

**INDIA AND IRAN IN THE *LONGUE DURÉE***

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**UCI** Jordan Center for  
Persian Studies



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

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— 2017 —



*In memoriam*

**Sri Pramod Chandra Chaudhury, 1930-2016**

**Hushang A'lam, 1928-2007**



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## **NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION**

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

# PARSI TEXTUAL PHILANTHROPY: PRINT COMMERCE AND THE REVIVAL OF ZOROASTRIANISM IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY IRAN

Afshin Marashi

## Introduction

During the 1920s and 1930s the Zoroastrian community of Bombay came to play an increasingly active role in the cultural, political, and economic life of Iran. The growing influence of the Parsis in Iran—including their support for the newly established Pahlavi state’s nation-building project—was premised upon a number of factors. First, by the early twentieth century, the Parsi intellectual renaissance of Bombay, which had itself gained increasing momentum since its inception in the early nineteenth century, had produced a vivid historical consciousness on the part of Indian Zoroastrians that Iran was the Parsi community’s ancestral homeland (Ringer 2011, 142-162; Boyce 1979, 196-204; Tavakoli-Targhi 2001). Second, the great prosperity that the Parsis had achieved through their remarkable success in the textile and commercial economy of colonial Bombay had placed enormous resources at their disposal for purposes of philanthropy and investment (Dobbin 1970, 149-164; Dobbin 1996, 77-104; Hinnells 1985, 282-286). From the point of view of many investment and philanthropy-minded Parsi industrial barons of the early twentieth century, building cultural and commercial ties with their ancestral homeland seemed like a natural extension of Parsi enterprise. Third, the great prosperity of the Parsi community of India stood in sharp contrast to the fortunes of the Zoroastrian community remaining inside Iran. Those fortunes had long been in decline, both as a result of the more general economic conditions in Iran during the nineteenth century, and as a result of the added burdens resulting from the Iranian Zoroastrian community’s minority status. Parsi philanthropists watching from Bombay were thus motivated to help alleviate the condition of their co-religionists inside Iran.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the growing Parsi connection to Iran

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<sup>1</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century the population of the Iranian Zoroastrian community had reached the brink of extinction, declining to approximately ten thousand members, mostly concentrated in the cities of Yazd and Kerman in central Iran. (Ringer 2011, 22; Jackson, 1906, 425).

was also enabled by technological changes of the early twentieth century. Steam-powered sea travel between Bombay and Persian Gulf port cities had become commonplace by the 1920s, moving regular cargoes of people and commercial goods (Green 2011, 125). Rail and road construction—as well as transport security—were likewise central pillars of the Pahlavi nation-building project, which in turn greatly facilitated commercial ties between the port cities of the south and the urban centers of Iran’s interior (Clawson 1993, 239-246; Yaghoubian 1997, 1-36). It was these cultural, economic, technological, and infrastructural changes of the early twentieth century that enabled the growing contact between Bombay’s Parsi community and the Iranian nation-building project of the 1920s and 1930s.

One of the most important aspects of this growing relationship was the resources that were invested towards the publication of Zoroastrian-themed Persian-language printed books that were produced under Parsi auspices in Bombay and exported to the growing reading public inside Iran. The goal of this publishing effort was to promote a new awareness of Zoroastrianism among Iranian readers and the general public, dispel common prejudices about the faith held by many in the majority population, emphasize the compatibility of Zoroastrianism with the ethical values of modernity and the enlightenment, and most importantly, highlight the importance of Zoroastrianism as part of Iran’s national history and cultural heritage. By the 1920s the newly established Pahlavi state had adopted Iran’s classical past—including its Zoroastrian heritage—as the basis of a new official nationalism (Marashi 2008). Promoting a new state-sponsored national identity that emphasized this classical heritage became one of the principal activities of Pahlavi-era cultural policy. Books from Bombay, produced under Parsi sponsorship and intended for Iranian audiences, therefore became an important way for Parsi philanthropists to participate in the changes taking place in interwar Iran, and to assist the Pahlavi state in promoting the status of Zoroastrianism as part of a newly emerging national identity.

