Introduction

You have plucked roses from the garden of the Persians
witnessed the new spring of India and Iran
Now taste a little of the heat of the desert
drink the old wine of the date!

(Muhammad Iqbal, 1877–1938)[1]

In April 2019, Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan made his first official visit to neighboring Iran. Speaking at a joint press conference in Tehran, he prefaced his talks with Iranian president Hassan Rouhani by claiming in English that "had the British not come into India in the 1800s, you would not need an interpreter because we all used to speak Farsi [Persian]; the court language for 600 years in India was Farsi [Persian]."[2] Though an oversimplification, Imran Khan's statement was not far from the truth. From roughly the ninth to the nineteenth centuries, Persian was a preeminent literary language throughout a broad region consisting not only of Iran, but reaching from the Balkans in the west to China in the east, and from Siberia in the north to India in the south.[3] Those societies where Persian was used as a language of learning, whether or not people actually spoke Persian in their daily lives, are collectively referred to as the Persianate world. India became one of the centers of Persian as various ruling dynasties in the subcontinent patronized the language, outpacing even Iran in sheer volume of Persian literary production.

[1] *"Az chaman-zar-i ʿajam gul chidahʾi / naw-bahar-i hind u iran didahʾi / andaki az garmi-yi sahra bikhvur / badah-yi dirinah az khurma bikhvur"* (Iqbal, *Asrar-i Khvudi*). Adapted from Nicholson.
[2] Khabarguzari-yi IRNA. [3] Green, "Frontiers."

Many might assume the influence of Persian in the subcontinent had something to do with India being subsumed into a "Persian empire," ruled from somewhere in Iran and governed by native Persian speakers. In fact, Persian's status as a Eurasian lingua franca had little to do with Iran. The language had served to link different peoples and societies together in a Persianate cosmopolis through a shared idiom and texts and common aesthetic, social, and political forms. The term "cosmopolis" need not suggest an idealized zone free of hierarchies, as scholars like Nile Green rightly warn against romanticizing the Persianate past.[4] But the Persianate was cosmopolitan in the sense that Persian learning was not the purview of one religious or ethnic community, but rather the common language of varied groups, allowing for connections across a highly diverse region without a single geographic core or center.[5]

Persian was spread to the subcontinent by Turks and Pashtuns – not groups we would today call "native Persian speakers" – and patronized by everyone from Sikhs to Bengalis. Rather than a "mother tongue" learned without effort in infancy, Persian was the language of literacy, acquired through education. Historically, Persianate lands lacked a concept of a single "native" or "mother tongue," a neologism (*zaban-i madari* in Persian, *madari zaban* in Urdu) introduced to Urdu under the influence of English in the mid-nineteenth century, which also emerged in Iranian nationalist discourse in the early twentieth century.[6] Instead, different languages could fulfill different social functions, and one's language of education played a much more

[4] Green, "Introduction: The Frontiers of the Persianate World," 2.
[5] Eaton, "The Persian Cosmopolis."
[6] According to the *Urdu Lughat* (a comprehensive project equivalent to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, issued by Pakistan's Taraqqi-i Urdu Board), the first recorded instance of *madari zaban* is in Nazir Ahmad's 1885 novel *Fasanah-i Mubtala* ("Madari Zaban"). On the emergence of *zaban-i madari* in Persian, see Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 124, and Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 137. Earlier developments in the early modern period made the "mother tongue" thinkable in the Persianate; see Dudney, "Going Native" and Pellò, "A Linguistic Conversion." On the similar absence of "native" speech see Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 505–11, also discussed in Gould, "How Newness Enters the World," 546–7.

important role than the language spoken at home.[7] Many of the most celebrated Persian poets had learned literary Persian as what we would now call a "second language." Some lived in parts of the Persianate world where other languages were used in daily life, like Mirza ʿAbd al-Qadir Bidil in northern India, or Fuzuli in what is today Iraq. Iran itself has never been monolingual, and Persian has always coexisted with other vernaculars there. Many Iranian poets, like Saʾib Tabrizi, spoke Turkic languages before learning Persian. Even poets like Hafiz and Saʿdi who lie at the heart of the modern Iranian canon, and are today thought of as "ethnically Persian," did not write as they spoke. Like most "Persian speakers" living before the standardization efforts of the Pahlavi state (r. 1925–79), the languages of their daily lives were local dialects that were mutually unintelligible and highly divergent from written Persian, attested to in the "dialect poetry" they also left behind.[8]

