

ARTICLE

Disciplining Persian Literature in Twentieth-Century Afghanistan

Aria Fani

Assistant Professor of Persian and Iranian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA
Email: ariafani@uw.edu

(Received 17 April 2021; revised 5 August 2021; accepted 11 August 2021)

Abstract

How was Persian literature disciplinized in the twentieth century? This article addresses this question by focusing on twentieth-century Afghanistan and outlining the sociohistorical processes that helped to transform scholarly and literary production into a social enterprise. A major outcome of these underexamined processes was the making of *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā* (1949–79) in Kabul, the first modern encyclopedia produced in Persian. The article explains the multilayered significance of *Āryānā*'s literary taxonomies, reading practices, and historiographical models that reified Persian literature as an object of academic study and national veneration in Afghanistan. A close reading of *Āryānā*'s account of Persian literary history illustrates its complex relationship with both Iranian and Afghan nationalisms of the 1940s and 1950s and its contributors' adherence to a modern methodology. The present study places *Āryānā* squarely within a transregional ecosystem that brought about the institutionalization of literature in Persian-speaking lands.

Keywords: literary historiography; twentieth-century Afghanistan; *Encyclopedia Āryānā*; literary style/*sabk*

In 1944, a cadre of Afghan scholars founded the Encyclopedia Association in Kabul.¹ They would go on to create *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, the first encyclopedia in Persian (1949–79).² The publication of *Āryānā* marked a significant moment in the institutionalization of Persian literature by codifying a new mode of literary knowledge into an encyclopedic category that posed as bounded and settled. I first came across *Āryānā* on the bookshelf of my Afghan neighbor in California ten years ago.³ What I encountered then, having been ignorant of its history, was a well-structured nugget of information, a reference point for knowledge pertaining primarily to Afghanistan. In writing this article a decade later, I aim to critically

¹ In Persian, *Anjoman-e dāʿerat ol-maʿāref*. For an entry on *Encyclopedia Āryānā*, see *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye adab-e Fārsi*, 3:128.

² In Iran, *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Fārsi* or the *Persian-Language Encyclopedia*, directed by Gholām-Hosayn Moṣāḥeb and his associates, was published in three volumes in 1966, 1977, and 1995. In 1975, Ehsan Yarshater launched *Dāneshnameḥ-ye iran va islam* or the *Encyclopedia of Iran and Islam*. In its title, the Persian term “*dāneshnameḥ*” (literally, “book of knowledge”), dating back to Ebn Sina’s *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye ʿalāʾī* (1034–49), replaced the Arabic loanword *dāʿerat ol-maʿāref*. In the 1980s, the name of the project was changed to the *Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, which is still ongoing. In Central Asia, the first Persian-language encyclopedia developed in the late 1970s as an outgrowth of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. The *Tajik Soviet Encyclopedia* (Энциклопедияи советии тоҷик) was published in eight volumes between 1978 and 1988.

³ This reminds us that encyclopedias like *Āryānā* had a different material life in the age of their prevalence. For one, they were not just found at institutions but were also (used and enjoyed) in homes.

outline historical processes that culminated in the production of this landmark work of scholarship, which has yet to receive critical attention in English or Persian.⁴

At a time when Pahlavi-era scholars were bringing Persian literary history into congruence and synonymy with Iran as an ethno-territorially defined entity, *Āryānā* offers us a more ecumenical approach to conceptualizing literary history. In their cultural undertaking, Afghan scholars faced a challenging task, one that involved navigating parochial accounts of Persian literature produced in Iran, on the one hand, and reactionary ethnocentric politics and policies of certain Mosāhebān officials, on the other.⁵ As my analysis shows, *Āryānā* as an end product is entirely irreducible to any single discourse or ideological impulse. *Āryānā* responds to Iranian nationalist efforts by highlighting the poetic contributions of Central and South Asian poets and dynasties, shifting the center of gravity away from Iranian territorial nationalism. Similarly, it counterposed the ethnocentric impulses of the state that aimed to valorize Pashto as a national language at the expense of Persian. Overall, a close reading of *Āryānā* illustrates that slippery categories like modern and national advance a scholarly discourse only if critically examined in light of their historical contingencies, internal tensions and contradictions, and muted potentialities.

This article outlines particular cultural-historical contexts that help explain *Āryānā*'s salient features vis-à-vis different facets of Afghan nationalism in the latter part of the twentieth century and Persian literary nationalism more broadly. First, it traces the formation of literature as a modern conceptual category in twentieth-century Afghanistan. Then, it examines the language policies and politics of the 1930s and 1940s to set up the right historical context. The final sections delve into *Āryānā*, its making, contributors, source materials, and distinct historiographical features. The focus of this article is volume three of the encyclopedia, which contains an extensive account of Persian literary history. Without bearing these contexts in mind, we run the risk of rendering *Āryānā* a standalone text and separating it from its disciplinary history.⁶

Literature: The Rise of a Modern Concept

The institutionalization of literature as a discipline took place through multiple sites of cultural production.⁷ Many of the activities that contributed to these disciplinary processes were based in literary and historical associations or *anjomans*.⁸ Some were centered around state schools and universities while others revolved around linguistic and philological connections.⁹ Collectively, these sites formed integral parts of print culture that made inroads without which such disciplinary processes would have been unimaginable. As such, these

⁴ *Āryānā* is absent from critical studies on the formation of literary history written in Persian. See, for instance, Fotuhi, *Nazariyeh-ye tārikh-e adabiyāt*. Fotuhi examines works of critical theory on literary history and literary histories of Persian composed in various languages. Yet, he fails to mention a single Afghan literary history of Persian. This omission is particularly noteworthy since the literary historiographical part of volume three of *Encyclopedia Āryānā*, the focus of this article, has been edited and republished in Iran as a standalone work. See Kahdu'i, ed., *Adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*. Sadly, glossing over Afghan cultural production is all too common inside Iran, as evident in the work of Fotuhi, a literary scholar whose institution (Ferdowsi University of Mashhad) is much closer to Herat than it is to Tehran.

⁵ On Zhubal's scholarly response to Iranian literary historiography, see Ahmadi, "The Cradle of Dari." For more on the language politics of this period, see Farhang, *Afghanistan dar panj qarn-e akhīr*, 690–94.

⁶ Since this article makes use of "institutionalization" and "disciplinization" as analytical categories, it is important to comment on their distinction. I see the latter as a sub-phenomenon of literary institutionalization; as such all disciplines are institutions, but there are many institutions that are not disciplines. In this article, there is an implicit distinction between literature and literary history and scholarship. Literature is seen as an institution and literary scholarship as a discipline, and therefore a sort of institution. Quite naturally, there exists a great deal of slippage, particularly when one speaks of literature as a discipline.

⁷ For an account of the disciplinization of Persian literature in Iran, see Fotuhi, *Darāmadi bar adabiyāt-shenāsi*.

⁸ For the role of *anjomans*, see Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 1.

⁹ Vejdani, "Indo-Iranian Linguistics."

sites should not be seen as standalone or sealed off from one another. Instead, they should be conceptualized as co-habitual, each creating its own unique center of gravity while simultaneously contributing to the creation of literature as a national enterprise. The institutionalization and nationalization of literature in the twentieth century is a uniquely transregional phenomenon whose processes and local manifestations in the Persian-speaking world have been analyzed in this special issue of *Iranian Studies*.

Any examination of literature as a modern discipline will have to begin with the rise of literature as a conceptual category. The idea of *adabiyāt* or literature in Persian as a canon of writings that embodies the literary and civilizational achievements of a unitary people defined by a certain ethnic genealogy and territorial sovereignty goes back no further than the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Literature as a concept was first introduced to elite Afghan readers in the pages of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals. In 1911, Mahmud Tarzi, a towering Persian-language intellectual and a pioneer of journalism in Afghanistan, established *Serāj ol-akhbār* (The torch of news) in Kabul, a biweekly periodical that produced one of the earliest articulations of the notion of *adabiyāt* in Afghanistan.¹⁰

The first issue of *Serāj ol-akhbār*, printed on October 9, featured an essay under the novel rubric of *adabiyāt*. It was written by Mowlawi ‘Abdol Ra’uf Ākhundzādah, poet, scholar, and chancellor of Kabul’s Madrasah-ye Shahi, the country’s most prestigious seminary.¹¹ An editorial note mentioned that ‘Abdol Ra’uf contributed the article at Tarzi’s request, which was then printed “word for word” in the newspaper.¹² ‘Abdol Ra’uf opened his article with a rhyming line: *adabiyāt chistand / va az che bahs mirānand*, or “what are *adabiyāt* / and what topics do they discuss?”¹³ He evoked *adabiyāt* as a plural term, similar to its use in premodern texts such as *Nafā’es ol-fonun fi ‘arā’es ol-‘oyun* (The jewels of science and the brides of the eyes), composed by Mohammad ebn-e Mahmud-e Āmoli (d. 1353) in the fourteenth century.¹⁴ The use of *adabiyāt* in that text alongside *tabi‘iyāt* (natural sciences), *shar‘iyāt* (religious sciences), and *riyāziyāt* (the science of mathematics) denotes its earlier disciplinization in the post-Mongol scholastic milieu in which it served as a designation for sciences pertaining to *adab*.¹⁵

In his article, ‘Abdol Ra’uf asserted that *adabiyāt*, or the knowledge derived from *adab* (‘*olum-e adabiyah*), was first studied in *madrasahs* and constituted an integral component of Islamic learning.¹⁶ But in the early twentieth century, he wrote, *adabiyāt* entered a new site of literary production: periodicals. ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article is extremely important for two reasons. Firstly, it illustrates that the semantic boundaries of *adabiyāt* in the early twentieth century were far from settled. The supple ambiguity with which ‘Abdol Ra’uf conceptualized *adabiyāt* closely mirrors the term’s polysemy in Mohammad Hosayn Forughī’s late nineteenth-century *Literary History*.¹⁷ In the 1910s, the term “*adabiyāt*” had not yet accrued its meaning as a *singular* designation for a nationally anchored canon of literary works. It remained closely tied to *adab* as “proper forms of aesthetic style and

¹⁰ For critical studies on Tarzi’s ideas and consequential career, see Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature*, chaps. 2 and 3; Schinasi, *Afghanistan at the Beginning*, 97–101; Gregorian, “Mahmud Tarzi”; Arbabzadah, “Modernizing.” In Persian, see Sakhāwarz, *Tarzi va Serāj ol-akhbār*.

