

INDIA AND IRAN IN THE *LONGUE DURÉE*

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UCI Jordan Center for
Persian Studies



India and Iran in the *Longue Durée*
Edited by Alka Patel and Touraj Daryaee

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— 2017 —

In memoriam

Sri Pramod Chandra Chaudhury, 1930-2016

Hushang A'lam, 1928-2007

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Historical names, terms, and titles of works have been transliterated. To avoid undue complexity, modern names of persons and places remain untransliterated.

INTRODUCTION: INDIA AND IRAN IN THE *LONGUE DURÉE*

Alka Patel & Touraj Daryaei

In the *natural* process of the development of *national* histories there is the recurring danger that one's grasp of past [*sic*] could become so insular that many large movements, which could not be restricted to modern territorial boundaries, might escape proper attention.¹

The above observation served as part of the justification for a work ostensibly similar to this one, titled *The Growth of Civilizations in India and Iran* (2002).² The work itself was not unique in its ultimate goal, as a number of important articles, chapters, and edited volumes – mainly beginning in the 1990s – have contributed to the endeavor of elucidating the multiple cultural-historical connectivities between the Indic and Iranian worlds. The quoted passage signals an ongoing process rather than a goal to be achieved fully. Indeed, the directions of recent scholarship formed the underpinnings for the conference in which this volume's contributions originated.³ But the above passage's emphasized words, *natural* and *national*, invite some scrutiny and in turn provide a further *raison d'être* for this volume.

In the extremely varied landscape of post-colonial thought, there is nonetheless consensus regarding nationalism and knowledge: there is nothing *natural* about *national* boundaries or *national* histories. Political boundaries are fabricated (and often remain in flux) and histories are continually being *refabricated*. The latter is certainly the case

¹ Moosvi 2002, vi. Emphasis added.

² It is noteworthy that in the same year, a volume emerged treating the connections between Iran and other regions, though principally concentrating on the post-Revolutionary period. See Keddie 2002.

³ Bearing the same name as the present volume, the conference was convened at the University of California-Irvine (20-22 April 2012): www.humanities.uci.edu/arthistory/india-iran-conf/. Only a selection of papers presented there is included in this volume.

throughout the nation-states comprising the focus of this volume – namely India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran – where shifts in political climate have led to the imposition of cultural policies and reinterpretations both of the past and of recent twentieth-century historical processes.⁴ Thus the present volume necessarily engages both the scholarly discourses *on* and the political realities *of* these regions – two arenas that are virtually always intertwined, whether acknowledged as such or not.

In line with current scholarly thinking, the authors in this volume do not fixedly define “India” or “Iran” in timeless ethnic terms or consider them geographically stable entities.⁵ Rather, each term is used as a rubric of convenience to refer to a cultural sphere with an ingrained understanding of its permeable frontiers, and to ascribe approximate geographical origins to cultural practices. What is unequivocally accepted is the long-standing connectivity between these cultural regions, superseding the rise and fall of empires, shifts of populations, and alterations in routes of communication. The volume approaches this connectivity as an indelible *structure* in the Braudelian sense, and embarks on the examination of a longer period than most other publications, as discussed below. The *longue durée* framework adopted here not only encompasses more than two millennia of India-Iran connectivity, it necessarily relies on multiple disciplines to elucidate various points in this chronology, especially given the differences in types of surviving evidence.⁶ This multidisciplinary purview allows for the analysis of early periods whence mostly material remains survive, and their juxtaposition with later *corpora* of evidence – which tend to be more textual⁷ – as indices of the mobility of populations and circulation of ideas.

Iranian Studies

The connectivity between the Indic and Iranian worlds likely commenced with the earliest

⁴ For a re-writing of the early twentieth-century Indian movements agitating for independence from British colonial rule, including more prominent (and historically inaccurate) roles for “Hindu” leaders and the sidelining of actors such as Jawaharlal Nehru himself, see Hari Om *et al.*, *Contemporary India*, the textbook of the Indian Government’s National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) [cited in Habib 2002, xxxi & note 80]. In a recent conversation with a representative of the Indian Ministry of Culture, the present author learned of the Modi government’s intended favoring of archaeological excavations at ancient Buddhist and Hindu sites, together with a benign neglect of the Islamic sites in India (S. Mittal, personal communication, January 2015). See also Chapter 8 in this volume.

