. The evidence is not simply the poets who studied under them, a great many of whom gained admission to the poetic society, but their own poetic genealogies that connect back to the most notable teacher in poetry of the time, Maulânâ Bâqîr Âgâh (d. 1220/1805).

Âgâh is indeed a crucial figure to the mid-nineteenth century network of Persian poets at Carnatic. Through him many poets were trained, including the Nawâb himself. As the map shows, the Nawâb is attached to Âgâh through his two instructors Vâlâ and Râqim. Originally from Vellore, Âgâh came to Madras in 1182/1768-9 and soon served as the tutor of Nawâb Muhammad Ali Wâlâjâh’s two sons -- Nawâb Umdat al-Umarâ and Nawâb Amîr al-Umarâ (Muhammad Ghaws Khân’s great-grandfather). He also trained Muhammad Ghaws Khân’s grandfather, Nawâb ‘Azîm al-Dawlah.⁶⁵

The lineage relationships among the Nawâb and his instructors, and Âgâh’s position of poetic respect and esteem among the Carnatic court, are crucial to understanding how the politics surrounding Persian literary activity would intersect with the poetic debates that were to beset the court of Nawâb. Vâsif’s controversial *tazkirah* not only disturbed academic and literary matters. It also offended a closely-knit group of individuals connected through deep-seated personal bonds and official relationships. Still, as much as Vâsif’s various challenges infuriated a localized network of elites, the ensuing debate was also associated with larger disputes of the Persianate world. The major debate taking place in Carnatic, in fact, was a particular localized version of debates happening elsewhere. It is to this topic that we now turn.

Persian and Politics at the Court of Muhammad Ghaws Khân A‘zam and Beyond

Tazkirahs at the Nawâb’s Court: Competition and Rivalry

Thus far this chapter has sought to establish the parameters and context for Persian literary activity in mid-nineteenth Carnatic by first looking at the personality and education of

⁶⁴ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 113-114.

⁶⁵ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 198 and 234.

Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân and then by assessing the network of individuals that composed Persian poetry, both inside and outside of the court, during his reign. Having explored Persian literary activity as it relates to the central individual benefactor and then the network of poets at the local level, we may now move on to a description of the poetic debates at the Nawâb's court, assess their nature, and determine how they relate to the greater Persianate world.

The poets of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic comprised a local and self-contained network, with the exclusive poetic society of the Nawâb's court at its center. However, they also engaged in poetic debates prevalent elsewhere in the Persianate sphere, including disputes beginning to appear in Qajar-era *tazkirahs* explored earlier (see Chapter One). Much like poets elsewhere in India and Iran during the time, the Carnatic poets debated the merits, value, and characteristics of the *tâzah-gû'î* style known for its inventive word choices and its juxtaposition with a simpler style of poetry. Like their contemporaries elsewhere, they tried to determine where to place this style in relation to their own time and within the historical spectrum of Persian poetic development.

Evidence from *tazkirahs* dramatizes the ways in which Carnatic deliberations were framed by local politics, a volatile mix of poetic tastes, personal rivalries, and professional ties. Indeed the debate over *tâzah-gû'î* during the Nawâb's time progressed along both poetic and personal lines. This was a consequence of the particular individuals involved in the debate and the reports of their positions and opinions in the *tazkirahs*, a genre whose public and professional act of "remembering" is expressed in terms of the authors' personal views of how best to categorize poets and poetry. In mid-nineteenth century Carnatic, not necessarily unlike other places, entry into disputations on poetics occurred through the writing of a *tazkirah*. Unique to the Carnatic experience, however, is that the mid-nineteenth century witnessed an outpouring of *tazkirahs* in a short time-span. Unlike other places, the authors of these works were in direct conversation with previously written works of their contemporaries. The authors working around the time of the Nawâb's reign used the *tazkirah* as the preferred avenue for publicly "remembering," and for entering their understanding of Persian poetics into the long spectrum of *tazkirah* production. But they also positioned their *tazkirah* as a response to another written by one of their peers. The composition of a new *tazkirah* became the manner by which an author offered his competing opinion and entered it into the ledger of current debates. More than simply serving as a testament to poets past, *tazkirahs* in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic recorded contemporary debates. The lines of connection (and contention) among them tread close to the surface. The chart below lists eleven *tazkirahs* as well as some other tracts that served as critical responses to recently produced *tazkirahs* of the time:

Fig. 2 Major *tazkirahs* and other works relevant to the reign of Muhammad Ghaws Khân A'zam (d. 1855)

Title	Author	Year of Completion
<i>Guldastah-yi Karnâtik</i>	Râ'iq	Between 1244/1828 and 1248/1832-3
<i>Natâ'ij al-afkâr</i>	Qudrat	1258/1842

<i>Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan</i>	Nawâb A'zam (?)	1258/1842-3
<i>Ma'dan al-jawâhir</i>	Vâsif	1260/1844
<i>Javâb-i i'tirâzât-i Vâsif</i>	Râqim	1261/1845
<i>Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish</i>	Bînish	1265/1848-9
<i>Tazkirah-yi gulzar A'zam</i>	Nawâb A'zam (?)	1269/1852-3
<i>Tufah-i A'zamîyyah</i>	Irtizâ 'Alî Khân	1270/1853 (?)
<i>Hadîqat al-marâm</i>	Vâsif	1270/1853-4
<i>Sham '-i mahfil-i sukhân</i>	Sayyid 'Abd al-Latîf	ca. 1279/1862
<i>Husn-i khitâb va radd-i javâb</i>	Vâsif	1287/1870

The Nawâb himself entered the world of *tazkirah* production and poetic debate in 1258/1842-3, about a year after he reached the age of maturity and attained the throne. His *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan* appeared under his name, and features a discussion of local Carnatic poets. It is unclear if the Nawâb was the true author of this work or whether it was written by one of his instructors in poetry, Vâlâ or Râqim.

More important than the question of authorship, however, is that the composition of *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan* and its attachment to the Nawâb's name marks his first official foray into the world of Persian poetics beyond the confines of poetic tutelage and regency. Its publication signals the beginning of a remarkably productive period of *tazkirah* writing by a series of authors who collectively sought to shape the memory of Persian poets and poetry at the court and beyond.

The author of *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan* expressly stated that he wished to position his *tazkirah* at least as an addendum to the recently composed *Guldastah-yi Karnâtik* (completed 1244-8) by the poet Ghulâm Ali Mûsâ Rizâ "Râ'iq" (d. ca. 1248-9/1832-4). As noted above, Râ'iq was also a companion of the Nawâb's father A'zam Jâh. The author of *Subh-i vatan* justifies his work as a response to what he found lacking in the accounts of the poets presented in Râ'iq's *tazkirah*. He resolved to offer commemorations of some additional notable poets of his time. The result was modest. Râ'iq's work included the biographies of seventy poets from late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Carnatic. The author of *Subh-i vatan* enlarged the entries to include twenty others and expanded upon some of the poetic selections.⁶⁶ Aside from the author's desire to use Râ'iq's *Guldastah* as the inspiration for his own *tazkirah*, the work is not remarkable, except for its association with the Nawâb himself, launching his foray into the realm of *tazkirah* production and poetic debate.

A year later in 1260/1844 the poet Muhammad Mahdî "Vâsif" (d. 1290/1873), who later became a rival of the Nawâb and his companions, completed a *tazkirah* entitled *Ma'dan al-jawâhir*. Vâsif's work is no longer extant (even the nature of its original distribution is in question), so it is difficult to know its precise structure and scope, the author's reasons for composing the work, and whether Vâsif was trying to position the work against the recently written *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan*. Vâsif's later opinions challenging the authenticity of the Nawâb's own works makes it highly probable that his *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* was at least in part motivated by the composition of *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan* a year earlier. More certain is that its composition set Vâsif on a collision course with the Nawâb and his supporters, bringing to the fore debates on the politics and stylistics of Persian at the Arcot court and beyond.

⁶⁶ Wladimir Ivanow, *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Collections of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, First Supplement* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927), 7-10.

What we know of *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* comes from the reactions it elicited among Vâsif's opponents, namely, that Vâsif criticized Âgâh and Nâsir 'Alî Sirhindî and treated them disparagingly. Recall that it was Âgâh who trained the Nawâb's own instructors in poetry (see Fig. 1), and it was Sirhindî whose poetry the Nawâb sought to imitate in his own work. According to Bînish, reporting in his *tazkirah*, Vâsif in *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* "made shameless insults referring to Nâsir 'Alî Sirhindî and other masters and treated most of [their] poetry without decorum" (*nisbat bi-janâb Nâsir 'Alî Sirhindî va dîgar asâtizah shûkhî-hâ kardah va dar aksar ash'âr bi adabî-hâ bih-kâr burdah*).⁶⁷ The specifics of Vâsif's "insults" are not specified, but one surmises that what Bînish took for "insults" may be more appropriately described as criticisms of these authors' poetic styles. After all, *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* would likely have been a compendium of poets constructed to appraise poetry. This does not preclude the possibility that Vâsif may have couched his criticisms in a mocking tone, but suggests that Vâsif's primary criticisms of Âgâh and Sirhindî may have focused mostly on their poetics. This proposition is consistent with the observation about Vâsif in *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A'zam*, composed nearly a decade later, which couches the debate between Vâsif and his opponents in terms of his scholarship. But like most aspects of these debates, the line between personal and professional, *adab* and poetry, is blurred. So too is the case for Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir*.

To grasp the grounds of Vâsif's criticisms of the likes of Âgâh and Sirhindî, one must look at Vâsif's own poetic pedigree and personal relationships to understand where he differs from his contemporaries. Unlike many of his contemporaries or even predecessors (see Fig. 1) Vâsif cannot be connected through poetic instruction or influence to many other poets. He was not linked to any major instructor in poetry of the time, nor to Vâqif, and certainly not to Vâlâ or Râqim (his two adversaries), or other crucial figures that served as important nodes in the primary poetic genealogies. He was a man apart, neither his poetic lineage, his family background, nor his employment directly crossed the paths taken by the aforementioned poets or the Nawâb. In addition to studying poetry and the traditional sciences he also learned English, which allowed him to teach Arabic and Persian to EIC employees at a Company School for seven years.⁶⁸ After that time, he devoted his life to scholarship and went on to compose over twenty works in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu.⁶⁹ His poetic instruction in Persian came primarily at the hands of his father 'Ârif al-Dîn Khân "Rawnaq" (d. 1270/1854). According to Bînish, Rawnaq favored a "simple" (*sâdah*) type of poetry.⁷⁰ The preference for such a style of poetry and its effect on Vâsif's poetic outlook, while not to be overemphasized, can be seen by the way Vâsif instructed his son, 'Abd al-Bâsit "'Ishq." 'Ishq, like his father before him, learned poetry primarily at his father's side. Like Vâsif, he cannot be connected to the larger network of contemporary Carnatic poets. Instead 'Ishq's poetry, like that of his grandfather Rawnaq, is described as being that of a simple style, hinting that Vâsif's family had a predilection for that style of poetry in the training of their offspring.⁷¹ Vâsif's early exposure and commitment to such

⁶⁷ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 124.

⁶⁸ A'zam, *Gulzar-i A'zam* 397-398.

⁶⁹ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 404-410.

⁷⁰ Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 82.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 98.

a simple style helps to explain his opposition to the poetry of Sirhindî and other like-minded poets being imitated during the time. While most poets active in Carnatic were instructed and influenced by each other, focused on a variety of poetic styles, primarily the fresh style of *tâzah-gû'î*, Vâsif and his family were in a realm apart.

Bînish further emphasizes Vâsif's differences from his contemporaries by noting that he was "more in the company with the eloquent ones of 'Ajam" (*u bishtar dar suhbat-i fusahâ-yi ahl-i 'Ajam bûd*) and "acquainted with many of their conversations" (*aksar-i muhâvarât-i ânharâ dar yâftah*).⁷² The full meaning of Bînish's comment is not made clear, but the implication that Vâsif had a poetic outlook distinct from his colleagues, being "more engaged" with the poets and conversations of 'Ajam, is suggestive. Though geographic fault lines had not yet fully cast a shadow over different styles of Persian poetry, equating *tâzah-gû'î/sabk-i Hindî* with Indian-born poets and a "simpler" *bâzgasht* poetry with the poets from 'Ajam, Bînish's comment hints that such lines were beginning to form.

Most likely the association Bînish was making between Vâsif and 'Ajam aligned him with native speakers of Persian, not the geographic locale of Iran or Iranian-born poets. At this early stage in the *sabk-i Hindî* versus *bâzgasht* debates, there were not yet distinct geographic locales assigned to the aforementioned categories. Rather, debates about stylistics in the Indian context centered on questions about one's poetic ability based on native language -- whether a poet was a native speaker of Persian or not.⁷³ Questions about one's ability to "speak for Persian poetry," or perhaps more accurately "speak Persian poetry," based on one's native tongue are raised later by the author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* (see below) when assessing Vâsif's critique of Bîdil. Nonetheless, the possibility remains that the borders of what constituted 'Ajam in the discourse of poetic debates were beginning to constrict for *poets in India*, even though they remained at a distance from the Iran-centric notion of 'Ajam emerging around the same time in Zand and Qajar *tazkirahs*.⁷⁴

Also possible is that the opinions offered by Vâsif in *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* may not have been made solely according to poetic tastes. His criticism, or "shameless insults" as Bînish called them, may have had a personal element as well, particularly his comments concerning Âgâh. Vâsif himself was not a direct student of Âgâh, but his father Rawnaq was, making Vâsif's criticism of the preeminent poetic instructor of Carnatic somewhat puzzling, especially since Âgâh and Rawnaq worked together to correct the poetic verses of the onetime presumptive heir to the throne, Tâj al-Umarâ 'Alî Husayn Khân "Majîd." The relationship between Rawnaq and Âgâh may have been somewhat complicated by the politics of royal succession. Upon the death of Nawâb Umdat al-Umarâ in 1216/1801 his son "Majîd" was passed over for the throne (on the recommendation of the British) in favor of Muhammad Ghaws Khân's grandfather Nawâb

⁷² Bînish, *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish*, 124.

⁷³ See Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 13 (1998): 3-30. Accessed 26 Nov. 2012.

⁷⁴ For information on the shifting and increasingly shrinking geographic meaning of 'Ajam, see: Sunil Sharma, "Redrawing the Boundaries of 'Ajam in Early Modern Persian Literary History," in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Farvin Vejdani (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 51-64. Sharma is particularly interested in the changing meaning of 'Ajam as it pertains to the literary discourse of Iranian-born and Western historians.

‘Azîm al-Dawlah. This occurred when Tâj al-Umarâ refused to play by the new set of rules established by the British. With Nawâb ‘Azîm al-Dawlah on the throne, instead of Mâjid, Rawnaq’s star at the court may have fallen. Unlike Âgâh, Rawnaq did not train the new Nawâb in poetry; rather, his fortune may have been solely tied to the rejected Majîd, who, in any case, would die later in 1801. When Majîd died, both his personal effects and the State Library, which had been his and his father’s possession, passed into the hands of the new Nawâb, ‘Azîm al-Dawlah.⁷⁵ Rawnaq withdrew to Hyderabad, and Âgâh continued to wield influence with the royal family through those poets trained by him. If Vâsif wanted to interpret such events as a rivalry to help explain why his father’s poetic influence waned at the court, he would not need to imagine much. Vâsif certainly held Majîd in great esteem.⁷⁶

Vâsif’s aloofness from the networks and styles of other poets prevalent at Carnatic, his education and instruction of his own son in a “simple” style of poetry, and his greater familiarity with the poets and debates of ‘*Ajam*, suggest a likely result: Vâsif increasingly was viewed as an opponent of *tâzah-gû’î* and its stylistics. When the dust of the personal animus that hovered over the debates between Vâsif and his opponents finally is cleared away, the difference in *poetic* opinions driving the debate would become evident. But first the dust over Vâsif’s “insults” would have to settle.

The response to Vâsif’s criticism of Âgâh, Sirhindî, and others as outlined in *Ma’dan al-jawâhir* was swift. A year later, Râqim penned his answer in a tract entitled *Jawâb-i i’tirâzât-i Vâsif (An Answer to Vâsif’s Objections)*. Râqim’s outright disdain for Vâsif and his recent work were made clear from the outset. His criticism firmly focused on what he perceived to be Vâsif’s breach of *adab*:

He brought out with the bond of the pen the *tazkirah* named *Ma’dan al-jawâhir* whose basic intention was the display of arrogance, self-praise, and...scoffing, cursing, and reproach of the eminent learned men and grand orators. He didn't follow [proper] investigation when he used his hand to slander the “teacher of teachers” and others who were like him. He impudently stepped outside the path of decorum and extensively displayed language of curse and objection.^{77*}

Râqim then explains the compulsion he felt to respond to Vâsif’s disparaging comments against the great masters. He relates a purported exchange with Vâsif, summing up his feelings with a pithy poem. Since Râqim and Vâsif’s accounts of this encounter differ significantly, both will be quoted in full. Râqim writes:

Although I strived to suggest in profusion (*bih mubâlighah*) and insisted in a friendly manner and based on good wishes the removal of some of the inappropriate expressions and baseless objections from his own book, he did not listen [to me] with an attentive ear.

⁷⁵ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 234.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 407.

⁷⁷ *Jawab-i i’tirâzât-i Vâsif* cited in Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 413.

* See Appendix 1.17.

So, in accordance to the proverb “*jaff al-qalam bi mâ hûwa kâ'in*,”⁷⁸ I turned away helplessly.

When Vâsif wrote the tazkirah
in which he made his reproach clearly
Upon the words of the chosen poet
Sayyid Nâsir ‘Alî Valî [Sirhindî]
Also to disgrace the esteemed Âgâh
he used impoliteness [stemming from] impurity of the heart
Râqim found in this year in history
the sigh of awareness from the Zulfiqâr of ‘Alî.⁷⁹†

Râqim, claims that he had encouraged Vâsif to remove certain portions of *Ma’dan al-jawâhir*, only to have the latter refuse to do so. When Vâsif demurred, Râqim was then forced to pen the work *Jawâb-i i’tirâzât-i Vâsif* in rebuttal. This story differs significantly from the way Vâsif was to remember the exchange. Vâsif, however, did not address the matter until 1287/1870, a full quarter-century after Râqim offered his indictment. His account appeared in a work entitled *Husn-i khitâb va radd-i javâb (The Beauty of Discourse and Rebuttal)*. According to Kokan, this work sought to address thirty-seven allegations that Râqim brought against Vâsif.⁸⁰ His recollection could not be further from what Râqim penned twenty-five years earlier:

O’ my kind master [lit. slave-pleasing patron], when walking in the garden during the poetic assembly of the most learned poets, Maulana Hajji Maulavi Muhammad Husayn Râqim, I was honored to present *Ma’dan al-jawâhir*. Did I not say that “Today this book and its compiler are in service of [lit. in the possession of] your highness (*sarkâr*) and that, with an eye towards amending whatever in the entry on the late Shaykh Nâsir ‘Alî [Sirhindî] is known to be unsound and reprehensible (*saqim va mazmûm*), be removed from my book” and, therefore, make this humble servant of yours much obliged? Did you not immediately reply that “You are older than me and your skills in the Persian language are apparent”? After this meeting...I was happy. Therefore I rejected the settlement of the uproar through the ripping out of three to four pages [concerning Nâsir ‘Alî Sirhindî] and tried to refute the objections [aimed at] dishonoring Vâsif...⁸¹*

To hear Vâsif tell it, not only did he willingly submit his work to Râqim for inspection, but also was amenable to having the “unsound and reprehensible” portions related to Sirhindî (about “three to four pages”) removed. When Râqim “opposed the settlement,” having deferred to Vâsif’s skills in Persian, Vâsif considered the matter closed. Only it wasn’t: Râqim penned his pamphlet (*Jawâb-i i’tirâzât-i Vâsif*) shortly thereafter, and a quarter-century later Vâsif was still trying to set the record straight in his own *Husn-i khitâb va radd-i javâb*.

⁷⁸ Literally “the pen is dry for what exists.” In other words, what is written cannot be undone.

⁷⁹ *Jawab-i i’tirâzât-i Vâsif* cited Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 413-414.

† See Appendix 1.18.

⁸⁰ *Husn-i khitâb va radd-i javâb*. Cited in Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 406.

⁸¹ Ibid.

* See Appendix 1.19.

The difference between the accounts of Vâsif and Râqim is striking and reveals how their rivalry was based upon personal enmity as much as differing notions of poetry. On the personal level, each poet attempted to prove that his own conduct was proper, while his rival's was not: Râqim claiming that Vâsif remained at fault for being unwilling to remove the disparaging remarks after he asked him to do so; Vâsif accusing Râqim of being in the wrong for apparently acknowledging that Vâsif should leave the work as is, but then reneging on his word. What remains through all the ambiguity and confusion between the two rivals' competing stories is the curiosity of Vâqif's willingness to wait so long to respond to Râqim's remarks. If Vâsif was so indignant by the way Râqim attacked both his character and his work, why did he wait so long to respond?

The most obvious answer lies in the likelihood that Vâsif did not wish to further jeopardize his reputation, possibly resulting in unwanted outcomes -- such as the loss of employment or estrangement from the court -- by continuing to challenge openly one the Nawâb's closest companions. In this regard, he was vulnerable to the whim of court politics and to Raqim's personal relationship with the Nawâb. In both arenas he had little leverage. Openly challenging Râqim head-on would be akin to self-sacrifice; better to let cooler tempers prevail and attempt to re-integrate himself as best as possible among his contemporary poets. The commencement of the poetic society of Muhammad Ghaws Khân in 1262/1846 may have provided one such an opportunity. Both Vâsif and Râqim, the latter who was one of the society's organizers, participated in its gatherings. The disagreement between the two rivals appears to have subsided. It is unlikely that Vâsif would have continued to attend the poetic society if his disagreement with Râqim was all consuming; likewise, Râqim certainly had it within his power to prevent Vâsif's attendance, if he so chose. Perhaps the two poets were willing to put aside their personal animus and differences in favor of the more professional experience of discussing poetry in the company of each other and others, shifting their disagreements to a more public and professional arena.

