

## CHAPTER 5

### **Imagining Iran before Nationalism: Geocultural Meanings of Land in Azar's *Atashkadeh***

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Nationalist views of Iran are predicated on “a congruence of state, society and culture,” territorialized onto a homeland and sharply delineated from those around it.<sup>1</sup> The scholarship of the last few years has detailed the various ways in which this process of imagining Iran as a national homeland occurred in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> All agree that there were previous notions of a place called Iran, and ways of belonging to it, that were different from what came after. But the question remains, what were these notions? Without specific historicizing, concepts like Iran tend to be read according to modern understandings that are paradoxically predicated on timelessness, even as they argue for radical differences caused by modernity.<sup>3</sup> For Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, whose work specifically focuses on the importance of land, works of medieval geography describe regions “much like nation-states today.” Geographical notions of a large swath of land understood to be Greater Iran were, she argues, “a means of self-definition” shared by “other Iranians” in medieval times.<sup>4</sup> Such a reading creates a premodern period consisting of centuries of static homogeneity, posed in contrast to the radical changes of the modern period. Yet, strangely, a sense of being Iranian seems to have existed throughout nonetheless. Historical contingency is evacuated, obfuscating the important differences in the constitution and narration of geocultural borders of Iran at particular times.<sup>5</sup> It is certainly important to trace continuities in “the long-standing patterns within societies to distinguish between rivals and neighbors by delineating territorial and cultural boundaries,” but not without questioning implicit nationalist assumptions as to the congruence of such boundaries.<sup>6</sup>

Even scholarship not directly concerned with nationalism or the modern period is still bounded by nationalist assumptions about how the land of Iran was conceived of and what it meant to be from Iran within the broader

geocultural Persianate world.<sup>7</sup> This article seeks to contribute to the question of continuity by outlining what I call geocultural meanings of land in a famous late eighteenth-century poetic *tazkereh* (commemorative compendium), the *Atashkadeh* of Lotf 'Ali Bayg "Azar" Baigdeli (AD 1721–1781/AH 1134–1195).<sup>8</sup> In the present study, I refer to Central Asia as Turan and South Asia as Hindustan and seek to historicize what is meant by Iran in the early modern context, because part of what enables anachronistic conceptual interpretations of the past is the use of anachronistic names. Even in a text like the *Atashkadeh*, where the land of Iran is central to the geographical mapping of Persian literary culture, there are specific perceptions of land and culture, shared with other texts of this period, that distinguish it from modern nationalist concepts. Iran was distinct from, but contiguous in meaning with, the lands around it, and these meanings can initially lend themselves to (proto-) nationalist readings. One difference with nationalism lies in geocultural meanings, the ways in which significance is vested in land through a history of near and far figures and events contained in the corpus of Persianate learning. I use the term "Persians" to refer to a group of people who shared a particular language of learning. Knowledge of Persian was derived from a corpus of well-known texts, and gave rise to shared literary tropes, interpretive paradigms, and representational forms. Persians in Iran, Turan, and Hindustan shared particular understandings of the meaning of geography, and how these meanings constituted bases of origin and community.<sup>9</sup>

### The *Atashkadeh* as a *Tazkareh*

The *Atashkadeh* is a *tazkereh*, a commemorative compendium of poets, a rich yet often overlooked genre of source material (beyond literary studies) for eighteenth-century social and cultural history. Understanding *tazkerehs* as commemorative compendiums instead of biographical dictionaries can show us something about the cultural and social contexts of their authors in a way that is less dependent on, but still mindful of, the value of the factual content of the entries. *Tazkereh* authors, as poets themselves, include and represent certain past and present poets as part of an imagined community, a cultural community of ancestors and peers, that transcended shared origins or homelands as they were conceived of in the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> This cultural community transcended actual acquaintance, political loyalties, social ties (such as those between teacher and student), and ethnic commonalities (genealogical or broader tribal groupings) to create lineages based on poetic sensibilities, which defined the *tazkereh* author himself.<sup>11</sup> These authors had gone through

"a process of moral and intellectual education designed to produce an *adib*, a gentleman-scholar," and thus the constitution of *tazkerehs* as books of ancestors and peers, was "intimately connected with the formation of both intellect and character."<sup>12</sup> Knowledge of poetry and the ability to compose it was one basic feature of this community of peers, who were often well versed in—or even best known for—other things, such as medicine, religious sciences, accounting, political administration, military leadership, and even commerce. Commemoration of friends, contemporaries, and bygone poets created a field of representation in which the poetic self of the author came into being.

Contemporaneous understandings of *tazkerehs* in other types of texts support this understanding. In the early nineteenth century, 'Abd al-Latif Shush-tari, when describing his friend Abu Taleb Esfahani, mentioned that he had written a *tazkereh* "from which the amount of his learning and taste is evident (*meqdar-e fahm va saliqeh-ash az an hovayda ast*)."<sup>13</sup> Abu Taleb's learning was evident in his ability to provide biographical information and poetry, but his refinement of taste, also, was demonstrated by his choice of poets and particular selections of their poetry. Shushtari understood the text as demonstrating something about Abu Taleb, indicating that the perception of *tazkerehs* as texts of self partly defined their consumption. Underpinning this expression of self is the possession of specific types of learning, shared by others in a larger Persianate cultural community.

Though it was common to include contemporaries whom the author had never met, the most substantive entries were usually about people with whom the author had a relationship or interaction, since reliability of information was perceived to be derived from personal acquaintance.<sup>14</sup> It was through overt reference to, and specific representation of, the author's social community, political ties, and literary commitments in entries on other poets that the author's character was constructed. Understanding the way in which self-construction was a critical aspect of eighteenth-century Persian *tazkerehs* enables an appreciation of the ways in which social and political ties needed to be expressed in a particular text. Such an appreciation acknowledges the narrativity of the entries, why the author chose to leave out, or foreground, certain facts according to concerns that tell us about the possibilities of Persianate selfhood beyond inscrutable personal idiosyncrasies.

Unlike the *tazkerehs* of previous centuries, eighteenth-century *tazkerehs* were usually not created within the context of court patronage, and had substantial historical and autobiographical narratives that were novel to this genre.<sup>15</sup> The *Atashkadeh* departs from other early modern *tazkerehs* in several ways. Most were organized alphabetically or by *tabageh* (station).<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Azar's *Atashkadeh* maps poets according to origin, an imperfect terri-

torialization that is different from the all-encompassing meanings of territorial origins in modern nationalism. Geographical refiguring, particularly of one's homeland, however it was conceived of, had always been a concern of the *tazkereh* genre, particularly in times of great upheaval.<sup>17</sup> Azar was born in the year the Afghans invaded Iran, laid siege to Isfahan, bringing down the Safavid state and inaugurating a period of political instability only briefly interrupted by Nader Afshar's seizure of the throne. Azar perceived himself as living in a ruined Iran, and the *Atashkadeh* places an overweening emphasis on Persians originating in the former Safavid dominions (*mamalek*) of Iran before Azar's time. A small number of historical poets originating in Turan and Hendustan, as well as a separate category of women, are included at the back. Post-Timurid poets who traveled or migrated to Hendustan are included, but given relatively short shrift. The conclusion is a historically rooted autobiographical narrative that also includes sixty entries on Azar's poetic contemporaries. Though Azar includes contemporaries who migrated to, or originated in, Hendustan, the most substantial of these entries are of those poets who were part of his circle of friends, as is the case with most *tazkerehs*.<sup>18</sup>