¹¹ *Serāj ol-akhbār*, no. 1 (1911): 10–12. Digitized in Afghanistan Digital Library, New York University Libraries. Accessed August 14, 2017.

¹² For an examination of ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article, see Arbabzadah, “Modernizing.”

¹³ *Serāj ol-akhbār*, no. 1 (1911): 10.

¹⁴ For an analysis of this text regarding its importance for the term *adabiyāt*, see Fani, “Becoming Literature,” chap. 1.

¹⁵ For Āmoli, these sciences included *khatt* (calligraphy), *loghat* (lexicography), *eshteqāq* (derivation), *tasrif* (morphology), *nahw* (syntax), *ma’ani* (semantics, a component of rhetoric), *bayān* (clarity, a branch of rhetoric focused on metaphor and simile), *badi‘* (rhetorical figures, also means elocution), ‘*aruz* (prosody), and others. Āmoli, *Nafā’es ol-fonun*, 16.

¹⁶ *Serāj ol-akhbār*, no. 1 (1911): 11.

¹⁷ On the importance of the Forughis to this project, see Fani, “Iran’s Literary Becoming.”

ethical conduct.”¹⁸ Secondly, ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article displayed critical awareness of the fact that writing in *Serāj ol-akhbār* marked an important shift from older (*madrasah*) to modern (periodicals) sites of learning and literary production. ‘Abdol Ra’uf may be the only literary intellectual who has given such a clear nod to the rise of a new disciplinary formation.

As Mana Kia has recently argued, *adab* was more than just a discourse of self-comportment. *Adab* entailed certain aesthetic and moral values embedded in a literary corpus and systematized forms of knowledge that were transmitted through education and other forms of sociality. As such, “we can consider *adab* as the mode by which Persians identify.”¹⁹ The *adab* of ‘Abdol Ra’uf’s world was undergoing a radical conceptual realignment in order to produce and denote civilizational and national affiliation and distinction. The idea of civilization, once associated with civility, was itself undergoing an important transformation. Its twentieth-century iteration invoked “a world community consisting of multiple civilizational blocs existing alongside one another and each characterized by a distinctive moral-aesthetic essence.”²⁰ In other words, the moral community of *adab* was being overshadowed by the civilizational-national community of *adabiyāt*. And while *adab* sided more closely with becoming, *adabiyāt* largely sided with identity or being. Instead of arriving at Persian as a shared language of learning, under the logic of *adabiyāt*, one was simply born as a Persian.²¹

‘Abdol Ra’uf’s article heralded a programmatic engagement with the notion of literature in *Serāj ol-akhbār*. Tarzi established a column that produced the most lucid expression of literature in early twentieth-century Afghanistan. For instance, in a column on *akhlāqiyāt* or ethics, Tarzi wrote, “Every people is alive through its language, and every language through its literature.”²² He argued that the existence of a people depended on how well they safeguard their language, forming an organicist idea whereby the nation and its literature constituted a whole. Tarzi’s views on language were closely echoed by literary intellectuals in Iran as well as by a global network of intellectuals writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the framework of many other literary traditions.²³

During its seven-year run from 1911 to 1918, *Serāj ol-akhbār* introduced a set of new concepts like *adabiyāt* and turned them into fixtures in the Afghan cultural landscape. Tarzi’s biweekly periodical helped to identify language and literature as entities affiliated with a national community defined on the basis of territorial and ethnic belonging.²⁴ Tarzi did not just initiate conversations about what it meant to speak of a distinctly Afghan literature and language; he also helped to create the ‘Enāyat publishing house and gestured towards the need to establish literary institutions in order to make the literary patrimony of Afghanistan more recognizable inside and outside of the country. What Tarzi had in mind was an entity, supported by the state, which would be tasked with safeguarding and regulating Persian and Pashto, and that would hold a culturally authoritative and socially prevalent position in Afghanistan.

The rise of national education and literary and historical associations in Afghanistan in the second quarter of the twentieth century led to the codification of not only *adabiyāt*, but also a host of other conceptually realigned notions. For instance, *tārikh* came to signify a positivist account of a unitary people’s history with the nation-state posited as its national subject.²⁵ During the 1920s, Qāri ‘Abdollah Khān (d. 1943), the distinguished *malek ol-sho‘arā* or poet laureate, educator, and scholar, developed a number of literary textbooks for

¹⁸ Kia, *Persianate Selves*, 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰ See Marashi, *Exile and the Nation*, 100.

²¹ The question of how *adab* operates within the discourse of *adabiyāt* today deserves extensive analysis better reserved for another article.

²² Farhādi, *Maqālāt*, 632.

²³ See Allan, *Shadow of World Literature*; Mufti, *Forget English!*

²⁴ Fani, “Becoming Literature,” chap. 1.

²⁵ On the formation of history as a national enterprise in Afghanistan, see Green, ed., *Afghan History*.

elementary and secondary education in emerging state schools in Afghanistan. Qāri's textbooks helped to turn *adabiyāt* into an object of pedagogy.

In his literary textbook for secondary education or *roshdīyah*, printed in 1930/31, Qāri wrote the following under the heading "Literature and Other Sciences": "Adabiyāt is connected to and interacts with some sciences, at times it speaks of them; through its sweet language it makes their benefits accessible."²⁶ He commented on how *adabiyāt* conveys ideas derived from *falsafah* (philosophy), *akhlāq* (ethics), *tasavvof* (mysticism), 'elm-e ejtemā' (sociology), and *tārikh* (history). On the connection between literature and history, Qāri wrote:

Literature is one of three [types of] sources [used in] history. In the same manner that one can decipher the state of a nation through oral narratives and ancient artifacts, one can decipher the customs and manners of that nation through literature. Also, the inscriptions of monuments, fragments of history, and the biography of people may all be literature, but they also aid with [the writing of] history.²⁷

The common denominator of literature and history, according to Qāri, is how they both embody the nation. The task of drawing shared elements between entities called *adabiyāt* and *tārikh* (history), imagined as self-contained, would not have made any sense to Qāri's literary predecessors in the early nineteenth century who operated outside national educational institutions. That said, the entwinement of literature and history did not fully take shape in Qāri's literary textbooks, which remained beholden to the *tazkerah* genre in their biographical orientation.

The historicization of *adabiyāt* within an emerging narrative of Afghan national history would ultimately take place in the 1930s, thanks in large part to the rise of literary associations in cities like Kabul and Herat.²⁸ *Anjomans* helped to expand the domain of print culture and created a new structure of networking centered around bylaws and formal positions such as president and secretary, modeled on European and Indian language academies that had preceded them.²⁹ The ideas that literary intellectuals like Mahmud Tarzi had forged in the 1910s gained currency as a state-sponsored cadre of literary intellectuals became professionally preoccupied with conventionalizing certain discursive practices that aimed to reify and regulate Persian literature as its nationally enshrined object of analysis.³⁰ Journals like *Kābol* (1931–79), *Herāt* (1932–80), *Āryānā* (1942–86, published irregularly after 1979), *Erfān* (1950–78), and many others became venues for the formation of a new mode of literary knowledge. As such, these *anjomans* cannot be described as "merely" language academies that aimed to reconfigure and standardize Persian-language grammar and vocabulary for the needs of an emerging reading public and educational institutions; they also crucially reconceptualized language and literature as part of a national imaginary.

The establishment of *Puhanzi-ye adabiyāt va 'olūm-e bashari* or the Faculty of Letters at the University of Kabul in 1944, less than a decade after the University of Tehran's Faculty of Letters, put in place a literary curriculum, as well as academic rules and practices, that cemented Persian literature as a disciplinary formation.³¹ In the 1950s, the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters launched three scholarly journals: *Adab* (1953–78), written mostly in Persian but periodically featuring articles in Pashto and English; *Wazhmah*, meaning

²⁶ 'Abdollah Khān, *Adabiyāt*, 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

²⁸ On the rise of national historiography in Afghanistan, see Nawid, "Writing National History"; Green, ed., *Afghan History*, 1–51.

²⁹ This proliferation of *anjomans* in British-ruled India had preceded both Iran and Afghanistan. See Stark, "Associational Culture"; Perkins, "New Pablik."

³⁰ Ahmadi, "Kabul Literary Society"; Zhubal, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*, 166. On the history of literary associations in general in Afghanistan, see Anusheh, ed., *Dāneshnāmeh-ye adab-e Fārsi*, 3:126–33.

³¹ Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 309–11.

breeze, printed entirely in Pashto with some articles in English; and *Joghrāfiyā*, or *Geography*, published in both Persian and Pashto.³² The university department began to operate with a core faculty of eighteen domestic professors, two foreign professors, and ten students who majored in Persian and Pashto literature.³³ The faculty offered courses on history, linguistics, literary history, poetry, journalism, and geography. It also employed sixty-five domestic and seven foreign lecturers on a permanent basis to teach its courses.³⁴ The Kabul Faculty established connections with its institutional counterparts in the region by hosting and sending students and visiting professors to institutions like the University of Tehran. It produced educators and scholars of Persian literature trained for the first time within a local university setting.³⁵

Let us draw together the institutional transformations outlined above. The institutionalization of *adabiyāt* as a new disciplinary formation in the 1940s and 1950s ratified earlier developments from the early twentieth century which were rooted in associational culture and civil society. In the course of half a century, literature became the prized object of a national discipline through the creation of co-habitual spaces such as *anjomans*, faculties of letters, printing houses, libraries, and state schools. These spaces were frequented by many of the same literary intellectuals who played multiple roles across several organizations; nonetheless they strove toward a single aim that concerned the making and edification of a civilizational and national community. The radical conceptual realignment of *adabiyāt* produced and was itself inaugurated by new modes of historiographical production.