Bînish gives no indication in his *tazkirah* that the rivalry between Râqim and Vâsif was much of an issue during the time of the poetic society's gathering. In fact, if one is to believe Bînish, then the entire rivalry between the two poets never really reached a fever pitch at all, at least during the time of his writing. While Bînish relates the contents of Vâsif's controversial *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* and his propensity for making "insults" against the likes of Âgâh and Sirhindî, he also notes that Vâsif did not bring out his *tazkirah* from the corner of hiding (*kunj-i ikhtifâ*). Thus, according to Bînish, since Vâsif didn't publicize his work, Râqim's response-referred to by Bînish as *Zûlfiqâr-i 'Alî* remained in the sheath.⁸² (As seen in the final line of Râqim's *bayt* above, it is also a name that he used for his tract against Vâsif.) It is possible that Râqim and Vâsif's respective works were not circulated fully until a later date, but evidence points to the contrary: there is no indication in the writings of Râqim or Vâsif that this was the case. Bînish's claim about the non-circulation of the works, rather, seems to have been both a genuine effort to follow the two poets' lead in downplaying the affair and a more selfish effort to protect the integrity and unity of the poetic society in his *tazkirah* by minimizing any disunity among its participants.

If by doing so, however, Bînish believed he could ease the rivalry between the two men or possibly erase it altogether, he would be sorely disappointed. Vâsif may have reasoned that foregoing a response to Râqim's challenges immediately after they occurred, trying instead to

⁸² Bînish 124-125. *Zûlfiqâr-i 'Alî* refers to the sword of Imam 'Alî, the fourth caliph of Islam.

reintegrate himself into the community of the Nawâb's poetic society, was the best course of action. But with the publication of *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A'zam* in the Nawâb's name in 1269/1852-3, his circumstances would change. No longer were his reputation, scholarship, and opinions of poetry being questioned by a fellow poet, albeit by the Nawâb's instructor and companion, but in a work bearing the Nawâb's name. The publication of this work -- not the tract by Râqim -- would lead to Vâsif's later responses challenging Râqim's claims against him and the authenticity of the works composed by the Nawâb. Moreover, the *Gulzar-i A'zam* foregrounds just how connected Carnatic was to other poetic debates of the Persianate world.

***Tazkirah-yi Gulzar-i A'zam* and the Case of Mirzâ Bîdil**

The personal clashes, poet rivalries, and debates over poetics at the court of Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân reached their apogee with the publication of *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A'zam* in 1269/1852-3. This work, more than any preceding or following it, laid bare the substance of conflicts among poets at the court, namely, poetic stylistics. Here one gains the fullest understanding of what exactly Vâsif wrote in his *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* that so upset his rivals -- beyond the various "insults" regarding Âgâh and Sirhindî -- and warranted a head-on response. This *tazkirah* ensured that Vâsif would no longer remain silent about his perceived unfair treatment by fellow poets and the questionable authorship of the *tazkirahs* bearing the Nawâb's name. *Gulzar-i A'zam* is the work that best situates the poetic debates of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic within the broader landscape of poetic disputes elsewhere in the Persianate sphere.

The idea that *Tazkirah-yi gulzar-i A'zam* was composed as a rejoinder to Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* is evident from outset, reinforcing again how authors used the genre to set the record straight on poetic matters, and how *tazkirah* production at the Nawâb's court remained a competitive venture. (Recall, the other *tazkirah* bearing the Nawâb's name, *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan*, also took its cue from a recently written *tazkirah* to justify it.) The introduction, however, offers only a general justification for the *tazkirah* and is no more than an opening salvo against Vâsif. The bulk of the impressions and criticisms are found in the entry on Vâsif himself, some 400 pages later (due to the alphabetical organization of the *tazkirah*). The entry spans some twenty pages and includes the author's critique and challenges to *Ma'dan al-jawâhir*. Overall it attempts to question the work's scholarship, culminating with its objection to Vâsif's portrayal of the Indian poet Bîdil.⁸³

Significantly, it is Vâsif's discussion of Bîdil, rather than, say, his criticism of Âgâh and Sirhindî (two personages close to the Nawâb's heart and that of his coterie) that the author wishes to address most forcefully. This approach underscores that Vâsif's work was not viewed merely as a breach of proper conduct based on his personal "insults," but also as one that opposed a certain type of poetry, exemplified by Bîdil's work. The status of *tâzah-gû'î* in general, if not Bîdil's poetry in particular, occupied several Indian authors and poets, as will be seen below.⁸⁴ No matter how local and personal the poetic debates of mid-nineteenth century

⁸³ Examples of the author's critique of various aspects of the Vâsif's work can be found in the introduction of this chapter.

⁸⁴ For some general information on the poetry of Bîdil and his impact see: See Jiri Becka. "Bedil and Bedilism," in Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), 515-520; and Muhammad

Carnatic were, they nonetheless remained engaged with the key aspects of debates over Persian poetics occurring elsewhere. The Persianate world was becoming more localized and fractured, but a major poetic debate was not absent from this seemingly far-off locale in Carnatic. Once again it is in a work written in response to Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* where one finds Vâsif's opinions themselves. The opening of Vâsif's opinion of Bîdil, as cited in *Gulzar-i A'zam*, runs as follows:

Concerning Mîrzâ Bîdil he [Vâsif] wrote that the Mîrzâ, mercy upon him, in his God-given insight ('*ilm-i khudâ-dâd*) toward the creation of meanings, started to produce some foundations for fresh conversations (*khudish az khalq-i ma'ânî bi-sû-yi ihdâs-i mabânî chand muhâvarât-i tâzah pardâkht*), he gained an abode in the eyes of Indians, like a pupil in the eye. However, in the eyes of the eloquent ones of 'Ajam (*bulaghâ-yi 'Ajam*), his invented terms appeared [as] inverting the rules of poetry and excessive poetry, [which] seemed like a pain-causing mote in the eye's socket. Consequently, they started finding fault in his work. Maulavi Âzâd Bilgrâmî, who was a distinguished learned man of equitable temperament...says that the noble Qur'an, even though it is the wondrous words of God the almighty, descended suitable to the idioms of Arab men of correct speech so to be closer [i.e. easier] to comprehension. Thus, in the Persian language, when even a [poet of] unquestionable perfection like Bîdil invents words (*alfâz-tarâshî*), how could the people of ordinary speech accept him? For instance, in his elegy for his own son, he writes:

Whoever was gracefully planting two steps.
had a staff in their palm from my finger.^{85*}

(*har-kih du qadam khirâm mî-kâsht*
az angushtam 'asâ bih-kaf dâsht)

Vâsif's recounting of Mîr Âzâd's opinion does not exactly correspond to the impression of Bîdil's poetry in Mîr Âzâd's original quote. Vâsif's rendition is actually more positive toward the great Indian poet. Vâsif notes that Bîdil merely "invents words," intimating that the poet knew his language would be difficult for people to understand. Mîr Âzâd's original quote strikes a more incredulous tone. In essence, Mîr Âzâd's original quote implies that if the Qur'an was of necessity revealed in an Arabic suitable to understanding, whereby an invention contrary to language (*ikhtirâ'î khilâf-i zabân*) would result in its non-acceptance by Arab men of correct speech (*fusahâ-yi 'arab*), then how can people of speech accept Bîdil's various inventions that contravene foundation?⁸⁶ In other words, if the Qur'an cohered with acceptable practices in the Arabic language, then so too should Bîdil's poetry in Persian.

Rizâ Shafî'î Kadkanî, *Shâ'ir-i âyînâh-hâ: barrâsî-yi sabk-i Hindî va shî'r-i Bîdil* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-'i Intishârât-i Âgâh, 1366/1987).

⁸⁵ A'zam, *Gulzar-i A'zam*, 402.

* See Appendix 1.20.

⁸⁶ Ghulâm 'Alî al-Husaynî al-Wâsitî al-Bilgrâmî "Âzâd," *Khizânah-yi 'âmîrah*, Cawnpore, Newal Kishor, 1871, HathiTrust Digital Library, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101076206505>, 153. Accessed 27 Nov 2012.

Vâsif's insistence that supporters and opponents of Bîdil's poetry were divided along fault lines, with Indians in the former camp and the "eloquent ones of 'Ajam" in the latter camp, is of primary importance here. It is this division that defines Vâsif's opinion and should be seen as strongly indicative of the manner in which the boundaries of 'Ajam were being reconfigured and understood. As will be seen in further detail below, the "eloquent ones of 'Ajam" in this context are not necessarily synonymous with "eloquent ones of Iran" or "Iranians," but more likely corresponds to "eloquent ones whose native tongue was Persian," leaving ambiguous the question of birthplace. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the fact that differences in poetic taste were being ascribed to different groups, whether one was a native or non-native speaker of Persian. Indeed the boundaries 'Ajam were shrinking. The fact that it was an Indian poet and scholar in the nineteenth century, not an Iranian one of the nineteenth or twentieth century writing within an Iranian nationalist discourse, makes this distinction all the more interesting. Vâsif, it may be said, was a part of what Shamsur Rahman Faruqi sees as a tendency of nineteenth century Indian poets to more definitively and uniformly disparage the Persian poetry of Indians at the expense of the "purity" of poetry composed by native Persian speakers.⁸⁷

Vâsif was not alone in viewing Bîdil's poetry as a lightning rod. He was not even unique in choosing this particular *bayt* and the expression "*khirâm kâshtan*" ("to gracefully plant") to criticize the poetry of Bîdil and to judge his poetics. This expression became a favorite of many Indian commentators in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* references these commentators to provide support for his own opinion of Bîdil's poetry. The inclusion of these earlier opinions underscores their accessibility in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic, traceable to advanced techniques in printing and copying (some of which were adopted by the Nawâb himself) and to increased book-centered learning and knowledge in late Mughal times.⁸⁸ Their presence in *Gulzar-i A'zam* is a testament to the vibrancy of the nineteenth century India book market and to the manner in which *tazkirahs* augmented the transmission and circulation of ideas and texts during this era.

Gulzar-i A'zam continues with a pastiche of the opinions of Âgâh, Mîr Âzâd Bilgrâmî (d. 1200/1786), Khân-i Ârzû (d. 1169/1756), and Mîrzâ Muhammad Hasan "Qatîl" (d. 1233/1817) on the poetry of Bîdil and, more generally, the use of idioms in Persian poetry. Opinions range from an outright dismissal of Bîdil's usage to the rejection of Bîdil's critics. The latter three commentators addressed the usage of *khirâm kâshtan* directly in their respective works: Mîr Âzâd in *Khizânah-yi 'âmîrah* (*The Royal Treasury*); Ârzû in *Majma' al-nafâ'is* (*The Assembly of Delicacies*); and Mîrzâ Qatîl in *Shajarat al-amânî* (*The Tree of Desires*). The opinion of Âgâh, however, is offered first and is based on an "abbreviated epistle" (*risâlah-yi mûazah*) focused on the structure of language. Âgâh comments in his letter that all languages are susceptible to new idioms, even if the great orators of Arabic and Persian would prefer such usages not enter poetry or prose.⁸⁹ Âgâh's argument is a defense of Bîdil and affirms his "right" to use new idioms.

The author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* then presents the opinions of Âzâd, Ârzû, and Qatîl, foreshadowing his own conclusion. He notes that all three have said that the words of Bîdil

⁸⁷ See Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India."

⁸⁸ Nile Green, "The Uses of Books in a Late Mughal Takiyya: Persianate Knowledge Between Person and Paper," *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (2010): 241-265. Accessed 5 March 2012.

⁸⁹ A'zam, *Gulzar-i A'zam*, 405-406.

“went against the idiom of the Persians” (*khilâf-i muhâvarah-yi Fârsîyân*). In this statement we have a clearer indication that the general dismissal of Bîdil’s poetry was one founded on linguistic, not geographic, affiliation. The author then notes that Mir Âzad believed that Bîdil “had invented some strange things in the Persian language that people of everyday speech do not accept” (*dar zabân-i fârsî chîz-hâ-yi gharîb ikhtirâ‘ nimûdah kih ahl-i muhâvarah qabûl na-dârand*), a slight variation of the same quote by Mir Âzâd that Vâsif included in his *Ma‘dan al-jawâhir*.⁹⁰

Summarizing the opinion of Khân-i Ârzû, the author notes that he too recognized Bîdil as having instigated bold usages in Persian, which the people of *vilâyat* and masters of India accept.⁹¹ This quote makes no precise reference to “the Persians” (*Fârsîyân*), but its very omission makes apparent the demarcation between their unstated opinion, on the one hand, and the people of *vilâyat* and India who accept Bîdil’s poetry and its invented terms on the other. Although Ârzû criticizes Bîdil for using idioms counter to accepted speech, his overall judgment of Bîdil in *Majma‘ al-nafâ‘is* is overwhelmingly positive. He refers to the poet as his “teacher” and defends the poet generally against criticism.⁹²

The author of the *Gulzar-i A‘zam* concludes with the opinion of Qatîl, who more plainly than the first two commentators remarks how critiques of Bîdil’s poetry are founded on extra-literary criteria, such as Bîdil’s Indian identity. Qatîl is perhaps an ideal candidate for detecting such complexities and subtle shifts in the identity politics of literary discourse. Born a Bhandri Khatri and named Diwani Singh, he became an accomplished writer and a convert to Shi‘i Islam.⁹³ Qatîl wrote of Bîdil that:

Such do they relate of Mîrzâ Bîdil, mercy upon him, that in the elegy of his own son he created the idiom *khirâm kâshtan* and the reason is on account of the Mîrzâ’s Indianness (*Hindî bûdan-i mirzâ*). If he had been from the soil of Isfahan or another locale in Iran (*az khâk-i Isfahân yâ dîgar bilâd-i Îrân*), then no one would reproach him.⁹⁴

Qatîl’s opinion, hinging on Bîdil’s “Indianness” as the source of his plight among critics, aligns best with that of the author of *Gulzar-i A‘zam*. The author of *Gulzar-i A‘zam* goes on to offer a justification for the use of *khirâm kâshtan* as an acceptable phrase given the stylistics of Bîdil’s poetry. But Bîdil’s homeland of India rather than Iran is what preoccupies the author. No matter that both the Indian-born Vâsif and Mîr Âzâd Bilgrâmî viewed Bîdil’s stylistics as problematic. It is the undue chastisement that the great Indian poet has endured for not being born in Iran, and

⁹⁰ A‘zam, *Gulzar-i A‘zam*, 406.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² See Kia “Contours of Persianate Community, 1722-1835,” 280.

⁹³ Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Eighteenth-Century Historiography and the World of the Mughal *Munshî*,” in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics*, Alam and Subrahmanyam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 423-425.

⁹⁴ A‘zam, *Gulzar-i A‘zam*, 407. For the original quote, see Muhammad Hasan Qatîl, *Shajarat al-amânî*, Cawnpore 1281/1865-6, HathiTrust Digital Library, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101076320728>, 14. Accessed 30 Aug. 2012.

presumably for not being a native speaker of Persian, that draws the author's ire. Building on Qatîl's example, the author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* offers the following summation:

The source of the attack of the Iranians (*Îrânîyân*) relating to the curse and scorn of the exalted Mîrzâ [Bîdil] is, one, the Indian origin (*Hindî nîzhâd bûdan*) of this esteemed master and, two, the Sunni religion of this man of excellence. But if this celebrated one had been from the locale of Iran (*Îrân dîyâr*) then they would have elevated him to the ninth clime and would have brought his spell-shattering (*bâtil al-sihr*) poems to the status of inimitability (*i'jâz*). From the time of Abu al-Hasan Rûdakî Samqarqandî Tûrânî, who is the point of reference (*marja'*) of all poets of Iran and Tûrân, until today not one of Iran's poets appears whose speech is immune of various types of offenses both by way of idiom as well as by way of prosody, rhyme, etc. What justice that they leave all [their poets] alone but only make trouble with the Mîrzâ[?].^{95*}

The author's scathing attack of Iranian critics who "made trouble" with the poetry of Mîrzâ Bîdil based on his "Indianness" and "Indian race" (not to mention his Sunni background) raises an intriguing question: who were these attackers? Scattered throughout the various citations on Bîdil in *Gulzar-i A'zam* are references to Iranians, "eloquent ones of 'Ajam," *Fârsîyân*, and the soil of Isfahan, leaving some ambiguity about their exact identity. Based on recent historiography and the manner in which Bîdil's poetry is often used by contemporary Iranian authors as a proxy to critique the so-called "Indian Style" and justify the emergence of *bâzgasht*, one may hypothesize that these "Iranians" are members of the Isfahânî Circle of poets. As documented above, the emergence of the Isfahânî Circle of poets was primarily defined by the social environment and activities in Isfahan. However, evidence from their own writings and in later *tazkirahs* indicates their distaste for the type of poetry produced by someone like Bîdil. Could it be possible that the ideas of a burgeoning *bâzgasht* movement contained in the *tazkirahs* of Qajar Iran or the poetry of the Isfahânî Circle traveled to Carnatic?

The citations in *Gulzar-i A'zam* provide no indication that this was the case, nor do *tazkirahs* composed in India around the same time. Consider, for example, *Natâ'ij al-afkâr*, composed at the Nawâb's court ten years earlier in 1258/1842 by Qudrat, an appointed judge of the Nawâb's poetic society. This work covers Persian poets during and prior to the author's own time, in India and elsewhere, and is well sourced.⁹⁶ Among the *tazkirahs* Qudrat consulted was Âzar's *Âtishkadah*. But his entry on Bîdil mentions no controversy surrounding Bîdil's poetry.⁹⁷ Moreover, his entries on Mushtâq, Sahbâ, and Sabâhî, later considered among the founders of the *bâzgasht* movement, neither portray these poets as having initiated a major stylistic movement antithetical to poetry like Bîdil's.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ A'zam, *Gulzar-i A'zam*, 407.

* See Appendix 1.21.

⁹⁶ Muhammad Qudratallah Khân Gûpâmavi "Qudrat," *Tazkirah-yi natâ'ij al-afkâr* (Bombay: Sultânî-yi Bombay, 1957). Also see Naqavî, *Tazkirah-navîsî dar Hind va Pâkistân*, 553-555.

⁹⁷ See Qudrat 112-114.

⁹⁸ See, for example, Qudrat, *Tazkirah-yi natâ'ij al-afkâr*, 664.

Further back in time, the *Tazkirah-yi Suhuf-i Ibrâhîm* (1205/1790-1) provides no evidence either that the “*bâzgasht*” program of the Isfahânî Circle was known in India. Like Qudrat’s work, *Suhuf-i Ibrâhîm* contains several entries on a few Isfahânî Circle poets, but does not mention any of their stylistic affinities or distastes. In fact, the emphasis of these entries is not a new stylistic movement (e.g. “returning to the ancients”), but instead focuses on the poets’ relationship to the mayor of Isfahan Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb, their patron.⁹⁹ Available evidence leads to the conclusion that a movement in Isfahan antithetical to poetry such as Bîdil’s had not yet emerged in India. *Suhuf-i Ibrâhîm* remarks on a controversy surrounding Bîdil’s use of idioms but offers no indication that this controversy was known to Iranians such as those of the Isfahânî Circle.

While it may be convenient to relate this Carnatic controversy over Bîdil and the role of his “Indianness” (i.e. not being born in Iran) in the nascent *bâzgasht* movement in Iran proper, this does not prove to be the case. The critiques over Bîdil’s “Indianness” appear to have been contained within India itself. Neither Âzar’s *Âtishkadah* or Hidâyat’s *Majma‘ al-fusahâ* have entries on Bîdil.¹⁰⁰ The “Iranians” of *Gulzar-i A‘zam* were most likely Indo-Iranians (whose native tongue was Persian) based in India. Criticisms of Bîdil’s poetry were at this time not connected to the nascent *bâzgasht* movement, although later literary histories did try to make this association, portraying Bîdil’s poetry as the apogee of *sabk-i Hindî* and a bridge to the emergence of the *bâzgasht* movement.

The debate over Bîdil’s poetry and who was critiquing it is long way from where *Gulzar-i A‘zam* began, namely, as one immersed in the local literary politics and rivalries of mid-nineteenth century Carnatic. In its introduction *Gulzar-i A‘zam* was positioned as a rejoinder to *Ma‘dan al-jawâhir*, in which that work’s author, Vâsif, “made shameless insults” about Âgâh and Sirhindî. By the end of the work, fittingly in its entry on Vâsif, it widens its lens beyond the local rivalries and the specific errors of Vâsif’s text to consider the broader issues of Persian poetic development and the place of Bîdil’s poetry in it. It does not show any receptivity to ideas emanating from an embryonic *bâzgasht* movement in Iran concerned with stylistics. Yet, this debate over Bîdil’s “invented words” should still be seen in the larger context of arguments about word usage in poetic stylistics, pitting a “simple” style versus a more “complicated” one, but not a debate necessarily in direct conversation with them. Put simply, it was debate that can be related to others elsewhere, but one occurring on the margins.

That *Gulzar-i A‘zam* engaged with the poetry of Bîdil, the larger question of poetic stylistics, and consolidated relatively recent opinions on the matter says a great deal about Persian literary culture at the Arcot court. It speaks to how the Arcot court fits into the larger Persianate world of the time and our understanding of Persian literary historiography. First, this text demonstrates that the debate over Bîdil’s poetry, which would later appear in the broader context of the history of *sabk-i Hindî*, was relevant in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic. The poets of Carnatic may have framed the discussion according to local politics and personal rivalries, but they nonetheless were engaged in a contemporary and wider-reaching dialogue taking place at several locations within the Persianate world. Even though the Persian literary world was on shaky grounds in mid-nineteenth century India, the literary atmosphere of Carnatic proved to be

⁹⁹ ‘Alî Ibrâhîm Khân Khalîl, *Suhuf-i Ibrâhîm: tazkirah-yi shu‘arâ-yi Fârsî (sadah-yi duvâzdahum)*, ed. ‘Abid Razâ Bidâr (Patna: Khudâ Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1978), 74 and 92.

¹⁰⁰ The Safavid-era *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî* by Muhammad Tâhir Nasrâbâdî contains two-lines from Bîdil’s poetry.

resilient in its ability to remain engaged with these ongoing debates taking place elsewhere. Different manifestations of this trans-regional debate relate to local circumstances and cultural preoccupations faced by diverse groups of poets. In Iran, for example, the Isfahânî Circle sought to indict a whole corpus of poetry over its stylistics; the debates in Carnatic were more grounded in discussing the merit and appropriateness of Bîdil's choice of words and poetry. While the Carnatic debates, and those occupying others in India, can be seen as being connected to concomitant debates in Iran, it did not necessarily mean that the Carnatic poets were indicting a whole style of poetry through their discussion of Bîdil.¹⁰¹

A second contribution of *Gulzar-i A'zam* is to provide further evidence in support of Shamsur Rahman Faruqi's thesis that Indian-born poets argued both sides of the debate over the merits of what would be known as *sabk-i Hindî*. Opinions in this text include those by Indians who supported Bîdil's poetry and/or what it represented (e.g. Âgâh, Qatîl, and the author of *Gulzar-i A'zam*) and other Indians who viewed it more skeptically (e.g. Vâsif, Mîr Âzâd.)