Often read as "an early expression of literary nationalism in Iran," linking Persian culture to the land of Iran by omitting large numbers of Persian poets originating in Central and South Asia,<sup>19</sup> the *Atashkadeh* endeavors to do two things that must be distinguished from nationalist concerns. First, it seeks to memorialize a new style of poetics (only later called the *bazgasht*) by refuting the value of the *tazeh gu'i* style (often anachronistically called the "Indian Style," or *sabk-e Hendi*) of the preceding centuries.<sup>20</sup> But in doing so, the *bazgasht* rejected many post-Timurid poets originating in the cities of Iran, as well as from Turan and Hendustan. Second, the text seeks to place Iran (specifically *Eraq-e 'ajam*) at the center of poetic culture, since it is from there that the new style originated, at a time when Iran was perceived to be in a state of ruin in contrast to its glorified Safavid past. This impulse to recenter Persia in Iran must be understood in a context where the greatest centers of poetic patronage had been in Mughal domains, in the cities of Lahore and Delhi, for the past century and a half. Centers of patronage were also where poetic styles developed and from which they emanated. The *Atashkadeh* was written as an intervention in the style that was current at the time, placing Azar's own Isfahani circle on the larger poetic map by linking it to the old masters originating in Safavid lands and attempting to shift the center of stylistic development back to Iran. The very means by which the *Atashkadeh* distinguished and centered Iran within the larger Persianate world depended on a history and standard of evaluation that was shared with other Persians in Turan and Hendustan. In the text, Iran is central to the Persianate world and foremost

in it culturally, but not singular or unique, sharing many overlapping features with Turan and Hendustan. A person's history, language, and community could not be reduced to their birth in the various cities of Iran. Furthermore, a person's origin was also defined by tribe, lineage, or learning in a way that could supersede territorial origin.

### Geocultural Persianate Landscapes

The Persianate world included lands where a body of knowledge—geographical, historical, religious, philosophical, and poetic—was dominant among the educated classes, mainly in Iran, Turan, and Hendustan. Ethical evaluations and paradigmatic possibilities were contained in this literary corpus. According to Kathryn Babayan, one prominent feature of the Persianate ethos was a sense of cyclical time and being, exemplified in the *Shahnameh*, where "Iranian society is portrayed as encountering similar ethical dilemmas in different ages. In each era, kings are confronted with analogous situations as they attempt to rule their dominion with justice and to deal with political realities and ethical choices regarding their sons, warriors, subjects and neighbors (Turan, Hind, Rum)."<sup>21</sup> These paradigmatic stories, first told in the *Shahnameh* and more widely dispersed through other texts and genres, underpinned Persianate cultural understandings of ethics, history, and place.

In the context of the Mughal court, manuscripts of the *Shahnameh* were less often patronized.<sup>22</sup> However, widely circulated universal histories contained stories of pre-Islamic Persian kings, alongside pre-Islamic Quranic history, and gave meaning to history and land within the Persianate world. This parallel dual narrative permeated Irani and Hendustani Persian texts up through the early nineteenth century, first through shared Timurid historiographical heritage, then, as it developed, in the closely related Mughal and Safavid historiographical traditions.<sup>23</sup> The hugely influential Timurid universal history, *Rawzat al-safa*, begins with pre-Islamic Quranic creation up through the Flood, including the prophets, patriarchs, and kings of Israel, then continues at length with the history of pre-Islamic Persian kings up to the arrival of Islam. "The termination of both narratives signaled Islam's moral and political superiority," beginning with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>24</sup> The narrative of pre-Islamic Persian kings is a prose re-inscription of the epic poem the *Shahnameh*. After the fall of the Abbasids, the historical narrative of Muslim domains becomes increasingly focused on the Persianate Islamic East, and then entirely on Iran and Turan.<sup>25</sup> This format of reconciled, parallel, pre-Islamic, Quranic, and Persian history in the *Rawzat al-safa*, with

a post-Mongol emphasis on the Persianate East, became the template for Mughal and Safavid universal histories throughout the early modern period, however much their post-Timurid accounts might have differed.<sup>26</sup> These universal histories circulated widely in the libraries of Hendustani and Irani Persians, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, well through the nineteenth century, as did the *Shahnameh* and its abridged prose narrative retellings.<sup>27</sup>

One of the last *tazkerehs* written in Iran that at least attempts to encompass lands beyond it, the *Atashkadeh* maps poets (excepting princes, nobles, women, and contemporaries) onto a regionally partitioned Persianate world that reflects both the accumulated dual narrative of Perso-Islamic histories and the specificities of Azar's own time and location.<sup>28</sup> A native of Isfahan and the Shamlu *oymaq*, his family fled to Qum for fourteen years after the Afghan invasion (1722), which occurred in the year of his birth. In 1736, Azar's father was appointed governor of Lar and then Fars, bringing the family to Shiraz.<sup>29</sup> After his father's death in 1738, Azar accompanied his uncle on the Hajj, by way of the Shi'i shrine cities. He ended his pilgrimage in Mashhad, just as Nader Shah's army was returning from Hendustan in 1741. Azar accompanied Nader's army to Mazandaran, Azerbaijan and 'Eraq-e 'ajam, eventually settling in Isfahan. He spent the next years in service to various rulers of the city, frequenting circles of the eloquent and learned, in particular naming his teacher Mir Sayyid 'Ali "Moshtaq."<sup>30</sup> When 'Ali Mardan Khan sacked Isfahan, Azar lost seven thousand verses of poetry and most of his library. "For a time after this crossroads (*rahgozar*) the parrot of speech and the nightingale of my temperament were broken-winged, until with the solicitous care of friends (*beh takallof-e abbab*) sometimes they [the parrot and the nightingale] would engage in adorning the rose garden of thought."<sup>31</sup> In the years following his friend-assisted poetic recovery, he made enough of a name for himself that *tazkerehs* in Delhi took note of him.<sup>32</sup> Azar later spent time in Shiraz, Karim Khan Zand's capital, before retiring to Qum in the 1760s to take up poetry and write the *Atashkadeh*. He died in 1780.<sup>33</sup>

The geographically organized portion of the *Atashkadeh* is divided into the larger regions of Iran, Turan, and Hendustan. These regions are further subdivided into smaller regional domains, and then into cities. Azar begins with the larger region (*velayet*) of Iran, whose "distinctly temperate climate and the intellect/perception (*edrak*) of the inhabitants of that region (*deyar*) it is not necessary to make manifest," because "all the books of histories speak to this point."<sup>34</sup> Significantly, it is to a presumably common body of historical texts that Azar points to justify his contention about the nature of the land's climate and its inhabitants. These descriptions of larger regions are brief; the

smaller domains, Azerbaijan, Khorasan, Tabarestan, 'Eraq-e 'arab and 'Eraq-e 'ajam, and Fars listed under Iran, are described more substantially.

Beginning with Azerbaijan, Azar contemplates the origin of the land's name, its history, and the characteristics of its climate and people. The terms *velayet* and *deyar* refer to Azerbaijan as well as Iran, acting here as a synonym for *mamlakat*, demonstrating the fluid ways in which smaller and larger domains are referred to in context by the same word. The name Azerbaijan "is derived from (*mansub bah*) Azar ibn Amir ibn Asud ibn Sam, who was the son of Nuh [Noah]. Some have written that in the time of Shapur, Azar was the name of a person who claimed to be a prophet and seduced a great number of people into accepting his claim. Shapur seized him and melted metals (*felezzat*) on his chest and he was not injured, causing the belief of people to grow. The flourishing of that region is due to him."<sup>35</sup> The qualification "some have written" precedes the pre-Islamic Persian narrative from the *Rawzat al-safa*, unlike the Quranic narrative, which demanded acceptance as absolute truth.<sup>36</sup> Following the *Rawzat al-safa*, Azar prefaces his inclusion of such popular stories with disclaimers of their veracity, but includes them because of their wide currency. His description of Mazandaran begins with its near past, of Shah 'Abbas, who, on account of his mother's family origin, spent much time there, building gardens and palaces. In providing its geographical details, Azar taps into a far, possibly mythical, past, explaining that one of its impregnable fortresses was a place where

[. . .]during the time of Afrasiab's conquest and the defeat of the Iranis, Manuchehr was besieged. Afrasiab was not victorious in his conquest of the fort. In the end, the great ones of Iran and Turan agreed on this condition for peace, that from the aforementioned fort an arrow should be launched and wherever it hit the ground should be the division of the holdings of Afrasiab and Manuchehr. Arash, one of the great warriors (*pahlavanan*) of Iran, launched an arrow that, after examination, had struck the ground on the banks of the Jayhun [Oxus] river. However much the acceptance of this story is outside the pale of probability, it has been written on account of its great fame (*shohrat*).<sup>37</sup>

These pre-Islamic Persian geographical lineages are viewed with a degree of skepticism, such as the account according to which an arrow could fly from Mazandaran to the Oxus. Yet such accounts are still included in the descriptions of geographical regions, because their fame had come to partially convey the character and meaning of these places.

