

Acknowledgment

Foremost I should express my thanks to the members of the History Committee of SAMT for their confidence in me, and for accepting my proposal to expand the project to more than a mere selection of readings which would have lost its academic value the moment a translated version in Persian would make itself available. The present market for such hack translations is seemingly most cordial in academic circles. The initial committee members comprised of Professors Agajari, Ajand, Hassani, Kheirandish, Mossadeq Rashti and Zargarinejad, all in alphabetical order.

The selection committee that cooperated most closely with me and was a constant source of support and assistance consisted of Professors Hassani of the Ministry of Education, who was particularly helpful in providing me with several of the selections needed for the compilation of chapters three and four. Professor Tanhatan Nasserri of the History Department of Tehran University actually undertook the task of preparing the pre-Islamic dynasties of Iran and laboriously worked to establish a consistency among the Islamic names and dynasties which I had initially prepared. His judicious comments and his warm friendship are always a source of appreciation. Professor Azadegan of Shahid Beheshti University was able to join our meetings only a short period, but none the less, his attendance and remarks at those initial meetings were helpful. I would also like to thank Mrs. Turkamani Azar, member of SAMT and coordinator of historical textbooks, for her assistance. I am most grateful to her and to the Chairman of the History Committee, Professor Abdulhussain Navai. My thanks are also due to Ms. Nahid Behzadi, my graduate student, for preparing the index to this volume, and to Ms. Atefeh Mazyar for cross-checking the index.

I should also express my gratitude to the SAMT organization for their concern and effort to publish books of academic standards. Needless to say, while I am most grateful to them all, I am fully responsible for the errors and shortcomings that may be noticed.

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Introduction to the 5th Revised Edition

Ten years have passed since I was first asked by the now well established Center for Studying and Compiling University Books in Humanities (SAMT) to prepare a two volume textbook for Iranian students of history in order to fulfill their needs as part of their university curriculum. Since then this text has turned into a standard work for most universities and is used both by undergraduates as well as graduate students of history in Iran. It also serves as a reference guide for the field of *Iranian Studies* and has been published at least once every two years since it first appeared in 1997.

To this 5th and revised edition is added an entirely new chapter entitled "Muslim and Persian Science". This chapter will take the place of Chapter Five in the sequence of the text, while the former Chapters Five to Seven will advance to Chapters Six to Eight respectively. The addition of this chapter was regarded essential in order to demonstrate the contributions of Muslims, including Persians, to the advancement of human science as well as western civilization. The entire purpose of this study was to show the continuity and diversity of human culture in our world today. In an age where conflict of cultures and civilizations override the prevailing atmosphere of dialogue and consensus, it becomes all the more necessary to show how human knowledge and understanding has progressed throughout the ages by mutual exchange and understanding, despite prevailing wars and conflicts.

In preparing this volume I am particularly indebted to my students who have used this book with utter diligence. I am indebted to the University of Washington who has been kind and supportive on numerous occasions when such support was needed in order to be able to teach, think and write freely. Finally, to my beloved family, particularly my wife Shayesteh, who has always supported me in my research, whenever the atmosphere was less than conducive for academic work, I own an immeasurable debt. To them all I need to express my thanks and appreciation.

Introduction to the 1st Edition

Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979 and Ayatollah Khomeini's decree for the establishment of the Cultural Revolutionary Council in 1980, the entire university curriculum underwent significant and dramatic changes which were in keeping with the needs and expectations of the society at large, and the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education in particular.

Among the new courses designated for students of history were two, entitled "Readings on Historical Texts in a Foreign Language". Since a significant quantity of the primary and secondary sources as well as the archival material on Iran is in English, foremost concentration at nearly all Iranian colleges and universities has been the instruction of these courses in the English language.

Years of experience in teaching these courses have convinced my colleagues and I, for the need to prepare textual material fulfilling the needs of Iranian universities. The initial plans were drawn in 1991 and it was agreed to prepare a two part textbook with the following specifications:

1. It was to cover the entire spectrum of Iranian history, prehistoric to modern times.

2. The selections were to be as varied as possible representing as many distinguished historians regarded authorities in their respective fields.

3. Since both volumes were to remain within the range of 400 pages, it was necessary to edit, and in certain places, to abridge the original selections. This was cautiously and tediously done (my sincere apologies to the authors) making sure that no alterations were imposed on the meaning or content of the materials employed.

4. Considering the fact that the major goal was to introduce distinguished scholars as well as historical material in English to Iranian students, it was regarded judicious to minimize one's own presence in these volumes. Thus only in areas where a gap was required to be filled, the editor resorted to his own writings or commentaries.

Another very significant goal was to provide a reference guide or a handbook on Iranian history. In this way the student would always be able to

refer to this volume as an essential reference tool. Thus not only is the student exposed to appropriate selections of textual material in English, but also to such essential tools as archival and research material, transliteration systems, major dynasties and a chronology of Iranian history.