Third, while the debate over Bîdil's poetry in Carnatic was *not* one that pitted Iranian-born poets against those born in India, the dispute was shaped by fault lines marking distinctions between "Indians" and "Iranians." The "Iranians" in this instance were Indo-Iranians whose native language was Persian. Notably, the author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* reserved his ire not for the Indian opponents of Bîdil, but for those "Iranian" critics and poets who seemed more preoccupied with Bîdil's place of birth and native tongue than his poetry. While it was the critique of the Indian-born Vâsif that precipitated the need to defend Bîdil, it was the Indo-Iranian critics whom the author chastised most. In sum, the *idea* that the debate was developing along fault lines pitting Indo-Iranian critics against Indian ones emerged in Carnatic, with Bîdil's poetry serving as the spark. If Indian poets were not unequivocally defending the Persian poetry of Indians, at least Indo-Iranians were the most forceful and primary culprits criticizing Bîdil's poetry. Though later historians would seek to retroactively present Bîdil as the exemplar of a style the *bâzgasht* poets sought to distance themselves from, evidence does not support this view. The Isfahânî Circle of poets allocated no such a role to Bîdil's poetry at the time. The debate over Bîdil's poetry in nineteenth century Carnatic was an Indian one, yet the culprits critiquing the great Indian poet's work were increasingly being seen as "Iranians."

Conclusion

When Nawâb Muhammad Ghaws Khân died without heir in 1855, the EIC took the opportunity to formally annex his dynasty's territorial possessions and end the reign of the Nawâbs once and for all. The Nawâb's uncle and one-time regent, Azîm Jâh, attempted to attain the position of Nawâb for himself, but was instead relegated to the title and role of Prince of Arcot. This royal household remained in existence when India became independent in 1947 and continues until today.

The death of Muhammad Ghaws Khân not only marked the end of Wâlâhjâhî rule in Carnatic, but also ended an era promoting Persian literary activities encompassing his reign and that of his predecessors. The absence of a local court dedicated to the support of Persian literary activities, the consequent lack of available employment opportunities for individuals versed in

¹⁰¹ I would like to thank Hajnalka Kovacs for her clarification of this point.

Persian administrative technologies, and the insistence of the British to shape the area's educational activities according to their own criteria all led to Persian literary culture in Carnatic losing much of its importance and luster. The *Madrasah-yi A'zam*, which the Nawâb started in 1268/1851 to instruct students in both "religious" and "secular" sciences, was converted into an English High School in 1275/1859. Many instructors appointed to teach Arabic, Persian, and Islamic theology were dismissed.¹⁰² So too, the Company's own *madrasah* at Fort St. George College, Madras, which once employed poets like "Nâmî" and "Hasan" to serve as instructors in Persian and Arabic, was converted into a High School.¹⁰³

Fate was no more kind to individuals whose livelihood depended on Persian retaining its cultural and official status at the court, whether they were poets and scholars receiving patronage or administrators. Those seeking to continue to capitalize on their skills and knowledge of Persian for employment turned to Hyderabad. The poet Râqim, for example, following the death of the Nawâb and his dismissal from *Madrasah-yi A'zam*, eventually migrated to Hyderabad and obtained an appointment at the *Dâr al-ûlûm* there.¹⁰⁴

Works in Persian continued to be produced by poets and scholars in Carnatic after the Nawâb's reign, but with less frequency.¹⁰⁵ If *tazkirahs* may be taken as reflective of contemporary literary climates, then the last *tazkirah* dedicated to the poets of Carnatic during this time does little to belie the notion that the vibrancy of Persian literary culture declined precipitously. Sayyid 'Abd al-Latîf's *Sham '-i mahfil-i suhân* (*The Candle of Poetry's Gathering*, ca. 1278-79/1862) appears only as a shell of the many *tazkirahs* discussed above that featured detailed accounts of the individuals, activities, and debates occurring around Persian in Carnatic in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ Few of the major poets who helped shape the direction of Persian literary culture but a decade or so earlier are mentioned in *Sham '-i mahfil-i suhân*. When they are, all that is offered is the scantest of biographical details. This could certainly mean no more than the author having a personal proclivity for brevity or only a paucity of information and texts accessible to him. But its depiction of Persian literary activity less than a decade after the Nawâb's death nonetheless represents a stark contrast to the time of the Nawâb's poetic society, their debates, and the overall Persian literary climate outside of the court. Those days were in the past.

Closing the chapter on the Nawâb's literary activities was left to Vâsif. After the Nawâb's death, he attempted to restore his honor by leveling claims against the authenticity of Nawâb's own writings. He addressed the issue of the authenticity of the two *tazkirahs* appearing in the Nawâb's name in a work entitled *Hadîqat al-marâm* (*The Garden of Intention*), which dealt with the learned men of Madras and Hyderabad. The work was not printed until 1279/1862-3, several years after the Nawâb's death. Though published at Madras, Vâsif most likely wrote

¹⁰² Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 517.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 518.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 411.

¹⁰⁵ For example, see: Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Abhinav Publications, 1995), 736-756.

¹⁰⁶ 'Abd al-Latîf al-Husaynî al-Latf, *Sham '-i mahfil-i sukhân* [microform] (Madras: Matba' Mazhar al-'Ajâ'ib, 1278/1862).

the work in Hyderabad, where he migrated in 1270/1853-4 to take a position at the *Dâr al-ûlûm*, much like his adversary Râqim. In this work Vâsif offers strong words about Vâlâ, one of the Nawâb's instructors in poetry, noting that

He was among the people of knowledge but he made people dumb-witted and envious.
He used to teach Nawâb Ghaws Khân, after his studies, cunningly [hidden] from people.
He used to address the Nawâb as “Khân Sâhib” and thus, because of this, he used to claim for himself that he [was] the greatest of poets and the most eloquent of orators.¹⁰⁷

Vasif accuses Vâlâ of trickery for appropriating Râ'iq's *Guldastah-yi Karnâtik* from Râ'iq's heirs (which formed the basis of the Nawâb's *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan*) and for being the true author of the Nawâb's *Tazkirah-yi gulzar A'zam*. Since Vâlâ died in 1264/1848 and *Tazkirah-yi gulzar A'zam* did not appear until 1269/1852-3, it is more likely that it was the Nawâb's other teacher in poetry and rival of Vâsif, Râqim, who was the true author. Vâlâ, who began educating the Nawâb when the future ruler was twelve years old, appears to be the more likely candidate for the authorship of *Tazkirah-yi subh-i vatan*. The Nawâb's authorship of either *tazkirah* bearing his name remains uncertain. Perhaps more important than this controversy itself is that Vâsif sustained this personal and poetic rivalry well into his later years, beyond the lives of the Nawâb and Vâlâ and the very existence of the Arcot State as a quasi-independent successor state.

Vasif's persistence is a testament to the state of Persian literary culture as it existed in mid-nineteenth century Carnatic, which resulted from a fortunate conjunction of factors. In particular, this vibrant poetic environment was the result of the Nawâb's personal interest in Persian and his promotion of literary activities, and the plethora of employment opportunities available for individuals skilled in Persian, both at the Nawâb's court and with the EIC in Madras. If the case of Carnatic reveals anything about the shifting position of Persian in post-Mughal India in general, it is how a ruler's personal investment in Persian's cultural value can intersect with local employment opportunities to create beneficial conditions for a thriving literary culture. Listening to the voices accumulated in various *tazkirahs*, one experiences the vitality of literary activity, debate, and rivalry that is the legacy of the last Nawâb of Arcot and the poets of his court and environs. In the case of Carnatic, the tale of Persian literary culture in nineteenth century India was not one of outright decline, but a story of re-articulations and renewals, driven by the local politics, personalities and networks of an educated elite. Their tussles over the poetry of Bîdil and the manner in which it was framed both by local rivalries and regional opinions demonstrate that the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot deserves to be accorded a place in the legacy of Persian in South Asia and the historiography of literary debates in the Persianate world.

¹⁰⁷ *Hadîqat al-marâm*, cited in Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960*, 355.

Chapter Four: *Bâzgasht* in Society as Normative Practice: The *Jangnâmahs* of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842)

Introduction

Amidst the historical works, diaries, journals, and other depictions of the 1839 British invasion of Afghanistan, the ensuing occupation, and the eventual withdrawal, is a series of Persian *jangnâmahs* (battle-poems). These works narrate the various events of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842), modeled on the *Shâhnâmah* of Firdawsî.¹ The texts provide information on the war from an Afghan perspective. Equally important they illuminate a literary trend and environment arising in response to that conflict. Composed in the mid-nineteenth century in the years immediately following the war—at the same time *bâzgasht* was in full flower in Iran, these *jangnâmahs* occupy an intriguing place within Afghanistan’s literary and national history. As texts imitating the *Shâhnâmah* of Firdawsî, one of the undisputed masters to whose work the Isfahânî Circle sought a “return,” these *jangnâmahs* bring to light a curious component of nineteenth century Persian literary culture when analyzed in the context of *bâzgasht*. Located at the juncture of interpretations of war, Afghan nationalism, the legacy of the *Shâhnâmah* in Persianate societies, and the literary heritage of Afghanistan and the Persianate world, these *jangnâmahs* offer a maelstrom of political, historical, and literary trends. This chapter focuses on three such *jangnâmahs*: the *Jangnâmah* (ca. 1843) of Muhammad Ghulâm “Ghulâmî” Kûhistânî, the *Akbarnâmah* (c. 1844) of Hamîd Allah Kashmîrî, and the variously titled *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* (ca. 1844-7) by Qâsim ‘Alî.²

¹ Diaries, journals, and works of history produced around the time of the first Anglo-Afghan War and after are too numerous to mention. In addition to the works featured in this chapter, several notable texts of note were composed in Persian by Afghans or other non-Europeans, such as: Mîrzâ ‘Atâ Muhammad Shikârpûrî, *Navâ-yi ma ‘ârik* (Peshawar: Bungâh-i Intishârât-i Mayvand; Sabâ Kitâbkhânah, 1379/2000); and Shâh Shujâ‘, *Vâqî ‘ât-i Shâh Shujâ‘* (Kabul: Mayvand; Peshawar Sabâ Kitâbkhânah, 1382/2003). For an account of *Navâ-yi ma ‘ârik* and the circumstances of its composition, see: Senzil Nawid, “Historiography in the Sadduzai Era: Language and Narration,” in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. Brian Spooner and William Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2012), 234-278. For a good bibliography of sources related to the first Anglo-Afghan War and a recent work on its history that uses both English and Persian sources, see: William Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-1842* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013). Dalrymple uses both the *Akbarnâmah* of Hamîd Kashmîrî and the *Jangnâmah* of Ghulâmî as sources in his work, the first to do so in English, but does not engage with the sources from a historiographical perspective. For insight into the British colonial apparatus and its understanding of Afghanistan at this time, see: B.D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). For the emergence of the Afghan State under Dûst Muhammad Khân and tribal politics, see: Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khân (1826-1863)* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997). For the impact of the British occupation on the Afghan economy and state formation, see: Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan: Market Relations and State Formation on a Colonial Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

² Other *jangnâmahs* from the first Anglo-Afghan War exist and still others may come to light. Another *jangnâmah* on the first Anglo-Afghan War from this period came to light in 1866-1867 in Kabul from the shop of a perfumist. The work is anonymously written, though presumed to be the work of Mîr Fayz al-Dîn bin Mîr Imâm al-Dîn Ahmad “Darvîsh.” The work, based on an eyewitness account, includes information on the battles in and around Kabul and

Places outside of Iran grappling with and debating the four schools of Persian literary development first conceived by Muhammad Taqî Bahâr have received scant attention, especially in the case of *bâzgasht*. Scholars who have been willing to consider the relationship between trends in nineteenth century Afghan literary culture and the concept of *bâzgasht* as in disagreement with one another. Do the practices of later nineteenth century poets, such as Mîrzâ Muhammad Nabî “Vâsil” Kâbulî (d. 1891/2), Sayyid Muhammad Muhsin “Shâmil” (d. 1891/2), and Ghulâm Muhammad Tarzî (d. 1900) constitute a movement of “return” toward the ancients, or comprise isolated incidents of poetic practice (see Chapter One)? The question is not easily answered.

One problem is that most literary historians contend that the idea of *bâzgasht* as applied to the Afghan case must cohere to the established Iranian model. For them, an Afghan *bâzgasht* must meet two criteria. First, it must be aligned with a self-conscious movement. Second, it must be one that promotes a style in imitation of the “masters” at the expense of other styles across state and society. The assumption is that since these criteria are considered the two major attributes of the Iranian *bâzgasht* movement, any Afghan *bâzgasht* must pass this test of eligibility. Lacking such adherence Latîf Nâzimî, among others, questions whether one can accurately claim that a *bâzgasht* movement occurred in nineteenth century Afghanistan at the hands of the aforementioned poets, or at all.³ Nâzimî is not entirely incorrect in his assessment. However, even the Iranian *bâzgasht* movement at its inception in Isfahan was a malleable and flexible movement. Despite the self-conscious attempts of later proponents to promote the movement solely according to the above criteria, the emergence of *bâzgasht* in Iran was more than just stylistics, as Chapter Two argues. Evidence for a possible *bâzgasht* movement in Afghanistan could more readily be discerned if one adopts a strategy beyond stylistics and examines the flexible characteristics connected to its own social and political environment.

Vâsil, Shâmil, and Tarzî are not the only writers connected to the idea of an Afghan *bâzgasht* in nineteenth century Afghanistan. The *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War, which in the words of the historian Mîr Ghulâm Muhammad Ghubâr helped enliven “the epic and battle spirit” (*rûh-i hamâsî va razmî*) of Afghan oral culture, have also been portrayed as possible representatives of a “return to the masters.”⁴ As works modeled after Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*, it is not surprising that they could warrant mention with the notion of *bâzgasht-i adabî*. Accordingly, the *jangnâmahs* have been subjected to the same criteria for establishing the occurrence of a “return” as the poets listed above. Like them, the *jangnâmahs* have also been dismissed for not exhibiting the requisite criteria. First, although the *jangnâmahs* were composed in imitation of the masters, they were unable to supersede in Afghanistan the overall dominance of other styles, such as the *tâzah-gû’î* style in general and the poetry of Bîdil in particular. Second, since these *jangnâmahs* emerged amidst the social and political turmoil of the war. They are considered to have arisen unwittingly, in response to exigency. In other words, they are not products of a self-aware movement seeking the determined “return” to the “ancient” style they were imitating, like their counterparts in Iran. For example, as Chihriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq

various personalities involved. For more information see: Mîr Ghulâm Muhammad Ghubâr, “Jangnâmah nuskhah khatî manzûm dar nasf-i duvvum qarn-i sizdah hijrî,” *Âryânâ* 6.11 (1327/1948-9): 1-5.

³ Husayn Nâ’il, *Sayrî dar adabîyât-i sadah-yi sizdahum* (Kabul: Matba‘ah-yi Dawlatî, 1360/1981-2), 148-149.

⁴ Ghubâr, “Jangnâmah nuskhah khatî manzûm dar nasf-i duvvum qarn-i sizdah hijrî,” 2.

declare, the trend of *jangnâmahs* was the result of “unconscious and inevitable influence of political and social events in Afghanistan.”⁵ While acknowledging that the *jangnâmahs* were part of a recognizable trend in epic poetry in the nineteenth century, these authors hesitate to relate the production of these works to the concept of *bâzgasht*. Instead they express doubt that the works shifted the overall trajectory of Persian poetic development in Afghanistan away from the dominance of other styles.

This chapter does not dispute this claim per se. Instead it posits that viewing these works through an Iranian-centric notion of *bâzgasht*, or through the prism of Afghan nationalism, has masked their full value. The composition and afterlife of these texts, such as the particulars leading to their composition, the extent to which they circulated, the connections between them, and the “marketplace” of oral and print culture, are all factors essential to a complete understanding of their work, extending beyond simply replicating a model of the great “ancients.” Absent an explication of these dynamic forces, their place within nineteenth century Afghanistan’s literary landscape and their more general place within the larger Persianate world remain clouded.

Resisting any preordained framework, this chapter instead explores the social and literary circumstances guiding their composition and the environment in which they emerged. If any framework is applied here, it is one more international and inclusive, more expansive and broader in scope. It allows for seeing these *jangnâmahs* beyond their relationship to the Afghan nation and instead as examples of Afghan literary products shaped by transnational characteristics, particularly through their entry into British India and the latter’s use of printing presses to publish and circulate one of the texts.⁶ This approach also validates a definition of *bâzgasht* as more than an Iranian-based movement. *Bâzgasht* may best be seen as a corpus of norms and practices that promoted the circulation of texts and oral tales related to the poetry of the “ancients” on a wider scale throughout the nineteenth century.

Attending to the circumstances of the *jangnâmahs*’ composition, their circulation, and the relationships and interconnections between them highlight the lively space they created and occupied in nineteenth century Afghanistan and South Asia. The emergent image is one of vigorous literary activity and productivity, a “marketplace” of texts in imitation of the masters, spanning geographical regions and embracing both oral and print culture. Such a transnational marketplace of texts may point to an alternative model of what is meant by *bâzgasht-i adabî*, based not entirely on collective action and production by a group of poets, but on active and circulating trends as well.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the “historical epic” and *jangnâmah* genre situated within the history of texts produced in imitation of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*. It argues that the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War constitute a unique example of textual production of this genre. The chapter then discusses how these texts have been treated primarily from a nationalist perspective in Afghan literary history. Following that, the chapter explores each of the three *jangnâmahs*, delineating the social, political, and literary environments under which they

⁵ See Chapter One; and Rizâ Chihriqânî Barchalûyî and Ismâ’îl Shafaq, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi’r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân,” *Funûn-i Adabî* 4.2 (Fall/Winter 1391/2012-3): 57, 60. Also see Muhammad Akbar Sanâ Ghaznavî, *Tarîkh-i adabiyât-i Dari* (Kabul: Mayvand, 1385/2007), 255-256.

⁶ For information on the transnational characteristics of Afghan literary production, see: Nile Green, “Introduction: Afghan Literature between Diaspora and Nation,” in *Afghanistan in Ink: Literature between Diaspora and Nation*, ed. Nile Green and Nushin Arbabzadah (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 1-30.

were composed, offering insight into a complex set of factors often overlooked in nationalist readings. The chapter concludes by arguing that the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War are best seen as having created a “marketplace” of works in imitation of a “master,” challenging the interpretation of *bâzgasht* in the nineteenth century as an exclusively Iranian category.

Shâhnâmah Imitation and the Jangnâmah Genre in Historical Perspective

The impact of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah* upon textual production in the Persian-speaking world has resulted in an outpouring of renditions, continuations, and imitations throughout history. It has served as a model for authors seeking to retell the tales and triumphs of various personalities contained within the *Shâhnâmah* itself through their own “cyclical” or “secondary” epics, and encouraged others to compose continuations of Firdawsî’s work. The *Shâhnâmah* has also served as a model for authors to narrate events more immediate to their own lifetimes, either contemporaneous or in the recent past (e.g., a monarch’s battlefield victories). This last class of texts is of primary concern here. Texts that rely on an epic tradition of the *Shâhnâmah* to narrate historical events are what Zabîhullâh Safâ refers to as “historical epics” (sing. *hamasah-yi târîkhî*). In his work on the epic tradition in Persian, Safâ cites the variety of “historical epics” composed in different geographic and political settings from the early thirteenth century to the early nineteenth century, many of which rely on the *Shâhnâmah* as a model.⁷ It is within this tradition of epic poetry and imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* that the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War are best understood.

The first historical epic imitating the *Shâhnâmah* model and contemporaneous to the events it described was *Shâhanshâhnâmah-yi Pâyîzî*, produced during the reign of Sultan ‘Alâ al-Dîn Muhammad Khwarazam Shâh (r. 596/1199-1200 to 617/1220-2). It recounts the Sultan’s various victories, and like many such historical epics, it was produced at the court of the patron at the center of the work.⁸ The early modern and modern periods also witnessed a proliferation of similar historical epics modeled on the *Shâhnâmah* or, in some cases, influenced more by the particular style of Nizâmî’s *Iskandarnâmah*. Imitations of the *Shâhnâmah* predominated in Safavid and Ottomans domains, mainly but not exclusively at the court.

At the court of the Safavid monarch Tahmasp, who has been portrayed as shunning non-religious poetry, the poet Qâsimî composed several historical epics in praise of various rulers. Qâsimî’s *Shâhnâmah-Qâsimî* included one part celebrating the deeds and victories of Shâh Ismâ‘îl (r. 1501-1524) (entitled *Shâhnâmah-yi mâzî*) and a second part dedicated to the deeds of Shâh Tahmasp (r. 1524-1576) (entitled *Shâhnâmah-yi navâb-i ‘âlî*).⁹ Later, during the reign of Shâh ‘Abbâs (r. 1588-1629), an unknown author produced two *jangnâmahs* (entitled *Jangnâmah-yi Qishm* and *Jarûnnâmah*) in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah*. These works describe battles between local forces and the Portuguese over various islands in the Persian Gulf in the

⁷ Zabîhullâh Safâ, *Hamasah sarâyî dar Êrân: az qadîmtarîn ‘ahd-i târîkhî tâ qarn-i chahârdahum-i Hijrî* (Tehran: Amîr Kabîr, 1333/1954), 343-390.

⁸ Ibid. 354.

⁹ Ibid. 364-366.

early seventeenth century, highlighting the heroic deeds of local actors, such as Imâm Qulî Khân of Shîrâz, as well the role played by the British East India Company.¹⁰ The last great court-sponsored imitation of the *Shâhnâmâh* in Iran, the *Shâhanshâhnâmâh* by the poet Sabâ, was produced at the court of the Qajar monarch Fath ‘Alî Shâh (r. 1797-1834).