With the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, "vernacular" languages outside of Iran officially replaced Persian, and the interconnected Persianate world began to fracture into nation-states. Colonial India was no exception, as the British replaced Persian as a state language with idioms deemed "local," like Urdu, especially after the anti-colonial revolt of 1857. But Imran Khan may have overstated the effects of that policy. While it is true that he and Hassan Rouhani did not share a language, Persian – and the Persianate tradition – did not simply die out in South Asia after 1857, but instead found new forms and new homes. What became of the vast Persianate literary heritage after Persian was no longer the lingua franca of a far-reaching cosmopolitan milieu? And how did Iranians, who now saw Persian as a national language, and South Asians, who now saw

[7] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 19–20. On the global advent of the "mother tongue" concept, see Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, and Politics in South India*, 19–24.

[8] Windfuhr, "FĀRS viii. Dialects;" Browne, "Some Notes on the Poetry of the Persian Dialects." On the unsuitability of "ethnicity" for the Iranian context, see Elling, *Minorities in Iran*, 15–28 and 41–4.

Persian as a foreign idiom, make sense of the corpus of Persian literature produced in India?

This book answers these questions by examining how Iranians and Indians alike adapted the premodern Persianate tradition to produce a modern genre, that of literary history. While other modern genres of writing – the novel, free verse poetry, the short story, and others – have received a great deal of scholarly attention, far less attention has been paid to literary history as a genre.[9] Yet literary history is a modern genre par excellence; this book captures how the genre participated in many of modernity's most salient features in Iran and India. In particular, *The Making of Persianate Modernity* shows how, from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, modernizing literary scholars brought together transformations in understandings of nation, history, sexuality, and technology in producing the first modern literary histories of Persian. Challenging the nationalist narrative of Persian literary singularity, the book argues that Persian literary history emerged out of collaboration between Indians and Iranians; drawing from Urdu-language sources as well as Persian, it demonstrates the crucial role of Urdu for literary modernizers in both Iran and South Asia.

Rather than a book about the premodern Persianate cosmopolis, this is a book about Persianate modernity. What happens to the Persianate in the age of nationalism and print? *The Making of Persianate Modernity* uses the emergence of literary history to elucidate the role of Indo-Iranian connections in the process of modernization from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. While scholars have often considered the nineteenth century as the end of the Persianate, I argue that it endures much later than typically thought.[10] Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi first articulated "Persianate modernity" in his groundbreaking work. Following Michel Foucault, he treated modernity less as an epoch than an ethos,

[9] On poetry see Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry*. For travelogues see Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 77–100. For other prose genres see Meisami, "Iran."

[10] For examples of such claims see Arjomand, "From the Editor," 3; Spooner, "Epilogue," 303.

a way of positioning oneself against the present, which he located in the early modern Persian-language texts of India and Iran.[11] Tavakoli-Targhi left his coinage largely undefined, inviting "other historians of Persianate modernity" to further pursue the project.[12]

Persianate modernity, as I use it here, is a discourse involving shared texts and concepts, in which Iranians, Indians, and European Orientalists participated from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. To be modern was to participate in that discourse, to valorize the present moment as a break with tradition. In order to see the present as discontinuous with the past, one must first consolidate the "tradition" against which the "modern" is defined. Indian Muslims and Iranians alike were often invested in the same literary heritage: the poetry of the premodern Persianate world. This book shows how modernizers made use of (and generated) tradition in the making of a new genre, that of national literary history. Nationalism – here, more a particular logic or way of seeing the world than a political movement – has been central to Persianate modernity. With apologies to Stuart Hall, I would argue that the nation-state is the modality through which modernity is experienced.

Persianate modernity is also an era: the period of time during which this discourse unfolded, as modernizers reworked the raw material of the past into national literary culture. The period which I call "Persianate modernity" that this book covers was bracketed between two texts, one often considered the last Persian *tazkirah* (a genre of biographical anthology) and the other seen as the hallmark of modern Persian literary history. Riza-Quli Khan Hidayat's *Majmaʿ al-Fusahāʾ* (*Assembly of the Eloquent*, 1871), produced at Iran's first modern educational institution, the Dar al-Funun, was a comprehensive, universal *tazkirah*. It served as an important starting point for later modernizers in Iran, India, and Europe, who all cited it, responded to it, and defined their modernizing projects against it.

[11] Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 1–17; Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?"
[12] Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 143.

