

## ARTICLE

## Soviet Persian Anthologies: Transnational, Multinational, International

Samuel Hodgkin

Department of Comparative Literature, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA  
[samuel.hodgkin@yale.edu](mailto:samuel.hodgkin@yale.edu)

### Abstract

In scholarship on post-Persianate literary modernity, the emergence of the new institution of literature is often conflated with the delimitation and reification of national cultures as different manifestations of a single process. This article examines three anthologies of Persian literature from the interwar Persophone Soviet Union to reconsider the relationship between state cultural institutions' procedures of literary modernization and nationalization. The anthologies mark out the stages by which classical Persian literature was portioned out to Soviet Eastern nationalities, and in particular the advent of Tajik literary history, but they also reveal the degree to which national literatures coevolved with new post-Persianate literary cosmopolitanisms and internationalisms.

**Keywords:** Šadr al-Dīn; 'Aynī (Sadriiddin Aini); Azerbaijan; canon; internationalism; Iran; literature; Soviet Union; Tajikistan

### Soviet Persian Anthologies: Transnational, Multinational, International

The elegiac scholarship that chronicles the end of the Persianate cultural ecumene has situated the transmutation of the Persian verbal arts from *adab* to *adabiyāt*—that is, from an organic system of practices and shared references to a reified object of discourse and state institution—within the global history of literary nation-building.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the advent of literary modernity, the replacement of *adab* with literature, and the delimitation and reification of national cultures often appear as different manifestations of a single process.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies have emphasized that these national canons emerged from conversations and polemics between intellectuals in Iran, South Asia, and Afghanistan, but even when the process was international, the product, it seems, was national.<sup>3</sup>

By all rights, the interwar Soviet East would seem more likely to exemplify this nationalization-modernization paradigm than to complicate it. After all, in accordance with Stalin's theory of the nation, only the “maximal development of national culture”

<sup>1</sup> Vejdani, *Making History*, 145–66; Schwartz, *Remapping*, 35–72. For the broader comparative literature of a literary modernity framed by national canon-building, cf. Beecroft, *Ecology*, 195–242.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on the Arabic transition from *adab/shi'r* to *adabiyāt*, by contrast, has consistently assumed an uneven and ambiguous relationship between literary modernity and nationalization. This is likely because the establishment of bordered, independent states came so much later for most Arabs, and was immediately accompanied by a briefly successful pan-Arabist political project, so that state literary institutions were always already imbricated in an Arab national project. Compare to al-Bagdadi, “Registers,” 451–52; Allan, “How Adab Became Literary,” 184–85; and Robyn Creswell's adaptation of Pascale Casanova's concept of “internal translation”: Creswell, “Modernism,” 129–30.

<sup>3</sup> Jabbari, “Making of Modernity,” 418–34; Fani, “Becoming Literature.” One partial exception is Marashi, *Exile*, 97–133.

could make possible the transcendence of particular cultures by the culture of international communism.<sup>4</sup> Given the particular significance of literature as a national cultural institution in Russia,<sup>5</sup> it is unsurprising that the construction of new nations required the partition of a Persianate literary commons into isomorphic national units, whose cultural nationalization would compensate for the absence of political sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> These national literatures centered on texts in vernaculars, sometimes supplemented by canons in quasi-local prestige languages that Soviet literary historiography treated as proto-vernaculars (Grabar for modern Armenian, Chaghatay for Uzbek, classical Mongolian for Buryat, etc.). National literatures of the Soviet East also included texts composed in regional prestige languages, especially Persian, by authors who were born or wrote within the borders of particular republics (since doctrinally, nations had to be autochthonous). Thus, in the symbolic realm, the delimitation of nations in Transcaucasia and Transoxania required the partition of national literatures as modular cultural institutions. Debates about which nation could lay claim to particular classical Persian writers often had high political stakes, and drew combatants from the top of the political hierarchy, including, in the cases of Ferdawsi and Nizami, Stalin himself.<sup>7</sup> The significance of this delimitation of the Persian literary classics was such that a literary anthology came to be thought of as the unofficial founding document of the Tajik SSR, and its anthologist, Šadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī (1878–1954), as the “father of modern Tajik culture.”<sup>8</sup>

This narrative of delimitation captures certain aspects of Soviet Eastern literary history, providing a stark illustration of the relationship that late- and post-Persianate scholars have identified between modernization and nationalization. Furthermore, the ambiguous status of the Soviet East, at once semicolonial and postcolonial, underlines the broader structural similarities (and indeed causal relationship) between European imperial regimes for the production and management of difference and the national cultural projects pursued by their successor states in the decolonizing world. Lastly, the process of nationalizing the verbal arts of the transregional Persian cosmopolis involved the same tension in Tajikistan as in Iran and Afghanistan. There was an imperative for cultural planners to produce a tidy, neatly contained canon and history by excluding disputed figures and works, but there also was a temptation to increase national prestige by laying claim to as many well-known figures and as large a map and timeline as possible.

Because of this tension, the case of Persian language and literature complicates this picture of Soviet national cultures defined by their delimitation from each other, and suggests another possible vision of the Soviet multinational literary system. But the exceptional status of the Persian in the Soviet Union also tells us something about the distinctive role of the Persian verbal arts in Eurasia before and during the time of the nation. The mutual exclusivity of canons assumed by the model of national delimitation was sometimes but by no means always a feature of either post-Persianate or Soviet Eastern national literatures. For both the post-Persianate sphere and the Soviet East, classical Persian literature was a particular site of anxiety for cultural nation-builders, consistently drawing ostensibly autarkic canons into mutual dependency and imbrication. Furthermore, these national literatures in all instances coevolved with new post-Persianate literary cosmopolitanisms and internationalisms, although the relationship between national and international was never comfortable. In the Soviet East, where each cultural bureaucrat answered to the diktats of both national and multinational or international organizations, building a national canon that maximized reach, even at the expense of coherence, was a higher priority than in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, or India.

<sup>4</sup> Maximenkov and Heretz, “Stalin’s Meeting,” 403.

<sup>5</sup> Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 231–48.

<sup>6</sup> Slezkine, “USSR,” 414–52. Subsequent scholarship has placed greater emphasis on the role of local activists in the creation of these cultural units; cf. Edgar, *Tribal Nation*; and Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*.

<sup>7</sup> On Stalin’s Nizami speech in 1939 (reported only secondhand), see Tamazishvili, “Iz istorii izucheniia,” 181–82. On his reference to Ferdawsi in 1941, see Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 18, 212.

<sup>8</sup> Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni*.

This article, therefore, examines three Soviet anthologies and chrestomathies of Persian literature assembled by Transcaucasian and Transoxanian scholars between 1922 and 1940 to clarify the relationship between the modern institutionalization of a classical Persian literary canon and its delimitation into national units, showing where these two processes do and do not coincide. The anthologies adopt different relationships to the literary *tazkirah*, the traditional Persianate genre of literary historiography that combines biographies with poetic samples, discussed elsewhere in this special issue. Over the three cases, changing conceptions of the function of poetry combine with changing modes of scholarly training to produce a widening methodological gap between the anthologists and the early modern *tazkirahs* that provide their most important sources.

Because the story of Soviet Persian literature is in large part a story of nationalization, the three case studies are increasingly national in their representative function: the first is assembled in 1922 as a textbook for Persian language learners, the second in 1926 as a corpus for consultation during the creation of a Tajik national language, and the third in 1940 as a textbook of Tajik literary history. The same arc also may be traced through their places of composition. The first was produced in Baku, a city that in 1922 had a substantial Persophone minority, but which was always considered Turkic or Azeri by Soviet nationalities policy. The second was composed as a resource for the Soviet Union's only designated Persophone national territory, the Tajik Autonomous SSR, but it was composed in Samarkand, a city which in 1926 had a Persophone majority that was excluded from Tajikistan and remained a minority in the Uzbek SSR. The third was published in 1940 in Stalinabad (now Dushanbe), the capital of Tajikistan, elevated ten years prior from an ASSR to the status of a full Soviet republic. The canonical texts of literary nationalization, as we will see, dealt with the problem of other, overlapping national canons in a variety of ways, and only sometimes through contestation or clarification of boundaries. As physical borders hardened, Soviet Eastern literary canons became at once practically bounded and potentially boundless, linked by a revolutionary Persianate literary commons that remained informal and tentative.