Further west in Ottoman domains, the *Shâhnâmâh* also served as a model for recounting recent events. The Ottoman court collected various copies of the manuscript and translated it into Ottoman Turkish, inspiring the production of several imitations of the *Shâhnâmâh* recounting the deeds of various sultans. These works first appeared in Persian verse in the same meter and style as Firdawsî’s work, but later began to be written in Turkish, sometimes in prose.¹¹ The status of such imitative authors reached a point during the reign of Shâh Sulaymân (r. 1520-1566) at which the authors earned the rank of “writer of *Shâhnâmâhs*” and received salaries for their efforts.¹² Several works focus on battles between the Ottomans and Safavids.¹³ Although singing the praises and deeds of an Ottoman Sultan through *Shâhnâmâh* imitation served a quasi-propagandistic purpose, this objective appears to be secondary to the literary and cultural prestige the act of composing such a work entailed.¹⁴

Finally, in regards to the modern history of Afghanistan, several works drawing on the epic tradition of the *Shâhnâmâh* pre-date the *jangnâmâhs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War. The *Shâhnâmâh-yi Ahmadî* concerns the deeds of Ahmad Shâh Durrânî (d. 1773), the founder of the modern Afghan State, following the death of Nadir Shâh. Another work dedicated to many of Ahmad Shâh’s victories on the battlefield is simply titled *Fathnâmâh*.¹⁵

A major feature of the texts listed above was that they were composed within the confines of a royal court. In couching their patron’s glorious deeds (most notably on the battlefield) within the *Shâhnâmâh* model, these poets honored their patron’s regal stature by linking it to monarchical prestige in a widely disseminated and respected epic tradition. One of the unique features of the *jangnâmâhs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War is that *praise* for a particular individual patron did not appear to be of primary concern. As Christine Noelle has demonstrated, a strong and unified state structure did not truly exist in mid-nineteenth century Afghanistan, deeply affecting prospects for patronage.¹⁶ Thus, while one finds “heroes” throughout these *jangnâmâhs*, such heroes were not necessarily the patrons of poets, a practice quite atypical in

¹⁰ Ibid. 366-370. For a brief history of Qishm Island, including an account of events concerning Portuguese interference, see: Daniel T. Potts, “Qeshm Island,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition (2004). Available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/qeshm-island>.

¹¹ Jan Schmidt, “The Reception of Firdausi’s *Shahnama* among the Ottomans,” in *Shahnama Studies II: The Reception of Firdausi’s Shahnama*, ed. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 132.

¹² Ibid. 133

¹³ Safâ, *Hamasah sarâyî dar Îrân*, 372.

¹⁴ Lâle Uluç, “The *Shahanama* of Firdausi in the Lands of Rum,” in *Shahnama Studies II: The Reception of Firdausi’s Shahnama*, ed. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012), 173-174.

¹⁵ Safâ, *Hamasah sarâyî dar Îrân*, 374.

¹⁶ See Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*.

the history of *jangnâmah* production. While these texts were not altogether disconnected from practices and *concerns* of patronage, they were more concerned with representing events than praising a king. The terms and circumstance of their production fell outside the strict confines of a particular court.

The *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War were dedicated to the narration of a recent event, not the deeds of a regal patron. Moreover, due to their composition in the mid-nineteenth century, these texts came alive in a variety of different ways, combining oral narration, manuscript dissemination, and new technologies in print culture. In other words, these three texts tied a recent event of historical import to the long-established *Shâhnâmah* tradition in a unique manner, operating across a spectrum of dissemination and circulation via oral transmission, copied manuscripts, and print. Contrary to the texts featured above, these *jangnâmahs* represent an instance where several similarly styled works, all dedicated to the same event and representing it in the same form, appeared alongside one another. No other class of “historical epics” can make such a claim. As a result, these texts represent a unique occurrence in the genre of *Shâhnâmah* imitation, warranting close examination alongside other concomitant trends of eighteenth and nineteenth century Persian literary culture where the “masters” of Persian poetry loom large.

The Jangnâmahs of the First Anglo-Afghan War

Viewed alongside one another, the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War represent a coherent collection of works in several distinct ways. First, they were all written in response to the occurrence of one major event: the first Anglo-Afghan War. While the circumstances of each author’s desire to compose a work detailing the war’s events differ, they were all composed within five years of the war’s end and seek to explain and interpret its occurrence, which would become “an important theme for modern historians who used the Afghan struggle for liberation from a colonial power as an image for the Afghan quest for self-determination.”¹⁷ Second, these works all employ a similar literary-cultural model, the *jangnâmah*. At their core, these works are within a genre devoted to the depiction of battles, in this case, between the British and their Afghan opponents, and highlight various personalities, warriors, and interactions among the warring parties. Third, they are consciously modeled after the *Shâhnâmah* of Abu al-Qâsim Firdawsî, employing the same meter, stylistics, and vocabulary choices made famous by that work.

These *jangnâmahs* have also been connected to one another in Afghan nationalist discourse, primarily through the prism of modern nationalist historiography. Prior to the twentieth century, manuscripts of Kashmîrî’s *Akbarnâmah* and Ghulâmi’s *Jangnâmah* existed in archives, private collections and libraries, passed from hand-to-hand, or circulated orally. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that they were “recovered” and published for mass distribution, championed as nativist responses to the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by a foreign entity, and serialized within the annals of Afghanistan’s national history. Each work appeared in the Kabul-based journal *Âryânâ*, the *Akbarnâmah* in 1327/1948-9 and the

¹⁷ Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 38.

Jangnâmah in 1334/1955-6. The Afghan Historical Society (*Anjuman-i Târikh-i Afghânistân*) published both shortly thereafter.

It is not surprising that these two native accounts detailing Afghanistan's "struggle for liberation from a colonial power" came to be published by *Âryânâ* and later the Afghan Historical Society. The publication and distribution of the *Akbarnâmah* and *Jangnâmah* in mid-twentieth century Afghanistan were part of a general environment that featured the intersection of intellectual production and state support. As M. Jamal Hanifi has noted, during the early-to-mid-twentieth century, the intellectual elite were essentially employed by the government itself and produced various projects that strengthened the state's legitimacy, ideology, and national legacy.¹⁸ This process largely came to be institutionalized with the establishment of *Anjuman-i Adabî-i Kâbul* (Kabul Literary Society). This first official and academic cultural association was inaugurated by king Muhammad Nâdir Shâh (r. 1929-1931) in 1930. One of its aims was to promote and improve Afghanistan's literature and "reform and standardize written Persian by developing and cultivating a discerning literary taste."¹⁹ The Society counted among its charter members the prolific historian Mîr Ghulâm Muhammad Ghubâr and published the writings of its members in a journal entitled *Kâbul*. In keeping with its close relationship to the state, *Anjuman-i Adabî-i Kâbul* remained under the supervision of the king's secretariat and was housed in the royal palace in Kabul.²⁰

One of the organizations succeeding *Anjuman-i Adabî-i Kâbul* was *Anjuman-i Târikh-i Afghânistân* (Historical Society of Afghanistan). This Society, established in 1942, had a similarly nationalistic mandate and responsibility as its predecessor, including the recording and dissemination of various aspects of Afghanistan's history, heritage, and culture. Among its articles of association were directives for the "compiling [of] a complete history of Afghanistan from the earliest times to the present" and "collecting and publishing sources of Afghanistan's history," whether documents, treaties, or manuscripts.²¹ The Society's journal *Âryânâ*, also founded in 1942 with a name that references a term once used for ancient Afghanistan, was tasked with publishing materials of national interest. *Âryânâ* published works related to Afghanistan's history, ethnography, literature, and archaeology.²² The publication of both the *Jangnâmah* and *Akbarnâmah*, two texts championing one of the grander moments in Afghanistan's history, fit well with the nationalist mandate of the Historical Society. More

¹⁸ M. Jamal Hanifi, "Colonial Production of Hegemony through the "Loya Jerga" in Afghanistan," *Iranian Studies* 37.2 (Jun. 2004): 315.

¹⁹ Wali Ahmadi, "Kabul Literary Society, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 25, fasc. 3 (2009): 318; An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kabul-literary-society>.

²⁰ Hanifi, "Colonial Production of Hegemony through the "Loya Jerga" in Afghanistan," 314.

²¹ R. Farhadi, "Anjoman-e Târik-i Afgânestân," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 2, fasc. 1 (1985): 90; An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anjoman-e-tarik-e-afganestan-pato-da-afganestan-tarik-tolana-historical-society-of-afghanistan>. The Afghan Historical Society became affiliated with the Ministry of Culture in 1966. In 1978, it merged with the Academy of Sciences.

²² 'A. Habibi, "Âryânâ," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 2, fasc. 7 (1987): 683; An updated version is online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/aryana-bulletin-of-the-historical-society-of-afghanistan>.

recently, the *Jangnâmah* and the *Akbarnâmah* have been situated within the context of the development of *shî'r-i muqâvamat* (resistance poetry) in modern Afghanistan.²³

These two texts did not remain uncirculated prior to their publication in the mid-twentieth century. The *Akbarnâmah*, for example, appears to have circulated within the Afghan government prior to its publication: one of the manuscripts used to collate the print edition of the *Akbarnâmah* was likely copied under the auspices of king Habîbullah's (r. 1901-1919) court; another was copied by the "Office of News Reform in Kabul." As only one manuscript of Ghulâmî's *Jangnâmah* is known to exist, cared for by the progeny of the famed national hero Mîr Masjidî Khân, this text was not as widespread as the *Akbarnâmah*, most likely circulating orally, primarily though not exclusively in the Kuhistan region. The place of these works within Afghanistan's national memory and political history as examples of the tradition of resistance to foreign incursions remains secure.

Solidifying the roles of these two *jangnâmahs* in Afghan national discourse and in recounting the Afghan resistance to the British is their juxtaposition with the third *jangnâmah* noted above. It is a variously titled work referred to here as *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* by a man named Qâsim 'Alî. Confusion over the author and title of this text is matched by the intrigue surrounding its composition. It is related by various historians that Qâsim 'Alî composed the work in response to the widespread circulation and popularity of Kashmîrî's *Akbarnâmah*, at behest of the British. The British were apparently unhappy with the circulation of the *Akbarnâmah* in Afghanistan and South Asia and the manner in which it portrayed the British defeat at the hands of the Afghans.

If the *Akbarnâmah* is seen as a work glorifying the Afghan people's success in defeating the British, then the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* is viewed as a counter-narrative, seeking to combat the former's influence. This element of the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* has not fared well for its treatment by scholars. Criticism of Qâsim 'Alî and skepticism toward his work has become somewhat of a tradition among Afghan scholars.²⁴ However, the circumstances surrounding Qâsim 'Alî's work are more complex, as will be documented below.

The *Jangnâmah* of "Ghulâmî" and Oral Culture

Maulânâ Mullâ Muhammad Ghulâm "Ghulâmî" Kûhistânî's *Jangnâmah*, the first *jangnâmah* detailing events of the first Anglo-Afghan War, was probably being composed while the war was still ongoing. It quite literally emerged from the debris of the war itself. Its recovery in manuscript form by the Historical Society of Afghanistan seems more redolent of national lore than reality. According to Ahmad 'Alî Kuhzâd in his introduction to the published edition of the *Jangnâmah*, Mîr Muhammad Hasan Khân, a relative of the famous fighter Mîr Masjidî Khân, delivered the manuscript to the Historical Society in 1331/1952-3. The manuscript was partially composed on official paper belonging to the offices of the British, evidenced by the fact that the first 76 pages of the 166-page manuscript contain ledgers of the names of British officials and

²³ For example, see: Muhammad Kâzim Kâzimî, "Faryâd-hâ-yi mawzûn: shî'r-i muqâvamat dar Afghânistân," *Sûrah Andîshah* 24 (1385/2006): 76-81.

²⁴ Pûhând 'Abd al-Shakûr Rashâd, "Darbârah-yi zafarnâmah-yi akbarî va nâzim-i ân," *Âryânâ* 44.2 (1365/1986): 139.

officers on the backside. On the tops of some of the pages, the heading “Ludhiana Political Agent, Political Agent Shikarpur” with the years 1841-1842 is discernible. (Ludhiana, India, was the location of the exiled Shâh Shujâ‘ and his court before being returned to the throne by the British.) Kuhzâd has concluded that this paper was recovered by an Afghan fighter amidst the loot of battle some time between November 1841 and January 1842, perhaps from Bâlâ Hissâr or another English fortress or encampment near Kabul. It was on this paper, Kuhzâd notes, that Ghulâmî recorded the “names of national brothers and high-minded fighters of the homeland in epic fashion.” The work itself was most likely completed around 1843, the year that Dûst Muhammad Khân returned to the throne in Kabul.²⁵

The events detailed in Ghulâmî’s work are presented in a straightforward chronology focused on Dûst Muhammad Khân’s defeat at the hands of Shâh Shujâ‘ and his subsequent flight.²⁶ Ghulâmî tends to champion the deeds of men from Kûhistân and their role in the resistance to British occupation, since he hailed from the village of Aftabchi in that region of Afghanistan. Directing the narrative is Ghulâmî’s conscious effort to compose his work in imitation of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*. This choice appears to represent an instance in which Firdawsî’s work was regarded as the appropriate model for recording current political events and highlighting the important personalities involved. Ghulâmî’s choice was not unique among Afghan authors relying on the *Shâhnâmah* model. As Shafiq Shamel notes, the stories of the *Shâhnâmah* have been recalled in Afghanistan “as models to be emulated in order to overcome existential or socio-political difficulties and to restore the dignity of oneself, one’s people or one’s nation.”²⁷ As noted above, imitations of the *Shâhnâmah* also appeared during the time of Ahmad Shâh Durrânî. In his *Jangnâmah*, Ghulâmî replicates the meter of the *Shâhnâmah* and utilizes language and stylistic choices associated with that work (e.g., referring to armies as “rivers” and heroes as “dragons”).²⁸ His opening praise for Dûst Muhammad Khân prior to the narrative of the text reveals this effort to the reader, or more likely, the listener. Here, Dûst Muhammad Khân and his actions are re-contextualized alongside the heroes and lore associated with ancient Iran and the *Shâhnâmah*:

The Grand Amir, the head of regality,
the son of Pâyindah Khân
In manners, he is like Alexander, in magnificence like Jamshîd,
Deserving of throne, crown, and [royal] waist-band.
His stock is Durrânî, his land is Kâbul
in strength, alas, he is the Rustam of Zâbul
May every day of his days be like Nawrûz,

²⁵ The details of this paragraph come from: Ahmad ‘Alî Kuhzâd, introduction to *Jangnâmah*, by Muhammad Ghulâm Ghulâmî (Kabul: Matba‘ah-yi Daulatî, 1336/1957).

²⁶ Husayn Nâ’il, *Sukhân-sarâyânî az sadah-yi sizdahum* (Kabul: Akâdimî-i ‘Ulûm-i Afghânistân, Markaz-i Zabân-hâ va Adabiyât, Instîtûtî-i Zabân va Adab-i Darî, 1382/2003-4), 318.

²⁷ Shafiq Shamel, “Afghanistan and the Persian Epic *Shahnamah*: Historical Agency and the Epic Imagination in Afghan and Afghan-American Literature,” in *Afghanistan in Ink: Literature between Diaspora and Nation*, ed. Nile Green and Nushin Arbabzadah (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 211.

²⁸ Habîb, “Jumbish-i jangnâmah-sarâyî dar shi‘r-i Darî sadah-yi nûzdah Afghânistân,” 52.

may his nights be as splendid as the Night of Qadr.^{29*}

By situating his tale in the style and rhythm of the *Shâhnâmah*, Ghulâmî could raise local personalities, like his Kûhistânî kinsmen Mîr Masjidî Khân, to the status of heroes. In this regard he followed a practice Louis Dupree observed in Afghan folklore as late as the 1960s as the desire to “reinforce pride in local heroes and groups.”³⁰ Kuhzâd maintains that the only existent manuscript of the *Jangnâmah* came to the Afghan Historical Society by one of Mîr Masjidî Khân’s progeny. It was likely guarded by the latter’s Kûhistânî family during the intervening period as a source of familial pride, in which a member of his kin embodied high-valued virtues like bravery and sacrifice. The lack of additional manuscripts of the *Jangnâmah* also suggest that the text mostly circulated orally, if at all.

As a confirmed witness to the events of the Anglo-Afghan War and writing while the war was still smouldering and fresh in people’s hearts, Ghulâmî’s choice to replicate the *Shâhnâmah* helped solidify the war’s events into the domain of oral tales and legend. The extent to which Ghulâmî’s tale circulated cannot be known definitively; however, in a predominantly non-literate society reliant on the oral transmission of tales and folklore, it may well have been vast.³¹ The recognizability of the *Shâhnâmah* model allowed access for a great many listeners. Ghulâmî drew upon this paradigmatic model to subordinate the temporality of the war’s events to folkloric proportions.³² He provided a format for the personalities of the Afghan resistance, like Dûst Muhammad Khân, his famous son Muhammad Akbar Khân, and Mîr Masjidî Khân, to be elevated to the status of epic heroes. The status accorded to such individuals in Afghan society would not subside, either in the short or long term, as evidenced by their future treatment in literary and non-literary formats. To note two prominent examples: Akbar Khân’s heroic deeds serve as the centerpiece for one of the first Afghan novels, *Jihâd-i Akbar*, which appeared in serial form between 1919 and 1921; and the highest civilian honor awarded by the Afghan government today is named after Mîr Masjidî Khân.³³ Ghulâmî’s depiction of their deeds and the ability of his text to enter Afghan oral culture while the war was still winding down certainly

²⁹ Muhammad Ghulâm “Ghulâmî” Kûhistânî, *Jangnâmah* (Kabul: Matba‘ah-yi Daulatî, 1336/1957), 7. The reference to *Shab-i qadr* (in Persian) or *Laylat al-qadr* (in Arabic) refers to the night when the Noble Qur’an descended from the Heaven and is commemorated each year toward the closing days of Ramadan.

*See Appendix 1.22

³⁰ Louis Dupree, “The First Anglo-Afghan War and the British Retreat of 1842: The Functions of History and Folklore,” *East and West* 26.3/4 (Sept.-Dec. 1976): 524. Accessed 19 Sept 2013.

³¹ The “CIA World Factbook” places the current literacy rate in Afghanistan at 28.1%. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>. Accessed 19 Sept 2013.

³² For a similar example later in the nineteenth century and from where this concept is drawn see: David B. Edwards, “Mad Mullahs and Englishmen: Discourse in the Colonial Encounter,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31.4 (Oct. 1989): 649-670.

³³ For information on *Jihâd-i Akbar*, see: Nile Green, “Introduction: Afghan Literature between Diaspora and Nation,” 23-24. More recently the image of Akbar Khân has been referenced in poetry of the Taliban. See “Our Life, O Afghanistan” by Mustafa Hamîd in: *Poetry of the Taliban*, trans. by Mirwais Rahmany and Hamîd Stankizai, ed. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012), 121-122.

helped in solidifying the perception of these heroes in the Afghan imagination. But the interplay between oral and literary culture cut both ways.

As much as Ghulâmî was creating new national heroes and legends by drawing on the epic model of the *Shâhnâmah*, his work was grounded within a larger discourse of epic tales and myth-making prevalent in Afghan history. He was likely giving voice and coherence to the stories of heroism and valour already being circulated amongst the Afghan populace during the time, but not in the form of a concretized literary text.³⁴ Indeed, the first poetic reaction of the populace against the rule of Shâh Shujâ‘ and his British overlords was a verse circulating orally:

Coins minted with silver and gold by Shâh Shujâ‘
The pupil of the eyes (*nûr-i chashm*) of “Lords” and “Burnes,” the dirt under the feet
(*khâk-i pâ*) of the “Company”³⁵

Ghulâmî’s *Jangnâmah* is representative of other nineteenth century authors seeking to explain events and confrontations through the *jangnâmah* and *Shâhnâmah* models, to dramatize uprisings against political authority. As the first known example of its time, Ghulâmî’s account of the first Anglo-Afghan war, with its emphasis on heroes from his own region, stands at the forefront of other similarly inclined authors seeking to retell current events also local in context. As Asadullâh Habîb notes, a host of other authors sought to place events of nineteenth century Afghanistan, including local rebellions or revolts against the later ruler of Afghanistan Amir ‘Abd al-Rahmân Khân, in a similar model.³⁶ The *Jangnâmah*, as a text at once modelled after the *Shâhnâmah* while remaining specific to events of Afghanistan’s modern history, points to its placement within multiple and overlapping discourses. It is both part of a long tradition of texts reliant on models pervasive in Persianate societies and one on the forefront of authors seeking to use such models to articulate accounts and expressions of events specific to Afghanistan in the nineteenth century.

Had Ghulâmî produced the only *jangnâmah* of the first Anglo-Afghan War, the insistence on viewing his work as representative of larger societal trends and part of a market of similarly-composed books and oral tales circulating in the mid-nineteenth century would not arise. But in far-off Kashmir another poet, Hamîd Allah Kashmîrî, was compiling the most famous of the time’s battle-poems, the *Akbarnâmah*, in honor of Dûst Muhammad Khân’s son Muhammad Akbar Khân. The circumstances under which Kashmîrî composed his work differ significantly from Ghulâmî’s and relate to his own literary environment. Nonetheless, Kashmîrî felt compelled to narrate the events of the war-- crucially, events he did not witness-- by using the *Shâhnâmah* model. Moreover, the *Akbarnâmah*’s composition sets in motion events that display the full breadth and circulatory power of *Shâhnâmah*-like texts and tales of the first Anglo-Afghan War. It is the appearance of this work leads to the composition of the third *jangnâmah* discussed below.

³⁴ Habîb, “Jumbish-i jangnâmah-sarâyî dar shi‘r-i Darî sadah-yi nûzdah Afghânistân,” 54.

³⁵ Chihriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi‘r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân,” 58.

³⁶ Habîb, “Jumbish-i jangnâmah-sarâyî dar shi‘r-i Darî sadah-yi nûzdah Afghânistân,” 53.

A Bâzgashtian Tale: The *Akbarnâmah* of Hamîd Allah Kashmîrî

Hamîd Allah Kashmîrî was born in the *pargana* of Shâhâbâd in Kashmir.³⁷ He was the son of Maulavi Himâyât Allah, a religious scholar of Kashmir, with whom he studied at an early age and from whom he most likely gained his first knowledge of the classical Persian canon.³⁸ While he is the author of several other works, it is his *Akbarnâmah*, dedicated to the national hero and son of Dûst Muhammad Khân, Akbar Khân, on which his fame rests. The work has earned him appellations in later histories such as “Firdawsî-i Kashmîr” or “Sâz-Kashmîr.”³⁹ Kashmîrî composed the *Akbarnâmah* in 1844, only one year after the composition of Ghulâmî’s *Jangnâmah*. He died four years later in 1848. Indications in the text suggest that he was old and infirm while completing it and too weak to travel.⁴⁰ There is also no indication in that text that Hamîd Kashmîrî had any knowledge of Ghulâmî’s *Jangnâmah*. While the lack of connection between the two texts on the surface runs counter to the notion that a “market of books” of the post-Anglo-Afghan War existed, inter-textual references and authorial awareness among the various texts is only one element of this story. That Hamîd Kashmîrî composed his work without knowledge of Ghulâmî reinforces the significance of a shared model among nearly contemporaneous tales. They both sought to convey their stories using Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah* and tapping into reserves of circulating traditions prevalent in the Persianate sphere, albeit for different reasons. One of the telling factors of the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War is that a single event could elicit several distinct instances of similarly structured texts. Unlike his predecessor Ghulâmî, Hamîd was not an eyewitness to the war, removed from events in Kabul by his location in Kashmir. Hamîd relied on oral accounts to compose his work, on tales of heroism and valor in the war that likely flowed through the population.⁴¹ Kashmîrî notes in his epilogue that he collected bits and pieces of the war’s events from travelers and passers-by, more than eager to share what they had heard or seen of the war. He composed his *Akbarnâmah* from such oral information.