On Iranian Historiography

Only five years prior to the Islamic Revolution, a distinguished Iranian professor of history assessed his views on the status of historical writing in Iran as follows:

Too much which is published on Iranian history continues to be either shallow, narrow, cliché-littered imitations of the not-so-great historians of the past, or are official glorifications of Iran's present [i.e. the Pahlavi regime], not always consistent with the truth. The field requires a widely extended and earnest historical inquiry into the development of modern Iranian society through the exploration of its recent past.¹

And yet another distinguished Iranian scholar, the late Professor Abdul-Hadi Hairi is noted to have commented on the general status of historical writing with the remarks that although historical writing in the Islamic world has a tradition extending well beyond a thousand years, yet it is still experiencing its infancy in Iran. Across this land history has never been treated seriously, "while history is serious, and a very serious subject indeed".²

Why is it that Iran faces such a paucity of sound historical writing? Generally it is expected that a country with such a rich historical and cultural tradition would have all the more reason to preserve and document its cultural heritage. However, this has proven to be contrary in Iran's case. The development of historical writing in Iran has seen very few changes in the course of its development, and those which have been noted or implemented in the twentieth century have been far too few and in between to be able to cause any change of major significance. Essentially, historical writing in Iran can be roughly divided into two broad categories of the traditional and the modern historical schools.

The traditional period of historical writing in Iran extends from the earliest materials available to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Characteristics of this extended period are somewhat compatible with what was quoted above. On the whole:

Neo-Persian historiography—i.e. in the Persian language but written in Arabic script by Muslim writers and with a vocabulary

strongly influenced by Arabic—appears in the tenth century ... in the form of translations and adaptations of earlier Arabic chronicles (al-Tabariī). In the eleventh century, it acquires an original and independent style, concurrently with the Arab chronicles, while, from the thirteenth century on, it covers the whole field of Iranian culture to the exclusion of Arabic works.³

Panegyrics appear as early as the tenth century at the Ghaznavīd and Būyid courts written in praise of rulers and dynasties by court historians and civil servants. Among other prominent characteristics of Persian historical works is an emphasis on sustained and hence chronological accounting of political events and dynasties, and a strong urge at times to mingle literature with history. Thus developed a literary genre known as *adab* which gave birth to a literary formation heavily dependent on and thus drawing upon history as an indispensable vehicle. Other characteristics that can be mentioned are a tendency to duplicate earlier works without proper documentation of the sources employed, to relate events via anecdotes and examples, whether they be legendary or historical; an inclination to please the court by exaggerating or distorting contemporaneous events, very little appreciation for precision and exact documentation, and last but certainly not least, a disproportionate distribution of historical works for each period or dynasty under consideration. As a rule, there are very few attempts at providing a methodological framework for the study of history, the one outstanding exception being the famed North African historian and philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406).⁴

With the coming to power of the Mongols in the Islamic world and the Il-Khāns in the Iranian world during the thirteenth century, a significant improvement is noticed in the historiography of Iran.⁵ This was essentially because of the new lease on life introduced in Iran following the advent of the Il-Khāns, and a detachment from the centralized power of the Caliphate which had hence pervaded the entire Islamic world and which had refused to allow Shī‘ism, sufism as well as the Iranian cultural heritage to develop as a separate entity.

The Safavīd dynasty in A.D. 1501 established Shī‘ism as Iran’s national religion and hence Iran emerged as a national state⁶ with its own national and territorial integrity vis-à-vis the Ottoman world. Yet the sources for this and the dynasties that follow, the Afshārs, Zands and the Qājārs, are woefully inadequate.⁷ While there is a marked increase of primary sources particularly during the nineteenth century Qājār Persia, yet these sources

leave much to be desired in terms of originality, depth, and analysis.⁸ However, with the introduction of western thought and western concepts of modernism and liberalism in Iran during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the atmosphere became conducive for the introduction of modern concepts of education, including new approaches to science and the humanities. With the establishment of the Dār ul-Funun in 1851, the first technical college model-led after western schools, translation of various historical works into Persian familiarized many of the intellectuals with modern concepts of historical writing. And not long after, analytical writings, first in the form of journalistic articles⁹ and later in the form of histories made themselves apparent. The Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911 was itself the most significant event of the Qājār period, and definitely the upheaval that followed caused a significant turnover of events in Iranian history. For the first time economic structures, political and religious movements, and tribal groups and loyalties were reduced in their various configurations as instances producing cultural symbols and attitudes. Hence events were not demarcated in a chronological sequence acceptable as factual truth, rather what they implied determined their significance.

Iranian historiography today continues to be woefully inadequate and outdated and this stems from several factors, including a disbelief and a lack of understanding or appreciation for history. Another element is related to economics. Disciplines that are not economically lucrative are generally looked upon with disdain. A third element stems from the view that history is not a reliable or a useful discipline. The general perception that history can be twisted to meet political ends has prevented its serious treatment and analysis in the past. Ironically, while modern schools of social thought such as post-modernism, deconstructionism and post-structuralism are barely understood even among academic circles, yet historical skepticism seems to have prevailed in Iran long before Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida expounded their ideas, but certainly not for reasons of discourse analysis.