While *adab*, with *balāgha* or the sciences of rhetoric as its main instrument, emphasized the cultivation of skill sets and behavioral dispositions regardless of birthplace and origin, *adabiyāt*, with literary history as its main instrument, served as a discourse through which people learned to think of themselves in relation to a national territory and identify with its history through the sanctioned narratives of its past. It took half a century for the processes outlined above to play out; *Āryānā*'s entry on Afghan literary history provides perhaps the most overt and structured product of these historical processes. One of the novel qualities of *Āryānā* is the fact that a new genre called encyclopedia contributed to the reification and codification of literary history as another new genre, making the latter appear more structured and authoritative.

Language Policies and Politics of the 1930s–1940s

It is important to briefly detail key language policies and politics implemented by the Mosāhebān dynasty in the 1930s and 1940s. These sociopolitical realities provide a crucial background against which *Āryānā* needs to be understood. The term “*Āryānā*” itself encapsulates key intellectual developments during a period in which “Afghan historians claimed that ancient Aryana or Aryanam Vaejah (that is, the territory defined in the *Avesta* as the land of Aryas) composed the regions that formed modern-day Afghanistan.”³⁶ These concerted efforts, aimed at bringing Afghanistan as a political entity into alignment with an ancient cultural geography called *Āryānā*, primarily took place within the framework of

³² In the literary and academic domains of the period, one may not neatly separate Persian from Pashto or vice versa. Many articles composed in Persian extensively quoted Pashto verses and often left them untranslated. Pashto articles quoted Persian poetry even more regularly. Topics related to Pashto literature (e.g. the Pashto *qasida*) were sometimes written in Persian. Overall, the two languages are inextricably entangled as they seek to chart a disciplinary domain in the 1940s and 1950s.

³³ *Shāyān, Āshenā'i*, 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵ Iranian scholars such as Sādeq Rezāzādeh Shafaq, Sa'īd Nafisi, and later Mohammad 'Ali Eslāmi Nodushan all spent time as visiting professors at the University of Kabul. In 1958, fifty-eight students, most of whom were from the Soviet Union and the United States, enrolled at the University of Kabul to study Persian and Pashto. *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁶ Nawid, “Writing National History,” 191. On Aryanism in Russian imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet Central Asia, see Laruelle, “Return of the Aryan Myth”; Battis, “Soviet Orientalism.”

the disciplinary formation described in this article. The historian Mir Gholām Mohammad Ghobār (d. 1978) was the first to link Āryānā and Bactria to the idea of ancient Afghanistan.³⁷ Āryānā was not only a pre-Islamic cultural geography, but also a racial³⁸ geography for Ghobār and his cohort; the key term used here was “*nezhād*.”³⁹

Ahmad ‘Ali Kohzād, who later served as a member of the Encyclopedia Association, significantly expanded on the ideas of Ghobār and ‘Abdol Hayy Habibi (d. 1984) in the journals *Kābol* and *Āryānā* and later in his monographs.⁴⁰ Kohzād’s writings helped codify Āryānā into a stable historiographical fixture in the modern genre of national history in Afghanistan.⁴¹ Overall, in the 1930s and 1940s the term “Āryānā” accrued a new historiographical referent: ancient, pre-Islamic Afghanistan. As such, Āryānā signaled the historicity of Afghanistan as a political entity, an effort to back-shadow the existence of a modern nation-state.⁴² This story, however, would be necessarily incomplete without critically taking into account language policies in Afghanistan. In order to better understand how the rise of Persian literary history relates to broader conceptions of Afghanistan as Āryānā, one must place its formation in the context of the Pashtun nationalism which was ascendant in the 1930s and 1940s.

Pashtun nationalism made inroads into the domains of policy, civil society, and state apparatus in the 1930s.⁴³ During the rule of Mohammad Nāder Shah and early years of Mohammad Zāher Shah (r. 1933–73), the state began to promote Pashto.⁴⁴ In 1936, Pashto was declared “the official language of Afghanistan” by a state decree.⁴⁵ In 1937, the Ministry of Education decided to make Pashto the language of elementary-school instruction across Afghanistan.⁴⁶ The Kabul Literary Association, established in the early 1930s, was disbanded in 1940 in favor of the Pashto Tolana or the Pashto Academy that began to operate in

³⁷ Ghobār, “Tārikhcheh-ye mokhtasar-e Afghanistan,” *Sālnāmeḥ-ye majallah-ye Kabul* (1932): 7–40; “Afghanistan joghrafiyā’i,” *Kabul* 1, no. 4 (September 1931): 44–57. See also Nawid, “Writing National History.”

³⁸ For instance, see Ghobār’s article “*Adabiyāt dar Afghanistan*” in the first issue of *Kabul* 1, no. 1 (1931): 13. In it, Ghobār writes, “The countries of Persia [*Mamlekat-e Fārs*] and Afghanistan appear to possess a shared Aryan race. The languages of the two countries such as Sogdian of Transoxiana have a shared genealogy.” Other intellectuals contributed to the development of Āryānā as an ethno-historical discourse; see, for instance, ‘Abdol Hayy Habibi, “Nokāti chand az tārikh va zabān-e keshwar-e mā,” *Āryānā* 1 (February 1943): 21–23.

³⁹ For a summary of a debate on the racial valences of ethno-nationalism in Afghanistan, see Nawid, “Writing National History,” 193–94. On Afghanistan–Germany intellectual connections, see Wardaki, “Rediscovering Afghan Fine Arts.” Wardaki’s research reverses the passive syntax with which we examine Afghan nationalism, attributing all ideas of racial, linguistic, and literary nationalism to contact with European cultures.

⁴⁰ See Kohzād, *Āryānā*. For more on the role of Kohzād and ancient studies in the formation of Afghan nationalism, see Green, “Afghan Discovery of Buddha.” Relevant to this study is Green’s statement “In a radical revision of its historical identity, between around 1930 and 1960 Afghanistan was transformed from an Islamic Amirate and a Pashtun dynastic dominion into a monarchical nation-state that was the heir to the ancient land of ‘Aryana’” (48).

⁴¹ Another work that shows the pervasiveness of the idea of Āryānā in Afghan historiography in the 1930s and 1940s is Turwāyānā, *Aryānā yā Afghanistan*. This book was originally published in Kabul in 1945.

⁴² Before colonial modernity, political divisions did not neatly match natural designations (*Māvarā’* on-nahr or Transoxiana, for instance, is a natural designation). The idea of Afghanistan as a unitary nation-state took form in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term “Afghanistan” itself appears to have been used for the first time by the British “probably in the upper corridors of the administration in Calcutta in the 1830s.” Schiffman and Spooner, “Afghan Languages,” 6.

⁴³ For analyses on earlier decades, see Wide, “Demarcating Pashto.” The following passage is particularly relevant: “It was not until the 1910s, through a concerted effort of state-backed reformist intellectuals, that Pashto was imagined as a language of the ‘modern’ Afghan nation state. Even here, however, the project remained incomplete: in escaping its status as subordinate to Dari-Persian, it never escaped its status as a symbol, rather than living and breathing component, of the Afghan state” (112).

⁴⁴ Showkat ‘Ali Mohammadi Shāri outlines some of these policies in detail in “Zabān-e Pārsi, sāzeh-ye howiyyat-e melli-ye Afghanistan.” For a survey of secondary sources on the social and political space of Pashto and its linguistic variations, see Hakala, “Locating ‘Pashto’ in Afghanistan.”

⁴⁵ Nawid, “Language Policy in Afghanistan,” 36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

its place.⁴⁷ The association's journal, *Kābol*, continued uninterrupted under the same name, but it became an exclusively Pashto-language publication. The Pashto Academy was tasked with the production of dictionaries and standardization of Pashto grammar.⁴⁸ While the Constitution of 1923 did not state a clear language policy, the Constitution of 1964 unequivocally stated that "It is the duty of the state to prepare and implement an effective program for the development and strengthening of the national language, Pushtu."⁴⁹

Many of these policies faced serious roadblocks. For instance, given the historical primacy of Persian as a language of education, the state struggled to implement its Pashto-only language policy. In a reversal of its previous policies, the government restored the status of Persian as an official language in 1946.⁵⁰ One of the central questions at the heart of language policy was who counted as Afghan. The term underwent different conceptual alignments in the twentieth century, shifting from an older sense limited to Pashtuns, to a radical reframing that claimed all those residing within the country of Afghanistan,⁵¹ and back again to Pashtuns only in the 1930s and 1940s. Overall, the monolingual policies and politics of the state in this period based on Pashto-language nationalism "utterly failed" and were largely "abandoned."⁵² In summary, Pashtun nationalists drew on Aryanist theories, anchored in archeological and nationalist linguistic discourses, in order to position themselves as Afghanistan's autochthon.⁵³ The critical attention paid to linguistic, literary, and ancient history in this period must be understood within this sociopolitical context.⁵⁴ However, as my analysis illustrates, the pursuit of such policies by the state did not produce a literary discourse that would reflect in any stable or straightforward way the principles of an ethnocentric nationalism.

A Transregional Collaborative Process

The Encyclopedia Association, founded in 1944, developed its own bylaws in 1954 and operated semi-independently, supervised by the Secretary of Education.⁵⁵ It commissioned and published books in Persian and Pashto on the history, geology, geography, literature, and educational history of Afghanistan, both ancient and modern.⁵⁶ The association's grand project was called *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā* or *Encyclopedia Āryānā* (henceforth *Āryānā*). *Āryānā* is the first Persian-language encyclopedia carried out by a team of collaborators and conceptualized within an associational framework, making it a new genre of scholarly production. *Āryānā* was focused on the languages, literature, politics, history, religions, folklore, and the

⁴⁷ For a study on the different literary figures of this time and the Persian-Pashto cultural interplay, see Hewādmal, *Roshd-e zabān*.

⁴⁸ Nawid, "Language Policy in Afghanistan," 36. Reshtin's *Pashto Grāmer* is one such example.

⁴⁹ See Article 35 in the *Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*, 19. Digitized Afghanistan materials in English from the Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection, Collection at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

⁵⁰ *Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*, 37.