I asked of wise people
 who were inhabitants of that domain.
In reports there were differences of words,
 I brought them together in agreement and spoke [them] whole.
I did nothing but adorn the battle itself,
 I didn’t add anything extra in this tale.
If there remains confusions in the narrative

³⁷ Sâbir Âfâqî, “Firdawsî-i Kashmîr” *Vahîd* 7.4 (1349/1970-1): 395. For a short biography of Kashmîrî’s life also see the entry on him in “Adab-i Fârsî dar Afghânistân,” in vol. 3 *Dânishnâmah-yi adab-i Fârsî*, ed. Hasan Anûshâh (Tehran: Sâzmân-i Châp va Intishârât-i Vizârât-i Farhang va Irshâd-i Islâmî, 1380-3/2001-5), 351-352.

³⁸ Habîb, “Jumbish-i jangnâmah-sarâyî dar shî‘r-i Darî sadah-yi nûzdah Afghânistân,” 55.

³⁹ For a list of his other works see Âfâqî, “Firdawsî-i Kashmîr,” 396.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 395.

⁴¹ See Habîb, “Jumbish-i jangnâmah-sarâyî dar shî‘r-i Darî sadah-yi nûzdah Afghânistân.”

My source (*râvî-i man*) is responsible (*zamândâr*) for it, not me.^{42*}

Kashmîrî's reliance on contemporary oral reports is not the only instance of how the work's composition was influenced by the surrounding atmosphere. Complementing its relationship to the oral culture concurrent with the war's aftermath is the *Akbarnâmah*'s relationship to the literary climate of the time, extending beyond the temporal confines of the war. If it was oral culture that allowed Kashmîrî to access the raw material to compose the work, then it was in fact his perception over the current state of Persian literary culture and poetics that instigated the project of writing. This aspect of the *Akbarnâmah*'s composition, though not entirely overlooked, has not been given its fair due, especially in the context of nineteenth century Persianate literary culture.⁴³

The *Akbarnâmah*'s connection to nineteenth century Persianate literary culture is at times forgotten amidst the national acclaim garnered by the work and its place in a nationalist discourse about Afghanistan's resistance to foreigners. Indeed Kashmîrî's birth in Kashmir does not preclude his work from being part of the national literature of Afghanistan.⁴⁴ But where Kashmîrî's work ended up is not where it began. He may have produced an Afghan national epic, but his intention was not necessarily to do so. Kashmîrî was responding to trends and perceptions of his own literary climate that viewed the achievements of its poets and authors as devoid of the excellence once attained by the great masters. In this respect, the situation resembled perceptions of some of the Isfahânî Circle of poets and Qajar-era *tazkirah* authors.⁴⁵

Kashmîrî tells his audience in the prologue that he composed the *Akbarnâmah* as proof that the tradition of the esteemed masters of Persian literature was still relevant and that imitation of their styles was still possible. He relates the story of how he had a dream of spending an evening at an *anjuman*, amongst "masters of bright dispositions" and their recitation of pleasant *ghazals*. These well-seasoned critics and poets were engaged in a conversation concerning the literary climate of the time. In such a setting, amidst the reading of *ghazals* and *masnavîs* by the likes of Khâqânî, Rûmî and Sa'dî,

In the end someone from amongst the assembly said:
"Alas, the people of speech have come to an end.
I long for the auspicious times
when such speech-cultivators [were present]
In these times, the urban and the village fools (*juhâl*)
with meaningless and nonsense poems
speak emptily of the esteemed masters [of before]
and call themselves perfect practitioners

⁴² Hamîd Kashmîrî, *Akbarnâmah* (Kabul: Anjuman-i Târîkh, 1330/1951-2), 236.

* See Appendix 1.23

⁴³ For example, see: G.L. Tikku, *Persian Poetry in Kashmir, 1339-1846* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 204-207; and Nâ'il, *Sukhân-sarâyânî az sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 271-274.

⁴⁴ Nâ'il, *Sukhân-sarâyânî az sadah-yi sîzdahum*, 313.

⁴⁵ See Chapters One and Two.

They draw nothing from the elegant and intricate class of [past masters]
except verse-stealing.^{46*}

These critical remarks directed toward the members of the *anjuman*, spoken by a person not further identified by Kashmîrî, provide insight into the literary climate in which the *Akbarnâmah* was produced. That this *anjuman* appeared to Kashmîrî in a dream, a common trope used by poets to relate the inspiration behind their work, should not detract from the content. It remains as much a reflection of Kashmîrî's perceptions of his surrounding literary climate and position in it, as if he had related the events of a "real" *anjuman*. The speaker expresses ire and disappointment toward the poetic climate of the time. He employs stock and trade phraseology to convey his concern, with phrases like "nonsense poems" and poets' misplaced self-designation as "perfect practitioners," terms with equivalents elsewhere in works of the tumultuous Persianate world of the nineteenth century. The nearly contemporaneous *tazkirahs* from the Zand and early Qajar period employ equally dismissive language of certain classes of poets and bemoan the present dire state of poetic affairs in similarly scathing terms.⁴⁷ One is reminded of the "rose garden" conversations among members of the Isfahânî Circle and the letter from Sabâhî to Rafîq (see Chapter Two). In all these cases and elsewhere, the market of poetry writ large and, in particular, the stylistics of the *tâzah-gû'î* poets are the objects of criticism. The language used by Kashmîrî, in a work modeled upon Firdawsî's *Shâhnâmah*, suggests that the speaker of Kashmîrî's creation was voicing concerns about *tâzah-gû'î* poets that parallel commentaries by his Isfahânî counterparts. Phrases such as "the people of speech have come to an end" (*ahl-i sukhân khatm shud*) and other accusations lend credence to this possibility. But it is also conceivable that some of the language used by Kashmîrî's speaker suggests otherwise.

The speaker talks of poets who "speak emptily of the esteemed masters and call themselves perfect practitioners" (*dam az ustâdân-i 'âlî dihand/bih-khud nâm-i sahib-kamâlî nihand*). He also impugns those very same poets for knowing nothing but "verse stealing" (*shî'r-duzdî*). Rather than bearing the hallmarks of criticism reserved for the poets of the *tâzah-gû'î* style such designations seem to be more in line with stylistic practices attempting feeble imitation of the "masters." The speaker displays disdain for those poets' proclaiming perfection by borrowing the verses ("speak emptily") of the "masters," which apparently is no better than "verse-stealing." This appears to express a general distaste for poets unsuccessfully imitating the "masters," not for those who challenge such masters. Evidence of this possibility is that the context for the lines quoted (and subsequent discussion) is not simply an *anjuman*, but one, according to Kashmîrî, where the poetry of Khâqânî, Rûmî and Sa'dî was being recited. Why would this speaker be so upset if the poetry of the master's was already being recited among the participants of the *anjuman*? Perhaps the speaker's displeasure was based on the manner in which members of the *anjuman* were imitating the masters' styles.

The criticism expressed by the unknown speaker and addressed to the members of the *anjuman* elicited an impassioned response from Kashmîrî. It sets in motion a challenge that would lead to Kashmîrî penning his famous work. Indignant at the speaker's claim that the time of poets has passed, Kashmîrî makes his position known with force:

⁴⁶ Kashmîrî, *Akbarnâmah*, 14-15.

*See Appendix 1.24.

⁴⁷ See Chapter One.

When these words reached my ear,
the flame of anger engulfed my mind.
I said to him: “Oh friend, slow down,
and stop your foolish talk.”⁴⁸

Kashmîrî proceeds to correct the original speaker’s perceptions of the current literary climate. He seeks to refute the fact that the time of the masters is over and to assert his own connection with the masters. Feeling personally slighted by the speaker’s claims, Kashmîrî defends his poetry to the gathering, especially with reference to stealing verses:

All my words are from new and old,
scan the depths of my poetry line by line
And tell: what ones have I stolen?⁴⁹

After Kashmîrî’s impassioned response, about thirty *bayts*, the original speaker again picks up the thread of the conversation. Asking Kashmîrî to support his talk with action, he requests that he prove his poetic talent by producing a work akin to the great masters of yore:

Oh, from among all in poetry,
prepared for self-praise and claim
You became angry for the sake of all,
you’ve been taken prisoner in place of all
If you have a trace of truth-telling,
now is the time to prove your claim.
And recite the tales of battle of that young lion,
the foreigner-breaking hero Akbar
Who in the battle of Kabul, in the field of war,
what lions scattered [by that] lion of a man
Like his sword, make your language sharp in clarity
in his manliness, make your own manliness manifest
Since you have made the claim, offer proof!
and, if not, then stop your idle talk!^{50*}

Either way Kashmîrî was seeking to demonstrate his ability to imitate the masters to combat a different style, or he sought to rise above contemporary poets who themselves were imitating the masters. The nature of the exchange between the irritated member of the *anjuman* and Kashmîrî is not clear. Either way Kashmîrî demonstrates an awareness of his local literary environment and that he composed his work in response to a challenge by a critic, who deemed him (and his contemporaries) unworthy.

⁴⁸ Kashmîrî, *Akbarnâmah*, 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 17.

* See Appendix 1.25

Buried in the *Akbarnâmah*'s prologue, and rarely cited in connection with the text is another understated aspect of Kashmîrî's motivations in writing the work: the issue of patronage. The poet references the issue and the plight of poets facing decreased patronage opportunities:

Don't say "No poet exists in the world,"
there are plenty of poets, but no patron.⁵¹

Kashmîrî here takes the offensive, introducing social and political realities his interlocutor so casually brushed aside in favor of aesthetic judgments. Kashmîrî is concerned with the role of poets given their troubling lack of opportunities for patronage. This attitude and its expression are reminiscent of Âzar Baygdilî and members of his Isfahânî Circle. Kashmîrî, like Âzar, is asking that the poets of his time not be judged according to the past experiences of the masters. The "masters," as Âzar said, were "nurtured in the cradle of prosperity and peace, obtaining every want and wish beneath the shadow of the protection of the monarchs of the age," while "the contemporaries" were not.⁵²

Kashmir was no kinder to Hamîd than post-Safavid Isfahan was to Âzar. The political and social situation remained chaotic and unsettled throughout Kashmîrî's lifetime. Under Afghan (1753-1819) and later Sikh (1819-1846) rule, Kashmir was dominated by times of political upheaval, intermittent attempts at revolt, oppressive rule, and avaricious governors.⁵³ Kashmîrî himself was no friend of the authorities. In his *Bibûjnâmah* (Book of Injustice) he likened the rulers to wolves amidst a population of sheep and bemoaned the depths of death and destruction to which Kashmir had fallen.⁵⁴

Kashmir's only respite from political and economic pressures during the period of Afghan and Sikh rule took place during the rule of Sukh Jivan Mal (r. 1754-1762), marked by a flowering of literary activity attached to patronage.⁵⁵ According to Mîr Âzâd Bilgrâmî, Sukh Jivan Mal held weekly symposiums to which he invited all the poets from the surrounding areas.⁵⁶ He also commissioned a group of poets to compose a history of Kashmir in the style of the *Shâhnâmah*. Bilgrâmî notes that the undertaking was carried out by five poets, each of who had ten assistants. The project was led by the poet Tawfiq, who had to approve each draft.⁵⁷ Kashmîrî in all likelihood would have known of Sukh Jivan Mal's earlier project and have regarded it as a stark change from his prospects for patronage some eighty years later.

⁵¹ Ibid. 16.

⁵² N. Bland, "Account of the Atesh Kedah, a Biographical Work on the Persian Poets, by Hajji Lutf 'Alî Beg of Ispahan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 7.2 (1843): 374-375. His translation.

⁵³ Tikku, *Persian Poetry in Kashmir, 1339-1846*, 159-165.

⁵⁴ Âfâqî, "Firdawsî-i Kashmîr," 397.

⁵⁵ Tikku, *Persian Poetry in Kashmir, 1339-1846*, 165.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 188-189. Also see, more generally, 179-195.

The *Akbarnâmah* offers compelling evidence for reconsidering what was involved in imitating the Persian masters in the nineteenth century and the prospects for a *bâzgasht* discourse outside of Iran. Kashmîrî's poetic experience--bemoaning the poet's role, a lack of patronage, and the desire to compose poetry in the style of the masters--closely mirrors the experience of the Isfahânî Circle. The internal evidence of the *Akbarnâmah* only strengthens this claim: an *anjuman* in which the poetry of certain classical masters was recited; a lamentation of current poetic affairs; a decrying of the loss of patronage, and false claims of "masterhood." Taken together, these elements make a case for the *Akbarnâmah* as contributing to a larger Persianate literary discourse of the time. Such a case can be augmented based on what happens next, when the *Akbarnâmah* enters the public domain.

Propaganda and Patronage: The *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* of Qâsim 'Alî

When the *Akbarnâmah* entered the public domain it became part of the oral and literary landscape that helped bring it to life. Kashmîrî anticipated that his work would be famously received in Kabul and elsewhere, writing in his epilogue:

Now it travels the domain of the world,
 adorning banquets of grandees.
 It travels to Kabul in every society,
 like a spring breeze, from meadow to meadow
 Wise elders and enlightened minds
 sit in the private banquet of the Amîr⁵⁸
 Drinking my sweet speech,
 imbibing my colorful poetry.⁵⁹

While there is no hard evidence detailing the extent to which the *Akbarnâmah* circulated, it is presumed that it was distributed widely at the time. Various scholars conclude that copies of the work passed from hand to hand or that it was recited in various societies, not only amongst the population of Afghanistan but also South Asia.⁶⁰ As evidenced by the manuscripts utilized in bringing the *Akbarnâmah* to publication, different manuscripts of the text were widely available, both in libraries and private collections.⁶¹ The present-day location of various manuscripts, in places like Hyderabad, Bombay, and Calcutta and copied during the nineteenth century, testify to its prevalence.⁶² According to Chiriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq, the "spiritual influence the work

⁵⁸ Referring to Dûst Muhammad Khân.

⁵⁹ Kashmîrî, *Akbarnâmah*, 235.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Chiriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq, "Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi'r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân," 58-59.

⁶¹ See Kûhzâd's introduction to the *Akbarnâmah*.

⁶² For the location of various manuscripts see Afaqî, "Firdawsî-i Kashmîr, 400, and Storey, Section II Fasciculus II, 401. Places such as Bombay, Calcutta, and Hyderabad would be natural locations for Persian manuscripts in India to reside, however, the presence of manuscripts copied in the nineteenth century indicates that the texts were in circulation at that time.

had on the people of Hindustan (who were under British colonialism) and the nation of Afghanistan is unprecedented and unique,” but this cannot be known with certainty.⁶³ More likely are that copies of the *Akbarnâmah* circulated there, passing from hand to hand and recited in various societies.

The circulation of the *Akbarnâmah* in Afghanistan and South Asia inspired another *jangnâmah*, also in imitation of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*, entitled *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*. The circumstances associated with this work involve one of the more intriguing and confusing stories about the textual production of *jangnâmahs* in the aftermath of the War and British pursuit of their regional aims. The confusion stems not least from the lack of unanimity as to the name of the author, the date of publication, and the text itself. The name and title are given variously in manuscript collections and secondary sources. C.A. Storey in his *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* provides the best overview of the disparity over author’s name and title.

These disparities among basic information about the work warrant brief mention. Storey lists the author as Qâsim ‘Alî “Qâsim” Akbarâbâdî, with the *takhallus* Qâsim, and the work composed as *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul*. Here he is following the information provided on the title-page of an apparent printed edition of this work that first appeared in Agra in 1272/1855-6.⁶⁴ Aloys Sprenger in *A Catalogue of Arabic, Persian and Hindu’sta’ny Manuscripts of the Libraries of the King of Oudh* refers to the work as *Zafarnâmah-yi Akbarî* by Qâsim, completed in 1260/1844-5.⁶⁵ The catalogue of the Âsafiyah Sarkâr-i ‘Âlî Library at Hyderabad refers to the work as *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* by Khwajah Qâsim Dihlavî completed in 1264/1848.⁶⁶ The catalogue of the *Dar al-‘ulûm al-islâmîyah* at Peshawar lists the work simply as *Akbarnâmah*.⁶⁷ Charles Rieu in *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* refers to the work as *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*, with no author listed, completed in 1260/1844-5.⁶⁸

The confusion over the author and title of the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* is matched by the intrigue surrounding its composition. Qâsim ‘Alî apparently did not simply compose the work in response to Kashmîrî’s *Akbarnâmah*, but he is presumed to have done so at the behest of the British. Unhappy with the circulation of the *Akbarnâmah* in Afghanistan and South Asia and the manner in which it portrayed their defeat at the hands of the Afghans, the British evidently commissioned Qâsim ‘Alî to pen an alternative version of events. Because of Qâsim Ali’s

⁶³ Chiriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi‘r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân,” 59.

⁶⁴ C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, section II Fasciculus II (London, Luzac & co., 1927), 402.

⁶⁵ Aloys Sprenger, *A Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian, and Hindu’sta’ny Manuscripts of the Libraries of the King of Oudh*, vol. I. (Calcutta, J. Thomas, 1854), 534 (no. 448).

⁶⁶ *Fihrist-i kutub-i ‘Arabî, Fârsî va Urdû makhzûnah-yi Kutub Khânah-yi Âsafiyah Sarkâr-i ‘Âlî*, vol. I (Hyderabad: Kutub Khânah-yi Âsafiyah Sarkâr-i ‘Âlî, 1928-1936), 248 (no. 203).

⁶⁷ Storey, *Persian Literature*, Section II Fasciculus II, 402.

⁶⁸ Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts of the British Museum*, vol. iii (London, British Museum, 1879), 1038b (Or. 1961). This “edition” is only extracts of the work, included within a manuscript featuring extracts of several other works compiled in 1850. It is now housed in the national British Library. Since it is the only manuscript that I have been able to access I will refer to the text as *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*.

association with the British, scholars have tended to view the work as a propaganda piece that was quickly printed and disseminated to combat the *Akbarnâmah* in Afghanistan and in South Asia. Unlike the *Akbarnâmah*, which was successful “in awakening the feelings of the people”⁶⁹ and has been seen as “the national and free history of Afghanistan,”⁷⁰ we are told this work achieved little success or support among the general populace and thus quickly faded. Qâsim ‘Alî has been described as a merchant or trader recruited by the English, a companion of Shâh Shujâ‘, or more colorfully as “a foreigner worshipper and fawner.”⁷¹

Qâsim ‘Alî’s association with the British is clear. He was involved in political activities as an employee of the political agent for Western Sind, Ross Bell, for whom he reportedly traveled to Baluchistan in 1840.⁷² One of the dedications in his work is directed toward Queen Victoria, whom he praises as the world-ruler and with similar accolades.⁷³ Primarily on these counts he has been labeled a sycophant and apologist for the British. However, it is not certain to what extent the British actually sponsored the work of Qâsim ‘Alî. Perhaps he believed he could earn British patronage by presenting them his work after it was completed.

The relationship between Qâsim ‘Alî and the British overshadow other aspects of the work less in line with the anti-British narrative that has congealed in Afghan historiography. As ‘Abd al-Shakûr Rashâd notes, criticism of Qâsim ‘Alî and skepticism toward his work have become somewhat of a tradition among Afghan scholars.⁷⁴ This nationalist approach, according to Rashâd, has shrouded aspects of Qâsim ‘Alî’s employment history and the social-political context in which he was writing. For example, while the praise to Queen Victoria appears in the first book of the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*, the work’s second book opens with a dedication to Maharajah Savaî Nanî Singh, a member of the royal family of the Jaipur State in the mid-nineteenth century. Qâsim ‘Alî boasts of his relationship to the Maharajah and implies that he composed this portion of the work after entering the Maharajah’s service and leaving the employment of Ross Bell.⁷⁵ This incidence of multiple employers points to the ways in which Qâsim ‘Alî may have been less wedded to a British version of the first Anglo-Afghan War than to receiving patronage. Like many other administrators and secretaries versed in Persian of the time, Qâsim ‘Alî was caught within the interstices of empires, where the transition of political authorities and the shift in language practices made the prospect of employment ephemeral, and searching for opportunities of the utmost importance. Other evidence points to his literary

⁶⁹ Chiriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi‘r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân,” 59.

⁷⁰ Âfâqî, “Firdawsî-i Kashmîr,” 399.

⁷¹ Muhammad Haydar Zhûbal, *Târikh-i adabîyât-i Afghânistân* (Kabul: Mayvand, 1387/2008), 264; Chiriqânî-Barchalûyî and Shafaq, “Bâzgasht-i adabî dar shi‘r-i Fârsî-i Afghânistân,” 59; Ghubâr “Jangnâmah,” 2-3.

⁷² Pûhand ‘Abd al-Shakûr Rashâd, “Darbârah-yi zafarnâmah-yi akbarî va nâzim-ân,” *Âryânâ* 44.2 (1365/1986), 144.

⁷³ For two slightly different versions of this dedication. See Zhubâl, *Târikh-i adabîyât-i Afghânistân*, 274-275; and *Zafarnâma-yi Kâbul*, British Library Manuscript Collection, Or. 1961, British National Library, London, 1844-5.