The Indian subcontinent had long been important to the Persianate literary tradition, and had been a center of Persian-language book production for centuries,<sup>2</sup> largely in the older manuscript traditions, but also increasingly in the newer nineteenth-century technologies of lithography and even typeset printed works.<sup>3</sup> It was, however, only in the early twentieth century—when industrialized forms of typeset book production combined with new efficient technologies of long-distance commercial exchange—that larger-scale networks of book production and circulation connecting Bombay and Iran became possible. These technological and commercial innovations may have enabled the larger-scale production and export of Zoroastrian-themed books from Bombay to Iran; however, the more important set of interests that compelled the Parsi book trade with Iran were not principally determined by market-driven considerations. In fact it is unclear if the

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<sup>2</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have described this tradition as the “Indo-Persian republic of letters” (Alam 2010, 359).

<sup>3</sup> There is a significant literature on the history of Persianate printing (Green 2010a; Green 2010b; Babazadieh 1999; Marzolph 2001; Floor 1990; Afshar 1966).

still relatively high costs of typeset book production and long distance distribution could commercially justify the enterprise of books bound for Iran (Green 2010a, 321; Marzolph 2001, 14). By the logic of “print-capitalism” the Parsi book trade may have been a risky venture, especially for Parsi entrepreneurs who had honed their considerable commercial skills in the China trade.<sup>4</sup> Mill-spun cotton and tins of opium bound for China were seen as profitable commercial ventures, the selling of Zoroastrian books to Iran was, by contrast, an enterprise of an entirely different sort, which had to be justified on other grounds.

Rather than commercial interest, the interwar Parsi book trade with Iran was instead tied to broader goals of religious philanthropy— as well as what might be termed a “quasi-missionary” motive—intended to improve the poor social and economic conditions of the Zoroastrian community residing within Iran, as well to encourage the nationalist revival of Iran’s classical heritage through the ongoing efforts of the new Pahlavi state. This practice of book production for purposes of religious and cultural philanthropy had roots in Bombay’s nineteenth-century colonial history. As others have argued, the evangelical Christian presses of the nineteenth century had long used mass-production of inexpensive Christian-themed printed books in vernacular languages—what Leslie Howsam has called “cheap bibles”— to proselytize the indigenous communities of India, as well as throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas (Howsman 1991). Mass circulating Persian-language printed books on Zoroastrian themes produced under Parsi auspices during the 1920s and 1930s were likely inspired by this practice of book production first pioneered by Christian missionaries. Instead of motives of “print-capitalism” the Parsi book trade with Iran can more appropriately be described as part of a tradition of textual philanthropy, which saw the printing, export, and distribution of books to Iran as part of a larger history of religious charity and cultural philanthropy on the part of Bombay Parsis towards their coreligionists within Iran and towards their ancestral homeland as a whole. Unlike their Christian missionary counterparts, however, evangelism and proselytism were never goals of Parsi-sponsored textual philanthropy. Nevertheless, the Zoroastrian-themed books bound for Iran were intended to promote a new understanding about Zoroastrianism that would help to elevate the status of the faith in the eyes of Iranians, and help bring Zoroastrianism into the center of debates surrounding Iran’s national identity.

The books produced as part of this tradition of textual philanthropy were mostly published under the auspices of two important organizations: the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman (Patel 2008; Ringer 2011, 190-191; Jamaspasa 2012). Both of these organizations were based in Bombay and were involved in a wide range of charity activities. The Iran League was established in 1922 and was the successor organization to the Persian Zoroastrian Amelioration Fund, which had itself been established by the Petit industrial family of Bombay in 1854 for the purpose of sending charity to the Zoroastrian communities in the Iranian cities of Kerman and Yazd. In addition to its interest in book production, the Iran League, like its predecessor, continued the tradition of raising funds

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<sup>4</sup> The centrality of profit is a key feature of most discussions of the early history of print technology (Anderson 1991, 38; Febvre 1991 [1958], 248-250).