The context of Azar's composition was the ruin of Iran, a perception that undergirds the *Atashkadeh* as a whole and is an essential part of the rhetorical labor of the text. Khorasan, "a province consisting of old and great cities, is the great cornerstone (*rokn*) of the region of Iran. At this time, like the rest of Iran, it is ruined."<sup>38</sup> More specifically, in describing places such as Kerman and Sabzevar, Azar elaborates that cities and their populations have been much reduced by "the vicissitudes of the times (*engalab-e zamaneh*)."<sup>39</sup> Azar and many other authors writing in the middle decades of the eighteenth century repeatedly reiterated this perception of the many regions of Iran being ruined, though they differed on its causes.<sup>40</sup> Different views on specific events were, nonetheless, bound up in the shared understanding of the meaning of lands where Iran and Hendustan had contrasting relationships to sacred space and cultural knowledge. Place of origin, direction of travel, and the reason for writing structure meaning within these travel texts.

Though political fragmentation, colonial encroachment, and a decided Iranianization of the Persian language was occurring in both Hendustan and Iran by the nineteenth century, a Hendustani Persian could still narrate places according to this dual Islamic and pre-Islamic Persian narrative.<sup>41</sup> 'Ali Mirza "Maftun," a traveler from Patna through Iran in the early nineteenth century (1826–1828), maps the geographical meaning of Tehran beginning with the older, nearby town of Rayy, figured as Tehran's ancestor.<sup>42</sup>

It is revealed to those versed in histories that the land of Rayy is in the fourth clime and one of the great old cities of [the province of] *'Eraq-e 'ajam* and there are differing accounts of its building. Some give the credit of its founding to Hushang, some to the prophet Seth, son of Adam.<sup>43</sup> Regarding the flourishing and habitation and spaciousness of it [Rayy] they [the histories] tell stories which are not empty of strangeness (*ghorebet*). For those who depend on proof (*abl-e khobrat*) it is manifest that the aforementioned land has been wrecked and ruined several times by massacre and pillage and earthquake."

The most spectacular instances of ruination, he notes, were at the hands of Genghis Khan.<sup>44</sup> Maftun demonstrates his knowledge of the dual narrative, though he also expresses skepticism about the veracity of both the pre-Islamic Quranic and Persian distant past. The only history he can be sure of, which has left material evidence and contemporaneous histories, is the more recent history of Rayy's destruction centuries ago at the hands of invaders like Genghis Khan.<sup>45</sup> But, regardless of relative perceptions of reliability, the less reliable distant past still widely marks the geocultural meaning of place.

Art historians have noted that Mughal manuscript traditions included representations of architecture in both image and text, as a way to lend character to a place and commemorate the achievements of rulers.<sup>46</sup> Later paintings presented architectural monuments as the sole subject in more technical and clearly articulated detail, reminiscent of actual architectural plans drawn for functional purposes.<sup>47</sup> These new types of paintings, inserted in Mughal texts re-commissioned in manuscript form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, represented architecture as a more integral sign of the achievements of certain rulers.<sup>48</sup> This connection is echoed in Maftun's descriptions of architecture, its patron/ruler, and their links to the history of the city. After mapping out the different gates of Shiraz, Maftun notes that "in the direction of the western gate there are grand structures, exalted palaces without blemish, and gardens pleasing to the heart and without compare and the like, which are the constructions of Mohammad Karim Khan Zand, known as *Vakil*, who at one time was the ruler (*farmanfarma'i*) of the domains of Iran."<sup>49</sup> Shiraz had been the seat of Karim Khan's rule and contemplation of that rule included a careful cataloging of his architectural achievements, both of which Maftun wholeheartedly approved. Maftun describes Karim Khan as "protective of peasants, attending to the comforts of soldiers, the spreader of justice, a guide for manliness/humanity (*moruvvat*), lord of the sword, politically astute," and so much more along these lines that he hardly seems unworthy of taking the throne, a paradox of humility that is precisely the point. Immediately following this, Maftun, as if to underscore these qualities, notes that "his mind inclined greatly to building," and what follows is a detailed description of these structures mapped onto the city of Shiraz.<sup>50</sup> Such connections between rulers and their structures are not limited to Karim Khan, as Maftun limns Isfahan with structures built by the Safavid shahs, Tehran as built by Fath 'Ali Shah, and Mashhad as built by centuries of rulers, particularly the Afsharids. Architecture mapped onto urban space as a sign of political order serves as a vehicle through which Maftun narrates places, as the accumulation of their histories.

The importance of a ruler's architectural contributions to the formation of the character and identity of place is not limited to Indo-Persian contexts. Though only briefly part of Safavid domains, the *Atashkadeh's* short section on *'Eraq-e 'arab* is included under the larger region of Iran.<sup>51</sup> Azar notes that Baghdad was founded in the year 763/146, close to a garden built at the time of the Persian kings near the palace of Ctesiphon. Thus, the seat of the Caliphate is mapped onto a site defined by the power of pre-Islamic Persian kings. The next mention of architectural contribution is not of Abbasids but of the Ilkhanids, and then Shah 'Abbas Safavid, "who built new fortifications around

the city after conquering it."<sup>52</sup> This last serves to undergird the region's link to Iran by noting the role of the kings of Iran in the very physical structure of the city.

Though geographically distinct from Iran, Turan is part of the Islamic and Persianate heartlands through its shared pre-Islamic Persian history. Azar notes that "when Faraidun ruled, he divided up the domains of his empire during his life. He gave [the land] from the banks of the Jaihun [Oxus] to Tur, which became known as Turan. He entrusted the region of Rum [one manuscript says Hend]<sup>53</sup> to Salm. He gave the domain of Iran to Iraj, who gave his name to Iran. In the end, what happened came to happen and it is fully detailed in [the aforementioned] histories."<sup>54</sup> This story originally appears in the *Shahnameh* and subsequent universal Persianate histories as Faraidun's division of the world. In the *Atashkadeh*, it appears as a history, not as a myth, of the division of the Persianate world.<sup>55</sup> The genealogy of these lands, as once united and then ruled by brothers, however bitterly they may have fought, creates a picture of related regions springing from one origin. The conflict that ensues between the brothers is caused by envy of Iraj's lot, since the throne of Iran is the coveted, choice portion. The land of Iran is connected to, but set hierarchically above, neighboring lands, as the original seat of rule. The resulting envy-fueled aggression on the part of Iraj's brothers and their descendants serves to set them, and thus their lands, ethically lower than Iran.<sup>56</sup> Though sharing common origins with Iran, the relation is one of conflict, where Iran has the higher moral status, due to the more noble behavior of its ruler.<sup>57</sup>