⁷⁴ Rashâd, “Darbârah-yi zafarnâmah-yi akbarî va nâzim-ân,” 139.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 157-158.

objectives as well, including his desire to imitate the work of Firdawsî and to have his work admirably received by his peers and men of letters.⁷⁶

Furthermore, a closer inspection of the text reveals that Qâsim ‘Alî’s work is not as pro-British as presumed by its detractors. In describing the conditions under Shâh Shujâ‘ that led to a general rebellion following his return to the throne by the British, Qâsim ‘Alî cites the “intense tyranny and oppression of the Shâh” as having created an atmosphere of general destitution and depravity. It was a situation in which the people of Afghanistan (especially women and children) were significantly worse off than before Shâh Shujâ‘ returned to the throne. He notes:

When a Shâh diminishes the sustenance of the people
He will ruin the people and their households
There is no patience for the hungry [man] in pain,
he will make robbery, thievery, and trickery.
He will have no memory of honor and reputation,
and will sell his [own] women and children for naught.
For each one who was previously destitute,
sixty women and children are becoming orphans.
All men and women will turn base and perverse
in search of bread, they will turn impious and irreligious.
In such intense tyranny and oppression of a Shâh,
life and households will be destroyed.
Death would be better than such a life
where one’s women and children are destitute.^{77*}

This statement does not appear to be the work of someone who can simply be described as a lackey of the British or a companion of Shâh Shujâ‘. His depiction of the travails of society following the arrival of the Shâh Shujâ‘ and the British resounds with protest, portraying how societal norms of piety and religiosity were undone and upturned, and the traditional position of women and children undermined.⁷⁸ Qâsim ‘Alî’s depiction of the leader Akbar Khân, the nationalist hero at the center of Afghan resistance to the British, is equally surprising in light of the work’s supposed pro-British bent. He presents Akbar Khân as a man of valor and courage, not unlike the other *jangnâmahs* of the times. He celebrates Akbar Khân’s killing of the British political agent William McNaughten, who was negotiating the terms of the withdrawal of the

⁷⁶ See the epilogue to *Zafarnâma-yi Kâbul*, British Library Manuscript.

⁷⁷ Munshî ‘Abd al-Karîm, *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr* (Lucknow, Matba‘-i Mustafâ’î-i Muhammad Khân Mustafâ, 1267/1850-51), 55. This selection (and others cited in this section from ‘Abd al-Karîm’s work) can also be found in: Sârâ, “Du ravâyit az yik hamâsah: bar-rasî-i muqâyisah-yi Akbarnâmah-yi Munshî Qâsim Jân va Akbarnâmah-yi Hamîd Kashmîrî,” *Âryânâ* 39.3 (1360/1981): 54.

*See Appendix 1.26

⁷⁸ For a more recent example of poetry which reflects how the emergence of new structures of power and social order were seen to have upturned societal norms and values in Afghanistan see: David B. Edwards, “Words in the Balance: The Poetics of Political Dissent in Afghanistan,” in *Russia’s Muslim Frontiers: New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 114-129.

British army from Kabul.⁷⁹ Moreover, he describes Akbar Khân as a leader in touch with the opinions of the people and their hostile attitude toward foreign occupation.⁸⁰ Qâsim ‘Alî’s *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* is consistent with the other two *jangnâmahs* of this chapter in affirming Akbar Khân’s reception among the populace at the time. Not as pro-British as it seems, the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* reflects more fully the social and political circumstances during which it was composed, of which employment by the British was only a part.

Not surprisingly, the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*, with its more balanced approach to the war’s events and, at times, its anti-British interludes, circulated more thoroughly than often regarded. Its printing in Agra in 1272/1855-6 may have garnered it little readership due to its likely association and distribution by the British, but the persistent idea that the work “was quickly printed and soon disappeared” appears false. The first verified appearance of the text was not in Agra, but in Lucknow in 1267/1850-1, in a prose work by Munshî ‘Abd al-Karîm entitled *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr*, which also dealt with events of the first Anglo-Afghan War.

‘Abd al-Karîm’s work contains approximately 200 *bayts* penned by Qâsim ‘Alî. In the introduction, he refers to “Munshî Qâsim Jan’s” *Akbarnâmah*, stating that it was composed in 1263/1847- four years previous to its appearance in this work and nearly a decade before the Agra printing- and modeled in the style of Firdawsî’s *Shâhnâmah*.⁸¹ Munshî ‘Abd al-Karîm, a contemporary, writes that Munshî Qâsim Jân witnessed⁸² the events of the war himself and “without deficiency, enthusiastically depicted the events of import and gallantry of both sides.”⁸³ He states:

The truth is that the aforementioned author [Munshî Qâsim Jân] during this time, in which the market of poetry and prose is dull, eloquently produced and himself stole earlier speech from his contemporaries and equals.⁸⁴

For Munshî ‘Abd al-Karîm, Qâsim ‘Alî was not simply providing a service by narrating events of the first Anglo-Afghan War. He was also undertaking an unparalleled work in an otherwise dreary literary market lacking in talent. Perhaps this view is evidence of an author being gracious toward a colleague or attempting to depict the author on whose work he will rely in the most felicitous manner. Even so, the comment illustrates the many life-forms a text such as the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* can inhabit at once: a political tool in the eyes of the British, a means of employment in the hands of the author, and a source of inspiration and literary triumph in the hands of a contemporary historian. The inclusion of Munshî Qâsim Jân’s poetry in *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr*, published years after its composition and a decade before its printing at

⁷⁹ ‘Abd al-Karîm, *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr*, 65; Sârâ, “Du ravâyit az yik hamâsah,” 48.

⁸⁰ ‘Abd al-Karîm, *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr*, 77; Sârâ, “Du ravâyit az yik hamâsah,” 49.

⁸¹ As noted above in some of the manuscript catalogues, this work may have been produced even earlier, in 1844-5.

⁸² Some sources offer evidence that Qâsim ‘Alî may not have actually participated in the war, thus ‘Abd al-Karîm’s claim must be considered inconclusive. See Rashâd ft. p. 141.

⁸³ ‘Abd al-Karîm, *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr*, 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 2-3.

Agra, further indicates the complicated and robust environment in which this *jangnâmah* was produced, replicated, and circulated.⁸⁵

The Jangnâmah “Marketplace”

The preceding sections demonstrated that there are more to these three texts than the manner in which they have been condensed into nationalist or literary historiography. Looking at the texts more closely, understanding the reasons for their composition, and assessing the environment in which they emerged, help better explain their place in nineteenth Persian literary culture. There is a fuller habitat that these *jangnâmahs* occupy, at times fuzzy and not fully formed, but one that points to a very active space for them in the nineteenth century, permeating through society in oral, written, and print culture. It is not simply that the first Anglo-Afghan War elicited the nearly contemporaneous composition of similar texts, constructed as *jangnâmahs* and based on the *Shâhnâmah* of Firdawsî, but that the result was a free-flowing and interconnected “marketplace” that speaks to Persian literary activity and culture in Afghanistan and South Asia in the nineteenth century.

All three of the texts featured in this chapter were products of primarily different, though not exclusive, discursive environments: the *Jangnâmah*, the oral environment; the *Akbarnâmah*, the literary environment; the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*, the social environment. Ghulâmî, as a witness to the war, sought to model his *jangnâmah* in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* in the first instance, reaching into the repository of epic literature and oral tales. He sought a model both appropriate for his task and recognizable by his audience. Kashmîrî’s *Akbarnâmah*, produced a year later, likely benefited from the tales of valor and courageous Afghan war heroes being shared among the populace, to which Ghulâmî’s work contributed. Subsequently, other authors narrating recent political events may too have benefited from the template established by Ghulâmî.

Kashmîrî’s *Akbarnâmah*, more than a nationalist tale of Afghan resistance to foreigners, connects to larger debates related to the composition of poetry imitating the masters at this time. In some respects the *Akbarnâmah* is a “*bâzgashtian*” tale, either in response to the poetry of the *tâzah-gû’î* style or to redress the ill-advised and poorly executed efforts of poets unable to imitate the ancients. The text, though somewhat ambiguously, reveals an engagement with debates and literary trends not usually associated with the output of poets from nineteenth century Kashmir, or for that matter, the non-Iranian Persianate world. What is clear, however, is that Kashmîrî’s prediction in his epilogue about the circulatory powers of his text proved correct.

The urge to circulate versions of the war’s events in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* extended to the British, who’s sponsorship of a third text, the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* of Qâsim ‘Ali, has been viewed as a piece of propaganda in Afghan nationalist historiography. But the text was more than a mere propaganda tool. There is Qâsim Ali’s employment history and criticism of Shâh Shujâ‘ (and by extension the British), making it likely he was more interested in the literary endeavor of the work itself, its circulation, and securing patronage. While the text at some point

⁸⁵ Questions remain about the timeline of the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*’s composition, its distribution, and the role played by the British, including the precise timeline of British sponsorship and whether the British sponsored the original composition in 1847 or the printed Agra version in 1855.

may have been sponsored by the British, most likely as a response to Kashmîrî's *Akbarnâmah*, it had many life-forms. The text itself was composed and in circulation between eight and eleven years prior to the printing at Agra in 1855, the point at which its distribution was most likely sponsored by the British.

Taken together the discursive environments of these three *jangnâmahs* offer a robust image of the ways in which the *Shâhnâmah*, the work of an undisputed "ancient" in *bâzgasht* terminology, operated across a variety of planes and platforms in Afghan (and South Asian) society in the nineteenth century. The social and literary environment generated an audience for this type of poetic-political text, employers were willing to sponsor their production, and they circulated orally, in manuscript form, or through print, quite significantly.

The chronology and geography of *jangnâmah* textual production help characterize this marketplace. Ghulâmî's *Jangnâmah* was written near Kabul around 1843. Kashmîrî's *Akbarnâmah* was produced in 1844 in Kashmir. Qâsim Ali's *Zafarnâmah*, was most likely completed in 1845-1846, and appeared in *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr* in Lucknow in 1847-1848 and in Agra in 1855. The chronology is summarized in Figure 3 below.

Fig. 3 Chronology and geography of *jangnâmah* textual production following the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842)

Title	Author	Year of Completion	Place of Completion
<i>Jangnâmah</i>	"Ghulâmî"	1843	Kabul
<i>Akbarnâmah</i>	Kashmîrî	1844	Kashmir
<i>Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul</i>	Qâsim 'Alî	1844-5	??
" <i>Akbarnâmah</i> " (<i>Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul</i>)	Qâsim 'Alî	1847	Delhi? Agra?
<i>Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr</i> (200 bayts from "Akbnâmah" of Qâsim 'Alî/Munshî Qâsim Jân	Munshî 'Abd al-Karîm	1850-1	Lucknow
<i>Muhârabah-yi Kâbul</i>	Qâsim 'Alî	1855	Agra

The table shows the correlation between a text's completion date and its distance from Afghanistan. The later a text was composed, the further it appears from the location of the events of the first Anglo-Afghan War, from the epicenter of the war in Kabul to Kashmir to the Indian cities of Lucknow and Agra, and perhaps Delhi. The trajectory begins with Ghulâmî's *Jangnâmah*, a text composed while the war was still smoldering, the immediacy of its production evidenced not only by when it was written but how it was looted from the scene of battle.

Eastward in Kashmir, Hamîd Kashmîrî, picked up the tales arriving in his domain from travelers moving east. This oral culture flowing into Kashmir made his work possible. Such travelers and Kashmîrî himself may not have been directly aware of Ghulâmî's text, but they were participants in an oral environment that Ghulâmî helped foster and sustain. The fame of the *Akbarnâmah* no doubt ventured back west into Afghanistan, either orally or through manuscript copies, buttressing the legendary status of its eponymous hero Muhammad Akbar Khân in Afghanistan, and validating Kashmîrî's own boast that his tale would pass though the societies of Kabul like the wind passing from meadow to meadow.

The *Akbarnâmah*'s movement eastward ushered the *jangnâmahs* into a jurisdiction beyond Afghanistan, to the world of British India and new technologies for distribution in places like Lucknow and Agra. The appearance of *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*, first in Munshî 'Abd al-Karîm's *Muhârabah-yi Kâbul va Qandahâr* and later in a stand-alone format, confirms that the *jangnâmah* texts, detailing events in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* and specific to Afghan national history, were sought to be made accessible to an Indian readership. The exact role of the British in sponsoring, producing, and potentially circulating a version of *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul*, and the question of whether this was done in response to the prevalence of Kashmîrî's *Akbarnâmah* will require further research. One possibility is that the circulation of Kashmîrî's *Akbarnâmah*, exposing the Indian populace to tales of British defeat in the War, was sufficiently widespread in India to worry the British into sponsoring Qâsim 'Alî's text. What is clear and relevant is that with the entry of the *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* into the marketplace, the dissemination of *jangnâmahs* entered a transnational phase. In a decade or less the production of these *jangnâmahs* went from being copied on looted paper in Kabul to being printed in major Indian cities. No longer restricted to Afghanistan or solely the domain of oral and scribal culture, the *jangnâmahs* entered another realm. In the final analysis, the geography of these texts incorporated not only a variety of physical locations of production but also a constellation of different authorial intentions, modalities of distribution, and methods of consumption.⁸⁶

The geography of the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War can be further extended in space and time. One may include the location of various manuscripts of the *Akbarnâmah* and those of Qâsim Ali's *Zafarnâmah*, under various titles, which are found in archives throughout Afghanistan and South Asia and copied in the 1850s. One may also include the anonymous *jangnâmah* of the War, potentially penned by the poet "Darvîsh," discovered in the 1860s in a Kabul perfumist shop.⁸⁷ And one may broaden the context to include other texts of *Shâhnâmah* imitation on topics other than the Anglo-Afghan War in India, for example the *Georgenâmah*, written by the Parsi Zoroastrian priest Mullâ Fîrûz ibn Mullâ Kâ'ûs (d. 1830) between 1811-1830 in Bombay. This work recounts the story of the British conquest in India.⁸⁸ Another epic exemplifying the *Shâhnâmah* style, also recounting the exploits of the British, is the *Zafarnâmah* of "Shimbhu Brahman." Written in the first decade of the nineteenth century, this text tells of the military career and victories of General George Lake (d. 1808), commander-in-chief of the British army in India under Marquis Wellesley.⁸⁹ An effort to visualize the manuscript locations and/or places of production of the texts in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* in nineteenth century Afghanistan and South Asia is offered in Figure 4. The marketplace of these texts from nineteenth century Afghanistan and South Asia was large indeed.

⁸⁶ For information on the "geography of the book" as a multi-faceted framework for understanding the production, distribution, and circulation of texts see: *Geographies of the Book*, ed. Miles Ogborn and Charles W.J. Withers (Farnham, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2010).

⁸⁷ See footnote 2.

⁸⁸ Daniel Sheffield, "Colonizing the Persianate: Epic and Empire in the *Georgenâma* of Mullâ Fîrûz," paper delivered at "The Sixth Biennial Convention of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies," Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, September 1-6, 2013.

⁸⁹ See "Zafarnâmah (For General G. Lake)" in Wladimir Ivanow, *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the Collections of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, First Supplement* (Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1927), 403-404.

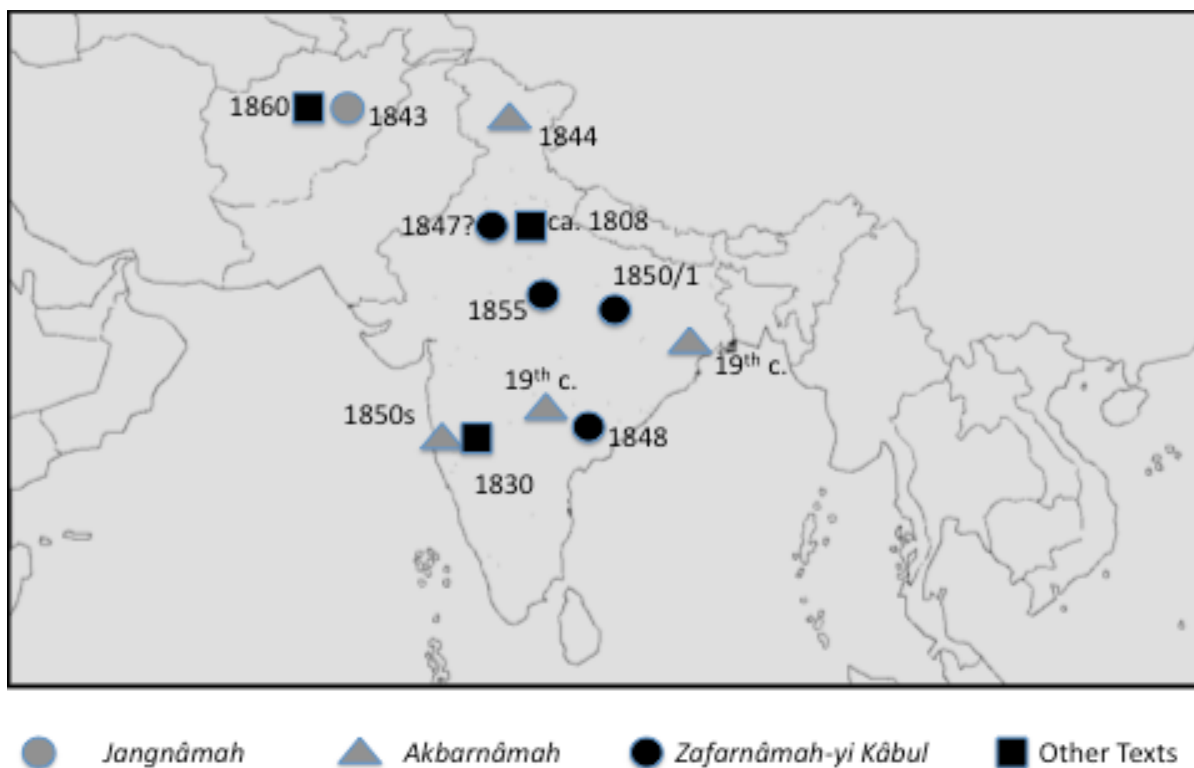


Fig. 4 Texts in imitation of the *Shâhnâmah* in nineteenth century Afghanistan and South Asia

Conclusion

The relationship between the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War and their prevalence throughout Afghanistan and South Asia shortly after their composition is crucial for understanding the state of Persian literary culture in Afghanistan and its place within the larger Persianate world in the nineteenth century. These three texts are bound together not only by the events of the Anglo-Afghan War they depict but also by the “imitation of the masters” stylistics they employ. Most importantly works like the *Jangnâmah*, *Akbarnâmah*, and *Zafarnâmah-yi Kâbul* helped create and were supported by a lively marketplace for such texts. As the visual map in the preceding section indicates, these three works were also part of a larger class of texts produced around the same time and in the same general vicinity. In conclusion, one proposes an expansion of the term *bâzgasht* as it relates to literary culture in the nineteenth century to embrace this history.

The *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War (and others like them) need not demonstrate the superiority of a particular literary trend- i.e., one in imitation of the “masters”- at the expense of all others. Rather, the production of the texts themselves, their circulation in oral, written, and printed forms and their interaction with the marketplace, suffices to demonstrate the liveliness of this trend. While these texts may not be linked together through their authors’ associations as a clearly defined collective or *anjuman*, along the lines of the Iranian *bâzgasht* movement, their story illustrates ways in which the prevalence and circulation of texts may help

enrich the understanding of *bâzgasht* beyond a definition that appears solely applicable to what occurred in Iran.

The *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War and the poetry of those like Tarzî, Vâsil, and Shâmil, who more “self-consciously” sought a return to the poetry of the ancients later on, indicate the diverse set of practices that the category of *bâzgasht* may encompass for trends in nineteenth century Afghan literary culture. Nineteenth century Afghanistan did not witness a “return” to the style of ancients on the same terms as Iran, such as seen in the sponsoring of *bâzgasht* stylistics and its prominence at the court of the Qajar monarch Fath ‘Alî Shâh and after. Nonetheless, the ways poets imitated Firdawsî’s canonic text after the first Anglo-Afghan War and imitated the style of the Khurâsânî and ‘Irâqî styles on a more wide-ranging scale later in the century, demonstrate that the masters’ work remained a crucial enterprise to be engaged with. This is just as true whether in seeking to explain a contemporary event or trying to reconnect with a literary past. In short, the model of the masters was one to be drawn upon in nineteenth century Afghanistan to help assist one finding their way in the world.

If the meaning of *bâzgasht* is expanded beyond an Iranian-centric notion to include trends in textual production, debates concerning the imitation of the masters, and circulating oral culture, one can begin to view *bâzgasht* as a set of normative practices rather than simply a definitional movement. In doing so, one can stimulate a more comprehensive discussion and portrayal of Persianate literary culture.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have touched upon a great diversity of peoples, places, and trends attached to Persian literary culture in the early modern and modern periods, particularly during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in West, Central, and South Asia. From the coffeehouses of Isfahan and poetic assemblies of the Safavid-Qajar interregnum to the Persian activity of a South India court and the *Shâhnâmah*-like responses of the first Anglo-Afghan War, they have sought to bring together different topics and phenomena not customarily analyzed in the same breath. Integrating such seemingly divergent, and at times forgotten, topics has been an attempt to demonstrate the vibrancy of Persian literary culture during a time of transition and change in the history of the Persianate world, and to argue that Persian literary history is in desperate need of revision.

Precipitating the need for revising our understanding of the writing of Persian literary history and culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been the long shadow cast by the concept and historiography of *bâzgasht-i adabî* (literary return). As noted at the outset, it is a category constructed as pertaining to Iran alone, which has had the effect of skewing understandings of Persian literary culture, both in Iran and elsewhere, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Bâzgasht*'s not-so-subtle nationalistic elements of construction, and its genesis narrative-- that a collection of Isfahani poets rescued Persian poetry from decline and revived it in accordance with the classical masters while the rest of the Persianate literary world stagnated-- have had two major effects. First, the narrative has shrouded important aspects related to the literary history of Iran in the Safavid and early-Qajar period, and has obscured how the movement known as *bâzgasht* came to emerge. Second, such a narrative, privileging trends in nineteenth century Iran, has ignored critical elements of Persian literary culture outside Iran at that time.

In Chapter One a major agenda was to un-package the historiography of *bâzgasht* through an analysis of Zand and Qajar-era *tazkirahs* and the scholarship of modern authors to demonstrate how the accepted notion of "literary return" has diminished many of the social and literary elements that actually helped nurture the movement's growth. This chapter also included information related to eighteenth and nineteenth century Persian literary culture pertaining to Afghanistan and South Asia history. In the case of South Asia, we saw how scholarship has tended toward understanding Persian during that time as a transitional force in bringing about the predominance of English and Urdu. While this is not altogether untrue, such a narrative does not do justice to the many revisions and afterlives of Persian literary culture in post-Mughal South Asia, the literary activity of the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot being but one. In the case of Afghanistan, the task was to highlight the multiplicity of poetic practice, whether promoted by the state or otherwise, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Poetic practice during this time was not solely devoted to imitating the poetry of 'Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil, for which Afghanistan is overwhelmingly known, but also engaged with the poetry of the "masters" as well. The chapter also raises questions about literary historiography in Afghanistan and the manner in which Afghan literary historians have grappled with the notion of *bâzgasht* in the writing of their own literary history.