from the Parsi community of Bombay for the building of schools, hospitals, and orphanages for the Zoroastrian communities of Iran. The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, which was established in 1917, had its focus on assisting the growing number of Iranian Zoroastrian immigrants who had made the journey from Iran to Bombay. As travel between Iran and India was facilitated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the growing Iranian Zoroastrian population of Bombay and western India—who had come to be known by the moniker of “Irani”—became themselves the focus of charity on the part of Bombay’s already established Parsi community, and were given assistance in the social transition to life in Bombay, including with respect to housing and employment (Hinnells 2005, 79-81; Kestenberg Amighi 1990, 129-137; Kulke 1974, 35).<sup>5</sup> Despite their slightly different areas of focus, both the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman cooperated towards the common goal of raising funds for the publication of Persian-language typeset printed books on Zoroastrian themes intended for export to Iran.

### **Kaikhusrav Shahrukh and Bombay Textual Philanthropy**

Between 1919 and 1939 these two Bombay-based Zoroastrian organizations were remarkably active in sponsoring and publishing numerous books on Zoroastrianism and ancient Iranian history intended for export to audiences inside Iran. Among the earliest of these Parsi-sponsored books is Kaikhusrav Shahrukh’s (1875-1940) *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* (*The Illumination of the Mazda Religion*), originally published in a 1909 Tehran edition, but then again in a 1919 Bombay edition produced through the auspices of Parsi textual philanthropy.<sup>6</sup> In the history of Bombay-based Iranian book production, Kaikhusrav Shahrukh’s *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* can best be described as a transitional work. It was not a book that was originally published under the direct sponsorship of the Iran League or the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, nor was it a book that was written for the purpose of promoting the cultural policies of Pahlavi nation-building, having originally been written more than a decade before the establishment of the Pahlavi state. Likewise, unlike typeset books that became the mainstay of book production sponsored by the Bombay-based Zoroastrian organizations of the 1920s and 1930s, Shahrukh’s work remained, in both its 1909 and 1919 editions, as part of the print tradition of lithography. Nevertheless, in a number of discernable ways the book bears the unmistakable signs of a work shaped by the milieu of the Parsi scholarly community of Bombay, as well as the growing tradition of Parsi textual philanthropy.

Kaikhusrav Shahrukh came into contact with the Parsi intellectual community during his time in Bombay, where he lived for at least one year sometime in the late

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<sup>5</sup> For a more general discussion of Parsi philanthropy see also Bulsara 1935.

<sup>6</sup> This work went through several editions during the twentieth century. See, Shahrukh 1909, 1919, and 1949. All three of these editions were in lithographed form. More recently the book was published in a 2001 typeset edition. See, Shahrukh 2001. This edition has significant changes in organization and content in comparison to the earlier editions. It has since been issued in five printings.

1890s, after having received his early education in Kerman, and his subsequent secondary education at the American missionary school in Tehran (Ringer 2011, 184-185; Shahrukh 1994, 2-4; Shahmardan 1961, 561-574). It was during his secondary schooling in Tehran, where Shahrukh excelled in the study of English, that he was encouraged to travel to Bombay to further his education. Shahrukh's time in Bombay was spent at the Jamshedji Jejeebhoy Madressa, one of the important Zoroastrian schools established in Bombay by the Parsi community of the nineteenth century (Shahrukh 1994, 4; Modi 1914, 477-483). Shahrukh's education in Kerman, Tehran, and Bombay proved a worthy foundation for his subsequent career. Following the victory of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905, he was elected to the newly established Majles, and spent the rest of his life as the principal Zoroastrian representative in the Iranian parliament. He also became an early supporter of Reza Shah, and played an active role in many of the subsequent cultural policies of the new Pahlavi state during the 1920s and 30s.