### Overview of Terms: Transnational, Multinational, International

The interwar Soviet Union was at once defined by a political commitment to internationalism, whose practical import diminished in the increasingly xenophobic 1930s, and by the bureaucratic fact of the multinational state, which in the same period developed an ideological dimension that scholars refer to as multinationalism.<sup>9</sup> Both internationalism and multinationalism assume the nation as the protagonist of intercultural solidarity or exchange, and the promulgation of these ideals heralded the destruction of actually existing transnationalism. The Persian cosmopolis before 1917 had been a broad-based phenomenon in which Persian provided a medium for first- or second-language communication in the population that circulated among the states of West, Central, and South Asia, including not only elites but also hundreds of thousands of Iranian migrant laborers in the Baku oilfields, who comprised one of the major proletarian communities of the Russian Empire.<sup>10</sup> In the same period, what Nile Green has called “Persographia”—Persian as a language of reading and writing—was even more widespread than Persophonia, and classical Persian literature lay at the foundation of most Muslim vernacular poetic canons in Russian Eurasia.<sup>11</sup> Soviet internationalism, as an internationalism of representatives, not only failed to exploit these sociocultural resources on any large scale, but demolished them, or rather

<sup>9</sup> On the shifting contours of interwar Soviet cultural internationalism, see Clark, *Moscow*; on the cultural interface between the Soviet multinational and international East, see Djagalov, *Internationalism*.

<sup>10</sup> Atabaki, “Disgruntled Guests,” 40–41.

<sup>11</sup> Green, *Persianate World*, 4; the landscape of Persographia's secondary roles in Central Eurasia is surveyed in DeWeese, “Persian and Turkic,” 131–155.

transformed them into a purely symbolic historical basis for fraternal feeling. As a result, a functioning sociocultural cosmopolis, which had only a limited existence as a concept in the minds of its participants, was replaced by an ideology of cosmopolitanism with only a limited existence in the world.<sup>12</sup> An elite corps of functionaries, many of them writers and literary scholars, performed multinational and international friendship in miniature through their personal friendships and literary exchanges, whereas the previously vast cadres of ordinary Persophone or Persograph polyglots, who might have been an audience for such exchanges, ceased to circulate across tightened borders and, in the following generation, almost ceased to exist with the advent of state schooling in the national language and Russian.

This same principle of an internationalism of representatives also operated in the textual realm. Whereas *adab* produces a multilingual corpus of mutually referential texts comprehensible to variable subsets of those Persophone polyglots (depending on the regional sprachbund), the Soviet literary system delimits that corpus and thins it out to a few major “classical” writers and texts per nation, and it also recombines those classics into a pantheon of world literature, connected symbolically by the intertextual links between them. So, for example, the literary friendship of the Persian-language poet Jāmī and the Persian- and Chaghatay-language poet Navā’ī transforms from a reflection of the multilingual literary culture of Timurid Herat into a synecdoche of the historical friendship between the Tajiks and Uzbeks.<sup>13</sup> Thus, far from erasing the history of the Persianate ecumene from the historical record or turning it into a basis for national cultural irredentism, as happened in South Asian and Iranian national historiography, Soviet culture builders and their fellow travelers in West and South Asia reified this historical commons as the prehistory of the multinational and international friendship of (likewise reified) peoples.

However, just as the Stalinist institutions substituted a symbolic internationalism of representatives for the previous, actually existing Persianate transnationalism, they substituted a discourse of “the classics” for the vital artistic system to which those classical texts had long contributed for readers, writers, and reciters of diverse cultural backgrounds, social strata, and political commitments. In the Western leftist tradition of working-class education, the Greco-Roman literary classics had long been regarded as the natural patrimony of ordinary people, to whom they needed to be restored so that everyone would have the opportunity to reach their full human potential, whether through public education in classical languages or comprehensible translations of the classics.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding the declarations of certain early Soviet avant-gardists that old literature could not serve the new society, from the beginning it was much more common for Soviet party-affiliated writers and pedagogues to instruct young proletarian writers to “study the classics,” a dictum that was raised to the level of official doctrine with the advent of socialist realism in 1932, and came to include not only Russian but world classics.<sup>15</sup> But as Persianate literary classics transformed from potentially feudal or nationalist objects of political suspicion into the natural heritage of the Eastern working classes over the course of the 1930s, this transfer of the Western idea of the “classics” disregarded a crucial difference: by contrast with the inaccessibility of Catullus or even Pushkin to the Russian proletariat and peasantry, classical Persian poets had always been part of everyday life for ordinary people in most of Transoxania and parts of Transcaucasia, whether they were literate or not and whether or not Persian was their home language.

<sup>12</sup> James Pickett makes this distinction between a cosmopolis in Sheldon Pollock’s sense of the term and Kantian ideologies of cosmopolitanism: Pickett, *Polymaths*, 21. In referring to Soviet and even Stalinist culture as cosmopolitan in a comparative, etic sense, despite the fact that this was usually a term of abuse in the Soviet Union, I follow Katerina Clark’s delineation of the overlapping but distinct phenomena of Soviet internationalism and cosmopolitanism: Clark, *Moscow*, 4–5.

<sup>13</sup> E. E. Bertels, “Abdurakhman Dzhami,” 463–74.

<sup>14</sup> Hall and Stead, *People’s History*.

<sup>15</sup> On the history of the concept of the classics in Soviet Russia, see Dubin, *Klassika*; on this 1932 shift, see Dobrenko, *State Reader*, 154–62.

The Stalinist restoral of the Eastern classics to the Eastern masses, then, was an act of sublation. According to the logic of the dialectic, it completed the process that had begun with a massive negation: the reforms of culture, education, language, and script that had, in combination with the murder of an entire generation of intellectuals for supposed nationalism or pan-Islamism, deprived the masses of those same classics. The delimitation of transnational *adab* into national literatures was another kind of sublation, intended to produce a cultural internationalism that would not be an accident of cultural geography, as the Persianate had been, but a conscious political solidarity between the peoples of the East. In accordance with this logic, drives to nationalize culture alternated with campaigns against any perception of nationalism until the two impulses had combined into a single internalized reflex for critics, writers, and bureaucrats. The result was a set of linked, modular national canons that individually mediated between national and international, and cumulatively reified a conceptual unity of the East.

### Baku 1922

Perhaps no single work better illustrates the problematic relationship between Persianate literary history's nationalization and its modernization than *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* (Sampler of the Literature of Iran), a chrestomathy published in Baku in 1922.<sup>16</sup> Since 1905, Baku had been a crucial staging ground for Bolshevik involvement in Iranian revolutionary politics, and from April 1920 to March 1922, as the capital of an independent Azerbaijan SSR (AzSSR), it had steered its own, quite active policies in support of the similarly short-lived Iran SSR declared by radicals in the northern province of Gilan. But 1922 marked the end of this independent foreign policy, as the AzSSR was incorporated into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and the Bolshevik leadership in Moscow began to regularize relations with the government in Tehran.<sup>17</sup> Just as Baku became host to a new wave of defeated Iranian leftists, who joined an already extensive population of Iranian migrant oil workers, the Persian language and literature instructor Mīrzā Muḥsin Ibrāhīmī (fl. 1909–1928) published *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* to serve as a textbook for his students at the Eastern Faculty of Baku State University.

As Ibrāhīmī explained in the work's preface, he prepared the anthology because "I couldn't find a suitable book from the point of view of contemporary literary history that I could recommend to students." Literary history, as he explains, "has entered the realm of the sciences and, like natural history, it explains about general laws, that is, it shows the laws of literature's growth and development, the means and reasons for its advancement or decline . . . and demonstrates a nation's civilizational level and its degree of essential vitality." Thus, a modern anthology must not be "content to enumerate a few fistfuls or nets full of literary masterpieces," but should "completely examine literary output from the standpoint of criticism and research."<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, although the volume does include selections from most of the major belletrists down to Jāmī, it does excerpt some truly obscure figures and works, particularly in the poetry volume (where a greater diversity of selections did not require so much space).

Ibrāhīmī's cited sources give some indication of the basis for his conception of the state of the field. In addition to numerous lithographed publications of classical works, mostly from Iran and the subcontinent, he makes extensive use of editions by orientalists, including

<sup>16</sup> At the time of the textbook's publication, the university was referred to as the Baku *Darūlfūnūn* (using the Arabic term adopted for the first modern state universities in the Ottoman and Qajar domains), but it would revert to Baku State University (*Bakı Dövlət Universiteti*) in 1924.

<sup>17</sup> Nejad, "Oilfield."

<sup>18</sup> Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*, 6–7. The Azeri language preface expresses this directive in somewhat more radical terms: scholars "must look attentively not only at literary masterpieces, but, as in civilizational history, at all literary works as a single picture." *Ibid.*, 3.