Chapter Two sought to reconstruct the circumstances, associations, and environments that were relevant to the Isfahânî Circle of poets who would later become enshrined as the founders

of the *bâzgasht* movement in Iran. I argued that the *bâzgasht* movement came into being for reasons beyond a mere distaste for a particular style, known at the time as *tâzah-gû'î* and to later authors as *sabk-i Hindî*. The attitudes and perceptions of the Isfahânî Circle, many of which were highlighted through an examination of their poetry, were related to an unease with the role of the poet in society, the chaotic political environment in post-Safavid times, the loss of patronage, and the desire, on account of all this, to re-create a community of socially-connected and like-minded poets. This is not to imply that the Isfahânî Circle of poets cared little for stylistics, rather that the model of the masters to which they sought guidance was one chosen not solely on account of its stylistics but for social reasons as well.

Chapters Three and Four looked outside of Iran toward aspects of literary culture in nineteenth century India and Afghanistan, to consider phenomena concomitant with *bâzgasht*'s emergence in Iran. Both cases demonstrate how poets, scholars, and littérateurs outside Iran remained engaged with poetry of the “masters” in the nineteenth century in their own ways. The literary activity at the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot, the subject of Chapter Three, demonstrated how the debates and rivalries at a small South Indian court addressed issues of stylistics and divisions over accepted styles of poetry. These debates, which culminated in questioning the use of idioms in the poetry of Bîdil and in the history of Persian poetry, including the masters, resonated elsewhere in the Persianate world. While such debates occurred on the margins of a period overshadowed by an Iranian-centric phenomenon (i.e. *bâzgasht*), the poetry of Bîdil served as a lightning rod for the Arcot-based poets quarreling over what constituted acceptable poetry. These discussions served as a bridge to debates among other Indian authors concerning the poetry of Bîdil specifically. Likewise, they can be linked to attitudes among the *bâzgasht* poets and later Qajar authors in Iran who favored a “simple” style of poetry over a “complicated” one. Chapter Three also demonstrated how Persian remained vibrant in various ways in a post-Mughal successor state, and how it remained relevant for littérateurs and administrators versed in scribal and literary activities tied to Persian, in search of their own employment prospects and poetic community.

Chapter Four turned its attention to a series of *jangnâmahs* composed in response to the first Anglo-Afghan War and in imitation of Firdawsî's *Shâhnâmah*. It contended that the production of these texts created a marketplace of the masters, stretching across Afghanistan and South Asia and spanning oral, written, and print culture. The existence in the nineteenth century of such a marketplace, one predicated upon the desire of poets to use the model of the masters to narrate a contemporary event, and the circulation of such texts in society, raise intriguing questions about *bâzgasht* as a historiographical category. While quite different than the emergence of *bâzgasht* in Iran, the *jangnâmahs* of the first Anglo-Afghan War make the case for a definition of *bâzgasht* as an expansive *category* able to account for a wider range of phenomena. Such a definition can help explicate and connect trends outside nineteenth century Iran that remained connected to the style, circulation, and role of the masters.

The topics of the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot and the Afghan *jangnâmahs*, like the Isfahânî Circle of poets in Iran, all point to how various individuals looked toward the poetry and prestige of the masters and engaged with them at a time when the Persianate world was breaking apart and in transition. None of this deprives the *bâzgasht* movement as it developed in Iran of its primary relevance and specificity. The ways in which the *bâzgasht* movement self-consciously developed there, was supported at the court of the Qajar monarch Fath 'Alî Shâh and later, and came to be remembered, does not have an equivalent elsewhere in the Persianate world.

But this does not contradict the value of relating the concept of *bâzgasht* to concurrent literary phenomena that, while not identical, are not altogether dissimilar. To explore that possibility-- by examining how different actors engaged, debated, and grappled with the place of the masters and their poetry in uncertain times-- whether in a chaotic Isfahan, a court emerging from the ashes of the Mughal Empire, or in response to occupation and war with a colonial power, establishes a more integrated Persian literary history in the face of social and political upheaval.

Finally, this project also hoped to highlight the many ways in which *tazkirahs* can contribute to our understanding of literary, social, and cultural history. *Tazkirahs* appear in all shape and sizes. They are produced for wide-ranging purposes, maintain differing emphases, vary in scope, diverge in their methods for composition and cataloging, and rely on different sets of sources. In short, they are rather wily texts and must not be culled solely for information or facts. Instead they must be attentively read so the internal dynamics of the text, the rhythms of language, and the author's primary aims begin to emerge. In Chapter Two, one saw how a close reading of *Tazkirah-yi Nasrâbâdî* helped reconstruct the peregrinations of various poets in early modern Iran and India and traced the impact this had on different centers of poetic culture. In Chapter Three, a close reading of the *Tazkirah-yi ishârât-i Bînish* and the author's insistence on detailing poets' various lineages, helped bring to life an interconnected network of individuals steeped in Persian literary culture around the court of the last Nawâb of Arcot. This network of interconnections between individuals' poetic, professional, and familial lineages can be mapped with relative accuracy and bring to life visually one of the core aims of a nineteenth century Indian *tazkirah*.

Connecting different *tazkirahs* to one another in space and time, that is, with texts composed prior to or coeval with it, can also bring into greater relief a wide array of information related to literary culture. In Chapters One and Two one we saw how, by reading a variety of *tazkirahs* ranging from mid-seventeenth century Zand Iran to mid-eighteenth Qajar Iran, a particular image of the *bâzgasht* movement developed. What emerged by comparing these *tazkirahs* across time is that various impressions of *bâzgasht*, once relevant to earlier portrayals, were erased or left out of later *tazkirahs*. The result was the whittling down of a narrative fit for later Qajar times, but not necessarily one that meshed with the circumstances of *bâzgasht*'s emergence some one hundred years earlier. Likewise, connecting a *tazkirah* to those contemporary with it has advantages in helping to reconstruct the social connections and membership of a particular poetic grouping, or elucidating the geographic scope of a poet's receptivity. In Chapter Two, the connection of *tazkirahs* equal in age was crucial to reconstruct the membership of the early *bâzgasht* poets in mid-to-late eighteenth century Isfahan. This comparison of texts also permitted one to cross-reference information found in each *tazkirah*, alleviating the potential bias a single *tazkirah* author may exhibit. One saw how contemporary, yet geographically distinct, *tazkirahs* reveal those aspects of a poet life's and work that reached authors in other locales, and help explain the transmission of poetic trends and knowledge. Chapter Three compared several *tazkirahs* from a historical perspective, a method that helped trace the different critiques of the poet 'Abd al-Qâdir Bîdil. This approach enabled one to see how one *tazkirah* treated an author's poetry shortly after his death in comparison with opinions written eighty years afterward.

The different approaches highlighted above are intended to demonstrate how creative uses of *tazkirahs* allow for a great deal of under-explored information about Persian literary, cultural, and social history to emerge. These methodologies hopefully provide examples for

additional scholarship on *tazkirahs* and the continued pursuit of writing a more integrated Persian literary history, in particular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of which this dissertation considers itself to have made a modest contribution toward this goal.

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Appendix: Original Persian of Select Poems and Quotations

Chapter One:

1.1 Rizâ Qulî Khân Hidâyat on the revival of Persian poetry in Iran from *Majma' al-fusahâ*:

در زمان ترکمانیه و صفویه طرزهای نکوهیده عیان شد طریقه ی انیقه ی انتظام قصیده ی فریده ی فصیح و شیوه ی شیوای موعظه و نصیحه و حکامیات و زهدیات و حماسیات که رسم فصحای ما تقدم بود بالکلیه بر افتاد موزونان بمخمس و مسدس و مثنوی سرائی و غزل آرائی و تعبیه ی معما و تهمیه ی اسمهای بی مسما مایل شدند و غزل را چون قراری معین نبود بهر نحویکه طبایع سقیمه و سلیقه ی نامستقیمه آنان رغبت کرد پریشان گوئی و یاوه درائی و بیهوده سرائی آغاز ناهدند بجای حقایق و ارده مضامین بارده و بعوض صنایع بدیعه و بدایع لطیفه مطالب شنیعه و مقاصد کثیفه در درج اشعار و ضمن گفتار درج و تضمین فرمودند خاصه که در اواخر صفویه و افشاریه و اوایل زندیه و الواریه طلوع کوکب طالع آنان مایه ی غروب اختر فضل و دانش و فصاحت و بلاغت و حکمت و معرفت گردید هر فاضلی زاویه ای گزید و هر کاملی بکنجی جزید هر هرزه درائی را کمال نام شد و هر کمالی تمام اگر چه اثبات این دعوی بر اهل اخبار و معنی واضح است ولی شاید از اشعار متوسطین قلبی ناچار درین اواسط مرقوم افتد القصه چون در پس هر نقصانی کمالی و در قفای هر فراقی وصالی مقرر است عزت و ذلت هر صنفی از اهل صفتی را وقتی مقدر در اواخر دولت الواریه چند تن را سلیقه بر احیای شیوه ی متقدمین قرار گرفت و از بیمزگیهای طرز متأخرین و طریقه ی مبتذله ی ایشان آگاه آمدند بغایت جوشیدند و کوشیدند و کسوت جد و جهد پوشیدند و مردم را از طرز نکوهیده ی متأخرین منع کردند و بسیاقت نیکوی متقدمین مایل آوردند و بمشقت مشق آنشیوه ها در پیش گرفتند اما بمراتب عالیه نرسیدند.

1.2 Fâzil Khân Garrûsî on Mushtâq Isfahânî and the revival of Persian poetry in Iran from *Tazkirah-yi anjuman-i Khâqân*:

پس از آنکه بتصرفات ناپسند و اختراعات نالایق متوسطین کار فصاحت بفضاحت کشید و حسن بلاغت بلاغ منحصر شد انوار افکار فصحا منطفی گشت آثار اطوار بلغا غیر مقتضی و کرده و بسعی خیالش بازوی فصاحت قوی شد و خرقة خلقان سخن نوی یافت اگرچه من حیث اشعر نه این ستایش باشد ولی باحیای سنت و تجدد رسم می شایسته و پیش از این است فحول طبقه اولای معاصرین چون آذر و عاشق و صهبا و هاتق و امثالهم پیوسته معتکف نادمی و معترف استادیش بوده اند.

1.3 ‘Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî on Mushtâq Isfahânî and the revival of Persian poetry in Iran from *Tajribat al-ahrâr wa tasliyat al-abrâr*:

چون بساط نظم، از اقدام خیالات خام شوکت و صائب و وحید و مایشابه بهم از استعارات بارده و تمثیلات خنک، لگدکوب شد و یکبارگی از طراوت و رونق افتاد، مشتاق به تماشای گلزار نظم آمده، طومار سخن سرایی آن جمع را چون غنچه بهم پیچیده و بساط نظم که خود، در آن صاحب سلیقه بود و آن روش ضمیری و نظیری است، بگسترانید. بر سر شاخسار سخن نواها ساخت و نغمه ها پرداخت، عندلیبان خوش نوای عصر، او را مقتفی آمدند، اشعار رنگینش زینت نغمات مطربان باربد نوای آن زمان شد و ترنمات شیرینش مجلس آرای محفل ظرفا.

Chapter Two:

1.4 Âzar in praise of Mushtâq Isfahânî:

روزى که از آن روز کنم یاد ندیدم	شد عمر و زایام دل شاد ندیدم
در کنج قفس مُردم و صیاد ندیدم	یک صید بمحرومی من نیست که ناکام
از دام غم عشق تو آزاد ندیدم	سرتاسر این بادیه را گشتم و یک صید
شمعی که فروزان شود از باد ندیدم	جز روی تو کز آه برافروخت شب وصل
جز قتل خود از کشتن فرهاد ندیدم	خسرو ز جهان میشد و میگفت که سودی
یک دل که توان گفتنش آباد ندیدم	فریاد که تا کشور حسن تو شد آباد

آذر همه‌ی عمر، بشاگردی مشتاق
شادم، که به استادیش استاد ندیدم

1.5 Hâtif Isfahani in memoriam of Mushtâq Isfahânî:

خسرو کشور سخن مشتاق
صاحب رأی پیر و طبع جوان
قطب سادات آن که می بخشید
قالب لفظ را به معنی جان
آن که از بحر طبع گوهر زای
چون شدی در شاهوار افشان

از لالی نظم او گشتی
منفعل گوهر و خجل عمان
آن که اشعار او که در هر یک
آشکار است رازهای نهان
عاشقان راست چاره غم عشق
عارفان راست مایه‌ی عرفان
آن که پیوسته از حجاب خفا
بردی از خامه و مداد بنان
نوعروسان بکر معنی را
موکشان سوی جلوه گاه عیان
بود آن مرغ دلپذیر آهنگ
در صفای کلام و لطف بیان
طوطی بذله گوی گلشن دهر
بلبل خوش نوای باغ جهان
چون درین تنگ آشیانه ندید
جای پرواز و عرصه‌ی طیران
طایر روح لامکان سیرش
کرد آهنگ روضه رضوان
حیف و صد حیف از آن یگانه‌ی دهر
حیف و صد حیف از آن وحید زمان
که سرا بوستان عمرش را
موسم دی رسید و فصل جزان
از نوای حیات چون لب بست
آن خوش آهنگ مرغ خوش الحان
شد تذر و تش به باغ نوحه سرا
عندلیبش به شاخ مرثیه خوان
رفت و در ماتم و مصیبت او
از زمین شد بلند تا کیوان

از دل شیخ و شاب ناله و آه
از لب مرد و زن خروش و فغان
چون سوی باغ خلد کرد آهنگ
«هاتف» از خامه شکسته زبان
بهر تاریخ زد رقم دایم
جای مشتاق باد صحن جنان

1.6 Sabâhî in memoriam of Âzar:

دریغ و درد که رفت از جهان جهان است
نهان به زیر زمین گشت آسمان سخن
فتاد سرو بلاغت ز جویبار کمال
پرید مرغ فصاحت ز آشیان سخن
دریغ و درد که رفت آنکه هر زمان صد گل
شکفتی از نم کلکش به گلستان سخن
فغان که بار سفر بست آن کزان شب و روز
به شرق و غرب روان بود کاروان سخن
فغان که بست زبان از سخن سخندانی
که حجت از سخن اوست در بیان سخن
به عزم مرثیه اش بعد ازین سزاوار است
که دوستان نسریند داستان سخن
چه غم که رسم سخن گشت در جهان منسوخ
سخن برای که؟ چون رفت نکته دان سخن
برند اهل بهشت از برای یکدیگر
ز کان طبع کریم وی ارمغان سخن
پناه دهر چه شد؟ افتخار دوران کو؟
طراز بزم کجا رفت؟ زیب ایوان کو؟

1.7 Hâtif Isfahânî in praise of Âzar:

نسیمی به دل می خورد روح پرور
نسیمی دلاویز چون بوی دلبر
نسیمی چو انفاس عیسی مقدّس
نسیمی چو دامن مریم مطهّر
نسیمی همه نفخه مشک سارا
نسیمی همه نشأه خمر آحمر
نسیمی در آن نکهت مهر پنهان
نسیمی در آن لذّت وصل مضمّر
نسیمی از آن جیب جان دامن دل
پر از عنبر اشهب و مشک اذفر
چه باد است حیرانم این باد دلکش
که عطر عبیر آرد و بوی عنبر
نسیم بهار است کویا که خیزد
ز روی گل تازه و سنبل تر
نسیمی است شبها به گلشن عنوده
ز گل کرده بالین و از سبزه بستر
بر اندام او سوده ریحان و سنبل
در آغوش او بوده نسرين و عنبر
غلط کردم از طرف بستان نیاید
نسیمی چنین جان فرا و معطرّ
نسیم ریاض جنانست گویی
که رضوان به دست صبا داده مجمر
نسیم بهشت است و دارد نشانها
ز تفریح تسنیم و ترویج کوثر
که از روی غلمان گشودست برقع
که از فرق حوران ربودست معجر
ز گیسوی حوران و زلفین غلمان
بدینسان وزد مشکبیز و معنبر

خطا گفتم از باغ جنت نیاید
نسیمی چنان دلکش و روح پرور
نسیمی است از باغ الطاف صاحب
نکو ذات و نیک اختر و نیک محضر
چراغ دل روشن اهل معنی
فروغ شبستان اهل دل آذر
محیط فضایل که دریای فکرش
کران تا کرانست لبریز گوهر
سپهر معالی که بر اوج قدرش
هزاران چو مهر است تا بنده اختر
مدار مناقب جهان مکارم
که افلاک عزّ و شرف راست محور
مراد افاضل ملاذ اماتل
که بر تارک سروران است افسر
جوادی که در کف جودش ز خواری
چو خیری بود زرد رخساره‌ی زر
کریمی که بر در گهنش ز اهل حاجت
نبینی تهی دست جز حلقه در
زهی پیش تاجوج شهوت کشیده
دل پاکت از زهد سدّ سکندر
از آن در طواف حریم تو پوید
که کسب سعادت کند سعد اکبر
شب و روز گردند آبای علوی
به صد شوق در گرد این چار مادر
که شاید پدید آید اما نیاید
از ایشان نظیر تو فرزند دیگر
به معنای مشکل سرانگشت فکرت
کند آنچه با مه بنان پیمبر

به گفتار ناراست تیغ زبانت
کند آنچه با کفر شمشیر حیدر

صور جمله‌ی کاینات و تو معنی
عرض جمله‌ی حادثات و تو جوهر

جهان با نهیب تو دریا و طوفان
زمین با وقار تو کشتی و لنگر

کلام تو با ریح و ریحان مقابل
بیان تو با آب حیوان برابر

فنون هنر فکرت را مسلم
جهان سخن خامه‌ات را مسخر

ز کلک بنان تو هر لحظه گردد
نگاری ممثل مثالی مصور

که صورتگر چین ندیدست هرگز
به آن حسن تمثال و آن لطف پیکر

لالی منظوم نظم تو هر یک
در خشنده نجمیست از زهره ازهر

که در وادی عشق گمگشتگان را
سوی کعبه‌ی کوی یار است رهبر

گلی می دمد هر دم از باغ طبع
به نکه‌ت چو شمامه مشک و عنبر

بری میرسد مر دم از شاخ فکرت
به لذت چو وصل بتان سمنبر

وفا پیشه یارا خداوند گارا
یکی سوی این بنده از لطف بنگر

ز رحمت یکی جانب من نظر کن
که چرخ چسان بی تو دارد به چنبر

تنم ز اه و جان ز اشک شد در فراق
چو از باد خاک و چو از آب آذر

تو در غربت ای مهر تابان و بی تو
شب و روز من گشته از هم سیه تر
کنون بی تو دارم سیه روزگاری
چو روی گنه کار در روز محشر
به دل کامها پیش از این بود وزانها
یکی بر نیاورده چرخ ستمگر

1.8 Selection of Sabâhî's letter to Âzar after the latter left Kashan for Qom:

زانو زند از پی تعلّم	ای آنکه برت معلّم عقل
دست از تو بریخت آب قلزم	نظم از تو گسیخت عقد پروین
بر خاک درت کند تیمّم	خورشید که منبع حیات است

1.9 Selection of Âzar's letter to Sâbahî (responding to the above):

نثر تو زره ربای قلزم	نظم تو گره گشای پروین
دیدم جو کشته او تو گندم	گفت انوری این قصیده گفتی
بر ساحل شط بود تیمّم	در مجلس تو ز دیگران شعر

1.10 ‘Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî on the literary climate in Isfahan during the governorship of Mîrzâ ‘Abd al-Wahhâb:

در حقیقت آن روز بخت ارباب کمال از خواب گران بر خاسته بود و خوان مراد مرام
اهل فضل و ادراک بالوان نعم آراسته و خطه اصفهان در وفور نعمت و کثرت
آسایش و آرامش طیره بخش سواد جنت نهاد «ارم ذات العماد التی لم یخلق مثلها
فی البلاد» بزم ارم نظمش آراسته بحضور دانشمندان و فصحا و شعرا اعجاز بیان بود

و هر روز محفل سرورش از وجود درویش عبدالمجید و عاشق و آذر و صهبا و صافی و هاتف و غیرت و نصیب و نیازی و رفیق محسود بوستان قدس و عالم روحانیان.

1.11 'Abd al-Razzâq Dunbulî on the literary climate in Isfahan following the death of Mîrzâ 'Abd al-Wahhâb:

آن حال میرزا عبد الوهاب وفات یافت بجای او حاجی آقا محمد رنانی اصفهانی حاکم شد راههای مداخل بکریم خان نمود و بر جمع اصفهان افزود در بند شعر و شاعری و فضل و کمال نبود و عقیم و طامع و بداندیش و بدسلوک بود و با کریم خان پدر فرزند شده خانه ها ویران کرد و بدعتها آشکار ساخت فقرا سوخت و مالها اندوخت و عموم اهالی را اسباب پریشانی اعزه و دانشمندان اصفهان را خصوصاً باعث جلای وطن و بی خانمانی گردید و کار را بر خواص و عوام چنان تنگ گرفت که زبان قلم از تحریر او بعجز و قصور اعتراف دارد طبع اقاصی و ادانی از آن گرگ حریص متنفر و دلها منزجر و آب دیده ها منهمر و ایام ایابت او ایام نحس مستمر آمد، وحشتی و نفرتی عظیم در میان خلق افتاد... در سنه ی ثمان و ثمانین و مائة بعد الالف (۱۱۸۸) اکابر و اعیان اصفهان از کلانتر و وزیر، وضع، شریف، و کدخدایان بلوک و جمعی از اهل حرفت و تجارت به بهانه ی تنقیح محاسبات دیوانی با دلی آکنده به محنت به شیراز آمده خاک نشین سایه ی دیوار مذلت شدند و شکوه بدر گاه آوردند شعرا و ظرفا از نفس دار الملک جلا یافته چون ابیات قصاید ببلاد عراق متفرق شدند آذر و هاتف و بعضی اد ظرفا رخت از اصفهان به بیغاوله ی قم و کاشان کشیدند آقا محمد تقی صهبا و مولانا حسین رفیق بشیراز تشریف آوردند.