⁵ See *inter alia* Pollock 2003; Flood 2009, 1-14; Patel and Leonard 2012; de Bruijn and Busch 2014.

⁶ For a discussion of *structure* and the *longue durée*, along with the need for interdisciplinary dialogue, see Braudel 1980, 25-55.

⁷ Cf. Patel 2007 for the preponderance of material *versus* textual evidence specifically for the Indian Ocean rim – including coastal India-Iran linkages – during the eleventh through fifteenth centuries, i.e. on the eve of European commercial and eventually colonial expansionism. It was in the early modern period, during the ascendancy of the Safavids and the Mughals, that *textual* sources came to the fore and continued to demonstrate the intense interaction and movements of people throughout the Indo-Iranian world. See also e.g. Subrahmanyam 1992 and below in main text.

periods of human activity, in the Indo-Iranian geographical regions recorded beginning in the third millennium BCE (Parpola 2002; Kuz'mina 2007). The Indic and Iranian peoples were the last groups among the Indo-Europeans to part from one another after a long coexistence.⁸ The great Indo-Europeanist Georges Dumézil (1898-1986) observed that this coexistence resulted in a common tri-functional social and ideological structure manifest, for example, in Vedic and Avestan literature. These shared cultural traits distinguished the Indic and Iranian peoples from the many other Indo-European speaking groups, rendering them the most similar to each other and leading to their mutual involvement in each other's cultural worlds (cf. Dumézil 1930). The work of Indo-Iranists, both of the previous (Schmitt 2012) and the new generation (Sadovski 2012), has shown the deep connections in the linguistic and structural views of these populations.

But despite the long accepted historical connections between the Indic and Iranian spheres, (Chattopadhyaya 1974; Vogelsang 1986; Callieri 2012) Iranian studies scholarship has evinced two arguably counterintuitive tendencies: one being a reluctance to expand into India and explore more fully the two regions' mutual significances; the second being a proclivity to assume these mutual significances were prevalent mainly *before* the fourth century BCE. Alexander of Macedon's defeat of the Achaemenids (c. 550-330 BCE) in 334-330 BCE, the assumption holds, supposedly severed Iran's transregional connections with India, to be reestablished nearly two millennia later with the rise of the Safavid (1501-1732) and Mughal (1526-1544, 1555-1858) empires.⁹ Although, a newly emerging scholarly emphasis on the first millennium CE (Alram et al. 2010) – exemplified by Bopearachchi, Parker and Daryaei in this volume – is gradually displacing this trend, demonstrating the continued interconnectedness of the Indic and Iranian worlds also *via* the Greco-Bactrians, the Indo-Parthians, and the Kushanas and the Kushano-Sasanians, i.e. spanning the third century BCE through the third century CE (Vondrovec 2014; Falk 2015; Rezakhani 2016).

One current enabler of the *status quo* in Iranian studies is the preponderantly westward gaze of most Iranists, regardless of whether their time frame of investigation is antiquity or the modern period. Thus, while both confrontation and interaction between Achaemenids and Greeks or Sasanians and Romans have received ample scholarly attention, Parthian-Maurya (third-first centuries BCE) or Sasanian-Gupta (fourth-sixth centuries CE) connections have not garnered comparable analyses.¹⁰ At the root of this issue were the geopolitically driven boundaries between the Indic and Iranian worlds: the several and distinct British, French, and Russian imperial-Orientalist projects of the

⁸ See Mallory 2002 for a review all of the viable theories on the Indo-Iranian migrations.

⁹ For Safavid-Mughal relationships see Hodgson 1974.