E. M. Quatremere, E. G. Browne, and V. A. Zhukovskii.<sup>19</sup> An opening section, showing an especially clear debt to oriental scholarship, consists of Latin-script Avestan and Pahlavi inscriptions, glossed in New Persian.<sup>20</sup> Ibrāhīmī also draws on one previous teaching chrestomathy, the prerevolutionary *Muntakhabāt-i fārsīyah/Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti* (Selections of Persian Writing, 1906), edited by Mīrzā ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Tabrīzī (d. 1927), who taught at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow.<sup>21</sup> Elements of *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*’s organizational scheme seem to be borrowed from *Muntakhabāt*, most notably the division of both works into separate chronologically ordered volumes for prose and then verse. Furthermore, Ibrāhīmī’s program echoes ‘Abd al-Ghaffār’s explanation that in addition to Firdawsī, Sa‘dī, ‘Aṭṭār, and Rūmī, “to serve as reference material for a course in the history of Persian literature, the compiler also took into account secondary poets, and those who are far from fully known to us,” particularly for the early periods.<sup>22</sup>

Such continuities highlight the similarity between the imperial functions of pre-1917 orientalism, which trained natives for roles as informants and intermediaries, and the Soviet indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) of the professional intelligentsia.<sup>23</sup> Baku State University was an exemplary institution of this *translatio studii*, founded in 1919 by the leadership of the short-lived Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to train local doctors, jurists, and scholars. Both in this brief period of independence and after the establishment of Bolshevik control, most of the university’s administrators were Russians or other Europeans, and attempts to replace Russian with Azeri as the primary language of instruction met with limited success until its closure and reorganization in the early 1930s.<sup>24</sup>

The orientalist who came to participate in the establishment of the university in the early 1920s often considered it their task “to nationalize scholarly work itself,” as the prominent linguist Nikolai Marr declared in a 1924 lecture there.<sup>25</sup> But in the early stages, the native intelligentsia-to-be was not always conceived of in national terms, least of all by its aspiring “Eastern” participants, as may be observed from the more expansive rhetoric of the 1920 Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East.<sup>26</sup> Notably, Ibrāhīmī’s Persian program was housed within a Department of the East whose distinct status within the Faculty of History and Philology was set from the first charter of Baku State University.<sup>27</sup> Whereas

<sup>19</sup> Citations are provided only for the prose volume, which necessarily limits what can be said about Ibrāhīmī’s sources.

<sup>20</sup> Several orientalist histories had previously included pre-Islamic texts as a prelude to New Persian literature, notably E. G. Browne’s *Literary History of Persia from the Earliest Times until Firdawsī*. Rizā-Qulī Khān Hidāyat’s mid-nineteenth-century *tazkirah Majma‘ al-fuṣṣahā* had already discussed pre-Islamic Iranian literature, establishing the basis for the subsequent historiographical convention “wherein Avestan, Pahlavi, and New Persian literatures came to be understood as belonging to a singular, ‘Iranian’ trajectory”; Jabbari, “Late Persianate Literary Culture,” 48.

<sup>21</sup> Gaffarov’, *Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti*, vol. 2, *Poeziia*; the Arabic title is *Muntakhabāt-i fārsīya; az āsār-i mu‘allifīn-i Īrān az qarn-i chahārum-i Hijri ilā ayyāmunā hazā*.

<sup>22</sup> Gaffarov’, *Obrazchiki persidskoi pismennosti*, vol. 1, *Proza*, iii–iv.

<sup>23</sup> Indigenization was the Soviet policy of preferentially hiring members of the titular nationality into each republic’s mid- to high-level official positions, from shop stewardships and engineering assignments to academic posts, to reduce the overrepresentation of Russians and other European nationalities in the leadership of “backward” republics. On continuities from Russian imperial to Soviet oriental studies, see Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*; and Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Imperial Roots,” 29–46. On the Tajik case specifically, see Battis, “Soviet Orientalism,” 729–45; and Yountchi, “Politics of Scholarship,” 217–40.

<sup>24</sup> For the early history of the university (renamed Baku State University in 1924), see Alimirzoev, *Azerbaidzhanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet*, 42–119.

<sup>25</sup> Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 152.

<sup>26</sup> As Masha Kirasirova has shown, “the East” functioned as a central geopolitical category for the Bolsheviks. Kirasirova, “The ‘East,’” 8–9.

<sup>27</sup> The act of the Azerbaijan People’s Republic Parliament of September 1, 1919, stipulates “four faculties (Rus. *fakultet*, Az. *fakültät*); History-Philology, with an Eastern department (Rus. *vostochnym otdeleniem*, Az. *Şarq şöbəsi ilə birlikdə*), Science and Mathematics, Law, and Medicine”; “Zakon ob uchrezhdenii v gorode Baku gosudarstvennogo universiteta,” in *Azerbaidzhanskaia Demokraticeskaiia Respublika*, 98.

for Russian Bolsheviks the East was a political space of action defined by particular historically conditioned social features, for their post-Persianate comrades the East was semi-interchangeable with the Muslim nation, regardless of the speaker's commitment to religion or atheism. Ibrāhīmī's textbook thus instantiates the wider semi-national venture that was the Baku State University. The book was designed to teach Persian language and literary heritage to Azerbaijani citizens, in a city where Persian language remained a common second language and Persian literature a common touchstone across communal lines, but especially for Muslims (although decreasingly so). However, it relegated that language to the specialist sphere of oriental studies within a new state education system. This shift marks the final departure of Persographia from the primary and secondary schooling of Turks in the Russian-Soviet domain, a process that had begun with the civic education reform movements of the late imperial period.<sup>28</sup> Finally, even though it included literature composed in Transcaucasia—declaratively so, in the case of the chapter named for the Atabegs of Azerbaijan—by the book title, it labeled such works the “literature of Iran.”<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding Ibrāhīmī's quintessentially orientalist conception of the organic development of civilizations, typified by his interest in the phenomenology of cultural decline, the mode of literary history that *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* instantiates is not simply a vernacularized variant of orientalism, but also draws on other literary-critical projects of its time. Whereas 'Abd al-Ghaffār explains his inclusion of noncanonical poets as a regrettable necessity when the literary record is thin, for Ibrāhīmī it is scientific rigor that demands a survey of the full corpus of “literary output.” Here we see a rapprochement of literary scholarship with the social sciences that has less in common with the old science of philology than with the late Ottoman positivist criticism of activist-scholars such as Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924), one likely source for Ibrāhīmī's articulation of the methodological consensus.<sup>30</sup> As we will see, the presence of such a conception of literary history in scholarship from early 1920s Baku suggests a supplementary genealogy for the Soviet sociology of literature, an approach to literary history that achieved near-dominance at the end of the decade, including in the eastern republics.

In drawing on Western scholars for Persian literary history, Ibrāhīmī followed in the footsteps of Riżā-Qulī Khān Hidāyat (1800–1871; whose *Qābūs-nāmah* edition he cites), 'Abd al-Ghaffār, and Shibli Nu'mānī (1857–1914), the final volume of whose magisterial *Shi'r al-'ajam* had been published two years earlier. Unlike Hidāyat and Shibli, however, 'Abd al-Ghaffār and Ibrāhīmī produced works that broke definitively with the conventions of the *tazkirah*: beyond a short preface, each provides no commentary on its literary excerpts, aside from section titles indicating period or dynasty with Hijri dates, title and author (with dating of work where possible), meter (for verse), and citation of the source. Although this adheres to normative standards for a chrestomathy in the modern science of criticism to which Ibrāhīmī declares his allegiance, it means that his critical commentary on this literature must have remained unpublished, in the life of his classroom.

But the work's presumed pedagogical function, “sufficient for elementary, intermediary, and advanced study of this language,” reveals another aspect of this conception of literary history.<sup>31</sup> Ibrāhīmī's intention that the process of reading through the book should mark the stages of a student's own progress sits uneasily with the work's chronological arrangement. As he admits, the Avestan and Pahlavi texts “aren't necessary for students of language,” and

<sup>28</sup> This transition also included changing destinations for Central Eurasian Muslims seeking higher education from Bukhara to Istanbul and Cairo, and then to Moscow. Bustanov, “Speaking,” 202–3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*, 58. This is one of the earliest works to identify the Persian canon as the literature of Iran.

<sup>30</sup> Discussions of literary history in the work of Gökalp in particular may be regarded as a precursor of the field of sociology of literature, albeit conducted in the mode of advocacy rather than positive analysis, and his popularity among Caucasian Turkophone intellectuals after the 1918 high-water mark of the Ottoman Caucasus campaign makes him a probable vector. Compare to Gökalp on “aesthetic Turkism,” in *Principles of Turkism*, 95–98.