1.12 Âzar, Hâtif, and Sabâhî discussing poetry in the rose-garden:

گرفته سر چشمه ی روشنی	یکی روز در ساحت گلشنی
نشستیم در سایه ی یک درخت	من و یکدو تن همدم نیکبخت
ز یکسو صباحی هم آواز من	ز یکدست هاتف نواساز من
کتاب غزلهای رنگین چو گنج	بصحبت گشاده ز هر نکته سنج

ز گوهر فروشان عهد قدیم
 فرستاده غواص شان را درود
 بگرد یتیمیش از دیده اشک
 صباحی که بادا صباحش بخیر
 کتابی کهن داشت با خود نهان
 گسسته ز هم عقد شیرازه‌اش
 بدستان گرفتم ز دستش کتاب
 گشودم چه دیدم؟ یکی بوستان
 ورقها چو برگ رزان فصل دی
 درختان کهن میوه‌ها نوبرش
 چو فردوس گل رسته در وی بسی
 همانا باین عالم آمد بهشت
 گلی ورنه از بوستانی نرست
 کسی میوه ورنه ز باغی نچید
 دلم برد از دست بوی گلش
 مگر بلبش کو بلب قند سود
 چه گفتم که باید زخم سر بسنگ
 دلارا یکی نازنین نامه بود
 در اوراقش از چشم عبرت نگر
 سراسر بخون دل آمیخته
 در آن نقش بس قصه‌ی دردناک
 نوشته در آن قصه‌ی دلنواز
 درخشان گهرهای غلطان در آن
 هم از شادی جستن لعل مفت
 سرودم ز ایوان گردون گذشت
 صباحی لب خود بدنجان گرفت
 خلف مانده دیدیم درها یتیم
 بهر دور شد نوحه را هم سرود
 روان بود از دلنوازی نه رشک
 چو آن انجمن دید خالی ز غیر
 بر آوردش از زیر کش ناگهان
 کهن لیک معنی همان تازه‌اش
 رهاندم ز گردش چو گنج از خراب
 که بادا تماشاگه دوستان
 پریشان و فائح از آن بوی می
 ز جان پرورش داده جان پرورش
 که خاری نیاززده دست کسی
 که رضوان در آن هرچه بایست کشت
 که خارش بخون دست گلچین نشست
 که از باغبان زهر چشمی ندید
 جگر خون شد از ناله‌ی بلبش
 معزی امیر شمرقند بود
 کجا بوستان دارد این آب و رنگ
 که بر مشک ترکابتش خامه سود
 ندیدم بجز پاره‌های جگر
 ز چشم سیاه قلم ریخته
 چو لوح جبین اسیران خاک
 بسی داستانهای ناز و نیاز
 نهان گنج درویش و سلطان در آن
 هم از ماتم آنکه این لعل سفت
 سرشکم ز دامان جیحون گذشت
 شکفتش چو گل روی و گفت ای شکفت

که این نامه کارام جان من است
مرا بود مونس بهر انجمن
که بیند خطای خطش از صواب
همانا نیاموخت در روزگار
حریفان که امروز نام آورند
شکر را ز حنظل ندانند چیست
در این عهد هر کو دو مصرع نگاشت
دوخر مهره هر کو بهم کرد جقت
نبینی که آمد درین مرز و بوم
خریدار گوهر در این شهر نیست
تو هم زنج بیهوده زین پس مبر
چه لازم کز اندیشه دل خون کنی
که در خواندنش چون بر آری نفس
ورش سازی از کلک و دفتر بسیج
مرا در دل افسون او کار کرد
باو گفتم از روی رفق ای رفیق
هم آن به که شبها نسوزم دماغ
چه بیجا گذارم زر اندر خلاص
چه کردم پی در شناور چو غوک
بدین گونه ما را سخن در میان
که از یکطرف هاتف آواز داد
بگرمی مرا گفت ای هوشمند
پس از عهد استاد فن رودکی
بنوبت سخن گستران از عدم
چو او چید هر کس سخن را اساس
نیوشنده را جان از آن تازه شد

چو تنها شوم همزبان من است
کسی جز تو نگرفتش از دست من
و یا خواندش کو نگوید جواب
کسی این لغت را ز آموزگار
ز دعوی بملک سخن داورند
ندانند امیر سمرقند کیست
سر عجب بر آسمان برفراشت
کمان کرد کو گو هر نظم سفت
همای همایون کم از بوم شوم
فروشنده را از بها بهر نیست
سخن پیش هر ناکس و کس مبر
مگر مصرعی چند موزون کنی
گذارند انگشت بر لب که بس
نگیرند چون این کتابش بهیچ
ز خوابم بافسانه بیدار کرد
عفی الله که هم صادقی هم صدیق
نیفروزم از بهر کوران چراغ
که شناسدش صیرفی از رصاص
که نگشایدش رشته زالی ز دوک
فرا داشته گوش روحانیان
دل رفته از من بمن باز داد
ز بازار سرد سخن شکوه چند
که در دری سفت از کودکی
نهادند در بزم دانش قدم
گهر ریخت در جیب گوهر شناس
جهانی زنامش پر آوازه شد

هر آن کز سخن طرز دیگر نهاد
اگر پنج روز این سرای سپنج
نماند و نماند بیکسان جهان
شنیدی که جمشید فرخنده بخت
ز بیداد ضحاک تازی ز مغز
جهان بود آشفته سالی هزار
دگر کز جفا شد پشیمان سپهر
درفش فریدون برافراخت باز
فلک روزگی چند بر زید و عمر و
نخواهد شدن ریشه‌ی تاک خشک
کنون گر بگیتی سخندان نماند
ز بلبل نشانی نه در بوستان
نگیرند کج نغمه زاغان باغ
چمن را تهی از سمن کرد دی
مخور غم که فرداست از کوهسار
صبا ریخته گل بدامان شاخ
بگلبن بر آورده بلبل خروش
سخن گستران کرده رو سوی باغ
نقاب از رخ گل گشایند خوش
غزل سر کند مطرب از هر کسی
بیا زین کتابی که در دست تست
شش اندر صد و پنج اندر ده است
گهی هیچ از او نام نشنیده کس
گر او رفت بر جای او کس نماند
تویی خود بحمدالله امروز نیز
هم او هم دگر ناظمان جهان

خزف در تراز وی گوهر نهاد
تهی شد ز ارباب دانش مرنج
شود آشکار آنچه بینی نهان
چو بیگانگانش گرفتند تخت
تهی شد شر نوجوانان نغز
بد و نیکش از ظلم زار و نزار
گرایید یکچند از کین بمهر
جهان رشک ایوان جم ساخت باز
اگر بوزه پیمود بر جای خمر
ز میخانه آید همان بوی مشک
گلی در همه باغ خندان نماند
ز طوطی تهی گشت هندوستان
ز عطر گل و طعم شکر سراغ
ز گل وز شکر شاخ خالی و نی
بزافراخته چتر ابر بهار
شکر کرده نی را گریبان فراخ
بمنقار طوطی شکر کرده نوش
بدستی کتاب و بدستی ایاق
بآهنگ بلبل سرایند خوش
فرستند رحمت بر آنکس بسی
ببین نقش حال معزی درست
که خاک معزی زیارتگه است
گهی در جهان نام او بود بس
سخنگو سخندان سخن رس نماند
بمصر سخن چون معزی عزیز
که بودند از کار نظم آگهان

ز تو زنده شد در جهان نامشان
بسعی تو ضایع نشد رنجشان
بنال ای کهن بلبل بوستان
بباغ از گل و میوه بنشان درخت
از این خاکدان چون بخلد برین
هر آنکو گلی چیند از باغ تو
هر آنکو خورد میوهات از درخت
سراسر سخنهایش بی عیب بود
دری سفت کآویزه گوش شد
باو گفتم ای ابر گوهرفشان
بگو تا بآن بحر کشتی برم
چه طرزت بود در سخن دلنواز؟
بگفت ای که نظمت سراسر خوش است بر آری ز هر بحر گوهر خوش است
ولی شد چو نقد جوانی ز دست
نیرزد که گیرد طمع دامت
مخوان از طمع سفلگان را خدیو
غزلخوانیت گرچه باشد بسهوی
مگو مدح شاهان چو نبود بجا
چه لازم چو فردوسی آیی ز طوس
بری سی چهل سال بیهوده رنج
بخاری ز اندیشه عمری قفا
شه گنجه را چون نظامی بعمد
که حمدونیان را شوی ده خدا
چه در مدح کوش؟ که چون انوری
ببلخت نشانند بر خر زرشک
گر از نخل دانش ثمر بایدت

بود گرچه در خاک آرامشان
که گوهر برآوردی از گنجشان
که چون گل گشاید دل دوستان
که تا بیند و چیند آزاده بخت
کنی رو که بادت لحد عنبرین
چو لاله دلش سوزد از داغ تو
به نیکی کند یادت ای نیکبخت
مگو هاتف او هاتف غیب بود
زبان را شکایت فراموش شد
ز گوهر بود در چه بحرت نشان
وز آن بحر گوهر بدست آورم
کز آن طرز بندم سخن را طراز
درین بحرت افتاد ماهی بشست
نزیبد که گردد هوس رهزنت
منه از هوس نام حوران بدیو
شمارندش از دوستان دور لهو
که ناچارش آخر بگویی هجا
بغزنین و شه را کنی پایبوس
که بر دامن افشاندت شاه گنج
کش از وعده آخر نبینی وفا
چه خوانی شب و روز از اخلاص حمد
نشینی ز کنج قناعت جدا
کند مغفر اندر سرت معجری
ز رخ خوی فشانی و از دیده اشک
به بستان سعدی گذر بایدت

ز هر گونه گویی سخن شیخ گفت	که هر رنگ گل خواهی آنجا شکفت
عفی الله که دادی مرا آکھی	دگر کفتمش ای تو را من رهی
اگر لطف ایزد شود یاورم	بچشم آنچه گویی بجای آورم
زبان عاجز از هیچگونه سخن	نباشد مرا گرچه در انجمن
که زیباست رای در آرای تو	ولی ز آن نیچم سر از رای تو
خدنگم بزه بین زهم در کمان	بکوتاه دستان مشو بدگمان
بآهنگ سعدی برآرم خروش	همان گویم اکنون که گوید سروش
که افشاندش بر سر دوستان	اگر شیخ گل چید از بوستان
بدیهیم بونصر بن سعد ریخت	و گر رشته از دسته گلها گسیخت
ببازاریان مفت نفروختم	من اینکه یکی گنج اندوختم
که شبدیز شه را فشام به نعل	گزیدم از آن در و یاقوت و لعل
به شیرازیان ارمغان برد قند	بشیرین لب او داد اگر داد پند
که شیرین کند خسرو از وی دهان	من آوردم اینکه شکر ز اصفهان

1.13 Selection of a letter from Hâtif to Sabâhî discussing the state of poetic affairs following the death of Âzar:

با فرومایگان بازاری	فلک انباز کرده ناچارم
دلخراشی گهی جگر خواری	رسد از طعن شان بمن گاهی
زاغ دشتی بکبک کهساری	تف بر آن سر زمین که خنده زند
با همه ساختم بناچاری	من و این شغل دون و این شرکا
از عزیزان تحمل خواری	چیست سودم از این عمل دانی

1.14 Selection of a letter from Sabâhî to Hâtif discussing the state of poetic affairs following the death of Âzar (responding to above):

مشتی از سفلگان بازاری	گر بانبازی تو لاف زنند
لیکن از حیلای هنر عاری	جلوه گر در حلال جمادی چند

خر دجال شان به بیطاری	در جدل با مسیح و نپذیرد
عشوه‌گر چون بتان فرخاری	کینه‌ور چون یلان قیچاقی
تیغ بر کف نه و بخون خواری	تاج با سر نه و خراج طلب

1.15 Letter from Sabâhî to Rafîq dealing with the state of poetic affairs:

گر ای صبا گذر افتد تورا به اصفهان
 که خاک آن چو عبیر است و سنگ آن چو عقیق
 پس از ادای سلام و درود بی پایان
 ز روی رفق بده عرضه با جناب رفیق
 که ای ز نظم تو منسوخ نسخه‌ی فصحا
 به پیش طبع سلیم و بر نگاه دقیق
 چنانکه نظم نبی سبعه‌ی معلقه‌را
 به پیشگاه حرم داد خجالت تعلیق
 ز غور قلزم فضل تو با کمال علو
 کمند فکرت عمیق قصیر از تعمیق
 بلی بود خطر کوتاه و بلند یکی
 به پیش لجه ژرف و به جنب بحر عمیق
 تنم گداخته از دوری تو باشد چون
 حقیر کالبدی در میان نار حریق
 مرا به سوی تو شوق و زمانه در اهمال
 مرا به وصل تو میل و ستاره در تفریق
 مرا صداع و تورا در قرابه ماء‌الورد
 مرا خمار و تورا در قدح شراب رحیق
 سپرده ره تو خواستم به پای وفاق

دریغ دست ز بختم نداد این توفیق
بر آنکه صیت سخایت رسیده بر عیوق
چه شد که لطف تو بی عایق است در تعویق
شکایتی است ز ابنای روزگار مرا
تویی به درک وی الحق درین بساط حقیق
نجسته ره به طریقت ستاده در ارشاد
نبرده پی به حقیقت نشسته در تحقیق
رسانده بانگ فضلیت به چرخ و شناسند
سهیل را ز سها و سهیل را ز نعیق
به خضر طعنه و خود در طریق وادی گم
به نوح خنده و خود در میان بحر غریق
زبان طعن گشایند بر بزرگان
که شعرشان به دو شعری بود به رتبه شفیق
ز ششصد است فزون سال کآرمیده به خاک
که خاک مرقدشان باد رشک مشک سحیق
کسی به ز اهل جهان منکر بلاغشان
چه از وضع و شریف و چه از عبید و عتیق
به صدق دعوی من عالمی گواه چو تو
سزد ز روح الامین بشنوی برین تحقیق
نیاورد بجز از خیر یاد این طبقات
میان معنی و لفظ آنکه می دهد تطبیق
ز طرز و شیوهی ایشان چو کسی شود عاجز
برای خود کند اندیشه مخلصی ز مضیق
نهد به شاعر دیرینه تهمت هذیان
دهد به گفته‌ی پیشینه نسبت تلفیق

یکی جهان‌د پی فارسی خری به وحل
 بماند و کرد سلامت گذار را تحمیق
 به ریشخند دو نادان ز راه رفته کنند
 گمان که هست مواثیق اهل عصر وثیق
 ز سفه بر هنر خود یقین کند چو رسد
 به گوش نغمه‌ی تصدیقش از لب دو صدیق
 ندیدی آنکه به اغوای ابله‌ی دو سه یافت
 لقب عنودی فاروق و کاذبی صدیق
 قبول کرد ز طنناز ساده دل این نام
 به طنز گفت یکی تند خوی را چو خلیق
 بود طریقه‌ی ما اقتفای استادان
 به یاوگی نرسد طعنه بر هداة طریق
 گر از حقیقت اسلام کس خبر یابد
 به مسلمی نرسد خود ملامت زندیق
 چه گفت؟ گفت که از پیریت نصیب مباد
 به پیر منحنیی خنده زد چو شاب رشیق
 مدام تا که بود مکث سفلی از تقریب
 همیشه تا که بود خط علوی از تشریق
 شود عدوی تورا نجم زندگی غارب
 بود محب تو را کوکب حیات شریق

Chapter Three

1.16 Introduction to *Gulzar-i A'zam* discussing Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir*:

تا اینکه تذکره‌ی معدن الجواهر واصف بملاحظه رسید و بوضوح انجامید که مومی
 الیه در مقامات کثیره بغوامض نکات شعری پی نبرده باعترافات بیجا بر کلام
 اساتذہ‌ی جہابذہ قلم فرسودہ و بدخل ناسزاکار فرمودہ لہذا بحر طبیعت باز بجوش

آمد در دریای خاطر خروش که جوابات رایقه‌ی آن درج تذکره سازم.

1.17 Râqim's response to Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* in *Javâb-i i'tirâzât-i Vâsif* (part I):

تذکره‌ی مسمی بمعدن الجواهر که غرض اصلی از ان اظهار ترفع و خودستائی و... توهین و طعن و تشنیع فضلالی کرام و فصحای عظام بوده، بقید قلم در آورده، و پی بتحقیق نبرده، چون کبک در پوستین استاد الاستاد و غیره که کالاستاد بودند افتاده بیباکانه قدم از جاده‌ی ادب بیرون نهاده زبان طعن و اعتراض دراز نمود...

1.18 Râqim's response to Vâsif's *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* in *Javâb-i i'tirâzât-i Vâsif* (part II):

هر چند درباره‌ی محو بعض عبارات ناملایم و اعتراضات بیجا از کتاب خودش بمبالغه گذارش کردم و دوستانه از راه نیک اندیشی اصرار نمودم، لیکن بسمع قبول گوش نکرده، فرمود که بحکم جف القلم بما هو کائن که (آنها برآرم؟) ناچار برگشتم

چونکه واصف نوشت تذکره‌ای	که دران کرد طعنهای جلی
بر کلام گزیده‌ی شعرا	سید ناصر علی ولی
نیز در شان حضرت آگاه	کرد سوء ادب بخبث دلی
یافت راقم ز سال تاریخش	آه آگاه ذوالفقار علی

1.19 Vâsif's account of his meeting with Râqim over the *Ma'dan al-jawâhir* controversy:

بنده نوازا چون در سیر باغ در مجلس مشاعره مولانا حاجی مولوی محمد حسین راقم افضل اشعرا با هدیه‌ی سنیه معدن الجواهر شرف ملازمت در یافتیم، آیا عرض نکردم که امروز این کتاب و مولف آن مملوک سرکار اند، بنظر اصلاح ملاحظه فرموده هر چه در باب شیخ ناصر علی مرحوم سقیم و مذموم معلوم میشود آن را از کتاب من بر آرند و برین بنده منت نهند، آنا نه فرمودید که تو به نسبت من کهن

سالی و مهارت تو در لسان فارسی ظاهر است من بعد از مائده... بهره‌ور شدم، پس از رفع فتنه یعنی چاک کردن سه چهار ورق اعراض کرده در رفع اعتراضات و وهتک حرمت و اصف کوشیدن...

1.20 Vâsif's opinion of Bîdil as told in the *Gulzar-i A'zam*:

ترجمه‌ی مرزا بیدل نوشته که چون مرزا علیه الرحمه بعلم خداداد خودش از خلق معانی بسوی احداث مبانی چند محاورات تازه پرداخت در دیده‌ی دل هندیان چون مردمک چشم منزلی حاصل ساخت اما مصطلحات مخترعه‌ی او در چشم بلغای عجم حکم شعر منقلب و شعر زاید که چون قذی موجب زحمت خانه‌ی دیده است بهم‌رسانید لاجرم بآهوگیریش (?) کمر بستند مولوی آزاد بلگرامی که فاضل علامه‌ی منصف طبع بود در خزانه‌ی عامره بداوری مسئله‌ی مشکله وجه پاکیزه ارشاد میفرماید که قرآن شریف با وصف آنکه کلام اعجاز نظام قادر علی الاطلاق است مطابق محاوره‌ی فصحای عرب نازل شد تا بفهمم قریب‌تر باشد پس در زبان فارسی اگرچه محقق کامل همچو بیدل لعه‌ی (?) باشد چون الفاظ تراشی کند چگونه اهل محاوره او را مسلم دارند مثلاً مرزا در مرثیه‌ی فرزند خود نوشته (است):

هر که دو قدم خرام میکاشت از انگشتم عصا بکف داشت

1.21 The author of *Gulzar-i A'zam* on criticisms leveled against Bîdil:

منشاء هجوم ایرانیان بر طعن و تشنیع مرزای رفیع الشان یکی هندی نژاد بودن آن بزرگوار دیگر سنیت مذهب آن عالی مقدار است و الا اگر این نامدار از ایران دیار میبود او را بر فلک نهم می بر آوردند و نسخه‌ی باطل السحر نظم او را سجد اعجاز می رسانیدند از عهد ابو الحسن رودکی سمرقندی تورانی که مرجع کافه‌ی شعرای ایران و توران است تا این زمان احدی از شعرای ایران بنظر نمی آید که در کلام او انواع لغزشها (?) هم از روی محاوره و هم از جهت عروض و قافیه و غیره واقع نشده باشد زهی انصاف که ایشانرا بگذارند و فقط با مرزا آویزش نمایند.

Chapter Four

1.22 Ghulâmî in praise of Muhammad Dûst Khân in his *Jangnâmah*:

نسب بر نسب پور پاینده خان	امیر کبیر آن سر خسروان
سزاوار تخت و کلاه و کمر	سکندر خصال است و جمشید فر
ببازو ایا رستم زابلیست	نژادش درانی وطن کابلیست
شبش چون شد قدر فیروز باد	همه روز روزش چو نوروز باد

1.23 Kashmiri on collecting and vetting sources in his *Akbarnâmah*:

که بودند باشنده‌ی آن دیار	بپرسیدم از مردم هوشیار
بهم داده بطبیق گفتم تمام	در اخباب(ر؟) بود اختلاف کلام
نگفتم درین قصه یک نکته بیش	من از خود جز آرایش بزم خویش
ضماندار آن راوی من نه من	بود گر اختلاف سخن

1.24 Selection of speech by member of assembly declaring the time of the masters to be over:

که هیئات شد ختم اهل سخن	در آخر کسی گفت زان انجمن
که بودند زین سان سخن پروران	ندانم چه بود آن خجسته زمان
باشعار بی معنی و ترهات	درین عهد جهال شهر و دهات
بخود نام صاحب کمالی نهند	دم از او ستادان عالی دهند
بجز شعر دزدی ندانند هیچ	زاین فرقه نازک و پیچ پیچ

1.25 Challenge by member of assembly for Hamîd Allah Kashmîrî to narrate the victories Akbar Khân in the style of the masters:

کمر بسته بر لاف و دعوی گری	که ای از همه در سخن پری
گرفتار گشتی بجای همه	بخشم آمدی از برای همه
کنون دعوی خود بکرسی رسان	اگر داری از راست گوئی نشان
فرنگین شکن اکبر پهلوان	بگو قصه‌ی رزم شیر جوان
چه شیران فگنداست آن شیر مرد	که در جنگ کابل بدشت نبرد
بمردیش کن مردی خود عیان	چو تیغش زبان تیر کن در بیان
و گرنه ز گفتار باطل خموش	چو دعوی نمودی در اثبات کوش

1.26 Qâsim 'Ali on the situation following the return of Shah Shujâ' to the throne at the hands of the British:

خود و خانه‌اش جمله گردد تباه	به مردم زروزی چو کم کرد شاه
کند دزدی و رهزنی و فریب	گرسنه به زحمت ندارد شکیب
فروشد زن و بچگان را به باد	نیارد ز ننگ و ز ناموس یاد
یتیمی کند کودک و زن ستین	بناچار از بهر دانکی پیشین
پی نان بد کیش و بد دین شوند	همه مرد و زنها بد آیین شوند
شود جان و هم خاندان‌ها تباه	به این سخت جور و جفاهای شاه
که آواره باشند فرزند و زن	بود مرگ بهتر ازین زیستن