Azar's inscription of pre-Islamic Persian history onto Turan extends to smaller regional and city descriptions.<sup>58</sup> The *Atashkadeh* describes Farghana as the farthest region of Turan, "at the corner of the civilized world (*dar kenar-e ma'mureh-e 'alam*)."<sup>59</sup> Azar has mentioned other lands, such as Europe (*farangestan*), China (*kbeta*) and Syria (*sbam*), demonstrating that the term *ma'mur* does not refer to the known world, but the civilized/Persianate world. This specifically Persianate refinement of civilization does not exclude the possibility of civilization in other places, like the Hijaz, which possesses the sacralized history of Islamic refinement. But though the holiest site of Islam, it does not possess Persianate poetic culture and the history in which Iran is the center, a history particularly prominent at a time when Azar was self-conscious of a less exalted present. The inclusion of Hend, even in the reproduction of only some manuscripts of the *Atashkadeh* in the tripartite division of the Persianate world reflects the legibility of Persianized Mughal Hendustan and the decreasing Persianization of Ottoman *Rum* by the eighteenth century, an updated geocultural mapping from the fifteenth century of *Rawzat al-safa*.<sup>60</sup>

This occasional inclusion is precarious, though not reflected in descriptions of the larger land of Hendustan.

In the *Atashkadeh*, Hendustan is outside of pre-Islamic Quranic and Persian history. Azar describes Hendustan as a place where "the customs and etiquettes [ . . . ] are for the most part in conflict/opposition with [those of] the inhabitants of Iran and even Turan (*rosun va qava'ed-e an ja aksar khelaf-e abl-e Iran ast balkeh Turan*)."<sup>61</sup> This opposition between the customs defining the societies of the two lands is further underlined by the strangeness of the land itself. "The strange fruits of that place cannot be found in this region [Iran]."<sup>62</sup> Yet, individual descriptions of these smaller regions and cities are far more equivocal with respect to their relation to Iran.<sup>63</sup> Because of its verdant gardens, delightful plains, and the quality of its air and water, Azar describes Delhi as exceptional among the cities of Hendustan. Immediately following is the presumably pertinent history of Delhi, its conquest by Muslim rulers in 1192/588, from which time it was a center of Muslim rule by "dynasties of great nobility."<sup>64</sup> Skipping ahead to the latest of these dynasties, Azar focuses on the architectural contribution of Shahjahan, who filled the gaps in the city's structures, ensuring the city would flourish, which is why it is called Shahjahanabad. "At this time, which is the year 1179 [1765-1766] that which had successively happened, caused by the arrival of Nader Shah Afshar and Ahmad Shah Afghan, has brought extreme disorder and ruin [to the city]."<sup>65</sup> For Azar, Iran was not the only land to have fallen into ruin. Hendustan had also been laid low by invaders and resulting chaos. By this time, many of the literati of Delhi had migrated to other cities, mainly regional centers of Faizabad, Hyderabad and Morshedabad, and were generally in agreement with Azar's assessment.

In the *Atashkadeh*, both the people and land of regions of Hendustan are celebrated. Azar describes Lahore as "a famous city of Hendustan. Even though it is in an area with a warm climate, they say that in the summer snow and ice come to hand and it has good fruits. Its people are clever/shrewd (*zirak*)."<sup>66</sup> This description of Lahore contrasts with the more negative description of the larger land of Hendustan. Even less equivocal, Azar's description of Kashmir is positively glowing, disrupting arguments that the *Atashkadeh* glorifies the land of Iran in contrast to, and to the exclusion of, others, particularly Hendustan.

From the abundance of gardens, trees, the multitude of rivers and streams, the whole city is a portion of the verdancy of heaven (*tamam-e shahr qet'eh-i ast az marghzar-e jannat*).<sup>67</sup> They say that its soil imparts great joy (*farab-*

*nak*) and its air elicits delight (*eshrat angiz*). During the reign of Soltan Sekandar the religion of Islam came to prevail. The weaving of shawls is the specialty of that region that they take to all parts of the world. That region yields a great deal of saffron.<sup>68</sup>

The physical character of the land itself is vaunted as heavenly, the very earth and climate inducing joy and delight. In the following section of Kashmir's poets, Azar refers to Binesh as "from that paradisiacal region (*deyar-e khold asar*)."<sup>69</sup> Calling a land "paradisiacal" was generally a form of demonstrating affiliation, a way of declaring home.<sup>70</sup> In some cases, within Persianate geocultural understandings, places like Kashmir were understood to be paradisiacal, whether or not an author had been there, and whether or not the place was within the larger land with which the author was affiliated. Azar also demonstrates familiarity with images of other beautiful green mountainous places to which he has never been, including Badakhshan and Qandahar.<sup>71</sup>

Geography gained meaning according to climes, where domains gained character in a symbiotic relationship between the inhabitants, government, land, and climate. Persianate regions were intertwined in the clime system, though climes did not correspond to larger regions.<sup>72</sup> The middle clime of the seven, the most temperate and thus desirable fourth clime, was not limited to the domains of Iran, but also extends to the regions of Turan and Hendustan, such as Kashmir.<sup>73</sup> Various domains of Iran were also in the warmer, less temperate third clime, such as parts of Khorasan, *Eraq-e 'arab*, Fars and parts of *Eraq-e 'ajam*.<sup>74</sup> Though entirely in the third clime, Fars was "the seat of most of Pishdadi and Keyan kings [pre-Islamic Persian dynasties]. They say that Persepolis (*estakhr*) is the first of Irani cities to have been built in the inhabited world (*rob'e maskun*)."<sup>75</sup> In spite of its venerable age and pre-Islamic Persianate history, this integral part of Iran is in the third clime, not the fourth. The northern reaches of Azerbaijan are in the colder fifth clime.<sup>76</sup> The land of Iran is not contained in the central, most desirable fourth clime, which includes portions of other lands. Lands located in the same clime shared similar physical features that corresponded to moral character. These features problematize a reading of the *Atashkadeh* as a text in which the land of Iran is vaunted above all others, per modern nationalist notions that require narratives of radical difference and unique singularity of homeland.

The way the land was depicted geographically, what this meant about the moral constitution of the inhabitants, and how meaning was assigned to a place, are all indicative of a humorial understanding of connections between land and nature. "Water and air" was an expression used to refer to the means

by which land could determine human or cultural disposition. Azar notes that the shoemaker/poet Aqa 'Abdullah "Sha'ef" was from Qom, "but he had an extremely pleasant disposition," a statement that points to a commonly held idea about the dispositions of Qomis.<sup>77</sup> This essence could be altered. The poet "Dami" was the son of a Hamadani, "but he himself was born in Isfahan and [because] the temperate water and air of that paradisiacal region nourished the sapling of his body/form (*qamat*), he knows himself as an Isfahani."<sup>78</sup> Circulating features of the land, such as water and air, could interact with a person's body and transform his nature. Less mutable than people, land nonetheless gained character according to its people, especially its rulers under whose stewardship the flows of people took place.