⁵¹ For instance, Article 8 of the Constitution of 1923 states, "Any person [*hamah-ye afrādī*] who resides in the country of Afghanistan, regardless of religion or sect, is considered a citizen of Afghanistan [*taba'ah-ye Afghānistān*]." This article redefines Afghan-ness not in (Pashtun) ethnic terms, but national and territorial terms. *Nezām-nāmah-ye asāsi-ye dowlat-e 'alīyah-ye Afghānistān*, 3. For more on the formation of Afghanistan's first constitution, see Ahmed, *Afghanistan Rising*. Article 1 of the Constitution of 1964 adds another sentence to this article for further clarification: "The word Afghan shall apply to each such individual." *Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*, 3.

⁵² Ahmadi, *Modern Persian Literature*, 48–49.

⁵³ The category "Pashtun nationalists" is not stable or homogenous. There existed a plurality of opinion among nationalist-minded Pashtuns, the examination of which lies outside the purview of this article.

⁵⁴ On more strictly political ramifications of Pashtunization, see Bezhan, "Pashtunistan Issue and Politics."

⁵⁵ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:i. In 1955, the Encyclopedia Association became affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

notable figures of Afghanistan.⁵⁷ It was organized alphabetically and included diagrams and illustrations. All six volumes were first composed in Persian and then translated immediately into Pashto by the Pashto Tolanaḥ. The first volume of *Āryānā* was released in 1949 and the last was printed exactly two decades later.⁵⁸

The subentry on Afghan literary history was subsumed under the entry on Afghanistan, included in the third volume, released in 1956. The subentry had synthesized the most recent research on language theory, literary history, and cultural archaeology into a coherent historical narrative. *Āryānā* took a significant step in gathering, consolidating, and structuring two decades of research that had been published in Afghanistan, Iran, India, and elsewhere. In writing this subentry, Afghan encyclopedists grappled with such questions as: How have different literary traditions contributed to the making of Afghan culture and literature? What is the role of the Eastern Islamic lands in the rise of New Persian as a polycentric literary tradition? In 228 pages, Afghan scholars produced the first collaborative and most capacious narrative of Afghan literary history yet in existence. In doing so, they helped to chart literary history as an emerging field of study marked by its own set of methodological tools and primary sources.

Thus far, *Āryānā* has been primarily mined for its knowledge of Afghanistan. As a result, some of its other key features, particularly its historiographical innovations that pertain to Persian literary history more broadly, have not been understood or analyzed.⁵⁹ I will lay out my main arguments at the outset to guide the reader through different parts of this section. The compilation and publication of the entry on Afghan literary history represents the first entwinement of *adabiyāt* and national historiography in an encyclopedic format. It puts forth an innovative method of periodization that reconciles a long-standing modern tension between periodological and typological approaches to literary periodization. Finally, *Āryānā*'s entry on literary history evinces an inherent tension between ecumenical and territorial visions of Afghanistan as a cultural entity. Highlighting this inherent tension is key to understanding *Āryānā*'s place within the discourse of literary nationalism.

The team that contributed to researching and writing this section included Mir Gholām Mohammad Ghobār, Ahmad Jāwid, Ahmad ‘Ali Kohzād, Khāl Mohammad Khastah, ‘Abdol Haq Bitāb, ‘Abdol Ra‘uf Binawā, ‘Abdol Ghafur Rawān Farhādi, and Mohammad Hosayn Behruz.⁶⁰ Ghobar and Kohzād served as members of the Kabul Literary Association and Afghanistan Historical Society. Bitāb, Afghanistan's last poet laureate, taught at the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters. Jāwid was a graduate of the University of Tehran's doctoral program in Persian literature while Behruz was a graduate of the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters. Rawān Farhādi, who later served as Afghanistan's ambassador to the United Nations, was a lecturer at the University of Kabul. Khastah was a scholar and poet from Bukhara who had moved to Afghanistan in the early twentieth

⁵⁷ *Encyclopedia Āryānā* is, to the best of my knowledge, the first work self-classified as a “*dā‘erat ol-ma‘āref*” in the Persian language. As Eliās Muhanna has noted, the term is an Arabic calque for the pseudo-Greek term “*enkuklo-paideia*” (literally, “child-rearing or training in a circle,” i.e. the circle of arts and sciences), and its usage in this instance is novel. *World in a Book*, 10. Encyclopedism is a more general category that has a long-standing history in the Islamic tradition. Here, I am not broadly referring to works that possess encyclopedic features and techniques or an expansive compilatory scope. What specifically concerns my framing in this article is the encyclopedia as a new informational medium that took shape within a specific disciplinary formation called Persian literature. For a history of Persian-language encyclopedias, see Moqaddasi, *Dāneshnāmeḥ’hā-ye Irāni*.

⁵⁸ The dates of release for other volumes are as follows: second (1951), third (1956), fourth (1962), fifth and sixth (1970).

⁵⁹ This entry on *Encyclopedia Āryānā* clearly underscores this approach. It states: “[The encyclopedia’s] value primarily lies in its articles and titles related to Afghanistan.” It frames the rest of *Encyclopedia Āryānā* as a poorly edited derivative of Iranian and European sources. Anusheh, ed., *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye adab-e Fārsi*, 3:6.

⁶⁰ The latter had earned his bachelor's degree in Persian language and literature from the University of Kabul, connoting the fulfillment of the recently developed discipline of literature within the national educational system. He went to Moscow to earn his PhD and worked with a group of Soviet Orientalists on a critical edition of the *Shahnameh*.

century. And Binawā was a Pashto-language poet and writer. It is important to note the affiliations of these scholars because they demonstrate the extent to which institutional sites of literary production were distinctly co-habitual, whereby graduates of university education end up co-authoring sections of *Āryānā*. This is an example of the self-perpetuation of this institutional process.

More research should be done on *Āryānā*'s drawing on (or lack thereof) different informational ecosystems. Such inquiries could tell us a lot about the varied and multidirectional elements of Afghan intellectual history in this period. For example, in his brief preface to the third volume, Sayyed Ahmad Shah Hāshemi stated that *Āryānā* made extensive use of many European sources in French, German, Russian, Italian, and English.⁶¹ According to Hāshemi, English-language sources predominated. Did the dominance of English have anything to do with the fact that the US embassy had opened in 1941 in Kabul as a prelude to the many Afghan students that were later sent to study in the United States via Fulbright? Concerning non-European sources, did Afghan scholars primarily access those texts through Iranian imprints? Were these imprints recent or from decades earlier? Does the same pattern form when it comes to both literary and nonliterary topics? Arriving at a more nuanced sense of *Āryānā*'s citational ecosystem (and its exclusions) will require a close reading of different entries.

Āryānā's entry on literary history drew on and repurposed a large number of texts reproduced in various time periods and through different discursive practices: biographical dictionaries (*tazkerahs*), poetic anthologies (*jong*), literary histories (*tārikh-e adabiyāt*), *divāns* (collected works), historical studies, periodicals, and lecture notes developed for modern educational institutions. Unlike the linguistic section of *Āryānā*'s literary history that referenced Orientalist knowledge in European languages, the section of New Persian literature only drew on non-European sources. This may be because the conceptual framework and insights of European sources like E. G. Browne's *A Literary History of Persia* had been fairly internalized by Persian-language periodicals and literary histories that proliferated in the first half of the twentieth century.

Among sources used by *Āryānā*'s entry on New Persian literary history, one sees texts primarily produced in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and India: Shibli Nu'māni's *Shi'r ul-'Ajam* (The poetry of Persians), Sadr ol-Din 'Aini's *Examples of Tajik Literature*, Bahār's *Sabk-shenāsi*, Sādeq Rezāzādeh Shafaq's *History of Iranian Literature*, Khāl Mohammad Khastah's personal manuscripts, as well as the journals *Kābol*, *Āryānā*, *'Erfān*, and *Adab*. As Alexander Jabbari has argued, the construction of literary history as a modern genre was necessarily a socially and linguistically mediated act of repurposing and synthesis, not a clean break from the "premodern" modes of literary and cultural production.⁶² What makes these multi-discursive source texts appear seamlessly within a standalone narrative of Afghan literary history is their positioning within the discourse of *adabiyāt*.

Adab(iyāt) and Āryānā

One may ask: Why produce an encyclopedia? The idea that "evolved" nations engage in the production of encyclopedias in order to historicize and showcase their folklore, ethnicity, music, poetry, and other cultural fixtures resonated with scholars around the world in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶³ In this period, the production of ethnically

⁶¹ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:alef-be (A–B).

⁶² Jabbari, "Late Persianate Literary Culture."

⁶³ For example, in an article called "Ahamiyat-e tarjomah" (The importance of translation) in *Kabul* (no. 4, 1931: 31–44), Ahmad 'Ali Khān Dorrāni called on Afghan intellectuals to undertake the translation of 'olum-e jadidah or "modern sciences." As an example, he mentioned "*Dā'erat ol-Ma'āref-e al-Bostāni*" or al-Bustani's encyclopedia (43). For another example that highlights the importance of encyclopedias to the nation-state and its civilizational achievements, see Gholām Jilāni Khān Jalāli, "Dā'erat ol-Ma'ārefhā," *Ā'inah-ye 'erfān* 2.5 (1935): 17–32. This essay, which was published as a series, had been inspired by a similar article in the Arabic-language periodical *al-Hilāl*.

oriented encyclopedias proliferated.⁶⁴ The case of Butrus al-Bustani (d. 1883) is particularly instructive here. In 1876, al-Bustani created the calque *Dā'irat ul-ma'ārif* or “Circle of Knowledge” as a title for his project *Encyclopédie arabe*.⁶⁵ *Encyclopédie arabe* may have been primarily conceptualized by al-Bustani, but it was carried out by a team of collaborators.⁶⁶ It has been dubbed the first modern encyclopedia in Arabic, an assertion made, according to Francesca Bellino, for reasons described below.

