as the actual initiator of the decentralization project of the 1990s, when debates around the topic grew heated. He argued that replacing the central budget with local revenues was the basis of decentralization, not the launching of local councils. Tajbakhsh disregards Karbaschi's model of deregulated financial decentralization, which worked as a model for large and mid-size cities and built an authoritarian municipal system run by powerful mayors across the country. Siddiqe Vasmaghi, the representative and speaker of Tehran's first council, describes how Tehran Municipality's unregulated financial system and the mayor's authoritarian rule hampered the first council's ability to make the municipality responsive to the people.[2] On the first page of his book, Tajbakhsh touches on the topic in a short paragraph, describing his dialogue with a taxi driver on the streets of Tehran in the summer of 1998 and the driver's conflicting views on Karbaschi's urban reform and trial for embezzlement on charges of wasting public property and mismanagement. The driver accuses Karbaschi of "lining his pocket just like all others" and, at the same time, admires him for building new highways and changing the face of the city. This paragraph is promising, but unfortunately the author does not return to this instance of debate among citizens about the unregulated financial decentralization of large municipalities, like Tehran, and its connection with the rise and fall of city councils in Iran.

That said, *Creating Local Democracy in Iran* engages its reader with many concrete aspects of city governance in Iran, with the formation of local councils as one of the main projects of democratization under Mohammad Khatami's reformist government. A critical reading of Tajbakhsh's book could help build a better analytical framework for examining local governments, finding balance between the majoritarian authoritarianism frame and the "local trap" inscribed in social capital theory, which suggests that the localization of decision-making power leads to a greater tolerance of others and democracy.

References

Khatam, Azam. "Shoray-e shar va syasat-e Esllahat dar Iran" [City councils and reformist politics in Iran]. *Goftogu* 74 (2017/1396): 69–84.

Tajbakhsh, Kian. *Creating local democracy in Iran: State building and the politics of decentralization.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Vasmaghi, Siddiqe. *There must be a way, notes of the first spokesperson of Tehran City Council (1999–2003).* Paris: Khavaran Publishing House, 2014.

Zād-e āḵerat. Abū Ḥāmed Moḥmmad Ḡazālī, ed. Salmān Sāket and Maliheh Ḡāzi Mārešk (Qom: Našr-e adabiyāt, 1398/2020). CV+183 pp.

Reviewed by Hossein Sheikh [ID], Independent Researcher, Tabriz, Iran

Zād-e āḵerat is a treatise on everyday religious practices, with some extra sections on theological issues. At the request of a group of religious people, Ghazali wrote *Bedāyat al-hedāya (in Arabic)* for followers (ʿawāmm) who lacked the intellectual wherewithal to

---

[2] Vasmaghi, *There must be a way, notes of the first spokesperson of Tehran City Council (1999–2003).*

benefit from the *Kīmīā-ye saʿādat* and the *Eḥyāˀolum al-dīn*. Nonetheless, because they were Persian, it was useless to them. He then translated it into Persian and named it *Zād-e āḵerat*.[1]

It addresses aspects of daily life such as waking up, dressing, going to the mosque, praying, fasting, and so on, as well as various forms of supplicatory prayer and ways to avoid sin. The treatise concludes with a section on "the proper social conduct toward people." At the end, Ghazali advises anyone interested in learning more about such topics to read the *Kīmīā-ye saʿādat* and, for a more in-depth study, the *Eḥyāˀolum al-dīn*.

The treatise was published twice in India in the nineteenth century and once in Iran in the twentieth century. However, none of these versions was reliable. Because the manuscripts they used were invalid, and their editing methodology was unscientific. Sāket and Gāzi decided to create a new edition based on the oldest known manuscripts of the treatise.

After introducing the writer, Ghazali, and the treatise, the editors go on to describe in detail the manuscripts they have access to and their method for editing the text. Following that, the text of the treatise and its variants are presented; the reader can see that this treatise had at least two versions, one short and one longer. The editors have chosen the oldest manuscript, which is a shorter version of the treatise, as the main text. They then provide a detailed commentary on the text, with translations of Arabic citations into Persian and references to Ghazali's other works, particularly the *Kīmīā-ye saʿādat* and the *Eḥyāˀolum al-dīn*. Appendices contain names, terms, and Qurˀanic verses. The book ends with a bibliography.

This scholarly edition offers a reliable version of one of Ghazali's works in Persian for the first time, which can serve as a foundation for further study and translation into other languages.

Centuries beyond Time (Qarn-hā-ye bi-Zamān): Epistemological Analysis of ʿAttār's Manteq al-Tayr. Mehdi Mohabbati (Tehran: Hermes, 2020). Pp. 951. ISBN 9786004562317

Reviewed by Mahsa Esfandiari ⬤, Independent Scholar, Iran (the Islamic Republic of) (esfandiari.m22@gmail.com)

Qarn-hā-ye bi-zamān is primarily an analysis of ʿAttār's poem *Conference of the Birds (Manteq al-tayr)*, through which the author, Mehdi Mohabbati, seeks to provide a coherent overview of ʿAttār's epistemology, mysticism, and personality more broadly. According to him, a precise understanding of ʿAttār's narration style is key to any analysis of the *Conference of the Birds*. He argues that the *Conference of the Birds*—and Attar's oeuvre more generally—follows a spiral path. Just like a funnel, it is wide at the top, gradually becomes narrower and deeper, and reaches the central end point. This narrative narrowing is visible in a few ways: first, in the reduction of the characters from thousands of inexperienced birds to thirty of the select; a second lessening is the gradual contraction of the ethical subject matter of the poem, which becomes more specific until a single point remains—the Simorgh and the mystical unity it represents. At the same time, the birds had always participated in the Simorgh,

---

[1] For Ḡazālī's works see https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gazali.