Contents of Volumes I and II

Volume I consists of an introduction and seven chapters. Historically it covers pre-Islamic Iran to the rise of the Safavids. Reference chapters include “Dynasties in Iran” (Chapter One), “Research Material on Iran” (Chapter Six), and “Transliteration Systems, Abbreviations and Roman Numerals” (Chapter Seven).

Volume II covers chapters Eight to Fifteen. Historical chapters include chapters Eight through Twelve. The three chapters which serve as references include “Archival Material and Contemporary Iranian History” (Chapter Thirteen), “Computers and Historical Research” (Chapter Fourteen), and “A Chronology of Iranian History” (Chapter Fifteen).

All remarks added to the text by the editor are inserted in brackets []. If it was found necessary to omit or edit part of a text, this is indicated by an open-ended three dots (...). With a few exceptions, all references and footnotes to the original texts are removed. However, full reference of each text is provided so that students can locate what they seek without difficulty. Furthermore, the system of transliteration of each text is maintained in its original form. As a result, there is no single uniform system of transliteration throughout, except for the material prepared by the editor. Here, with minor modifications, the system of the Library of Congress is used.

The editor hopes that given the content and scope of this undertaking, and in keeping with the limitations of time and space, he will have succeeded in fulfilling both the short and long term goals of this project. Needless to say, the short term goal is to fulfill SAMT’s expectations by providing a comprehensive textbook with appropriate selections on historical texts in English which could be used throughout universities in Iran. The long term goal is to provide a handbook on Iranian history which I hope will always be useful as a reference guide both for the generalist as well as the specialist scholar on Iran.

Gholamreza Vatandoust, PhD

Notes

1. Hafez F. Farmayan, “Observations on Sources for the Study of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Iranian History”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 5(1974), pp. 32-49.
2. See the following article by Mohammad Husain Manzour-u-Ajdād on Professor Abdul Hadi Hairi entitled “Ta’muli bar barkhī Vīzhgīhā, Didgāhā va Amuzehāyeh Dr. Abdul Hadi Hairi”, *Ganjineh*, Vols. 2 & 3, Nos. 10 and 11, 1372 A.H.S./1993, p. 70.
3. Claude Cahen, Jean Sauvaget’s *Introduction to the History of the Muslim East*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965, p. 35.
4. Ibn Khaldun, in the *Muqaddimah*, the introduction to his *Kāāb al-Ibar*, or his world history, provides the general laws of historical development and analyzes

the role of various social, political and demographic factors in the cyclical rise and fall of dynasties, particularly those of the Islamic dynasties. His analytical approach to history and sociology became particularly noticeable since the seventeenth and particularly in the twentieth century by the community of Islamic and western scholars.

5. The Persian sources for the history of the Il-Khāns is rich and ample. To name but a few are Rashid al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*, Juwaini's *Tārikh-e Jahān-Gushā* *Tārikh-e Wassāf*, and *Tārikh-e Guzideh*.
6. See the work by W. Hinz entitled *Irans Aufstieg zum National-staat im funfzehnten Jahrhundert* (1936).
7. Some good primary source exists for the Safavīds, such as Hasan Rumlu's *Ahsan al-Tawārikh* and Iskander Munshī's *Tārikh-e 'Alam-ārāy-e 'Abbasī*. The sources for the study of the Qājārs is plentiful, however, but even though they relate to the nineteenth century, the style of historiography is traditional and repetitious, with a very few attempts made to preserve objectivity and/or to be analytical in scope.
8. Primary sources for the study of the Qājārs are fortunately many. Here, however, only a few of the more important ones are mentioned. See for example Abdul-Razzaq Beig Donbali, *Ma'āthar-e Soltāni* (Tabriz, 1824), republished several times since; Muhammad Taqī Lisan al-Mulk Sipīhr, *Nāsikhal al-Tawārikh: Salātin-e Qājāriyyeh* (Tehran, 1974); Muhammad Hasan Khān I'timād al-Saltaneh's numerous published works particularly his *Tārikh-e Muntazam-e Nāsirī*, edited and published in 3 volumes by Muhammad Ismail Rezvani (Tehran: Dunīyā-yeh Kitāb 1367/1988) and *Al-Ma'āthir wa al-Āthār* (Tehran, 1888/1306).
9. Mīrzā Sāleh of Shiraz was the first to bring back with him from London a small printing press and to publish the first official newspaper in Iran entitled *Kāghaz-e Akhbār*. This led the way for the publication of a number of a highly critical Persian newspaper in exile during the second half of Nāsir ud-Dīn Shah's reign. These papers were essentially published abroad in cities such as Istanbul, London, Calcutta and Cairo and imported into Iran. Among the most important of these papers were *Akhtar*, *Qānūn*, *Habl ul-Matin*, and *Parvareh*. For a full account of the impact of these and other newspapers see Hamid Mowlana's unpublished PhD dissertation entitled *Journalism in Iran: A History and Interpretation* (A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School at Northwestern University, 1963).