As a cultural enterprise, its publication, distribution, and importance would have been difficult to conceive before the rise and accessibility of the printing press. The writing of *Encyclopédie arabe* had been informed by “positivist, empirical, secular, and scientific” forms of knowledge.⁶⁷ If *Encyclopédie arabe* “provided the Arabic reading public with a current catalog, albeit a partial one, of man’s knowledge about his nature, his world and his accomplishments,” then *Āryānā*, produced around three quarters of a century later, provided Persian and Pashto readers with a distilled body of knowledge created by a new disciplinary formation in twentieth-century Afghanistan.⁶⁸

There are other discursive similarities between these two landmark projects. Al-Bustāni’s differentiated use of *adab* is particularly insightful and relevant here, as explained by Bellino:

In the entry on *adab*, al-Bustani distinguishes between the singular (*adab*) and plural (*ādāb*) forms. The former has a technical sense and designates a certain branch (*adab ul-qaḍi* or *adab ul-shā'ir*) of science (*‘ilm ul-adab*) that requires a technical terminology. The latter covers the general meaning of knowledge, as a synonym of *al-‘ulum* and *al-ma'ārif*. In addition, al-Bustani adds the meanings of the various forms derived from the root to those two meanings.⁶⁹

Encyclopédie arabe holds an important place in the conceptual realignment of *adab*, which culminated in its twentieth-century disciplinization as literature across much of the Arabic-speaking world.⁷⁰

Released in 1952, the second volume of *Āryānā* dedicates a five-page entry to *adab*.⁷¹ The entry draws on a number of different sources such as Muhammad Farid Wajdi’s Arabic-language encyclopedic work *Kanz al-‘ulūm wa-l-lughah* (1905), Ja’far Ibn Muhammad Baytī’s *Mawāsim al-adab wa-āthār al-‘Ajām wa-l-‘Arab* (1908), Jalāl Homā’i’s *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Irān* (1930), and an uncited American encyclopedia. The entry defines *adab* as an *‘elm* or science (invoked here in its older sense as any systematized form of knowledge) and ascribes two senses to it, a capacious sense that deals with language in general (*adab-e lesān*) and a narrower sense that is concerned with the literary (*adabiyāt*). The former, more general sense is encapsulated by *adab* as a discourse of proper conduct.

⁶⁴ On *Qazaq sovet èntsiklopediyası* or the *Kazakh Soviet Encyclopedia* (1972–78), for instance, see Baker, “Ethnic Words,” 141–53.

⁶⁵ This Arabic calque generates valences that need to be analyzed. Premodern encyclopedic works utilized different plural nouns as a way of indicating their scope and comprehensiveness. As such, the idea of a circle of knowledges or *ma'ārif* signals a certain continuity with premodern encyclopedic texts. Whereas, *Dā'irat ul-tarbiyah* or *ma'rifaḥ*, a more literal Arabic translation of the corrupted Greek term “enkuklopaideia,” would have signaled more of a departure in that sense. On the other hand, the term “*ma'ārif*” implies a nonspecific sense of knowledge, in comparison to more specific terms like *wafāyāt*, *masālik*, *‘ajā’ib*, or *funun* deployed by premodern texts. See Tuttle, “Educational and Social Worlds.” I am grateful to Cameron Cross for this observation and reference.

⁶⁶ Bellino, “Arabic Encyclopaedias,” 154. Afghan scholars were well aware of al-Bustani’s encyclopedia and referenced it in periodicals such as *Kabul*. For instance, see Ahmad ‘Ali Khan Dorrāni, “Ahamiyat-e tarjomah,” *Kabul* 1, no. 4 (September 1931): 43.

⁶⁷ Bellino, “Arabic Encyclopaedias,” 124.

⁶⁸ Jandora, “al-Bustāni’s *Dā'irat ul-ma'ārif*,” 89.

⁶⁹ Bellino, “Arabic Encyclopaedias,” 153.

⁷⁰ El Shakry, *The Literary Qur'an*; Allan, “How Adab Became Literary.”

⁷¹ *Dā'irat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 2:598–602.

Following this general note, the entry provides two subcategories: the science of *adab* in the East and in the West. In its note on the Eastern iteration of *adab*, Āryānā emphasizes *adab*'s two valences as literary form and proper conduct. It then enumerates different branches that pertain to the science of *adab*, not dissimilar to Āmoli's *Naḡā'es ol-fonun*, and briefly discusses various literary genres in poetry and prose. Āryānā's section on the Western iteration of *adab* similarly ascribes two senses to the idea of literature, one broadly used to refer to a body of written or printed works on any particular subject and a narrower sense to mean literary form. The subentry enumerates different literary genres common in Western European literary traditions. What differentiates the Eastern and Western iterations of *adab*/literature, Afghan scholars argue, is the fact that the etymology of "literature" in European languages mutes any connections to orality while *adab* is not etymologically limited to writing.

Curiously, the term "*adabiyāt*" in Āryānā was itself subsumed under the entry on *adab*. This entry was devoted exclusively to the University of Kabul's Faculty of Letters.⁷² It included a note about the founding of Afghanistan's first department of literature in 1944 and a list of courses such as "Persian Literary History" taught therein. "Faculty of Letters" is quite an appropriate entry to be placed next to *adab* for it not only signifies *adab(iyāt)*'s conceptual transformation and disciplinization within an academic paradigm, but it also demonstrates the co-habitual, multi-generic, and self-perpetuating nature of this historical process. The takeaway here is clear: *adab* does not just seamlessly become *literary* through a handful of texts or even institutions, no matter how seminal they may be. It happens through complex social processes whose local and transregional contexts must be critically examined. The alternative would be to attribute the rise of literature to a taken-for-granted contact with colonial modernity.

Āryānā's entry on *adab* shows that Afghan scholars, and Middle Eastern intellectuals more broadly, were not passively receiving and importing a model of literariness into their local cultures. To the contrary, the formation of *adabiyāt* as literature necessitated grappling with, debating, and reconfiguring concepts such as *adab*. Writing in the 1950s with limited access to primary resources, Afghan scholars displayed a critical awareness of the fact that the idea of *adab*, both in the East and West, was far from fixed or universal.⁷³ The *adab* entry alone demonstrates the precision and inventiveness with which Afghan encyclopedists aimed to define and parse out one of the most culturally consequential and pervasive concepts of their milieu.

Āryānā and the Codification of Literary History

In the early 1930s, the concept of literary history needed to be defined clearly in the pages of journals like *Kābol*. In delineating models for the writing of literary history, Afghan scholars drew on a wide variety of sources, including 'Abbās Eqbāl Āshtiyāni's column "Tārikh-e adabi" in the journal *Dāneshkadeh*, Shibli Nu'māni's *Shi'r ul-'Ajam*, Edward Browne's *A Literary History of Persia*, and many others. By the mid-1950s, literary history posed as a more bounded category, occupying a central place in the national historiography of Afghanistan.⁷⁴

Āryānā's subentry on Afghan literary history included the following sections:

1. Indo-European Languages⁷⁵

⁷² It was titled "Adabiyāt (Fakultah)." *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 2:602.

⁷³ Consider, for instance, a note at the end of the section on *Adab* in the West explaining that the idea of literature as a canon of works on any particular subject is a contemporary usage of the term. *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Two major literary histories of Afghanistan were published in the 1950s. See Kohzād, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghānistān*; Zhubal, *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*. On the latter, see Ahmadi, "The Cradle of Dari."

⁷⁵ Indo-European and Indo-Iranian were separate categories in the encyclopedia. *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:937–43.

2. Vedic Literature as It Relates to Afghanistan
3. Avestan Language and Literature
4. The Origins of Orthography and Its Variations in Afghanistan
5. The Proliferation of Greek Language, Literature, and Orthography in Afghanistan
6. Parthava or the Pahlavi Language and Literature of Khorasan
7. The Reviving and Flourishing of Sanskrit Literature in the Kushan Period in Afghanistan
8. Afghanistan and Middle Persian Literature
9. New Persian Language and Literature

These section headings clearly demonstrate the expansive research scope of Afghan encyclopedists and their inclusive understanding of literary history, which entailed wide-ranging topics such as orthography, literary canon, and scripture. These sections included scholarly discussions on the ways in which such literary traditions as Greek, Sogdian, Sanskrit, and Eastern Middle Persian shaped the literary culture of contemporary Afghanistan. As such, these encyclopedists did not seek to chart the literary history of a territorially defined and self-contained political entity or highlight the role of a single literary tradition at the expense of others. Instead, they aimed to situate Afghanistan within a distinctly multilingual and transregional ecumene. Essentially, Afghan encyclopedists deployed the Indo-European hypothesis in order to weave together fragmented and discontinuous cultural episodes into a national unit that is both geographically and historically coherent. Their emphasis on *Āryānā* as an organizational concept—as opposed to the more contested and limited term “Afghan”—dovetails well with the task of composing a national literary history out of Vedic, Greek, and Persian traditions.

The entry on Afghan literary history opened with the following statement: “A new avenue of inquiry was created in 1876 in linguistics and scholars discovered that there are similarities among European and Indian languages such as Greek, Latin and Sanskrit.”⁷⁶ Inspired by and in response to the work of Sir William Jones, a body of language theories by such linguists as Gaston-Laurent Coeurdoux (d. 1779), Franz Bopp (d. 1867), Jacob Grimm (d. 1863), and Karl Verner (d. 1896) emerged in the nineteenth century that elaborated on the idea of language families.⁷⁷ Afghan encyclopedists offered summaries of these scholars’ work and asserted that formal similarities among languages are explained by the fact that there once existed a single primordial Indo-European tongue, an idea referred to as proto Indo-European by linguists today.⁷⁸ They contended that each Indo-European language is in possession of a unique set of features and that geography is the key factor that determines those unique features.

Indo-European language theory opened new horizons for Afghan scholars who sought to historicize the ethnic constitution of their nation and locate its distinctive place in an emerging cultural configuration within which every nation was imagined as possessing its own unique literary tradition.⁷⁹ This objective found its most lucid expression in the following paragraph, which prefaced subentries on Indo-European languages:

If the speakers of the initial and primordial Indo-European language are enfolded in the layers of prehistory, the speakers of the Indo-Aryan family of languages enter the scene in the beginning of the historical period. They consisted of a series of tribes that used to live in Aryana Vaeja, in the upper range of Syr Darya and Amu Darya, and the domain of their common living extended to the region of Bactria [Bākhtar] in northern Aryana or

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3:408.

⁷⁷ 1876 may refer to the publication year of Verner’s article “Eine Ausnahme der ersten Lautverschiebung” or “An Exception to the First Sound Shift” in the journal *Comparative Linguistic Research*.

⁷⁸ *Dā’erat ol-ma’āref-e Āryānā*, 3:408.