His *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā*, published after his initial election to the Majles—in a 1909 Tehran lithographed edition—is perhaps the first Persian-language text on Zoroastrianism that is rooted in the modernist intellectual tradition of the Bombay Parsi community. As Shahrukh details very clearly in the introduction to this work, he based his understanding of Zoroastrianism directly on the writings of the Parsis, as well on the writings of scholars from Europe and America that he came into contact with through Parsi intermediaries (Shahrukh 1919, 2). His intention in writing the book, he explains, was to bring to the attention of his Iranian readers the “new sciences” (*‘ulūm-i jadīd*) regarding the faith that were then circulating among the scholars of Bombay, Europe, and America (Shahrukh 1919, 3). He goes on to say that very little was available in the Persian language that could help Iranians to become aware of a new intellectual movement underway among European, American, and Parsi scholars regarding a “true” and “certified” knowledge of Zoroastrianism, what he described in the introduction to the text as a “new awareness and understanding” regarding the faith (*bīnīsh va danīsh-i naw*) (Shahrukh 1919, 3). The goal of publishing the *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā*, he says, was to make these ideas available to readers inside Iran, as he states, “...in order that the new knowledge not remain useless” (Shahrukh 1919, 4). The substantive chapters of the book contain a combination of Shahrukh's own writings, which are in keeping with a modernist interpretation of Zoroastrianism, emphasizing its essential monotheism and compatibility with the moral and ethical teachings of the Abrahamic faiths. The 1909 and 1919 editions of the book also include short excerpted translations from Parsi, European, and American experts on Zoroastrianism.<sup>7</sup>

More important for the present discussion is not only the religious and intellectual

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<sup>7</sup> The translated selections, which comprise the bulk of the text in the 1909 and 1919 editions, include excerpts from Dastur Jivanji Jamshidji Modi (one of the most prominent Parsi scholars of Bombay), Annie Besant (the principal organizer of the Theosophical Society in India), Lawrence H. Mills (Professor of Zoroastrianism and comparative religion at Oxford University), and Samuel Laing (a popular science writer of turn-of-the-twentieth century Britain). In the later editions of this work, these excerpted translations have been removed from Shahrukh's text.



content found in Kaikhusraw Shahrukh's *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā*, but rather the details that the book provides regarding the manner of its production and circulation. In the history of textual philanthropy emanating from Bombay to Iran in this period it is often difficult to detail the process of distribution and circulation of these texts. More often the content of the texts and the manner of their production are easier to document than are questions of how these books *travelled* or in determining *how they were read*. In the case of Shahrukh's *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā*, however, we are able to answer some of these questions through the aid of an important appendix that Shahrukh included in both the first Tehran edition of 1909, as well as the second edition of 1919 published in Bombay (Shahrukh 1909, 303-310; Shahrukh 1919, 299-304). In this intriguing appendix Shahrukh includes eight double-columned pages, after the main body of the book's narrative, listing the names of those whom he calls the book's "subscribers" (*mushtarikīn*) (Shahrukh 1909, 303; Shahrukh 1919, 299). These subscribers, he explains, are those who provided financial assistance used to cover the cost of the book's publication. The eight-page appendix consists of a list of names organized by the subscribers' city of residence, and by number of copies of the book sponsored through pre-purchase by each subscriber. In the 1909 edition of the *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* the cities of Tehran, Isfahan, Kerman, Kashan, and Yazd are listed, and the total number of "subscribers" amounts to two hundred and seventy-five. The appendix also indicates the number of copies each subscriber pre-purchased, from a high of five hundred copies purchased by Arbab Jamshid Purbahman of Tehran, to the more common number of between 5 and 10 copies purchased by other subscribers (Shahrukh 1909, 303). The names of the subscribers in the 1909 edition also seem to indicate that most of the subscribers were members of Iran's Zoroastrian community, and some entries provide details indicating that the purchasers were connected to merchant houses (*tijārat-khānihs*) owned by Zoroastrian commercial families, principally from Kerman (Shahrukh 1909, 303). The cumulative number of copies produced in the 1909 edition, as indicated in this appendix, amounts to a total run of approximately two thousand five hundred lithographed copies, and unusually large number for a book published in the lithograph tradition. Some of these copies may have been purchased by subscribers for the purpose of resale, others were more likely distributed by these "patron-subscribers" to others within the Zoroastrian community, as well as to non-Zoroastrians free of charge, as part of the larger goal of spreading the new knowledge about Zoroastrianism among the reading public inside Iran.