### Origin and Land

Not everyone in Azar's poetic community could be linked to a land, but everyone was born in a place. Azar describes them as "kings and princes of every land (*har deyar*) and commanders of great power of every dominion (*mamlakat*), including Turks and others that in truth are not connected to a [particular] land (*mansub beh-velayati nistand*)."<sup>79</sup> This deterritorialized section provides an alternative view of whom Azar considers part of the Persianate, figures whose ties to lands were multiple and not the basis of their origin. Lineage, tribe, position, and service define the individuals in this section. The kings and princes range from descendants of Soltan Mahmud to Seljuks, Safavids, and Timurids of Iran, Turan, and Hendustan.<sup>80</sup> The most attention is given to the progenitors of the line, as in the lengthy description of the maternal and paternal genealogy of Shah Esma'il Safavid. This shah is most important for who he was, rather than his poetry, most of which was written in Turkish.<sup>81</sup> Azar also provides sizeable entries, mostly historical rather than poetical, for a number of his sons and descendants.<sup>82</sup> This section lists numerous pre-Safavid rulers, such as Sultan Ya'qub, "the son of Hasan Padshah Torkaman [Aqqoyonlu]. [Judging by] that which has been gleaned from histories, there had never been such a king among the Turks (*etrak*)."<sup>83</sup> This ethnicity is a known identity, which defines a specific dynasty, the Aqqoyonlu, who ruled northwestern Iran from Tabriz in the fifteenth century. Among the Timurid princes included are those, such as Homayun and Akbar, who ruled Hendustan. Azar describes Homayun as being "of the sons of Timur Gurkan. After Babor Padshah, he raised the flag of kingship in the domain of Hendustan."<sup>84</sup> The Gurkani rulers of Hendustan were largely defined as originating

from the Timurid royal line. At different times, these princes ruled various domains in Iran, Turan, and Hendustan. It is lineage that defines them, as no single place can.

Descriptions of high nobles (*omara'*) focus less on fathers and more on generalized lineages of tribes and ethnically defined groups of people, in service to kings of Turan, Iran, and Hendustan. Azar describes the origin of the poet Bikhvodi not as a place, but as a lineage/tribe, the Rumlu (*aslash az ta'efeh-ye Rumlu*), and that he grew up (*nashv va noma' yafteb*) in Farah.<sup>85</sup> The poet Salim is identified as "from the Shamlu *oymaq* and a resident (*saken*) of Tehran and Qazvin."<sup>86</sup> For men from these Turkomen *oymaqs*, collectively known as the Qizilbash, this tribal identity turned family lineage trumped geographical place as the primary factor of origin. Place merely functions to distinguish them further as individuals. They are residents of cities, sometimes more than one, but do not belong to them like other poets. Azar himself was a Shamlu, and while this heritage no longer meant the same thing as in the first century of Safavid rule in terms of language or military position, it had crystallized into an ethnic identity of origin. When this ethnic identity was taken beyond the borders of Iran, to which the Qizilbash were particular, it became a marker of the specificity of Iran within the larger Persianate world.<sup>87</sup>

Belonging to multiple lands because of political loyalties were other figures, such as Bairam Khan Baharlu'i, who was "of the *oymaq* of Baigdeli Baharlu'i Turcomans. From the beginning of Homayun Shah's reign, he renounced service to the Safavids (*az dawlat-e Safavi ru gardan sbodeh*) and went from Qandahar to Hendustan."<sup>88</sup> Bairam Khan's move from Qandahar to Hendustan occurred in tandem with switching loyalties from one king to another, causing these lands to accrue as part of his identity. But his immutable origin is his Turcoman ethnicity and Baharlu tribal identity, modified by his service to rulers of particular lands. The only sense of belonging to one land or another is his service to kings who rule particular kingdoms. Regardless of the reasons, the lack of centrality of place is the defining feature of origin in the section on kings, princes and high nobles. When included, place is multiple and accumulated in a narrative of origin determined by lineage and service, not a site of origin in and of itself.

For women, lack of fixity to a particular land at first seems to do with the mutability of their primary affiliations, as a daughter, wife, or mother, definitions created according to male relatives, who are themselves assumed to be more geographically fixed.<sup>89</sup> The only information Azar provides for Nur Jahan Begum's origin is that she was "the wife (*baram*) of Jahangir, the king of Hendustan." Her two verses are prefaced with vague vignettes about them being improvised in the context of her interaction with Jahangir.<sup>90</sup> But sons,

like daughters, shared the same affiliation with prominent fathers. Nur Jahan is defined according to her husband, a king, not her father, who was less well known. Additionally, her known poetry was composed during her presence at court, a contextual affiliation that would have been mentioned for a male poet as well. Women are thus not alone in being defined by other men, though marriage is one association discussed only in their context. Details beyond links with other men, such as place of origin and other activities in their lives, are included in the biographical information, when available. Mahsati's entry is the longest provided for a woman, and fairly substantial in the *Atashkadeh*, regardless of sex. The only male mentioned in her biography is the Soltan at whose court she enjoyed prominence and patronage. The way in which Soltan Sanjar is narrated in her biography serves to historicize and specify her position, much as it would for any man. Azar's description of Mahsati as noble-born from Ganjah is a marker of origin that could easily be given to any male poet.<sup>91</sup> But unlike a male poet, she is not listed under Azerbaijan's poets. Instead of a poet of Ganjah, Mahsati is a woman poet, who happens to be from Ganjah. For Azar, it is her womanhood, not her location, that is a defining feature of her origin.

Women poets were a particularity, different from the general category of poets who are presumed to be male. This difference is transmitted to Azar in the form of the loss of, and lack of preservation of, women's work, as well as the scanty biographical information available about them. Azar in turn reproduces this particularity in the organizational structure of the *Atashkadeh*. The poet 'A'asha "is from the people of Samarqand (*az abl-e Samarqand*)."<sup>92</sup> This is the only biographical specific Azar is able to provide, except for what he extrapolates from her poetry, "that her words are sweeter than sugar." Instead of his personal selection, her poetry consists of what remains and he remarks, "though [no] verses besides these two *ruba'i* have reached my consideration, it can be comprehended that she had a pleasant (*kbosh*) disposition." It is not that her work has merely failed to circulate, but that "copies of her thoughts have disappeared from among [us]."<sup>92</sup> Even the work of the well-known Mahsati "was lost over time, especially in 'Abdullah Khan Uzbeq's conquest of Herat."<sup>93</sup> Paucity of poetry and biographical source material haunts the *Atashkadeh* as a whole, but overwhelmingly in this section.

Even if the geographical origin of some women is known, their gender, the meaning of their female sex, trumps that location as a definitive source of origin. They are defined by their particularity as women. Azar titles their section "an account of the circumstances [of the lives] and poetry of virtuous women linked to every land who lived in different times and whose words robbed all [others] of eloquence."<sup>94</sup> That this eloquence is in reference to other women



poets only is clear when Azar comments that Mahsati “of all the types (*asnaf*) of women, no one with such an exquisite (*deqqar*) disposition has been seen.”<sup>95</sup> Women are compared to each other, cordoned off from male poets into their own category, irrespective of different stations and affiliations or geographical and genealogical origins.<sup>96</sup>

This gendered particularity is also constituted by the language and selection of detail of the biographical entries themselves. Though her biographical description and length of poetic selections make her entry like a man’s, Mahsati is still only a woman. Azar explains that her name is a compound contraction of *mah* (moon) and *seti* (the name by which female sayyids were called).<sup>97</sup> Grafted onto her genealogy, her gender is modified into a particularity. In another sizeable entry, Azar remarks that Laleh Khatun “pursued rulership in a manly/capable (*mardaneh*) way and ruled the region of Kerman for a time.”<sup>98</sup> There is no specific male according to whom her biography gains distinction, but the gendering of the ideals of bravery and strong leadership equate her with masculinity in general, both literally and figuratively.<sup>99</sup> In order to praise her, Azar evokes this abstracted male presence, in contrast to its presumed contemptible opposite, a presence according to which she is defined as an exception. Women are marked as flowers (Laleh) or noted for appropriate qualities, such as chastity (*Esmati*).<sup>100</sup> Set apart from all other poets, who are men distinguished by their place of origin, rank, or their temporal proximity to Azar, it is these social specificities of their sex that become most important and that turn female poetry writers into the single category of women poets.