⁷⁹ Mufti, *Forget English!*

present-day Afghanistan. The communal life and position of Aryans or Indo-Aryans has had a significant impact on the literary history of our country, because this living together is what led to the formation of Aryan language(s), from which common Indian and common Aryan languages have derived. The oldest contrasting branches [*shākhah-hā-ye motaqābbelah*] of these languages are Vedic Sanskrit and Avestan languages, which have been identified by present-day linguistic research as the origin of the Indian and Aryan families of languages, respectively.⁸⁰

The idea that the proto Indo-European language originated in present-day Afghanistan was informed by a broader scholarly impetus to shed light on the role of Central Asian languages and cultures in the making of the Sassanian Empire before the advent of Islam and the rise of New Persian in the courts of Persian-using dynasties between the early ninth and tenth centuries. It drew on archaeological findings and historical writings regularly published in journals such as *Āryāna*, the main organ of the Afghanistan Historical Society. This was also an effort to reorient Persian literary history as conceptualized by Iran-centric accounts produced in Tehran.

Iran-centrism refers to the idea that Iran, posited as a primordial geo-cultural entity, is the exclusive and native domain of Persian literature. For instance, Eqbāl Āshtiyāni's series of essays titled "Literary History," which appeared in *Dāneshkadeh* in the late 1910s, offered one of the earliest schemata of Persian literary periodization from an Iran-centric perspective. His schema fragmented previously overlooked Persianate empires whose centers of power fell outside the borders of late Qajar Iran.⁸¹ *Āryānā* focused on Persianate polities such as the Ghurid (879–1215) and Kurt (1244–1381) dynasties, which ruled from a territory most of which falls into what is today Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the authors consistently emphasized the polycentric nature of Persian literary culture.⁸² Afghan encyclopedists' instinct to push against the marginal place assigned to Central Asia has been widely accepted today.⁸³

Highlighting the place of Central Asia as an integral part of a Persian-speaking ecumene, and not as a marginal land in between civilizations, was integral to the reification of an Afghan literary history that was itself subsumed under a larger encyclopedic entry on Afghanistan. The ecumenical and polycentric thrust of *Āryānā*'s literary history, placed within a strictly territorially defined idea of Afghanistan, produced an inherent tension not just in *Āryānā*, but in the making of literary nationalism more broadly. One of the main objectives of the Encyclopedia Association, funded by the Mosāhebān dynasty, was to produce a text at the service of a territorially and ethnically defined idea of Afghanistan. Yet, the final outcome in many ways is counterposed to any parochial and ethno-territorially defined project.

There are two points here that broadly pertain to the study of literary nationalism. Firstly, the discourse of literary nationalism should not be reduced to a singular thrust. In fact, ecumenical and parochial impulses often exist side by side, creating irresolvable tensions, and the extent to which one is muted or animated at the expense of the other should be subject to analysis in individual circles and texts and at different times.⁸⁴ And secondly, it is important to remember that twentieth-century intellectuals were not working within ready-made scholarly models whereby they would import a universal model of literature and literary history into their local environment. Literary histories created in the shadow

⁸⁰ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:408–9.

⁸¹ Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 2.

⁸² For instance, the mass migration of Persian-speaking scholars and poets to Mughal South Asia was marked as a normative event given that the Persian language had made inroads into the subcontinent in previous centuries. See *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:516.

⁸³ For a recent study of the place of Central Asia in shaping Persian and Perso-Islamic empires, see Rezakhani, *Reorienting the Sasanians*. For a study on modern Central Asia, see Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*.

⁸⁴ Marashi analyzes a similar tension between Iranian and Parsi scholars in the 1930s. See *Exile and the Nation*.

of romantic nationalism were seldom aligned with the dominant discourse of power in ways that could be straightforward and predetermined.

Periodizing Persian Literature

The bulk of Āryānā's literary history was focused on New Persian literature, organized as follows:

1. The Persian Language and Literature
 - a. Nomenclature
 - b. The Place of Origin and Development of the Persian Language
 - c. The Earliest Persian-Language Poets
 - i. Oldest Prose Works
 - d. Arab Domination and Arabic-Persian Interplay
 - e. Tahirid Dynasty (821–73)
 - i. Poets
 - f. Saffarid Dynasty (861–1003)
 - i. Poets
 - g. Samanid Dynasty (819–999)
 - i. Samanid Poets
 - ii. Prose in the Samanid Period
 - iii. The Characteristics of Samanid Prose and Poetry
 1. Poetic Style (*Sabk*) and Historical Periods
 - h. The Poetic Style (*Sabk*) of the Ghaznavid Period (977–1186)
 - i. Scientific Production in the Twelfth Century
 - i. Arabic-Language Works by Ghaznavid Scholars
 - j. Literature in the Seljuq Period (1037–1194)
 - k. The 'Erāqi Style
 - l. The Ghurid Dynasty (879–1215)
 - m. Persian Prose in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Centuries
 - n. The Rise of the Mongols and Its Influence on Persian Literature
 - o. The Kurt Dynasty (1244–1381)
 - p. The Timurid Period (1370–1507)
 - q. The Second Period of Persian Prose
 - r. Literary Works of the Sixteenth Century
 - s. Afghan Literature after Sultan Hosayn Mirza (d. 1506)
 - i. The Indian Style or Alternatively, the Style of Modern Poets (*Mote'akherin*)
 - t. The Poets of the Seventeenth Century
 - u. The Third Period of Persian Prose
 - i. The Published Prose Works of the Seventeenth Century
 - v. Afghan Literature from Nāder Shah Afshār (d. 1747) to Mohammad Nāder Shah (d. 1933)
 - i. Afghan Poets of the Twentieth Century
 - ii. The Fourth Period of Persian Prose
 - w. Sources
 - i. Tazkerahs
 - ii. History
 - iii. Literary History
 - iv. Collected Poems (*Divān*)
 - v. Selected Works and Anthologies
 - vi. Collected Periodicals
 - vii. Miscellaneous Works

This section aimed to cover more than a millennium of Persian literary production by placing the works of dozens of Persian-language poets and scholars in historical and stylistic contexts. In conceptualizing and transforming this history into more manageable units, Afghan encyclopedists did not commit to a singular organizing principle. They employed a multitude of methods such as dynastic (e.g. Timurid), fields (e.g. history), stylistic (e.g. Indian), and formal genres (e.g. ghazal). As a result, they represented Persian as a multi-discursive and multi-dynastic literary tradition. The use of both periodological and typological approaches to the writing of literary history, which were often separated under the ethos of Western European modernism, was highly innovative.⁸⁵ This hybrid scheme shows that Afghan scholars resorted to different tools in order to carry out the task of nationalizing Persian as a distinctly polycentric and transregional literary tradition. Writing an Afghan literary history would only be possible in reference to trends, political and linguistic, that took shape outside of the nation-state's territory. *Āryānā* is by no means a singular text in that regard. Recent scholarly works have demonstrated the trans-regional scope and outlook of Afghan historiography in Persian.⁸⁶

The idea of poetic styles and extrapolating a critical vocabulary with which to study them has a long-standing history in Arabic and Persian poetic debates, rhetorical treatises, and *tazkerahs* or commemorative compendia. The question of *sabk* or style was particularly pertinent in twentieth-century Iran and Afghanistan, a certain iteration of which in the form of Mohammad Taqī Bahār's *Sabk-shenāsi* became an integral part of Persian literature as an academic discipline in the 1940s. The idea of *sabk* afforded literary historians a robust mechanism for periodization, a blend of literary typology and strictly political demarcations. It also produced a set of philological features with which scholars and students would attempt to identify undated manuscripts.⁸⁷ By the early 1950s, Bahār's classification of Persian prose (and to a much lesser extent poetry) into the four styles of Khorāsāni, 'Erāqi, Hendi (Indian), and Bāzgasht or Return had become distinct historiographical signposts for more than a millennium of Persian literary production. Bahār's classification was first articulated in the pages of journals such as *Armaḡhān* and *Mehr*, and later published in three volumes commissioned by the University of Tehran. Afghan scholars were in conversation with scholarly trends in Iran.⁸⁸ As such, Bahār's insights entered an encyclopedia entry through *Āryānā*. But this inclusion was far from uncritical.

Under the heading "The Characteristics of Samanid Prose and Poetry," *Āryānā* introduced its readers to the idea of style.⁸⁹

In the Arabic language, *sabk* (or style) means to melt and pour gold or silver. In the terminology of contemporary *odabā'* it refers to a distinct kind of prose or poetry as well as to the comprehension and articulation of ideas through the configuration of words, selection of vocabulary, and modes of expression. The branch of knowledge that discusses different styles in a language is called *Sabk-shenāsi* [Stylistics].⁹⁰

Following this definition, the encyclopedists recognized the fact that the classics (*qodamā*) had their unique critical vocabulary such as *fann* (art or technique), *tarz* (way or method),

⁸⁵ For a critique on separating the two in modern literary historiography, see the opening chapter of Kronfeld's *Margins of Modernism*.

⁸⁶ See Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*; Nawid, "Writing National History"; Green, ed., *Afghan History*; Crews, *Afghan Modern*.

⁸⁷ *Āryānā* itself became available to Iranian readers soon after its publication. We know this because each volume of *Āryānā* would feature notes that were sent to Kabul in praise of the project from other cities, domestic and international. On Iran-Afghanistan literary connections, see Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 4; Rasikh, "Orientalism from Within."

⁸⁸ See Fani, "Becoming Literature," chap. 4; Rasikh, "Orientalism from Within."

⁸⁹ *Dā'erat ol-ma'āref-e Āryānā*, 3:442.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

and *tariqa* (road or pathway), and discussed literary style through many different conceptual frameworks.⁹¹ Ultimately, they argued that Stylistics is a new discourse and few others have contributed to its development more than Mohammad Taqi Bahār.⁹² I left the term “*odabāʿ*” untranslated in the above passage because its valences could not be covered by a single English term. *Adib* broadly refers to someone not only learned but also with a commanding grasp of Arabic rhetorical techniques.⁹³ This reference in *Āryānā* is particularly fascinating since the *odabāʿ* as a class had largely given way to new classes of professionals such as teachers, university professors, and literary scholars. But mediated continuity in forms of knowledge—from which *sabk* was derived—echoes even in a modern encyclopedia composed by a cadre none of whom are professionally called *adib* anymore.