<sup>31</sup> Ibrāhīmī, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān*, 7.

before he begins early New Persian prose with Bal‘amī, he includes a few short tales in simple language, organized nonchronologically. After reading these, language students should “choose from the rest of the book appropriate for their ability, so that bit by bit, they gain the ability to understand the whole book.”<sup>32</sup> Even with these accommodations, the arrangement reveals the connection between language pedagogy and literary history assumed by the orientalist chrestomathy-teaching tradition. The ontogeny of the individual language learner—the transformation from a novice into a fluent reader of Persian—is assumed to recapitulate the phylogeny of a civilization, as a journey from the prehistory of literary Persian through its historical development carries a student from elementary to advanced Persian proficiency. In this respect, the ambiguously quasi-national status of Ibrāhīmī’s “Iranian” literature prefigured the culture-building projects of the Soviet Eastern republics. Major Soviet Eastern writers were almost all involved in educational policy and language reform, and relied on a similarly organicist ontogeny-phylogeny model of the relationship between literacy and literature. Thus the entire field of Uzbek and Tajik state-sponsored literature moved from maximal stylistic simplicity toward increasing complexity, in its authors’ attempts to draw citizens out of ignorance and into their national culture.

*Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* also prefigures certain features of the literary textbooks produced in interwar Iran, in both format and disciplinary framing.<sup>33</sup> Given this Soviet textbook’s presence in the catalogs of libraries in Iran, it is likely that some of the first generation of Pahlavi-era textbook writers and educational policy makers were aware of the curriculum of Baku State University as a possible model. At present, though, this remains a supposition, and this textbook disappeared from the subsequent literary historiography of Persian in both Iran and the Soviet Union. However, one trace of the work’s influence has survived, in the most influential of all Soviet Persian literary anthologies.

### Samarkand 1926

The Bukharan writer and scholar Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i Tājīk* (Sampler of the Literature of the Tajiks, 1926) is rightly regarded as the foundational work of Tajik literary historiography, and indeed of the Tajik national project.<sup>34</sup> The work was originally commissioned as a literary corpus to guide the Soviet Tajik language reform commission in its deliberations, but the ideological stakes of ‘Aynī’s research immediately rose, given debates about the status of Persian speakers in the newly founded Uzbek SSR.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the early 1920s, many Transoxanian intellectuals argued that Tajiks were Uzbeks who had been superficially Persianized during the hegemony of Persian culture and needed to be brought back to their true, Turkic language. Based on this logic, the Uzbek republican leadership disputed the designation of Tajiks as an ethnically distinct minority, entitled to their own Persian-language schools and other cultural institutions, and in part territorialized through the establishment of a Tajik Autonomous SSR in the east of the Uzbek SSR.<sup>36</sup> Against this backdrop, ‘Aynī staked a claim for the legitimate autochthony and longevity of a Tajik nation. In the first sentence of his introduction to *Namūnah*, he asserts: “From the first recorded history until today, in the region of Transoxania and Turkestan, a great people (*qawm*) has endured, called Tajik or Tazik, and likewise their language and literature has been widespread.” Far from being imposed by Persian rulers or introduced by immigrants from Iran, he insists, the Persian literature of

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–30.

<sup>33</sup> Compare the critique of the *tazkirah* mode of literary historiography in Jalāl al-Dīn Humāzī’s foundational textbook *Tārīkh-i adabiyāt-i Īrān* (1929), discussed in Vejdani, *Making History*, 162–63.

<sup>34</sup> Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni*, 39; Rzehak, *Vom Persischen zum Tadschikischen*, 154–64.

<sup>35</sup> Bergne, *Birth of Tajikistan*, 78–79.

<sup>36</sup> Large urban populations of Persian speakers remained outside the ASSR’s borders, including ‘Aynī himself, who wrote *Namūnah* at his home in Samarkand.



Central Asia proves “the existence in these places of a major people called Tajik, belonging to the Aryan race.”<sup>37</sup>

The influence of *Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i Tājīk* on the eventual consensus narrative of Tajik national culture is remarkable, considering that, once completed, it was initially deemed unpublishable by the state publishing organs of the Tajik ASSR. Indeed, after its eventual publication in Moscow, it became the subject of such widespread attacks in the Central Asian press that, by 1930, it was removed from circulation and most copies were collected for destruction, just as Tajikistan embarked upon a new phase as a union-level republic.<sup>38</sup> In spite of such a problematic ideological status, this literary anthology played a crucial role in establishing the scholarly basis for the renegotiation of the status of Persian speakers in the Soviet nationalities dispensation.

However, scholars have often overstated the degree to which ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* undertook to delimit or nationalize a subset of Persian literature as the sole possession of a Tajik nation. This is in part a legacy of the subsequent consolidation of Tajik national historiography in the 1930s and, as we will see, especially during and after World War II, a consolidation whose teleology shadows our reading of earlier periods of Soviet Persian scholarship and nation-thinking. But it also is the result of this anthology’s internal contradictions: modern scholars in search of programmatic statements on the Tajik nation are most likely to read the volume’s preface and introduction, beginning with the declarative statement quoted above, and they less frequently engage with the story told by ‘Aynī’s editorial choices within the anthology or his shorter critical introductions to particular sections and poets.

Finally, like ‘Aynī’s contemporaneous critics, scholars today are most interested in his treatment of the classical canon down to the Timurid period, which constitutes only 100 of the anthology’s 626 pages and is the only section in which the Tajik national story overlaps substantially with Iranian and Afghan nationalist historiographies. But ‘Aynī’s focus on later periods should not surprise us: the second and third volumes, covering periods from the late eighteenth century to the Soviet period, provided more relevant precedents than Rūdakī for establishing a standardized Persian that reflected the contemporary Central Asian vernacular. Furthermore, as ‘Aynī points out in his introduction, extant pre-sixteenth-century Central Asian Persian literature was much better represented in scholarship and in printed editions, whereas although post-Timurid poets “have been collected in commonplace books and *tazkirahs*, they aren’t widely known among the general public because they haven’t been printed.”<sup>39</sup>

‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* may be better understood not as a prelude to Tajik national intellectual history but as a significant episode in Persophone literary historiography as a whole. Although the work’s reception in Iran, Afghanistan, South Asia, and the former Ottoman Empire would be belated and limited, ‘Aynī’s book was itself the product of ‘his wide reading and sophisticated engagement with criticism, scholarship, and printed editions from all of those regions, as well as Western orientalism. Based on frequency of citation, three previous moments of canonic consolidation were particularly important for the work’s image of Persian literature down to the sixteenth century: the late Timurids, represented by Dawlatshāh’s *Tazkirat al-shu‘arā’* (1487) and Jāmī’s *Bahāristān* (1487) in Persian, as well as Navā’ī’s *Majālis al-nafā’is* (1491) in Chaghatay; the early *Bāzgasht*, represented by Āzar’s *Ātashkadah* (1760); and the post-Constitutionalist functional curriculum of Ibrāhīmī’s *Namūnah-i adabīyāt-i Īrān* (1922).<sup>40</sup> The latter two collections account for respectively 38

<sup>37</sup> ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Aini, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 118.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 14, 15, 92, 104. Although ‘Aynī cites Jāmī in Nawal Kishore’s Lucknow lithograph (likely the 1870 ed.), when citing Dawlatshāh he uses a manuscript of his *tazkirah* held by the Uzbek state, writing in his discussion of the excerpt, “It is too bad that this work hasn’t yet been published; although it was printed in London in 1900, it hasn’t circulated to our country. . . (I hope that the government of Uzbekistan, keeping in mind the historical and literary importance of this book, will have it printed, with properly careful editing)”; *ibid.*, 104–5. ‘Aynī cites *Ātashkadah* as

percent and 34 percent of citations in ‘Aynī’s first volume, so that in precisely the section where scholars have located ‘Aynī’s Tajik nationalist claim to the classics, his debt to non-Transoxanian narratives of the Persian literary tradition is greatest. To complete our transregional picture of Persian literary historiography, it need only be added that ‘Aynī cites both Jāmī and Āzar in editions printed in British India.