## Conclusion

Even in a text such as the *Atashkadeh*, which seeks to map poets onto geography, place has a secondary role as a marker of origin for some people. Outside of such textual labors, a person’s alignment with lands was multiple, a multiplicity Azar was able to strip away for most past poets, reducing them to their place of birth, but not when it came to princes and nobles, women, and his contemporaries in the three lands. In order to valorize Iran in that mapping, Azar relies on the overlapping schematics of history and geographical characteristics specific to a still intermeshed social, political, and cultural Persianate landscape. Even many of the poets whom Azar maps onto Iranian cities spent most of their lives elsewhere, as integral parts of Turani and Hindustani social and cultural circles. In the eighteenth century, Azar’s valorization of Iran was unable to separate its society, culture and geography from neighboring Persianate lands. It is only within this shared Persianate geocultural context that

Iran as a land could be distinguished, distinctions that defied the exclusivities of nationalism.

## Notes

1. Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power and the State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 6.

2. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*; Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (London: Palgrave, 2001). Marashi focuses on royal ritual and public ceremonies. Tavakoli-Targhi traces the increasing Iranianization of Persian culture, a multifaceted idea of history and a body of knowledge vested in language. Kashani-Sabet argues that the preservation of the land of Iran was the impetus for nationalism.

3. For a discussion of the multiple contextually determined meanings of the term *mamlakat*, for instance, see Mana Kia, “Accounting for Difference: A Comparative Look at the Autobiographical Travel Narratives of Muhammad ‘Ali Hazin Lahiji and ‘Abd al-Karim Kashmiri,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2 (2009), 210–236.

4. Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 15. I do not challenge the nucleus of her argument, that European colonial threats to the territorial integrity of the Qajar kingdom generated modern nationalist discourse. It is the ahistorical idea of Iran traced over thousands of years that I find problematic.

5. For instance, Kashani-Sabet argues that those described as “Iran’s enthusiasts” regarded the Qajars as “heirs to previous emperors” and “dreamed of reconquest and the genesis of a new Persian empire” (4). Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Irani Persian texts see the restoration of Iran as the unification of the specific territories held under the Safavids, not a timeless ancient empire. This distinction is vital for understanding the changing historicity of Iran as an idea, and its political and social significance in the medieval and early modern periods. Kashani-Sabet even notes this Safavid-specific territorial understanding of Iran in her early nineteenth-century sources, but does not comment when she notes changes in this association in late nineteenth-century sources (19).

6. Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 18.

7. Muzaffar Alam, “The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan,” *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 131–198; Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ehsan Yarshater, “Safavid Literature: Progress or Decline,” *Iranian Studies* 7/1–2 (winter-spring, 1974), 217–270.

8. Lutf ‘Ali ibn Aqa Khan Azar Baygdeli, *Atashkadeh*, ed. Hasan Sadat Nasiri, 4 vols. (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1336–1378 [1957–1999]).

9. For a fuller discussion of Persianate cultural knowledge, see Mana Kia, “Contours of Persianate Community, 1722–1835” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2011).

10. For more on how *tazkerehs* functioned in commemoration of Persian literary

history, and their intervention therein, see Sunil Sharma, "Redrawing the Boundaries of 'Ajam in Early Modern Persian Literary Histories," in *Iran Facing Others: Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective*, eds. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

11. Only poetic *tazkerehs* authored by men remain to us. The only *tazkereh* authored by a woman is on Sufis of the Chisti order, *Munis al-arwah* by Jahanara Begum, the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's daughter. I thank Sunil Sharma for bringing this to my attention.

12. Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 85.

13. Mir 'Abd al-Latif Shushtari, *Tuhfat al-alam va zel al-tuhfat*, ed., Samad Muvaahhid (Tehran: Ketabkhaneh-e Tahuri, 1363 [1984]), 368. Abu Taleb is the author of the famed travelogue to Europe from Calcutta, *Masir-e Talebi*.

14. This perception is part of the larger Islamicate historiographical tradition. Dwight F. Reynolds et al., *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Dwight F. Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

15. On the development of the *tazkereh* genre, see Sunil Sharma, "Redrawing the Boundaries of 'Ajam"; and "Amir Khosraw, Fayzi and the Geography of Indo-Persian Literature," unpublished papers.

16. Sharma notes that two other geographically oriented *tazkerehs*, Amin Razi's *Haft 'Iqlim* and Taher Nasrabadi's *Tazkereh*, did exist ("Geography of Indo-Persian Literature," 5-7). Azar is aware of them and references them often.

17. Sharma, "Boundaries of 'Ajam" and "Geography of Indo-Persian Literature."

18. See the section on Azar and the *Atashkadeh* in Edward Granville Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 4, intro. J. T. P. de Bruijn (Bethesda, MD: Iranbooks, 1997), 282-284.

19. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 105. Though they take generic context and literary history more into account, most scholarly treatments of the *Atashkadeh* assume this protonationalist impulse. Sharma "Boundaries of 'Ajam," 5-9; "Geography of Indo-Persian Literature," 13, 16-18; and Alam "Persian in Precolonial India."

20. Tavakoli-Targhi notes that in the wake of the *bazgasht*, Persian in Qajar Iran was written in a new, simpler style. Tavakoli-Targhi frames this as part of the genealogy of modern Iranian nationalism, but its practitioners, like Yaghma Jandagi (d. 1271/1859) called it *farsi-e baset* (basic Persian) or *sadeh nevisi* (simple prose) (*Refashioning Iran*, 107). The important thing is that at the first half of the nineteenth century it was considered a style of writing, not a practice of national identity. For more on the problematics of Sabk-e Hendi, see Wali Ahmadi, "The Institution of Persian Literature and the Genealogy of Bahar's 'Stylistics,'" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31, 2 (2004), 141-152; and Rajeev Kinra, "Make it Fresh: Time, Tradition, and Indo-Persian Literary Modernity," in *Time, History, and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia*, ed. Anne C. Murphy (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 12-39. For more on Bahar, see Matthew Chaffee Smith, "Literary Courage, Language, Land, and the Nation in the Work of Malik al-Shu'ara Bahar," (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2006).

21. Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for Middle East Studies, distributed

by Harvard University Press, 2002), 29. Persian as a literary language in Rum (Ottoman domains) had declined by the eighteenth century.

22. This does not mean that manuscripts of the *Shahnameh* were not commissioned or circulated in Mughal domains. Emperors treasured copies in their libraries and manuscripts were produced in noble and regional courts. See Sunil Sharma, "The Production of Mughal Shahnamas: Imperial, Sub-Imperial, and Provincial Manuscripts," in Ferdowsi's *Shahnama: Millennial Perspectives*, ed. Olga M. Davidson and Marianna Shreve Simpson (Boston: Ilex, distributed by Harvard University Press, forthcoming 2013).

23. See Shohleh Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah Abbas: Ideology, Imitation and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000).

24. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 85. For the medieval development of this dual narrative, see Julie Meisami, "The Past in the Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14, 2 (Summer 1993), 247-275. Mohammad ibn Khavandshah ibn Mahmud "Mir Khvand," *Tarikh-e rawzat al-safa fi sirat al-anbeya' va al-muluk va al-kholafa'*, 15 vols., ed. Jamshid Keyanfar (Tehran: Asatir, 1380 [2001-2002]).

25. The third section begins with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, the advent of Islam, the first four caliphs, and the subsequent history of caliphs and imams until the Mongol invasion under Hulagu Khan. The fourth section covers the history of kings in Persia from Arab to Mongol conquests. The fifth section covers the Mongol empire, particularly Ilkhanid rule in Iran and Mesopotamia. The sixth section covers Amir Timur and his descendants until the year 830/1426, though many subsequent manuscripts extended this coverage, and other court histories sought to write rulers and their dynasties into this narrative frame.

26. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, Reza Qoli Hedayat, a poet, scholar, and official in the Qajar court, updated *Rawzat al-safa*, extending it to Naser al-Din Shah Qajar's time. In 1017/1608-1609, a courtier at the court of Shah 'Ali 'Adelshah of Bijapur wrote *Tazkereh al-muluk*, which was an abridged version of *Rawzat al-safa* and *Habib al-seyar* that included a history of the kings of the Deccan, beginning with the Bahmanis up through the 'Adelshahis, and including accounts of the sultans of Gujarat, Ahmednagar, Golconda and the Mughals. The last section covers the reign of contemporaneous kings, including the Ottomans and the Safavids. The conclusion includes extracts from the *Shahnameh*. Edward Rehatsek, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Arabic, Hindustani, Persian and Turkish MSS in the Mulla Firuz Library* (Bombay: Managing Committee of the Mulla Firuz Library, 1873), 73-75.

27. Shahjahan's governor of Ghazni commissioned one such prose retelling for Mughal officials who did not have time to read the full poem. The text, *Shahnameh-e Mokhtasar-e Shamsir Khani*, by Tavakkol Baig, was commissioned in AD 1652-1653/AH 1063. Copies of this text were made well into the eighteenth century and turn up in the libraries of Hindustani Persians in the nineteenth century. In Bombay, the Parsi Mulla Firuz's manuscript copy is dated AD 1716-1717/AH 1129 (Rehatsek, *Catalogue*, 152). The Sikh ruler of the Punjab, Ranajit Singh, presented an 1835 copy in 1841 to the French Lieutenant-General Comte de Rumigny. This copy at least interposes verses from the poem with prose abridgements. "Shamsir Khani: From Pen to

Printing Press, Ten Centuries of Islamic Book Arts," Indiana University Collections, accessed 6/30/11, [www.iub.edu/~iuam/online\\_modules/islamic\\_book\\_arts/explore/shamshir\\_khani/index.html](http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/online_modules/islamic_book_arts/explore/shamshir_khani/index.html). For more on this text, see Pasha M. Khan, "Marvellous Histories: Reading the Shahnamah in India," *Indian Journal of Economic Social History Review* 49, 4 (2012), 527-556.

28. This location is very much 'Eraq-e 'ajam, or west-central Iran. John R. Perry notes that none of the big literary names of the time lived in Afsharid-ruled Khorasan, which he claims stagnated culturally and economically after 1750 (*Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], 244).

29. Though the Shamlus, as a Qizilbash tribe, had been formally removed from the upper echelons of central Safavid power, they remained locally powerful. Azar's maternal family had ruled Qalamraw 'Ali Shakar region (around Kirmanshah and Hamadan) through Karim Khan Zand's rule (Perry, 20-21). They were not alone among the Qizilbash tribes to retain local power in provincial areas. See Nobuaki Kondo, "Qizilbash Afterwards: the Afshars in Urumiya from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth century," *Iranian Studies* 32, vol. 4 (1999), 537-556.

30. He also accompanied 'Ali Mardan Khan and Karim Khan Zand on campaign (Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, 308).

31. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:10.

32. 'Ali Qoli Khan Valeh Daghestani, *Tazkareh-e riyaz al-sho'ara'*, vol. 1, ed. Mohsen Naji Nasirabadi (Tehran: Asatir, 1384 [2005]), 309; and 'Ali Ebrahim Khan Khalil Banarasi, *Sohof-e Ebrahim: Bakhsb-e mo'aseran*, ed. Mir Hashem Mohaddes (Tehran: Anjoman-e asar va mofakher-e farhangi, 1384 [2006]), 48-49.

33. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, 244; J. Matini, "Azar Bigdeli," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, December 15, 1987, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/azar-bigdeli-hajji-lotf-ali-big>. Also see the introduction to the fourth volume, Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:7-17.

34. *Ibid.*, 1:101.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Such stories fit into the larger historical context of the *Shahnameh*, but it is in histories like the *Rawzat al-safa* that they are specifically narrated, animating the basic *Shahnameh* chronology. Shahpur was the son of Ardeshir, the first Sasanian king. See Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin, 2007), 574-576.

37. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 2:865. In the *Shahnameh*, this story fits chronologically into the wars of Iran and Turan during the Kayanid period (Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 110-141). It is specifically referred to in the *Rawzat*. Azar echoes Mir Khvand's credulity with regard to the flight of the arrow, but states that he included it because all the other histories have done so as well. Mohammad ibn Khavandshah ibn Mahmud "Mir Khvand," *History of the Early Kings of Persia: From Kaiomars, the First of the Peshdadian Dynasty, to the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great*, trans. David Shea (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1832), 172-176.

38. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 1:212.

39. For Sabzevar, see *ibid.*, 1:397; for Kerman, see *ibid.*, 2:611.

40. Valeh also shares this perception. See, e.g., *Riyaz al-sho'ara'*, 1:147.

41. For more on the Iranianization of Persian in nineteenth-century India, see Sha-

mur Rahman Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth Century India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, vol. 13 (1998), 3-30.

42. Maftun was a poet born in Delhi who later moved to Azimabad (Patna). In November 1825, he undertook the Hajj, traveling to the Hijaz via Calcutta and the Indian Ocean. After performing Hajj, he arrived in the port of Bushihr in November 1826, in order to perform pilgrimage to the tomb of the eighth Shi'a Imam in Mashhad, from where he returned to Hendustan via Central Asia. Maftun's long journey to Mashhad is punctuated by stops in Shiraz, Isfahan, and Tehran, as well as smaller towns. The minutiae about the state of the roads, every halting place and caravanserai, and nearby villages, with information about the quality of available food and water in marketplaces, indicates that he likely wrote the text as a practical manual for future pilgrims and travelers. See Hajji 'Ali Mirza Maftun, *Zobdat al-akhbar fi savaneh al-afar: safarnamab-e Iran qarn-e nuzdahom-e miladi*, ed. Zakera Sharif Qasemi (New Delhi: Islamic Wonders Bureau, 2003).

43. Houshang was the grandson of Gayomars and an early pre-Islamic king (Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 1-4).

44. Maftun, *Zobdat al-akhbar*, 110.

45. Maftun cites Hamdullah Mustawfi Qazvini (1281-1350), who wrote epic poems, histories, and geographies focused on Iran up through the Mongol period, in service to the last Ilkhan, Abu Sa'id, to describe the destruction of Genghis Khan (*Zobdat al-akhbar*, 110).

46. Chanchal Dadlani "The 'Palais Indiens' Collection of 1774: Representing Mughal Architecture in Late Eighteenth-Century India." *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010): 186-187.

47. Dadlani, "The 'Palais Indiens' Collection," 188-189. The difference is that architectural plans served strictly functional purposes and were not drawn with aesthetic concerns in mind. The *Palais Indien* paintings on the other hand were idealized representations drawn with color, flourishes, and materials reminiscent of the works of art.

48. *Ibid.*, 191-192.

49. Maftun, *Zobdat al-akhbar*, 9.

50. *Ibid.*, 10.

51. Such an inclusion could be due to its importance to Shi'i Islam as the resting place of most Imams, its adjacency to 'Eraq-e 'ajam and the shores of Fars. Whatever the reason, it is obviously claiming illegitimacy of Ottoman rule.

52. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 3:915.

53. *Ibid.*, 4:11. This is a lithographed copy of an Iranian manuscript.

54. *Ibid.*, 4:239.

55. See Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 36-37.

56. *Ibid.*, 37-41.

57. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:239.

58. For Balkh, see *ibid.*, 4:241. For Badakhshan, see *ibid.*, 4:348.

59. *Ibid.*, 4:411.

60. As noted above, Azar draws on and echoes the *Rawzat*. The *Atashkadeh* has a short entry on Mir Khvand, largely because of the *Rawzat*, since Mir Khvand did not have a *takballos* and only occasionally wrote poetry (Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:282).