Āryānā's characterization of Bahār's stylistic classification afforded it greater flexibility, adding more caveats to understandings of *sabk* that carried with it certain value judgements about poetic language and comprehensibility. Afghan scholars wrote, “Each style includes many schools and the characteristics [of those schools] differ in nuance but they broadly adhere to the [main] category. Furthermore, there also exist ‘in-between’ styles which have their own masters.”⁹⁴ The recognition that there are other stylistic categories beyond what Bahār had identified in his book added complicated philological approaches to the study of Persian literature. For instance, Afghan scholars did not only explain but also qualified the Khorāsāni style, or “ancient Afghanistan” as they alternatively called it. They added this caveat: the Khorāsāni style may have originated in Khorāsān but it was not strictly limited to that region; the question of style has to do with era not location.⁹⁵ They then offered another important caveat: “In classifying different styles, some have identified a style called Fārs (the region) distinctly separate from the ‘Erāqi style. One should remember that these classifications have a general objective. Should we go by subtle distinctions, one can mention many other styles and even come up with a separate style for each poet.”⁹⁶

The encyclopedists recognized that literary styles need to be carefully qualified and that each stylistic category serves a particular purpose, some general and some more specific. At the core of that recognition lies the idea that *sabk* needs to serve as a descriptive category modified by the specificities of Persian poetry and prose, rather than a fixed analytical category employed to mark sharp historiographical breaks in literary history. Recent scholarly debates on the merit of retaining *Sabk-e Hendi* or the Indian Style as a descriptive category and applying it to the study of Persian literary production from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries have taken into account that, ultimately, *sabk* may not serve as a monolithic and fixed category of aesthetics and that many poets possess their own unique styles.⁹⁷

Bahār's fourth stylistic category was called *Bāzgasht-e adabi* or Literary Return, which he understood as a movement led by Iranian poets emulating “pre-Indian” style poets such as Hāfez, Saʿdi, and Ferdowsi. *Āryānā* shared Bahār's impression that “literary return” as a literary movement was happening in Iran.⁹⁸ But unlike Bahār, *Āryānā* did not give sole primacy

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Adib* as a designation denoted both specific professional skills and many general types of expertise that were usually not mutually exclusive. For more careful definitions of *adib*, see Pickett, *Polymaths of Islam*.

⁹⁴ *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:442.

⁹⁵ Ibid. Similarly, in “Sheʿr beh sabk-e Khorāsāni dar Hend” (Khorāsāni style of poetry in India), Bahār emphasized that poetic style was not determined by the region where it was produced. He examined a few verses by the Persian-language poets of India and claimed that they were composed in the Khorāsāni style. *Mehr* 2, no. 3 (1934): 298–99.

⁹⁶ *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:442.

⁹⁷ Mikkelsen, “Of Parrots and Crows.”

⁹⁸ “... and *bāzgasht* in the styles of Khorāsān and ‘Erāq which has had currency in Iran since the nineteenth century until today.” *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:442. Kevin Schwartz has challenged the idea that Literary Return was happening only in Iran by looking at the ways in which Afghan and Indian poets and *tazkerah* writers were engaged with the work of the masters of Persian poetry in different ways and contexts. *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

to Literary Return by adding the words “or new styles” before each category.⁹⁹ In referring to “new styles,” Afghan scholars broadened their historiographical horizon to include Central Asian poets well beyond Afghanistan from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were overlooked by Bahār’s Iran-centric classification. Similarly, in their characterization of Indian Style poetry (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), the encyclopedists did not exclusively commit to a single category (*Sabk-e Hendi*) by creating an alternative fixture subsumed under “or the style of modern poets.”¹⁰⁰

The crucial inclusion of the disjunctive “or” functioned as a critical mechanism of historiographical rewriting, bringing marginalized and sub-canonical poets back to the center of canonical debates on Persian literary history. It also reflected the broader scholarly impetus of *Āryānā* to highlight Central and South Asia as a formative site in the formation of the Persianate ecumene. In fact, one of the most valuable features of the entry on Afghan literary history is its extensive list of Central and South Asian poets and samples of their work, many of which must have been compiled and edited by Mawlānā Khāl Mohammad Khastah (d. 1973), who played an important role in anthologizing the work of two generations of Persian-language poets in Afghanistan.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

The nation-state as a political formation was entirely new to the Persian literary ecosystem, giving rise to new configurations of identity and social and cultural institutions to produce and safeguard them. But the idea that Persians’ relationships (invoked here in the sense used by Mana Kia) with their textual tradition were mediated by both local and trans-local connections and contestations is not peculiar to the nation-state or its nationalisms. As Kia reminds us, connections to place, self, and community were multiple or “aporetic,” simultaneously accommodating and negotiating different forms of distinction or even opposition.¹⁰² We must then resist the urge to universalize literature as a conceptual category and remain attentive to local knowledge and politics. That is why the work of Mosāhebān-era scholars in producing *Āryānā* must be understood against the backdrop of both local and trans-local cultural and historical contexts.

This article is inspired by and a response to the growing scholarly impetus to interrogate concepts that have been treated as universal and timeless. It is thanks to this body of scholarship that literature is gradually becoming a contested category. Michael Allan’s *In the Shadow of World Literature* examines the most salient features of literature as a modern notion. Allan shifts our attention away from literature as a fixed canon and toward particular reading practices that become enshrined as literary and modern.¹⁰³ Similarly, in *Forget English!*, Aamir Mufti argues that the idea of literary history is an outgrowth of colonial modernity that conceptualizes the world as an assemblage of different civilizations, each in possession of a unique literary tradition.¹⁰⁴ Both studies begin decidedly right *after* the formation of literature as a conceptual category and analyze its impact on our understanding of what counts as literary.

This article unpacked the internal processes by which a new disciplinary formation of literature took form in twentieth-century Afghanistan. Because when we begin only in the aftermath of the inauguration of literature as a modern discourse, it is more likely that we will take for granted the historical process by which literature took anchor and as a result present it as more bounded and settled than it actually is. Such an outlook also runs the risk of affording too much agency to discourses of colonialism in shaping local iterations of

⁹⁹ Schwartz, *Remapping Persian Literary History*.

¹⁰⁰ *Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*, 3:516.

¹⁰¹ His two anthologies include *Moʿaserin-e sokhanwar* and *Yādi az raftagān*.

¹⁰² Kia, *Persianate Selves*.

¹⁰³ Allan, *Shadow of World Literature*.

¹⁰⁴ Mufti, *Forget English!*

literature and literary history. Even though both Allan and Mufti explicitly allude to the conceptual multiplicity of literature in different local contexts, readers may be forgiven for thinking that the idea of literature spread in a modular fashion in the aftermath of colonial modernity. By placing *Āryānā* squarely within a new disciplinary formation, this article strove to show the contingent and multivalent nature of texts produced in the emerging shadow of nation-states.

Further extensive research on the disciplinization of music, education, and literature in Afghanistan will more forcefully challenge the facile idea that the nationalization of Persian literary culture was a strictly Iranian enterprise or that it was a West-East phenomenon, whereby the latter uncritically imported new forms of knowledge and distributed it seamlessly and unproblematically.¹⁰⁵ If there is a single takeaway from this article, it is the following: the cadre of professionals that produced *Āryānā* was committed to a modernist methodology that resisted the conscription of their product into romantic and territorial nationalism. In a sense, their methodology makes visible the inherent desire within nationalism for rendering the past knowable through historical positivism. But since not every element of that past is the desideratum of the nation, there arises an irresolvable tension between a nationally sanctioned past and the past reified through modernist methodologies. This discursive incompatibility and all of its attendant contradictions lie at the heart of Persian literary nationalisms in the twentieth century. The way we read modern texts like *Āryānā* determines the degree to which the nation can emerge as a coherent unit of belonging in our own milieu.

Acknowledgments. I am grateful to colleagues who read and commented on this article: Cameron Cross, Nile Green, Alexander Jabbari, Ali Altaf Mian, Shahla Farghadani, Marjan Wardaki, Sam Hodgkin, Kevin Schwartz, Nicole Ferreira, and the anonymous reviewers of *Iranian Studies*.

Periodicals

- Ādab*. Kabul: Pohanzi-ye adabiyāt va ‘olum-e bashari, 1953–78.
Ā’inah-ye ‘erfān. Kabul: Ministry of Education, 1930–?
Armaghān. Tehran: Anjoman-e adabi-ye Iran, 1920–79.
Āryānā. Kabul: Anjoman tārikh-e Kabul, 1942–86 (published irregularly after 1979).
‘Erfān. Kabul: Vezārat-e ta’lim va tarbiyat, 1950–78.
Herāt. Herat: Anjoman-e adabi-ye Herāt, 1932–80.
Kabul. Kabul: Anjoman-e adabi-ye Kabul, 1931–79.
Mehr. Tehran, 1933–67.
Sāhnāmeḥ-ye majallah-ye Kabul. Kabul: Anjoman-e adabi-ye Kabul, 1932–37.
Serāj ol-akhbār. Kabul: Matba‘ah-e Māshin Khānah, 1911–18.

Bibliography

- ‘Abdollah Khān, Qāri. *Adabiyāt: serf-e sevom-e roshdiyāh*. Kabul: Vezārat-e ma‘āref, 1930/31.
 Ahmadi, Wali. “‘The Cradle of Dari’: The Question of ‘Origins’ in Modern Literary Historiography in Afghanistan.” *Slovo, Presses de l’INALCO* 50 (2020): 41–55.
 Ahmadi, Wali. “Kabul Literary Society.” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2012. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/kabul-literary-society>.
 Ahmadi, Wali. *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form*. London: Routledge, 2008.
 Ahmed, Faiz. *Afghanistan Rising: Islamic Law and Statecraft between the Ottoman and British Empires*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.
 Allan, Michael. *In the Shadow of World Literature: Sites of Reading in Colonial Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.
 Allan, Michael. “How Adab Became Literary.” *Journal of Arabic Literature: Formalism, Orientalism and the Institutions of World Literature* 43 (2012): 172–96.
 Āmoli, Mohammad. *Nafā‘es ol-fonun fi ‘arā‘es ol-‘oyun*. Edited by ‘Abol Hasan Sha‘rāni. Tehran: Eslāmiyeh, 1957.