¹⁰ One extremely important exception to the prevailing, westward-looking trend is provided by the monumental *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (ed. Ehsan Yarshater): One of *Iranica's* most detailed sections is on India, wherein thirty-three lengthy articles or sub-sections trace India-Iran connections over several centuries. Indeed, *Iranica's* India section counts among the longest of any section dedicated to a subject area outside of Iran. Regarding India-Iran ties during the Sasanian period see also Kroger 1981; Wheeler 1947-48; and Callieri 2004.

nineteenth century parceled the knowledge of Asia into artificially bounded geographical areas.¹¹ Hence, political powers rather than historical-cultural realities divided rivalrous Franco-British interests in what is now known as the Middle East/Near East/Islamic world – most significantly including Iran – from Britain’s virtually sacrosanct dominion of India. These divisions, along with Czarist Russia’s practically proprietary interests in Central Asia – a geo-cultural neologism in itself¹² – have all conspired in the obfuscation of historical linkages between the Indic and Iranian worlds, and indeed in determining the extents of these worlds themselves.

Fortunately, recent conferences and publications (e.g. Shayegan 2007), including the present volume, have begun to serve as correctives to both these tendencies. In terms of scholarly methodology, it is important to consult – for example – the vast corpus of Sanskrit literature for information on the Iranian peoples, while even the comparatively meager Old Persian texts mention Indic groups. The Old Persian term *hindu-*, for example, appears in the inscriptions of Darius I (r. c. 522-486 BCE) as a reference to the Indus River (Skt. *sindhu-*), concretizing the easternmost territories of the Achaemenid empire and the latter’s firm association with the Indic cultural sphere. According to P. Thieme (1970: 450), in the Achaemenid epigraphic corpus the river was perceived to demarcate the frontier between the Indic and Iranian cultural worlds. This frontier was a permeable one, however, and traditions combined to form fascinating cultural and material syncretisms documentable especially in the areas contiguous to the Indus, which in modern times fall within the nation-states of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Overall, this volume joins a small but growing number of works aiming to instill a scholarly awareness that by studying the Indic world, one can better understand the Iranian world, and vice versa.

Indo-Persian Studies

Several works by the late C.E. Bosworth (1928-2015), eminent historian of the eastern Islamic world, as well as more recent scholarship have continually shown the importance of the regions today encompassed by Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India – though eventually almost the entire Indian subcontinent – for understanding the Iranian world from late antiquity through the early modern period.¹³ Here, seemingly far from the center of Iranian culture, Persian nevertheless became an important literary and official language. It must be emphasized, however, that any focus on medieval India-Iran connections is rightly distinguished as Indo-Persian studies or a specialization in its own right: such a term not only treats the *historical* connection between India and Iran as integral, the term also encapsulates the *historiographical* reality of this field as one that is simultaneously part of and yet also distinct from Iranian studies (e.g. Islam 1970).

¹¹ See Greaves 1959 and 1986; and Bonakdarian 2004.

¹² See Mahajan 1980; and Morgan 1981.

¹³ While Bosworth’s list of publications is extensive, the most relevant among his works to India-Iran connectivity are listed among the Works Cited. See also Patel 2007/2011 and *idem* 2014.

The *longue durée* approach of this volume further underscores the need to be aware of a pointedly Indo-Persian field of study: while “Iranian” fruitfully encompasses the ancient through late antique periods (c. 400 BCE onward), “Indo-Persian” better suits the eleventh through nineteenth centuries, and perhaps beyond.¹⁴ The compound term disambiguates the era initiated by Firdausī’s (d. 1020) *Shāh-nāma* and the emergence of the Persian language as a principal purveyor of the Persianate *ecumene*. It bears reiteration that the great epic itself was composed in its most widely accepted recension at Tus and brought onto a transregional stage at Ghazna, in its own turn at the threshold of those very porous frontiers of the Indic and Iranian cultural worlds. Indeed during the eleventh through nineteenth centuries, India was much more than a passive consumer of imported Persian literary (and other) productions; the region itself was a prolific *maker* of them. The “Indo-Persian” rubric, then, is inclusive of a span of at least nine centuries, well into the modern era, when Persian literary achievements transgressed putative geographic polarities between the Indic and Iranian worlds.¹⁵

But is it *natural* that this abundant production of Persian poetry and prose in India for close to a millennium would shape the scholarly landscape in significant ways? Certainly upon surveying the western-language edited volumes analyzing the mobility of people and ideas between India and Iran, a notable tendency does come to the fore: With the exception of the 2002 *Growth of Civilizations* volume discussed above – which spans several millennia from prehistory onward – the majority of these works focuses on the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, or the early modern through modern periods. Of course, this temporal bias overlaps with the beginning of a growing European presence abroad, for our purposes specifically the French and English entrées into Safavid Iran and Mughal India, respectively.¹⁶ What is more, the largest proportion of contributions to the

¹⁴ This was the central question addressed at a conference titled *After the Persianate*, convened by Afshin Marashi (University of Oklahoma, 7-9 March 2014).