61. *Ibid.*, 4:417.

62. Ibid.

63. The land of Hendustan consists of the Deccan, Delhi, Sirhend, Kabul, Lahore, and Kashmir. Azar repeatedly admits that his attention to them is scanty because of the paucity of information at his disposal.

64. This was the date on which Delhi was conquered by Muhammad Ghuri.

65. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:423.

66. Ibid., 4:440.

67. Referring to Kashmir as a city is not the only geographical error Azar makes. He calls the Deccan a *velayet*, though from the description it is obvious that he is referring to the city of Hyderabad (or Golconda, as it was known until the late seventeenth century).

68. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:441. Sultan Sikander "*botshekan*" (idol smasher) was the second ruler of the Sayyid dynasty and ruled Kashmir from 1389 to 1413. For an overview of Islam in Kashmir and other regions of Hendustan, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: Brill, 1980).

69. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:441.

70. Valeh calls Isfahan "*behesht neshan*" (Valeh, *Riyaz al-sho'ara*, 2:885). Azar calls Isfahan "*kbold nesban*" (ibid., 4:590). Both Azar and Valeh were born in Isfahan and considered it their homeland.

71. Ibid., 4:348.

72. Azar cites *Haft 'eqlim* in the geographical section on Sistan, but does not repeat its particulars on Sistan, because Azar says that he has not seen the region and, therefore, cannot verify the text's information. This is one among many signs of his general skepticism of *Haft 'eqlim*, authored by a migrant from Iran at the Mughal court (ibid., 1:420). For more on climes and the *Haft 'eqlim*, see Sharma, "Geography of Indo-Persian Literature," 5–8.

73. For Kashmir, see Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:441. Balkh is listed under Turan, but is in the fourth clime (ibid., 4:241).

74. For Ghaznin, see ibid., 2:535, Sistan (included as part of Khorasan), see ibid., 1:418; *Eraq-e 'arab*, see ibid., 3:921; Fars, see ibid., 4:115. Yazd (ibid., 4:101) is in the same clime as Delhi (ibid., 4:423).

75. Ibid., 4:115.

76. Shirvan (ibid., 1:148) and Ganjah (ibid., 1:204) are also in the fifth clime.

77. Ibid., 4:520.

78. Ibid., 4:495.

79. Ibid., 1:37.

80. For instance, Azar includes sons of Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara' of Herat, such as Badi' al-Zaman Mirza (ibid., 1:48). For Akbar, see ibid., 1:52.

81. For the entry, which lists only one line of poetry, see ibid., 1:57–58. Shah Esma'il wrote poetry in Turkish, because this devotional poetry was aimed at his Qizilbash followers, who were mostly Turkish speakers. He named his sons Bahram, Sam, Alqas, and Tahmasp all after figures in the *Shahnameh*, because he hoped to tap into the ideal of kingship it represented, as part of his political legitimacy. Like his contemporaries, Babur and the Ottoman Sultan Selim (who wrote poetry in Persian), Esma'il was bilingual in Persian and Turkish, linguistic identities which, like origins, could and did accommodate multiple features that were deployed according to context. For more

on Shah Esma'il as a poet, see V. Minorsky, "The poetry of Shah Isma'il I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* (1942): 1006a–1053a.

82. See, e.g., the entry on Shah Abbas I, Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 1:76–77; the entry on Shah Tahmasp, ibid., 1:74; and the entry on Shah Esma'il II, ibid., 1:75.

83. Ibid., 1:100.

84. Ibid., 1:99–100.

85. The manuscripts differ on the word *ta'efeh*. One only has "*aslash az Rumlu*," while three others use the word *tabageh* (a class or order of men) instead. See ibid., 1:49 n. 8. The Rumlu were a tribal group who helped the Safavids come to power in Iran and whose membership became fixed around the time the Safavids gained political power. For more on the Qizilbash, see Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 353–366; Masashi Haneda, *Le chah et les Qizilbas: le système militaire safavide* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1987); and Roger M. Savory, "Qizil-bash," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online. Accessed 24 July 2011 at <http://referencenetworks.brillonline.com/?fromBrillOnline=true>.

86. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 1:64.

87. The Qizilbash were so integral to Safavid political identity that, even after their putative loss of power on an imperial scale, they were associated with the land of Iran because of their association with Iran's Safavid rulers. In the early nineteenth century, travelers and migrants from Iran to Hendustan call other Irani Persians in Hendustan "Qizilbash." See Kia, "Contours of Persianate Community," 163–170.

88. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 1:49. This detail is factually incorrect, since Bairam Khan's Baharlu line was actually part of the Qaraqoyonlu confederation that entered Timurid service in the mid-fifteenth century, when the Aqqoyonlu took over Azerbaijan and eastern Anatolia. Bairam Khan followed his father in service to Babur and never switched loyalties. See Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, Trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 33; 473 n. 71. The veracity of this claim is not important for the purposes of my argument, which has more to do with perception than accuracy.

89. For more on women poets, see Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, "Odes of a Poet-Princess: The *Ghazals* of Jahān-Malik Khātun," *Iran* 43 (2005), 173–195, and Sunil Sharma, "From 'A'asha to Nur Jahan: The Shaping of a Classical Persian Poetic Canon of Women," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2,2 (2009), 148–164.

90. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:452.

91. Ibid., 4:448.

92. Ibid., 4:445. Azar notes a similar paucity of biographical information and availability of work for the poets 'Esmati and 'Efatī (ibid., 4:446).

93. Ibid., 4:449.

94. Ibid., 4:445.

95. Ibid., 4:448.

96. Their placement at the end of the *Atashkadeh* is indicative of their relative value as a group. Princes and nobles, also distinguished from other poets by their station, come first; followed by the main/male historical poets mapped onto a hierarchically valued geography, with Iran followed by Turan and Hendustan. Women are last, before the author launches into his autobiography.

97. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:448–51.

98. *Ibid.*, 4:446.

99. This equation of valorized behavior with masculinity is also found in Valeh, who praises female poets who write like men (meaning they write well), or defends their poetry as an exception, though they are women. Specifically, women poets who were also rulers are compared to men in order to praise them. See Sharma, "From A'esha to Nur Jahan," 8–12.

100. Azar, *Atashkadeh*, 4:446.

## CHAPTER 6

### The Khuzistani Arab Movement, 1941–1946: A Case of Nationalism?

BRIAN MANN

Many historians have focused on the complex and intriguing Kurdish and Azeri national movements of the 1940s, but the Khuzistani Arabs are conspicuously absent from the historiography of Iran's "decentralization" era, which lasted from 1941 until 1953. When Iranian Arabs appear, they are often dismissed as nothing more than self-serving agents of British imperialism, or proxies for the British military, the Foreign Office, the Government of British India, or the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). This paper challenges these views and conceptions, arguing that the elites of Khuzistani Arab society voiced a unique Arab ethnic national identity, which became the basis for a burgeoning yet short-lived ethnonationalist movement. To say otherwise, one would have to put aside the fact that the Arabs involved said they constituted a nation, a nation based on a shared ethnic identity rooted in shared traditions, rituals, and history, and one located within a defined territorial homeland. This does not discount that British agents, at times, lent support to the movement, but as this paper will demonstrate, often the British acted against Khuzistani Arab interests. Scholars have long recognized Soviet support for the Tudeh Party, the Mahabad Republic, and the Azerbaijan People's Government, but simultaneously stress these movements as genuine and independent. This paper aims to provide the Arabs of Khuzistan the same treatment that has been afforded to other non-Persian ethnic movements and non-state actors.

#### Background

The Arabs of Khuzistan had long resented the modernization, centralization, and detribalization efforts of the Pahlavi state, and its ethnically Persian-