‘Aynī’s method and sources can be seen from his entry on the fourteenth-century poet Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad, who was born in Chach (now Tashkent) but spent his poetic career in India (pen-name “Badr,” often called Badr-i Chāchī). Following the poet’s name and date of death, the entry begins by crediting the source of the selections, an 1841 *sharḥ* (explication) of Badr’s works by the great lexicographer Muḥammad Ghiyās al-Dīn Rāmpūrī (1785–1852), printed in India in 1895.<sup>41</sup> There follow excerpts from five *qasidas* (mostly from their prefatory lyric sections, or *nasībs*), including footnoted glosses of difficult lines attributed to the *sharḥ* and definitions of unusual words given without citation, as well as a ghazal requiring no glosses. The final section is a biography and commentary, which quotes in full the brief entry on Badr in the Ottoman encyclopedia *Ḳamūs-ül a’lām* (1889–1899), assembled by the Albanian intellectual Şemseddin Sâmi Bey Frashëri (1850–1904) (in ‘Aynī’s Persian translation), and then part of the introduction of the Indian *sharḥ*, with ‘Aynī’s own additional deductions about Badr’s life.<sup>42</sup> He acknowledges the extreme difficulty of Badr’s style, noting, “In this collection only his easy poems have been selected.” He has included Badr’s verse, he explains, to show “that five hundred years before this date, in Tashkent, which is the heart of Turkistan, such an abstruse Persophone (*fārsī-zabān*) poet thrived, or that poems whose comprehension is dependent on explication, glosses, and acquaintance with many fields of knowledge could have pleased connoisseurs among the literateurs of Fārs.” Last, he apologizes that the section is a bit long, “since Badr-i Chāchī’s biography hadn’t [previously] been written in *tazkirahs*.”<sup>43</sup>

Ghiyās al-Dīn and Sâmi Bey mark out the geographical bounds of ‘Aynī’s maximalist community of Persograph scholars. In their periodicals, Soviet Eastern reformists such as ‘Aynī frequently placed their efforts to modernize language, literature, and habitus in the context of other state modernization projects within the same zone. We encounter this same geography in this account of Badr-i Chāchī’s life and works: by contrast with Iranian contemporaries such as Bahār, ‘Aynī is unconcerned with finding boundary demarcations in the space of Persianate literary composition and reception. ‘Aynī could have explained Badr’s difficult style with reference to the supposed connection, asserted in the Iranian post-Bāzgasht critical texts that he read, between excessive stylistic complexity and the bad literary taste of “foreign” Indian readers.<sup>44</sup> Instead, both here and in later discussions of what he calls the Bīdilian style, he focuses on the reception of particular poets rather than regionally defined movements. Furthermore, he makes Badr’s complexity a mark of the sophistication of supposedly peripheral Turkistan, indicating its synchronization with tastes in both India and Iran.

‘Aynī is careful not to identify Badr as a Tajik poet, and indeed, he includes several poets for whom he clearly wasn’t making such a claim, such as the Timurid ruler Abū al-Qāsim Bābur Mīrzā, the foundational Chaghatay poet ‘Alī-shīr Navā’ī, and members of the royal family of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Kokand Khanate. In some instances, such as the inclusion of Navā’ī but not his friend and contemporary Jāmī (whose Persian poetry was far more famous and influential), it is clear that the purpose of inclusion is to insist on the prevalence of Persian poetic production among Central Asians generally,

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having been published in Lucknow (*ibid.*, 14), but given his cited publisher and year, it is likely this edition was printed in Bombay: Āzar, *Ātashkadah*.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 66. On Rāmpūrī’s career, see Bruce, “Ġiāṭ-al-Din Rāmpuri.”

<sup>42</sup> Sâmi, *Ḳamūs-ül a’lām*, vol. 2, 1256. On Frashëri and *Ḳamūs-ül a’lām*, see Bilmez, “Shemseddin Sami Frashëri,” 341–71.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 70–72.

<sup>44</sup> Iranian and orientalist polemics against the “Indian style” are surveyed in Kinra, “Make It Fresh,” 15–19.

Turk and Tajik alike. In his entry on the nineteenth-century queen of Kokand, Nādira, a key figure in the Chaghatay poetic revival, he complains about a 1923 Uzbek publication: “Even though it provides her biography and Turkic poems, her Persian poems are not mentioned.”<sup>45</sup>

Adeeb Khalid is correct to identify ‘Aynī’s works of the 1920s as “the first time in history that the Persian-speaking population of Central Asia had been conceptualized as a transhistorical community, a nation in its own right.”<sup>46</sup> In this respect, ‘Aynī’s geopoetics come into focus when set alongside the eighteenth-century Iranian *Ātashkadah*, a *tazkīrah* from which ‘Aynī drew some of his excerpts. The evident pride that the *Ātashkadah* takes in the poetic accomplishments of Iran (relative to Hindustan) has often been read as proto-national but, as Mana Kia has shown, the work instead places Iran at the center of the Persian poetic world through a decidedly nonnational delineation of multiple and overlapping geographies of belonging.<sup>47</sup> By contrast with *Ātashkadah*, *Namūnah* attempts to carve out an exclusive community associated with a bounded space, but to do so it eschews any claim to centrality within the Persophone domain, arguing only for distinctiveness. But the drive to nationalize Central Asian Persian literary history competes with the work’s other imperatives. Whereas Turkists of the early 1920s had claimed that all Central Asian culture was really Turkic, even if sometimes covered by an Arabo-Persian veneer, ‘Aynī emphasized the Persian dimension of all Central Asian culture, and the Persophone component of a literary tradition that, as he acknowledged, was multilingual. In this respect, the messiness of geography and identity in *Namūnah* is not so different from that of *Ātashkadah*: by reintroducing Persophonia into regional literary historiography, ‘Aynī restored the transregional dimension of Transoxanian poetry.

This was a corrective to the Turkic chauvinism of early 1920s Transoxanian literary culture, but it simultaneously rescued the Turkist project of historical recovery just as interest in the classics became unacceptable in the Uzbek cultural arena. From 1918 to 1920, a “Chaghatay Conversation” (*Chighatāy gurungi*) group had formed (with the slogan, “Make use of the historical and literary heritage”) as a community for sharing research in fields from lexicography to oral history, from literary criticism to archaeological fieldwork. As Ingeborg Baldauf has pointed out, from 1924 on, Transoxanian scholars who continued work in these fields increasingly did so in national or local “bureaus of *kraevedenie*.”<sup>48</sup> The term refers to a Russian academic discipline, best translated as “regional or local studies” (its German counterpart is *Heimatkunde*), that brings together materials from any humanistic, social-scientific, or scientific disciplines relevant to a holistic understanding of a particular locale or community. In Central Asia it was sometimes used interchangeably with “uzbekology” or “tajikology” (*uzbekovedenie*, *tadzhikovedenie*). The post-Timurid, pre-1905 sections of ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* continue the work initiated by the Chaghatay group and codified by his contemporary local studies scholars, as he recovers minor writers and works from local and sometimes privately held manuscripts. However, at its most nostalgic, such research risked accusations of bourgeois nationalism, as had already become clear in 1921 with the Bolsheviks’ forcible disbandment of the Chaghatay Conversation group. By the Soviet cultural revolution of the late 1920s, the push to “proletarianize” Central Asian culture—that is, in the absence of an indigenous proletariat, to represent the Central Asian lower classes—spurred academies to support more folkloristic and ethnomusicological research into the verbal arts of the masses, and less study of “feudal” classical literature.

The overlap between Uzbek and Tajik state-sponsored *kraevedenie* work was substantial, whether regarding objects of study or the administering bodies and participants. In fact, in the same year as he received the commission to produce *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik*,

<sup>45</sup> ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 185.

<sup>46</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 309.

<sup>47</sup> Kia, “Imagining Iran,” 89–112.

<sup>48</sup> Baldauf, “*Kraevedenie*.” On the discipline more generally, see Johnson, *St. Petersburg*.

‘Aynī also was commissioned by the Scientific Committee of the Uzbek SSR to produce a volume entitled *Türk adabiyāti namūnālari* (Samples of Turkic Literature), although this was ultimately fulfilled by his colleague ‘Abd al-Ra‘ūf Fiṭrat (1886–1938).<sup>49</sup> As ‘Aynī explains in his introduction, he produced *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik* to correct the lack of awareness of Tajik writers of the Soviet state’s appreciation for “the language and literature of the nations” and the “value and prestige that they gave to literature generally.” This ignorance, he suggests, was the result of the Uzbek government’s neglect. As cultural authorities and critics in the Uzbek state institutions became more hostile to “the classics,” ‘Aynī is suggesting, the cultural organs of the Tajik Republic (mostly still headquartered in cities of the Uzbek SSR until the early 1930s) could fulfill the mandate of Soviet nationalities policy on behalf of Transoxanian “literature generally.”<sup>50</sup>

Scholars have generally explained the defection of many former enthusiasts of Chaghatay to Tajik literature and cultural work as a matter of self-preservation, but I propose that it also had an element of triage. That is, in political terms, Tajik identity certainly began as what Khalid has called a “residual category” from the national delimitation, but in cultural terms, the Tajik national project ultimately became a vessel for those aspects of the Chaghatay project that no longer had a place in Uzbek public culture in the late 1920s.<sup>51</sup> ‘Aynī thus set the course for other Transoxanian intellectuals who decided, at a moment of state hostility to tradition, that the heritage that they wanted to rescue from oblivion was not specifically Turkic but more broadly classical.<sup>52</sup> In this respect, his effort to turn this residual category into an essential one was a remarkable success.