The second edition of this important work—which is the Bombay edition of 1919—also includes a subscribers' appendix, and includes similar information about those who sponsored the publication of this edition. Clearly the Parsi community of Bombay had recognized the significance of Shahrukh's *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* for disseminating new knowledge about Zoroastrianism inside Iran, and deemed this work worthy of sponsorship for a second edition. The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay had in fact been formally established just two years earlier, in 1917, and saw charity and philanthropic activities, including book publication, as part of its mission.

The information included in the appendix of the 1919 edition reveals a number of important details. First, the 1919 Bombay edition was published in a substantially larger

number, totaling almost twice the number of copies as the first Tehran edition, at just below five thousand copies. Additionally, the second edition confirms the great interest that was shown by the Parsi community in sponsoring the second printing of this text, with the vast majority of the “subscribers” of the 1919 edition listed as residents of Bombay. The list of subscribers in fact includes numerous names that will be familiar from the subsequent history of Parsi textual philanthropy during the 1920s and 1930s, names such as Peshotanji Marker, a prominent Parsi merchant from Bombay who would go on to sponsor the significant “Marker Avestan Series.”<sup>8</sup> He personally sponsored two hundred lithographed copies of the 1919 edition of Shahrukh’s *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* (Shahrukh 1919, 299). Likewise, the name of Dinshah Irani, one of the key founders of the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, and the author and publisher of numerous Perisan-language books on Zoroastrian topics, is also listed as a subscriber-patron of the *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā*; he sponsored twenty-five copies (Shahrukh 1919, 300).<sup>9</sup>

Other names on the list of *mushtarikīn* seem to indicate members of the successful Iranian-Zoroastrian expatriate community of Bombay. The number of Iranian immigrants to Bombay by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had reached significant numbers, especially Iranian-Zoroastrians from the cities of Kerman and Yazd.<sup>10</sup> The appendix to the 1919 edition lists numerous sponsors who were residents of Bombay with names indicating that they are originally from Iranian cities, such as Aqa Khudasad Gushtasb Kirmani, who sponsored the publication of three hundred copies of the work (Shahrukh 1919, 299). Numerous other Kermanis are also listed in Shahrukh’s 1919 subscribers’ appendix. Most significant of all, however, is the first textual evidence of the publishing activities of the “Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman” of Bombay, which is listed in the appendix as the principal sponsor of the 1919 Bombay edition, with the pre-purchased sponsorship of five hundred copies (Shahrukh 1919, 299). The Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman of Bombay went on— along with the Iran League— to participate in an extensive publication enterprise later in the 1920s and 1930s of producing books in Bombay that were bound for Iran. Their significant involvement in the sponsorship of the 1919 Bombay edition of the *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* established an important precedent for these later efforts.

Kaikhosrow Shahrukh’s *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* is therefore significant for several reasons. Not only is it noteworthy for the eclectic content of new scholarship on Zoroastrianism, that it made available to Iranian readers perhaps for the first time, but it

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<sup>8</sup> Peshotanji Marker (1871-1965) became perhaps the most generous of the twentieth century Parsi philanthropists. In the area of print philanthropy he most famously sponsored the “Marker Avestan Series” beginning in the 1920s, which published Ibrahim Purdavud’s Avestan translations, discussed below. Marker also made major contributions to social services and development projects in the city of Yazd. See Lohrasp 1966.

<sup>9</sup> On the life and work of Dinshah Irani, see Marashi, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> For discussions of Zoroastrian migration in the nineteenth century, see Hinnells, 2005; Kestenberg Amighi, 1990.

is also noteworthy as an indication of the increasingly deliberate and organized role played by the Zoroastrian community of Bombay in promoting the publication of Zoroastrian-themed books intended for audiences of Iranian readers. While the *Furūgh-i Mazdāyasnā* was merely a single text, it is nevertheless important as a significant foreshadow of the Parsi textual philanthropy that quickly took on even greater proportions during the 1920s and 1930s.