¹⁵ Cf. also Hermann and Speziale 2010, 10ff. For Persian literary activity in northern India during the eleventh through sixteenth centuries see esp. Alam *et al.* 2000, 23-4; Alam 2003 and *idem* 2004, 7ff. Due to the high esteem in which the Persian *ecumene* was held among the Mughal elite, Indian practitioners of Persian poetry in particular maintained it “pure” and free of the admixture of indigenous literary practices (see Lefèvre 2014: 92, 100). A study of the absorption of Persian language and literary traditions *into* the Indic vernacular Sindhi is discussed in Asani 2003. For a more quantitative assessment of the presence of Persian in India during the early modern through modern periods (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries), see Cole 2002.

¹⁶ While the scholarship on English presence in India is vast and well trodden, Delvoye (1995, 1-4) provides a brief but informative outline of French scholarly beginnings: In many ways similar to the British, French interest in Iran and eventually in India came as by-product of commercial and military presence in these areas; the eventual rise of studies on the Indo-Iranian world in France were initiated particularly during the eighteenth century, thanks in large part to the collection of manuscripts in India – and their transportation back to France – by individuals such as Jean-Baptiste Gentil (1726-99, in India 1742-77) and Antoine-Louis Polier (1741-95). For both these soldier-adventurers’ activities in India see Dadlani 2010 and Sharma 2012.

aforementioned works analyzes texts (including poetry and print culture), with only a few addressing other cultural productions.¹⁷

It is worth noting that, in current historiography, such a concentration serves partially to reify – rather than interrogate – the influential yet problematic periodization of the totality of Persian literature first put forth by the renowned Iranian scholar Muhammad Taqi Bahar (1884-1951, named *Malik al-Shu‘arā’* by the Qajar ruler Muzaffar al-Din Shah in 1903). Bahar’s periodization has been criticized not only for sidelining sixteenth-through nineteenth-century Persian literary production in India as “over-ripe” and “baroque” – considered characteristic features of the *sabk-i hindī*, or the Indian style – it also renders “the history of Indian Persian in the pre-Mughal period either insignificant or incomprehensible” (Alam 2003: 187). The current scholarly predilection for studying the connectivity between India and Iran from the sixteenth century onward has also resulted in the tautological conclusion that “[w]hile mobility was always an important characteristic of South Asian society, it dramatically increased during the early modern period” (De Bruijn and Busch 2014: 7).¹⁸

It is impossible, however, to establish definitively that the movement of people and ideas during one historical period was quantitatively greater or lesser than another, particularly given the decreasing probability in the survival of evidence from the more distant past. Ultimately, the present volume’s adoption of a *longue durée* view of the multiple moments and registers of interaction between the Indic and Iranian cultural spheres strives toward two complementary aims: to (re)emphasize the transregionalism of persons and their tangible and intangible belongings in *all* pre-modern periods; and thereby to confront the reality that “India” as well as “Iran” have always been and will continue to be unstable concepts in the making.

The Essays (in sequential order)

The chapters by Osmund Bopearachchi and Grant Parker both address geographical and cultural understandings of “India” around the turn of the first millennium CE. Whether in material or textual terms, these understandings have been strongly mediated through Achaemenid political presence in the northwestern reaches of the subcontinent, specifically

¹⁷ For the scholarly predilection toward subjects dating to the sixteenth century and later, see e.g. Hermann and Speziale 2010; Patel and Leonard 2012; and de Bruijn and Busch 2014. The volumes emerging from French academia furnish some respite from the early modern and modern biases: cf. Delvoye 1995; Alam, Delvoye and Gaborieu 2000. Nevertheless, only a few contributions in these last two works and the others provide exceptions to the overwhelming emphasis on literary/textual production.