This semi-national reading of ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah* is in line with his statements on classical literature during the ensuing language reform debates. Unlike many of his colleagues, he does not suggest that a specifically Central Asian version of the Persian language can be found in pre-sixteenth-century literature.<sup>53</sup> “A Tajik or an Iranian,” he wrote in 1928, “understands and likes the works of Sa‘dī, Ḥāfiẓ, Niẓāmī, and so on to the same degree as the works of Rūdakī, Kamāl Khujandī . . . and so on. Whatever difficulties a Tajik encounters in understanding some words taken from Old Persian [sic: Pahlavi] by Firdawsī, an Iranian will have too.”<sup>54</sup> In the defensive preface that ‘Aynī’s Iranian colleague Abū al-Qāsim Lāhūtī (1887–1957) appended to *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik* to ensure its approval in Moscow, he emphasizes this aspect of the work. Describing Central Asia as “the oldest source and wellspring of Persian literature,” Lāhūtī suggests that today, as in the time of Rūdakī, it is the Central Asian “Persian writers” such as Fiṭrat, Zihnī, and ‘Aynī who can resurrect “a dead literature.” This is both a task of new writing and proper anthological recontextualization of the classics. “The contemporary literature of the Tajiks,” he explains, “is like a rose garden that for many years has had no gardener and hasn’t been watered, and needs a lot of

<sup>49</sup> Baldauf, “Kraevedenie,” 10.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Aynī, *Namūnah*, 3–4.

<sup>51</sup> Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 291–92, 306–7.

<sup>52</sup> Following these interwar Turks on their intellectual journey from rejection to recuperation of classical Persian literature should remind us of the ways in which the term “Persianate” is inadequate, and may help us understand the absence of an equivalent emic term. There are costs to an excessive emphasis on the relationship between this multilingual tradition and the Persian language specifically, a language in which some but not all of its participants could read and write, and in which some but not all of its rhetorical and generic conventions developed.

<sup>53</sup> That argument was made in a puzzling form by the poet and journalist Baḥr al-Dīn ‘Azīzī (1895–1944), who explained that medieval Persian can be divided already between the “city language,” heir to the “Pahlavi language,” and the “mountain language,” heir to the “Dari language”—the former implied to be Iranian Farsi, and the second Tajik. He evinces as evidence couplets from Rūmī’s *Maḡnavī-i ma‘navī* and one of Ḥāfiẓ’s ghazals that refer to Pahlavi and Dari, and takes the two poets as models of two literary languages, nearly mutually incomprehensible (a difficult conclusion to imagine): “if you put these two divans by ancient poets before you and become acquainted with them, you will understand well what kind of difficulty to understanding the poet Rūmī presents, having composed his speech in city language, and how easily comprehensible to the masses Ḥāfiẓ is, having composed his discourse in mountain language.” ‘Azīzī, “Bah zabān,” 360. See also Zihnī, “Maṣlaḥat-i man,” 436–37.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Aynī, “Dar aṭrāf-i zabān-i fārsī,” 162.

arrangement and trimming. I am certain that the honored master has established literary masses [sic] among the new, earnest Tajik youths, and they will make very firm steps toward the unity of a literary movement in the Persian language."<sup>55</sup> For Lāhūtī, the distinctness of the Tajik case offered a vantage point from which to reframe the Persian canon and remake Persian literature on an international basis. Like the Transoxanian intellectuals who redirected their hopes for the preservation of heritage from Turkophone to Persophone scholarship and literary production, Lāhūtī regarded Tajik literature as a particularizing project whose results could then be generalized.

In a sense, this conception of national culture is in perfect agreement with Stalin's framing of the national question in his speeches and writings of the second half of the 1920s, which emphasized the dialectical process by which differentiation of more distinct nations would eventually permit the development of an international socialist culture. 'Aynī's wavering image of the Tajik nation in his anthology, both primordial and provisional, reflects the tensions in that framing. By the early 1940s, however, these tensions were more or less resolved. In the process, a transhistorical category of Tajik literature was reified in ways that far exceeded the polemical position of 'Aynī's *Namūnah*, whereas "pan-Iranism" gained wide currency as a term of abuse for orientalists and cosmopolitans like Lāhūtī who regarded Persian literature as fundamentally nonnational.

### Stalinabad 1940

'Aynī's inclusion of Persian poetry composed by Turks, and the defection of Chaghatayist intellectuals to the Tajik cultural sphere, suggested that the ambit of Persian literature exceeded the Tajik political project. In the late 1920s, one of these defectors, the Samarkandi critic Nazr-allāh Biktāsh (1903–1938), derived from this mismatch a radically negative conclusion. As he wrote in a manifesto circulated privately in 1930, "after the advent of Islam, for the entire Muslim East, a court language, the feudal Persian style, became recognized as universal," such that "even the language of the Turks' dynasties and their courts couldn't be rid of it." The historical relationship of the Tajik people to literary Persian, he argued, must likewise be understood as an alien imposition of "the feudal language and style of Iran," and not a basis for a new national literature.<sup>56</sup> Biktāsh's manifesto, together with the contemporaneous pulping of *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik*, marks the high-water mark of "cultural revolution" in Transoxanian literary criticism. Biktāsh and his circle of young radicals, seeking to "proletarianize" Central Asian literature, developed a trenchant sociological critique of the cultural capital functions of Persianate classics in education, and turned to folkloristics as an alternative to literary classics as such. In the second half of the 1920s, an orientation of literary criticism toward sociology and class analysis was widespread in the Soviet academy and literary journals, and Biktāsh's stance was no doubt inspired in part by prominent Russian "vulgar sociologist" critics such as Valerian Pereverzev (1882–1968).<sup>57</sup> But, as we have seen, the sociological orientation of late Ottoman Turkist literary criticism was already part of Ibrāhīmī's milieu in 1922 Baku, and the orientation of Chaghatayists toward Istanbul and Baku makes this a likely supplementary source for Tajik class analysis of literature. By the end of the 1930s, Biktāsh had perished in the purges, whereas 'Aynī had survived, and the Tajik literary establishment had definitively embraced the Persian canon. But the relationship between the Persian canon, the Soviet Eastern nations, and Iran continued to drive Soviet debates about Persian literary history throughout the Stalin period.

Between the 1926 anthology that initiated Tajik literary historiography, *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik*, and the 1940 anthology that cemented a durable consensus narrative,

<sup>55</sup> 'Aynī, *Namūnah*, viii.

<sup>56</sup> Biktāsh, "Dar aṭrāf-i zabān-i tājikī," 536–37.

<sup>57</sup> Emerson, "Literary Theory," 76–79, 85–87.

*Namunahoji adabijoti toçik* (Samples of Tajik Literature), four distinct episodes in succession changed the Soviet Eastern literary-critical landscape. First, as we have seen, during the “cultural revolution” years of the first Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), proletarian writers’ organizations questioned the relevance of the Persian canon to Tajik national literature. Second, the establishment of the union-wide Union of Soviet Writers with republic-level affiliates in 1932–1934 delegitimized the proletarian organizations’ attacks on the canon. The formation of the writers’ union also spurred the institutionalization of modular national literatures with long, distinct histories and provided a range of institutional opportunities for writers and literary bureaucrats from different republics to learn from each other’s formulations.<sup>58</sup> Third, Soviet participation in the international Firdawsī Millennium Celebration of 1934 inspired a series of jubilee celebrations (1937–1941, then continued after the Second World War) for prestigious canonical writers who could be connected with particular Soviet national literatures, which cumulatively heightened the value of classical Persian poets within the symbolic economy of Soviet literature.<sup>59</sup> Fourth, as a result of the second and third developments, the question of the relationship between the historiography of Soviet Eastern national literatures, Iran, and the Persian language came to a head in the polemic over pan-Iranism (at its height 1938–1941, but continuing until 1953).

All of these developments left their mark on the palimpsestic *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, produced by a committee of young and old writers and critics of diverse backgrounds and ideological commitments, with an unsigned introduction by the Russian Jewish orientalist Iosif Braginskii (1905–1989).<sup>60</sup> An examination of this anthology will therefore reveal a picture of Soviet Persian literary historiography, for Transcaucasia as well as Transoxania, at the moment when it solidified into a consensus narrative, while also suggesting the contingencies and polyphonic aspects of that consensus and its relationship with other visions of the Persian classics, both national and nonnational. In spite of its title and its emergence from anti-pan-Iranist polemic, this anthology’s vision of Persian literature strays from its national or even regional focus to an even greater degree than ‘Aynī’s *Namūnah*. Thus, although *Namunaho* may be accurately described as an end product of the transformation of cosmopolitan Persianate *adab* into a set of nationally delimited canons, it also shows us the new international and interregional visions of Persian literature that this delimitation produced.