¹⁰⁵ For a critique of the idea that Persian literature has only been institutionalized in Iran, see “How Do You Say ‘Literary Institution’ in Persian?” in Fani, “Becoming Literature.”

- Anusheh, Hasan, ed. *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye adab-e Fārsi. Vol. 3, Adab-e Fārsi dar Afghanistan*, 126–133. Tehran: Mo'assaseh-ye farhangi va enteshārāti-e dāneshnāmeḥ, 1996.
- Arbabzadah, Nushin. "Modernizing, Nationalizing, Internationalizing: How Mahmud Tarzi's Hybrid Identity Transformed Afghan Literature." In *Afghanistan in Ink: Literature between Diaspora and Nation*, edited by Nile Green and Nushin Arbabzadah, 31–65. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Baker, Christopher Aaron. "Ethnic Words and Soviet Things: Soviet Civilization and the Literature of Late Soviet Kazakhstan." PhD diss., Indiana University, 2019.
- Battis, Matthias. "Soviet Orientalism and Nationalism in Central Asia: Aleksandr Semenov's Vision of Tajik National Identity." *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 729–45.
- Baytī, Ja'far Ibn Muhammad. *Mawāsim al-adab wa-āthār ul-ʿAjām wa-l-ʿArab*. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādah, 1908.
- Bellino, Francesca. "Arabic Encyclopaedias and Encyclopaedism between the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Centuries: Forms, Functions, Intersections of Adab and Modernity." In *Adab and Modernity: A "Civilising Process"?* (*Sixteenth–Twenty-First Century*), edited by Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, 124–67. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Bezhan, Faridullah. "The Pashtunistan Issue and Politics in Afghanistan, 1947–1952." *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 2 (2014): 197–209.
- Constitution of Afghanistan (1964)*. Kabul: Franklin Book Programs, 1964.
- Crews, Robert D. *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Dāʿerat ol-maʿāref-e Āryānā*. Vols. 2–3. Edited by Seyyed Ahmad Shah Hāshemi. Kabul: Matbaʿa-ye ʿomumi-ye Kabul, 1956.
- El Shakry, Hoda. *The Literary Qurʾān: Narrative Ethics in the Maghreb*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019.
- Fani, Aria. "Becoming Literature: The Formation of *Adabiyāt* as an Academic Discipline in Iran and Afghanistan (1895–1945)." PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2019.
- Fani, Aria. "Iran's Literary Becoming: Zokāʾ ol-Molk Forughī and the Literary History That Wasn't." *Iran Namaq* 5, no. 3 (2020): 114–44.
- Farhādi, A. G. Rawān. *Maqālāt-e Mahmud-e Tarzi*. Kabul: Mo'assasah-e enteshārāt-e Bayhaqī, 1977.
- Farhang, Mīr Mohammad Seddiq. *Afghanistan dar panj qarn-e akhir*. Vols. 1–2. Tehran: Enteshārāt-e ʿErfān, 2006.
- Fotuhī, Mahmud. *Darāmadi bar adabiyāt-shenāsi: rāhnāmā-ye osul-e āmuzesh va parvaresh dar adabiyāt-e Fārsi*. Mashhad: Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, 2018.
- Fotuhī, Mahmud. *Nazariyeh-ye tārikh-e adabiyāt: naqd va barrasi-ye tārikh-e adabiyāt negāri dar Irān*. Tehran: Nāzh, 2004.
- Green, Nile. "The Afghan Discovery of Buddha: Civilizational History and the Nationalizing of Afghan Antiquity." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017): 47–70.
- Green, Nile, ed. *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Gregorian, Vartan. *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880–1946*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969.
- Gregorian, Vartan. "Mahmud Tarzi and *Saraj-ol-Akhbar*: Ideology of Nationalism and Modernization in Afghanistan." *Middle East Journal* 21, no. 3 (1967): 345–68.
- Hakala, Walter. "Locating 'Pashto' in Afghanistan: A Survey of Secondary Sources." In *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold Schiffman, 53–88. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Hewādmal, Zalmay. *Roshd-e zabān va adab-e Dari dar gostareh-ye farhangi-ye Pashto zabānān*. Kabul: Etehādiyeh-ye navisandegān-e Afghanistan-e āzād, 1997.
- Homāʾi, Jalāl. *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Irān az qadimtarin ʿasr-e tārikhi tā ʿasr-e hāzer*. Tabriz: Ketābkhāneh-ye adabiyeh, 1930.
- Jabbari, Alexander. "Late Persianate Literary Culture: Modernizing Conventions between Persian and Urdu." PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2017.
- Jandora, John W. "al-Bustāni's *Dāʿirat al-maʿārif*." *The Muslim World* 74 (1984): 71–84.
- Kahduʾi, Mohammad Kāzem, ed. *Adabiyāt-e Afghanistan dar advār-e qadimah (Bargereftah az jeld-e sevom-e Āryānā)*. Tehran: Enteshārāt-e al-Hodā, 2005.
- Khastah, Khāl Mohammad. *Moʿaserin-e sokhanwar*. Kabul: Mo'assasah-e nasharāti-e anis, 1960.
- Khastah, Khāl Mohammad. *Yādi az raftagān*. Kabul: Dawlati matbaʿah, 1965.
- Kia, Mana. *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020.
- Kohzād, Ahmad ʿAli. *Āryānā*. Kabul: Modiriyat-e ʿomumi-ye tārikh, 1942.
- Kohzād, Ahmad ʿAli. *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghānistān*. Kabul: Da Kābul ʿomumi matbaʿah, 1951.
- Kronfeld, Chana. *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1996.
- Laruelle, Marlene. "The Return of the Aryan Myth: Tajikistan in Search of a Secularized National Ideology." *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 1 (2007): 51–70.
- Marashi, Afshin. *Exile and the Nation: The Parsi Community of India and the Making of Modern Iran*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020.
- Mikkelson, Jane. "Of Parrots and Crows: Bidil and Hazīn in Their Own Words." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 37, no. 3 (2017): 510–30.
- Mohammadi Shāri, Showkat ʿAli. "Zabān-e Pārsi, sāzeh-ye howiyyat-e melli-ye Afghanistan." *Belāgh* 49/50 (2015): 205–60.
- Moqaddasi, Mahnāz. *Dāneshnāmeḥ-hā-ye Irāni*. Tehran: Daftar-e pazhuhehshā-ye farhangi, 2006.

- Mufti, Aamir. *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018.
- Muhanna, Elias. *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Nawid, Senzil. "Language Policy in Afghanistan: Linguistic Diversity and National Unity." In *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold Schiffman, 36–52. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Nawid, Senzil. "Writing National History: Afghan Historiography in the Twentieth Century." In *Afghan History through Afghan Eyes*, edited by Nile Green, 185–210. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Nezām-nāmāh-ye asāsi-ye dowlat-e ‘allīya-ye Afghanistan. Kabul: Tab‘iyah-ye majlis-e ‘āli, 1923.
- Perkins, Ryan. "A New Pablik: Abdul Halim Sharar, Volunteerism, and the Anjuman-e Dar-us-Salam in Late Nineteenth-Century India." *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (2015): 1049–90.
- Pickett, James. *Polymaths of Islam: Power and Networks of Knowledge in Central Asia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020.
- Rasikh, Jawan Shir. "Orientalism from Within: The Formative Impact of Iran on Afghan Nationalism in the Twentieth Century." In *Power Hierarchies and Hegemony in Afghanistan: State Building, Ethnic Minorities and Identity in Central Asia*, edited by Shah Mahmoud Hanifi. Tauris Academic Studies, forthcoming.
- Reshtin, Sadiqollah. *Pashto Grāmer*. Kabul: Pashto Tolana, 1948.
- Rezakhani, Khodadad. *Reorienting the Sasanians: East Iran in Late Antiquity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Sakhāwarz, Bashir. *Tarzi va Serāj ol-akhbār*. Tehran: Enteshārāt-e ‘Erfān, 2007.
- Schiffman, Harold F., and Brian Spooner. "Afghan Languages in a Larger Context of Central and South Asia." In *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors*, edited by Harold Schiffman, 1–28. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Schinasi, May. *Afghanistan at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*. Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale: Seminario di Studi Asiatici, 1979.
- Schwartz, Kevin. *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.
- Shāyān, Farid. *Āshenā‘ī bā puhantun-e Kabul*. N.p.: Nashriya-ye ekhtesāsi-ye jadid al-shumulān-e puhantun-e Kabul, 1973/74.
- Stark, Ulrike. "Associational Culture and Civic Engagement in Colonial Lucknow: The Jalsah-e Tahzib." *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 48, no. 1 (2011): 1–33.
- Turwāyānā, Najibollah. *Tārikh-e mokhtasar-e Afghanistan: Āryānā yā Afghanistan*. Peshawar: Al-Azhar, 2000.
- Tuttle, Kelly. "The Educational and Social Worlds of Premodern Arabic Encyclopedism." In *A Companion to World Literature*, Vol. 3 (1451 to 1770), edited by Christopher Lupke and Evan Nicoll-Johnson. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2019.
- Vejdani, Farzin. "Indo-Iranian Linguistics, Literary, and Religious Entanglements: Between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism, ca. 1900–1940." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 435–54.
- Wajdi, Muhammad Farid. *Kanz ul-‘ulūm wa-l-lughah (qāmūs ‘āmm li-l-lughah wa-l-‘ilm)*. Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Wā‘iz, 1905.
- Wardaki, Marjan. "Rediscovering Afghan Fine Arts: The Life of an Afghan Student in Germany, Abdul Ghafur Brechna." *Modern Asian Studies* 55, no. 3 (2021): 1–37.
- Wide, Thomas. "Demarcating Pashto: Cross-border Pashto Literature and the Afghan State, 1880–1930." In *Afghanistan in Ink: Literature between Diaspora and Nation*, edited by Nile Green and Nushin Arbabzadah, 91–112. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Zhubal, Mohammad Haydar. *Tārikh-e adabiyāt-e Afghanistan*. Peshawar: Saba Ketabkhana, 1957.