¹⁸ The authors go on to say that “enhanced mobility [was] one of the constitutive features of early modernity itself” – an assertion requiring re-examination in light of the extensive mobilities evidenced principally in material, non-literary remains from prehistory onward. Cf. the various contributions in *The Growth of Civilizations* (Habib ed. 2002), together with the essays esp. by Bopearachchi and Daryaei in the present volume, and Subrahmanyam (1996) for the pre-Mughal migrations into India from the Iranian world.

the area spanning the Panjab (partly in modern Pakistan) through eastern Afghanistan.

Bopearachchi emphasizes the significance of material culture for the study of pre-modern periods in his analysis of coins from the Pushkhalāvaṭī/Shaikhan Dehri coin hoard, and the *Śakuntalā* iconography of a ringstone, published here for the first time. The author firmly dates the Shaikhan Dehri hoard – discovered in 2007 in a garden near Peshawar (Pakistan) – to the establishment of an Achaemenid satrapy in northwestern India in the fifth century BCE, but considers it to be important evidence for the continued cultural autonomy of this easternmost imperial province. By this time, the region was well equipped both technologically and iconographically to issue coinage that circulated in local and transregional networks, maintaining customs already in place prior to Achaemenid political presence. In his analysis of the *Śakuntalā* ringstone and more generally the prevailing theory of the technology transfer of large-scale stone architecture (along with some iconography) from late Achaemenid Iran to Maurya India (c. 320-180 BCE), Bopearachchi re-emphasizes the cultural autonomy of the latter region: rather than interpreting the work of local stone workers as mere imitation of Achaemenid prototypes, he insists on its classification as definitively *Indian*, in keeping with “the narrative force [that] is the invisible thread binding every form of Indian art.”

Parker takes up the far-reaching conceptual consequences of the Achaemenids’ eastward expansion, within the Mediterranean – and specifically Roman – *ecumene*. He discerns two Roman methods of consuming India, which were often conflated but in reality distinguishable: one, subcontinental India as the land of natural abundance that was enriching itself thanks to Roman avarice; and the other, northwestern India (Panjab-eastern Afghanistan), which represented the edge of the world and, in a conquering emperor’s hands, would signal his world dominance. But, whence this idea of “India” as imperial prize among the Romans? Parker traces its genealogy to the Achaemenids. The Asian campaigns of Alexander (355-323 BCE) – whether as historical figure or accretion of collective memory – aid in overcoming the temporal dissonance: Alexander’s own virtually unstoppable drive to envelop the world within an empire of his won was actually following the momentum set by Achaemenid expansion eastward. He delivered to the pre-modern western world, not necessarily his own perception of the land he reached, but rather one strongly filtered through his Achaemenid predecessors’ politically more enduring – though, according to Bopearachchi, culturally ineffectual – presence.

The following papers by Touraj Daryaee and Frantz Grenet identify possible communications of courtly practices between the Indic and Iranian cultural spheres, with Grenet especially testing the limits of a *longue durée* approach in his linkage of Achaemenid Iran and Mughal India. It is noteworthy that in both essays, Alexander is again a pivotal figure, in these cases for the conveyance of court ceremonial across space and time.

Daryaee begins by questioning the meaning of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph Harūn al-Rashīd’s (r. 786-809) gift of a white elephant to the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne (r. 800-814). In light of the long history of demoniac associations with elephants in Zoroastrian/Sassanian and early Islamic texts, why would the paramount ruler of Islam gift such a beast to his counterpart in Christendom? The author proposes that a sub-current of elephantine royal symbolism, probably originating in India, persisted into late Sassanian

times, providing a reference point for the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph. Daryaei relies on both visual-material and textual evidence to trace the complicated itinerary of the white elephant’s royal symbolism from Alexander’s encounter with India in the fourth century BCE to the ninth-century CE courts at Baghdad and Aachen. Interweaving the cultural strands of Alexander’s Bactrian colonies with Parthian – eventually Sassanian – lands, the analysis attests to the seamless continuity in dialogue between the Indic and Iranian cultural worlds well after the rise of Islam in the seventh century.