*Namunaho* draws from *Namūnah-i adabiyāt-i tājik* many of its choices of authors, much of its argumentative framing, and its apparatus of non-Soviet sources for texts and scholarly background. It also owes a deeper structural debt to ‘Aynī’s anthology, from its division between pre-1917 and post-1917 literature to its arrangement of the elements of each entry. But the gap between 1926 and 1940 is visible on each page, in the anthology’s use of exclusively Gregorian dates (‘Aynī used Hijri dates for preconquest writers) and Latin script (in fact, by the time of *Namunaho*, the Latin script adopted a decade earlier had already been legally replaced by Cyrillic, but the transition would take several more years to complete). In accommodation of the late-1920s reevaluation of folk culture, it includes sections on “folklore before the revolution” and “Soviet folklore” (the term was rendered in Latin script as “folklor”). The volume contains almost no literature produced between 1905 and 1917, reflecting the purge and execution of most of the former Jadids and, even in the

<sup>58</sup> The best study of the 1934 Congress from the standpoint of nationalities policy is Kathryn Schild, “Between Moscow and Baku.” On the generation split in Tajik literature, see Nicholas Seay, “Soviet-Tajik Writing,” 119–35.

<sup>59</sup> On the Soviet Firdawsī Jubilee, see *Literaturnaia gazeta*; and “Tysiacheletnyi iubilei Ferdousi,” 1. The Pushkin Jubilee has been the subject of intensive scholarly analysis: see Sandler, “The 1937 Pushkin Jubilee,” 193–213. On other jubilees for national writers, see Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics*, 81–88; and Kaplan, “Art of Nation-Building.” The Iranian writer Buzurg ‘Alavī described his experience of the Navā’ī Jubilee in *Ūzbakhā*, 20–54. On the Iranian Firdawsī commemoration, see Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 124–32; and Grigor, *Building Iran*, 46–75.

<sup>60</sup> Ajni et al., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*; Ahmed, Haag-Higuchi, and Nölle-Karimi, *Modernity and Modernism*, introduction by Thomas Loy (where I quote the introduction, the translation is my own). For fuller context on this anthology, see Samuel Hodgkin, introduction to “Preface to *Namūnahā-i Adabiyāt-i Tājik*.”

case of those who survived, like ‘Aynī, the rejection of their pre-Soviet experiments with indigenous literary modernity. Although the later anthology contains more pages covering precolonial literature, it is far less concerned with recovering minor poets, sampling only twenty-three precolonial writers to ‘Aynī’s eighty-three, but providing more extensive introductions to those who are included. In short, it is less of a sourcebook, and more of a solidified curriculum for future teachers in the Tajik state educational system.

Of those twenty-three precolonial writers, only ten had appeared in ‘Aynī’s anthology, five of them canonically significant beyond Central Asia (Rūdakī, Daqīqī, Ibn Sīnā, Niẓāmī ‘Arūzī, and Kamāl Khujandī), and only five from ‘Aynī’s vast collection of less famous local writers. Of the remainder, almost all were canonical writers who occupied prestigious positions in the orientalist and Iranian nationalist canon of Persian literature. Some of these had originated or had careers in Khurasan or Transoxania, but had been excluded from ‘Aynī’s collection for one reason or another (Firdawsī, Nāṣir Khusraw, ‘Umar Khayyām, Jāmī, and Ḥilālī),<sup>61</sup> but even more were definitively non-Central Asian, hailing from either Iran and the Caucasus (Khāqānī, Niẓāmī Ganjavī, Sa’dī, ‘Ubayd Zākānī, Ḥāfiẓ) or from Mughal India (Zīb al-Nisā’, Bīdil). Some of these non-Central Asian poets had been mentioned in ‘Aynī’s anthology without formal inclusion, as in his repeated allusions to Bīdil’s influence on eighteenth- to early twentieth-century Central Asian literary style. In *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, however, they were included alongside the Tajiks, albeit without any claim that they were themselves Tajik (beyond the title of the anthology itself).

In fact, whereas the poets most clearly associated with Central Asia are presented without ethnic markers, it is the disputed figures for whom ethnic identifiers are provided. Most Iranian and Transcaucasian poets are explicitly identified as part of “Perso-Tajik” (*fārs-tājik*) literature, whereas Niẓāmī Ganjavī is a “brilliant poet of Azerbaijan.”<sup>62</sup> In many of these cases, special emphasis is placed on the poets’ reception not only in Central Asian Persian literature, but also in classical “Uzbek,” “Azerbaijani,” and Indo-Persian literature. In fact, the classical portion of the anthology is everywhere deeply concerned with premodern and modern reception. That is, the anthology as a whole is teleologically focused on providing Soviet Tajik readers, unschooled in *adab*, with a sufficient sense of the literary tradition that set the conditions for the postclassical and early Soviet Persian literature of Central Asia. That traditional background, however, is emphatically de-territorialized by the *fārs-tājik* designation and through frequent and unapologetic references to geographies beyond Central Asia. This hyphenated designation, in various forms (*tājiki-fārsī*, *fārsī-yi tājiki*), preserves a certain ambiguity. ‘Aynī had used it in his writings of the 1920s to distinguish a local subset of Persian language and literature, whereas in 1930s polemics, scholars such as E. E. Bertels (1890–1957) had used it to stake out the internationalist position that was ultimately rejected as pan-Iranism. By the 1940 anthology, the hyphenated amalgamation was safe again, insofar as it claimed all Persian literature, in a nonexclusive sense, for Tajikistan.<sup>63</sup> But in the postwar revival of anti-pan-Iranism, these hyphenated terms would be definitively excised from the Tajik critical lexicon.

This is not what we might expect from the end product of Soviet anti-pan-Iranism and literary nationalization, but in fact *Namunaho* provides us with an accurate microcosm of how classical Persian literature would be treated in subsequent Soviet scholarship, curricula, and public culture, whether in Moscow, in the eastern republics, or in cultural diplomacy with India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. Very little remains of ‘Aynī’s vision of the anthology as a means of recovering the forgotten local literary past. Instead, in a complete reversal of the late 1920s sociological critics’ radical suspicion of the Persian canon, the

<sup>61</sup> The scholar S. Uluğ-zoda explicitly frames Nāṣir Khusraw’s inclusion as an act of reclamation, rescuing a progressive poet from his association with Isma‘ilism and the malign, British imperialist influence of the Agha Khan: Uluğ-zoda, “Nosir Xisrav,” 44.

<sup>62</sup> Ajni et al., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, 13, 69, 85, 90, 103, 135.

<sup>63</sup> Shukurov, *Khuroson ast in jo*, 167.

volume's editors are fully invested in the currency of literary prestige, as defined by the multinational and international marketplace of cultural capital. Rather than intervening in the internecine and regional polemics among Transoxanian critics and cultural bureaucrats, *Namunaho* curates a literary pantheon with a cache recognizable not only to Turkish or Indian diplomats, but even to Russian and Western elite readers only casually acquainted with Persian poetry. Whereas 'Aynī introduces the reader to non-courtly poets to suggest that classical Persian verse was not an elite phenomenon but an outgrowth of the cultural life of the people, *Namunaho* reconfirms the progressive credentials of familiar figures, from 'Ubayd's harsh satire of religion and feudalism to Sa'dī's humanism.<sup>64</sup> The dimension of contestation with Turkic chauvinism in 'Aynī's earlier work is likewise entirely absent from *Namunaho*, along with the Persian compositions of poets such as Navā'ī and Mashrab, because for the Tajik literary scholars and cultural bureaucrats who received their training from *Namunaho* and the textbooks that followed it, classical literature no longer needed to prove the existence of an autochthonous Tajik nation.

By 1940, the Tajik SSR was already an institutionalized fact, under no threat of erasure, and its representatives were in the ascendant. In fact, for much of the post-Stalin period, Tajik literature and culture would be disproportionately visible in the multinational and international spheres, because of the institutional clout of two intellectuals of the generation who rose to prominence during the purges as opponents of pan-Iranism: Bābājān Ghafūrov (1908–1977) and Mīrzā Tūrsūnzādah (1911–1977).<sup>65</sup> Ghafūrov, a historian and cultural bureaucrat, benefited from the shake-up of the Soviet academy during de-Stalinization, ascending in 1956 to the directorship of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow, which he occupied for over twenty years, advocating a maximally expansive vision of Tajik history on a union-wide stage. Tūrsūnzādah, a prominent poet in the Stalin period, became a key figure of thaw internationalism as the long-term chairman of the Soviet African-Asian Solidarity Committee and published collections of verse that highlighted the shared heritage of Central and South Asia. As Artemy Kalinovsky has shown, during the Khrushchev thaw, in the economic and cultural spheres, Central Asia underwent a process partially analogous to decolonization.<sup>66</sup> This shift cemented the presence of classical Persianate writers in the general secondary and university curriculum of the Eastern republics, each now associated with only one nationality, but some appearing in other republics' curricula under the rubric of world literature, and in translation.<sup>67</sup> This was far from the delimitation of Persian literature suggested by Ibrāhīmī's position at Baku State University in 1922. The situation more closely resembled the position of Persian classics in the Iranian state school curriculum than in India or Turkey, where young people only read Persian classics in specialized upper-level courses or in religious settings outside of formal schooling.