The process of reworking the *tazkirah* into literary history culminated in the institutionalization of the latter genre with the 1942 publication of Muhammad-Taqi Bahar's *Sabkshinasi* (*Stylistics*), the first textbook for the nascent doctoral program in Persian literature at the University of Tehran. The works of Hidayat and Bahar serve as meaningful bookends to a process of literary modernization. They also roughly correspond chronologically to the period between revolt and partition (1857–1947) in South Asia, or between the reigns of Nasir al-Din Shah and Riza Shah (1848–1941) in Iran.

This timeline challenges established chronologies of the Persianate. Earlier scholarship averred that the Persianate began to decline in the nineteenth century, and eventually dissipated.[13] The "late Persianate" period following this supposed decline was neglected, as many scholars took for granted that the rise of nationalism and colonialism did away with the shared Persianate sphere. The latest scholarship, however, has extended the "late Persianate" period into the twentieth century.[14] This book responds to the question posed by Mana Kia and Afshin Marashi: "are the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between Iran and India, indeed, after the Persianate?"[15] The Persianate was always a living tradition; its core texts and concepts were not static over time, remaining in motion from the ninth century to the fifteenth and up to the nineteenth. As Marashi argues, "as the early modern Persianate system of thought began to fray during the nineteenth century, its component elements

[13] This idea dates back at least as early as Hodgson, who coined the term "Persianate" (first introduced in *The Venture of Islam*, 1:40, and defined in ibid., 2:293–4). Hodgson connected the decline of the Persianate to modernization and the rise of nationalism (see ibid., 3:237). The term "late Persianate" – which still lacks much currency in academia – was applied to earlier centuries, ending before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[14] Examples include Amanat, "From Peshawar to Tehran;" Fani, "Becoming Literature;" Hodgkin, "Lāhūtī;" Hodgkin, "Revolutionary Springtimes;" Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*. This attention to the "late Persianate" is by no means ubiquitous; Richard Eaton's recent, and excellent, *India in the Persianate Age* ends in 1765.

[15] Kia and Marashi, "Introduction: After the Persianate."

did not disappear or melt away, but were in many cases reconfigured, empowered, and enabled to operate as the basis of modernist projects of culture and politics."[16] While Marashi's focus is on Indo-Iranian neoclassicism, I show how the shared Persianate tradition was reshaped once again by modernizers to develop a shared Persianate modernity with a common set of references and modern conventions. As the cultural logics underpinning the Persianate shifted, modernity and nationalism did not simply bring an end to Persianate affiliations; instead, such historical ties endured – now strengthened by new physical infrastructure like drivable roads linking India and Iran – and even played an essential role in generating national identities and national heritage.[17] Modernizers reworked the Persianate textual tradition, producing a Persianate modernity which drew on the connections that the earlier cosmopolis had engendered.[18] Yet, simultaneously, this Persianate modernity sought to cover its tracks, erasing the traces of its cosmopolitan connections so as to present an image of national heritage that appeared to be *sui generis*, independent, self-contained.[19] In other words, what I term "Persianate modernity" is the form the Persianate takes after the transformations around the turn of the century. It is the connected framework left over from the bygone cosmopolis that enabled intellectuals from Iran and India to learn from each other in their modernizing projects, and to rework the literary texts of the earlier tradition into national heritage.[20]

[16] Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 15.

[17] I draw from Fredric Jameson's understanding of a "dominant cultural logic" as "the force field in which very different types of cultural impulses … must make their way" (Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 6). On the physical infrastructure see Green, "New Histories" and Koyagi, "Drivers across the Desert."

[18] As Eric Lewis Beverley suggests, cosmopolitan languages like Persian "provided templates whose elements could be disaggregated and recombined into new systems" (Beverley, "Documenting the World," 1051–2).

[19] Tavakoli-Targhi describes a similar dynamic in which the contributions of Persianate native informants were erased from European Orientalism's self-narrative, producing what he terms a "genesis amnesia" (Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 18–34).

[20] Kia also argues for Persianate culture as "the basis for a modern self" produced through Indo-Iranian dialogue (see Kia, "Indian Friends.")