Similar to Daryaei’s method of positing a source (and thus an explanation) for an otherwise mysterious courtly practice, Grenet re-examines the Mughal emperor Humāyūn’s (r. 1530–40, 1555–6) seemingly eccentric *bisāt-i nishāt*, or Carpet of Mirth. Considered one of several royal practices from Humāyūn’s reign that his son and successor Akbar (r. 1556–1605) discarded as “embarrassing quirks” (see also Anooshahr in this volume), Grenet salvages *bisāt-i nishāt* as the interpretation and implementation of an ancient Iranian royal protocol. The genealogy of this protocol had been forgotten by the early modern period, and thus no longer commanded currency among the Mughals. Once again, Alexander emerges as indebted to the Achaemenids, not only for his own imperial aspirations (as argued by Parker), but also for aspects of his court ceremonial. Indeed, his adaptation of Achaemenid royal practices was instrumental in conveying them to early modern posterity *via* the medieval Islamic mystical traditions. With this analysis, Grenet methodologically opens the door for future elucidations of unexplained “inventions,” both during Humāyūn’s reign and beyond.

Although addressing differing time periods, the contributions by Ali Anooshahr and Sudipta Sen treat Persian textual genres other than the strictly literary/poetic, adducing further evidence to the fluid intertextuality between the Indic and Iranian spheres well into the period of growing British commercial-political presence in India.

Continuing in the vein of Grenet, Anooshahr further illuminates the Mughal emperor Humāyūn’s apparently unorthodox performances of kingship. Not only did Humāyūn adhere to an arcane courtly protocol whose significance was lost on contemporary courtiers (cf. Grenet), he allied himself with the Shaṭṭarīs, a Ṣūfī order setting itself apart from others in early modern India given its unabashed quest for political power. Anooshahr explains this distinctness in light of the Shaṭṭarīs’ origins in early sixteenth-century Iran, where Ṣūfī orders such as the Ṣafawīyya (the initially Sunni-affiliated Safavids) had themselves built a state through political maneuvering and militant action. In contrast to the indirect but powerful grass-roots influence of the Chishtīs in India, for example, the Shaṭṭarīs promoted an admittedly bizarre, “concrete” and egalitarian mysticism, wherein prescribed rituals available to *all* prepared initiates (rather than only the divinely chosen) could result in the total control of politically powerful individuals and hence the effective wielding of political power. Anooshahr’s essay not only elucidates a specific connectivity in India-Iran Ṣūfī networks, it throws a human light on the precarious beginnings of what came to be an illustrious dynastic line: Not unlike his Persianate (and surely other) predecessors, the desperate quest for power and its consolidation led the beleaguered Humāyūn to take recourse in alternative, seemingly “fringe” state-building measures, which were readily renounced by his more firmly

ensconced successors who, moreover, needed to cultivate *au courant* and cosmopolitan personas.¹⁹

Sen's re-examination of *Sair al-Muta'akhirin* (1779-80) by the statesman Ghulām Ḥusain Ṭabaṭabā'i, a native of Patna in present-day Bihar, northeastern India, brings this volume's analytical thrust into the period of the British East India Company's (EIC) ascendancy in India. Sen goes beyond other interpretations of the *Sair*, recently described as emblematic of "a transitional, 'early modern' phase in the writing of Indian history": the essay provides insight into the gray areas between an early modern Indian political actor's successive loyalties to the Nawabs of Bengal and the EIC, the social-political vicissitudes of his lifetime and his own responses to them (as legible in the *Sair*), and the continuities and ruptures between this actor's perceptive framework and the Persian *tārīkh* tradition in India (traceable in its beginnings to the twelfth century). Thereby Sen brings into vivid focus the necessity outlined by Muzaffar Alam of redefining *sabk-i hindī* (see above), no longer as a degenerate Persian literary production emerging outside Iran, but rather a cohering series of developments beginning with the earliest Persian writing in India in the eleventh century and continuing well into the modern period.