The primary task for representatives outside of Tajikistan, then, was to situate the cultural history of the Tajiks, formally recognized but permanently somewhat obscure, in relation to a Persian canon that commanded universal familiarity and respect. That is, Tajik literary representatives did not need to be armed for interethnic disputation within the region (as in the 1920s) or for contestation of shared heritage with other Persophone nations (as in the late 1930s). Rather, they needed to establish a field of reference that would be familiar to their peers in other cultural bureaucracies, whether these were Russian intelligentsia raised to admire Ḥāfiẓ through fin de siècle Symbolist translations or committed South Asian writers who would appreciate a reference to Amīr Khusraw. As a result, although postclassical canons and folkloristics continued to differentiate along national

<sup>64</sup> Ajni et al., *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik*, 117, 105.

<sup>65</sup> Kirasirova, "Sons of Muslims," 106–132; Kalinovsky, *Laboratory*, 43–66.

<sup>66</sup> Kalinovsky, *Laboratory*.

<sup>67</sup> On translations of classical Persian poets to other Soviet Persianate languages for a young readership, see Hodgkin, "Persian Poetry."



lines in the Cold War period, national canons of pre-Timurid Persian literature underwent not a further parting of ways, but a convergence.

### Conclusion: From Tajik Nation to Persianate International

The path of canon formation marked out by these three anthologies allows us to see not only the process by which Central Asian Persian literature came to represent the newly nationalized Tajik folk before the world, but also the transformation of this nationalized Tajik canon into an institution of surrogate representation for Persophone peoples everywhere. Thus, the introduction of *Namunahoji adabijoti toçik* justifies its inclusion of Iranian poets by pointing out that “the Tajik common people consider the entirety of this civilizational heritage to be their own, and they recognize the great writers and poets of this literature to be their own writers and poets.”<sup>68</sup> By the same token, the volume’s epigraph, from Stalin’s 1925 telegram of congratulations to the new Tajik ASSR, urges the Tajik workers to “show the entire East that you are the best of your ancestors’ progeny, holding firmly aloft in your hands the flag of liberation.”<sup>69</sup>

Although this post-national approach to canon formation owed much to the old Russian imperial dream that Central Asia might become a bridgehead for domination of the East, it also prefigured postcolonial internationalism. In 1949, during a revival of anti-pan-Iranist discourse as part of the all-union anti-cosmopolitan campaign, the future star of Soviet Persianate internationalism, Tursunzadah, explained the inclusion of Iranian poets in Tajik literature as a sort of custodianship. The Iranian bourgeois press, he explains, “not only doesn’t appreciate the classics, but even openly rejects or falsifies them. . . . We, by contrast, lovingly and carefully preserve the best in the works of Sa’di and Hāfiz.” After the Iranian revolution, “the Tajik people will return to the Persians (*persam*) the legacy of their poets in its original glory and brilliance.” Tursunzadah preserves the nationalist conceit that literary heritage is a form of property that can only belong to one nation at a time. However, by combining this fiction of national heritage with a notion of kinship among the Persophone nations, he derives a non-European variant of orientalist surrogacy that disrupts the fiction of autochthonous national culture. The Tajik nation, as a young and vigorous relative, can act as an executor for Iran’s national property until it recovers. In completion of the cycle initiated by ‘Ayni’s coinage of “Tajik-Persian” literature, Tursunzadah declares: “Then, we saw in this term a means of restoring our indisputable rights to the literary heritage, to protect ourselves from the frenzied ‘Iranization’ of our Tajik culture. Now it is obvious that this term has become obsolete.”<sup>70</sup> Lāhūtī, who by this point had been out of official favor for over a decade, could only complain in an appeal to Stalin that the advocates of this maximalist Tajik canon had effectively declared, “what’s mine is mine, what’s yours is mine.”<sup>71</sup> Stalin did not reply.

And yet, in a real sense, Iranians of the constitutionalist generation had drafted precisely the critique of Iran’s inadequate guardianship of its literary heritage that Soviet Central Asian literary bureaucrats now took up. Furthermore, it was precisely that generation’s demands for the institutionalization of Persian literature that the Soviet literary system fulfilled. Lāhūtī himself, in his journalistic writings before his 1922 escape to the Soviet Union and subsequent transformation into a communist, contrasted Western nations’ “provision of the necessaries for literature’s advancement” with the situation in Iran, where so many “great ones’ divans have disappeared and their works remained behind the veil of oblivion.”<sup>72</sup> In the Stalin period, the Soviet state’s preservation of Persian manuscripts, its careful

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv–xv.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>70</sup> Tursun-zoda, “Protiv kosmopolitizma,” 3.

<sup>71</sup> RGASPI f. 558, op. 11, d. 878, doc. 4, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Lāhūtī, “Īrān,” 49, 53.

and lavish printed editions of Persian classics, and its statues and public celebrations of Persian and Persianate poets were popular talking points in Iranian travelogues of the Soviet Union.<sup>73</sup>

As James Pickett has suggested, “The Soviet and Iranian leftist visions of modernity overlapped more than they diverged and Iranian intellectuals found ample room to pursue their cultural reform project.”<sup>74</sup> But the appeal of the Stalinist program for cultural memorialization and monumentalization had an appeal for Iranian intellectuals beyond the political left. Sa‘īd Nafīsī (1895–1966) is the most famous instance of an Iranian scholar and writer who became an important cultural ambassador precisely because of his distance from Iranian Communist politics. As secretary of the Pahlavi state-sponsored Iranian Literary Society, he was invited to speak at the Moscow celebration of the 1934 Firdawsī Jubilee. He later recalled the experience of that speech:

Until that day I had never heard my own voice through an amplifier. While the first sentence in Persian came out of my mouth, and my voice reverberated in that huge space in the presence of all those men and women under the high vault of the theater, I entered a state that is difficult for me to express. The translator translated my speech sentence by sentence. Obviously, my speech was about the greatness of Firdawsī’s place in the world, the importance of his epic in world literature and for relations between Iran and the peoples of the Soviet Union. Every time I spoke a sentence that excited [their] sentiments, the sound of the attendees’ applause resounded through that vast space, and filled me with such rapture, I can’t say.<sup>75</sup>

The scale of the Stalinist echo chamber, with its institutional capacities for amplification and translation, offered Iranian nationalists a place in world culture to suit their most chauvinistic fantasies. Meanwhile, the element of contestation—the notion that Persian literature could only belong to the world by not belonging to Iran—remained for the most part a polemic directed at Soviet insiders, infuriating émigrés such as Lāhūtī more often than foreign Iranian visitors.

Well into the period of post-Stalin Cold War internationalism, the second-world cultural apparatus of literary magazines and conferences would remain a favored megaphone for Persianate nostalgists from across West and South Asia, as well as from the Soviet East. In articles in *Lotus* and speeches at jubilees for poets such as Sayat Nova (1963) and Amīr Khusraw (1975), they emphasized the multilingual and transregional dimensions of the Eastern classics, their simultaneous national exemplarity and humanistic universalism. The relationship between these non-Soviet and Soviet Eastern writers and literary scholars served the competition and sometimes the shared interests of nations and multinational states. By the same token, those states’ violent internal and international politics set the terms for the writers’ and scholars’ mutual engagement. Still, on both the interpersonal and the institutional level, this was a mutually beneficial conversation that was only sometimes routed through Moscow. The legacy of that conversation was a new framing for a world literary heritage whose influence would go far beyond the former Persianate world.

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<sup>73</sup> See Nafīsī, “Safarhā-yi man bih mā-varā’ Khazar,” 49; and ‘Alavī, *Ūzbakhā*, 29–30, 33–34.

<sup>74</sup> Pickett, “Soviet Civilization,” 817.

<sup>75</sup> Nafīsī, “Safarhā-yi man bih mā-varā’ Khazar,” 48–49.

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**Samuel Hodgkin** is an assistant professor of comparative literature at Yale University. He has published on the modern verse, theater, and criticism of Iran, Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. His research engages with theories of representation, translation, and world poetics and with the history of literary institutions. His current book project, entitled "The Nightingales' Congress: Poetics of the Persianate International," shows how the Soviet internationalist project of world literature emerged from sustained engagement between leftist writers of West and South Asia and state-sponsored writers of the multinational Soviet East.