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were a time of tremendous social and political change in the Persianate world, including India and Iran. For centuries, Persian had been "the most widely used language for governance across South Asia,"[21] and it continued to be used as such under British East India Company rule. However, British support for Persian learning in India began to erode in Bombay and Madras Presidencies in 1832, and further in 1837 with Act XXIX in the Bengal Presidency, which dispensed with the requirement to use Persian in judicial proceedings.[22] Persian's status changed even more dramatically after the failed 1857 revolt against Company rule. The British, for their part, violently suppressed the rebellion, and reconsidered their colonial approach in its aftermath. Preoccupied with their failure to comprehend "native Indian religious and social belief" and prevent the bloody uprising, the British shifted focus from rule through the Persian written tradition to vernacular languages like Urdu.[23] The language policy first implemented in particular administrative units two decades earlier became universalized throughout British India.[24] As the British saw it, vernaculars were authentically "native" languages, grounded in the reality of Indian daily life, as opposed to literary languages like Persian, which they understood as belonging to Iran and therefore foreign to India (though Indians literate in Persian had historically had few such qualms). As a result, patronage for the Persian literary tradition in India declined, though as I show in this book, reports of its demise are greatly exaggerated. Persian never fully disappeared from the subcontinent.

[21] Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age*, 17.
[22] King, *One Language, Two Scripts*, 54–9; Mir, "Imperial Policy."
[23] Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, 8–10.
[24] Persian maintained official status in the several of the princely states until much later. It was described as the common language of Kashmir, uniting linguistically diverse Kashmiris, as late as 1941, and was still taught in Jammu and Kashmir in the 1950s even as Urdu became the sole official language (Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, 272, 319). In Chitral (now part of Pakistan), Persian was the only language of writing and government until 1953 (Bashir, "Indo-Iranian Frontier Languages.")

Colonialism and revolution impacted the place of Persian in Iran as well. European colonial powers had swallowed up neighboring territories like India, and Iran had suffered devastating territorial losses to the Russian empire during the Russo-Persian wars. Iranian intellectuals developed a modernizing, proto-nationalist discourse in response, which culminated in the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11. Nationalists, intellectuals, and revolutionaries transformed Persian into a national language and "mother tongue." Consequently, Persian literature became understood as national heritage. As the modern, nationalist state developed institutions like the university, it remade *adab* (belles-lettres and proper comportment), into *adabiyat*, "literature" in the modern, institutional sense.[25] Literature as a modern institution was supported by several pillars, including dictionaries, canons, academic departments, and, as I argue here, literary history.

Modern literary history emerged out of engagement with the *tazkirah*, a Persianate prose genre that flourished from the fifteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century. *Tazkirah*s were anthologies of poetry, typically consisting of relatively short biographical notices about the poets followed by selections of their poetry. While Persianate modernizers understood literary history to be something different from the structure, internal logic, and genre conventions found in *tazkirah*s, *tazkirah*s were nevertheless a crucial source of material that was refashioned according to the modernizers' expectations. *Tazkirah* production peaked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during the politically tumultuous final years of the genre's lifespan, but rather than simply fading away, literary history ascended to take its place as a genre that performed similar functions under – and in response to – changing epistemic conditions. As

[25] On *adab* see Ahmed, *What Is Islam*, 380–1; Kia, "*Adab* as Ethics of Literary Form," 282, 288; *Persianate Selves*, 199–200; Mayeur-Jaouen, "Introduction;" Metcalf, *Moral Conduct and Authority*. On the transformation of *adab* into *adabiyat* see Allan, *In the Shadow of World Literature*, chapter 4, and Fani, "Becoming Literature," chapter 1.

commemorative texts, *tazkirah*s were particularly important in times of disorder and disruption, as litterateurs strived to memorialize communities in their *tazkirah*s which were disrupted in real life.[26] If *tazkirah*s preserved the memory of moral communities during times when turmoil threatened morality in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Kia contends, literary histories commemorated national communities, both generated and suppressed by colonial modernity, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Literary history offered narratives of the nation's history through the lens of what the British Orientalist Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) called the "manifestation of the national genius" – that is, national literature.[27] Significantly, literary history was nationally defined. Unlike the anthological structure of *tazkirah*s, with their entries on individual poets loosely organized by criteria such as profession or pen name, literary history assumed a progressive chronology, with poets grouped together in poetic movements which developed in relation to national conditions. Literary history was structured by nineteenth-century historiography's positivist assumptions of a recuperable past. These assumptions made it possible to trace a genealogy of Persian literature, and indeed of the Iranian national spirit.[28]

The hitherto unexplored archive of Persian literary histories offers a unique way of telling a connected South–South history of modernizing Iran and South Asia. Each chapter of this book is about significant aspects of the new literary histories, which reflect intellectual developments in Persianate notions of historiography, sexuality, nationalism, and print culture. Through the literary histories, we encounter some of the most influential and colorful

[26] Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 165. On the peak in *tazkirah* production see Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*, 178–9.
[27] Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, *passim*.
[28] On the genre's origins and development in Europe – relevant for our purposes as European literary histories were influential models for Persian literary history – see Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible*, chapter 1.