The final two essays in the volume by Afshin Marashi and Alka Patel focus on nationalism, one of the twentieth century's most distinguishable features. Marashi analyzes the agendas and mechanisms behind the Indian Parsis' (fortuitous?) concordance with the Pahlavi state's (1925-1979) "neo-classicist" revival of ancient Iran in the service of Iranian nationalism. Patel's work treats the twentieth-century Persian-language scholarship on a twelfth-century dynasty, addressing the impact of nationalism on scholarly production not only in India and Iran but also Afghanistan, the literal space between the two loosely bounded cultural worlds, all of which acquired fixed "national" boundaries only well into the twentieth century.

With the term "textual philanthropy," Marashi identifies one of the primary methods by which Bombay-based entities funded by prosperous Parsis worked toward the betterment of the status of Iran's remaining Zoroastrians in the early 1900s: by inviting Iranian scholars of Zoroastrianism (many also scholars of ancient Iran in general) to research and write in India and, most importantly, publishing their work in book form and circulating it throughout Iran. Conversely, this intellectual production also helped disseminate the Pahlavi state's nationalist revivalism of ancient Iran (including Zoroastrianism) among the Parsi communities of India based in Bombay, Puna, and parts of Gujarat. Thus, Marashi's essay elucidates the continuing circulation of people and ideas between India and Iran in the twentieth century, facilitated by the convergent goals of a

¹⁹ Such was the case with the twelfth-century Ghurids of Afghanistan (see below in main text), in their early alliance with the increasingly heterodox Karrāmīyya. After the Ghurids' definitive re-occupation of Ghazna in 1175, and particularly after their successful campaigns in northern India in the early 1190s, the dynasty abruptly distanced themselves from the Karrāmīyya. Thereafter, the two principal sultans pledged allegiance to the Shafī'i and Ḥanāfi schools, in harmony with their two main bases of power at Herat and Ghazna (respectively). See esp. Flood 2005 and the essay by Patel in this volume.

religious “minority” and a constitutional monarchy looking to Iran’s ancient past for the region’s – eventually the nation’s – modern identity.

Patel’s essay addresses the various nationalisms of already bounded nation-states and their impact on scholarship. Reversing currently favored methodological approaches to objects *as texts*, Patel analyzes four twentieth-century Persian-language texts *as objects*, precisely to gain insight into the specific moments and locations of nationalism. Published in Iran and Afghanistan between 1968 and 2009, the four monographs all focus on the Ghurids (c. 1150-1215), an Afghani dynasty with Persianate aspirations that, in contrast to the Persian-language historiography, has been little studied in western-language works on the medieval Persianate world. While the Ghurids have been prominent in Afghani scholarship on Afghanistan (perhaps understandably), Patel nonetheless notes methodological shifts in these works over the last 50 years, attributable to the differing inflections of Afghani nationalism over time. Equally noteworthy is the Iranian scholarship on the dynasty, which has implicitly subsumed Afghanistan into a Persianate world whose center is the monolithically conceived nation-state of Iran. Remarkably, in this historiography works from post-Independence India – particularly those of the Nationalist historians headed by R.C. Majumdar (1888-1980) – appeared as important secondary and even primary sources, at times translated *verbatim*. The circulation of intellectual production between twentieth-century India and Iran, then, extended beyond the “textual philanthropy” of the Parsis to include Indian scholarship on the medieval Iranian world.

As noted above, it appears that investigative gazes on the Indic and Iranian cultural spheres, while still transregional, have nonetheless undergone a marked winnowing from *longue durée* approaches to focus largely on the early modern period. The ensuing contributions, then, aim to broaden again the scholarly perspective to encompass a transtemporal examination of the links between “India” and “Iran.” The ultimate goal of the volume is twofold: to bring forth the little or unknown specifics of *événements*; and hence also to enrich the spanning arc or *structure* of the transtemporal connectivity between these geo-cultural regions. In the end, no single work can elucidate all the significant events of this Braudelian *structure* – hence the richness of the concept itself. Nonetheless, the gathering and dialogue of various disciplines goes a long way in reminding us that *India* and *Iran* themselves will always be multifaceted ideas with differing manifestations.

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