### **Ibrahim Purdavud's Bombay Books**

Perhaps the most important textual collaboration in this history of Parsi-sponsored book production was between the Iranian scholar Ibrahim Purdavud (1885-1968) and the Parsi community of Bombay. This collaboration took place during the 1920s and 1930s and came to mark the most prolific stage in the history of Parsi textual philanthropy vis-à-vis Iran, producing a series of works that became canonized texts in the revival of Iran's pre-Islamic past during the twentieth century.

Ibrahim Purdavud was a towering figure in twentieth-century Iran's intellectual history (Purdavud 1946; Mostafavi 1992; Nikuyeh 1999). He spent the years immediately before and after World War I in Beirut, Baghdad, Paris, and Berlin where he became intimately acquainted with the traditions of French, German, and English oriental studies. He was also, perhaps most famously, a member of the "Berlin Circle" of Iranian expatriate activist-intellectuals who cooperated with the Germans during the war in charting a new nationalist political and cultural course for Iran (Bihnam 2000, Matin Asgari 2014; Marashi 2008, 49-56, 76-85). The members of this group, which included other luminaries in the early twentieth-century intellectual history of Iranian nationalism such as Hasan Taqizadīh, Husain Kazimzadīh, and Muhammad Jamalzadīh, published a series of periodicals from Berlin between 1916 and 1927, most famously *Kāvīh*, which advocated for a new political birth of Iranian nationalism. Like many other members of the Berlin circle, after the war, Purdavud went on to have an illustrious career in Iranian public life and academia. Until his death in 1968, at the age of eighty-three, Purdavud served as Professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Tehran, became the founder of the University's Institute for Iranian Studies, and trained a generation of students in subjects relating to Iranian philology, Zoroastrian studies, and pre-Islamic Iranian history. As part of these efforts, and as one of the key intellectual founders of what became the official Pahlavi culture of mid-century Iran, Purdavud also became a prolific author, often of books that were designed for general audiences.<sup>11</sup>

Significantly, the first stage of Purdavud's prolific post-WWI career took place in Bombay, where he spent the years between 1924 and 1927, at the invitation of the Iran League.<sup>12</sup> The Zoroastrian community inside Iran had become aware of Purdavud's linguistic and scholarly talents as a result of his training in France and Germany and recommended him to the Parsis of Bombay as a worthy recipient of a grant to facilitate

<sup>11</sup> A complete bibliography of Purdavud's writings can be found in Mustafavi (1992, 387-463).

<sup>12</sup> Purdavud spent an additional year in India during the year 1934-35. See Marashi (2010, 72).

his further studies (Hinnells 2005, 80).<sup>13</sup> It was the Iran League—in particular the efforts of the Iran League’s impresario President, Dinshah Irani—who facilitated Purdavud’s travel to India and his subsequent activities with the Parsi scholarly community of Bombay (Hinnells 1985, 283). During Purdavud’s two-and-a-half-year stay in Bombay, he spent his time studying with Parsi scholars at key religious and academic institutions, as well as lecturing to audiences about issues relating to Iran and India’s shared civilizational heritage (Mostafavi 1992, 44-53, 119-125). The result of Purdavud’s time in India, and his collaboration with the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, was the publication of a series of books that became integral to popularizing the cultural foundations of the Pahlavi state’s official nationalism.

Between 1925 and 1933 Purdavud and the Parsis published no less than ten Persian-language typeset printed books in Bombay. These books circulated both within India and were also exported to the growing reading market inside Iran. The first of Purdavud’s Bombay books was a slim one hundred-page pamphlet titled *Irānshāh*, published in Bombay under the sponsorship of the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman in 1925 (Purdavud 1925).<sup>14</sup> The content of the *Irānshāh* can be described as a modern retelling of the story found in the *Qissih-yi Sanjān*, the sixteenth-century versified narrative written in Persian containing the myth-history of the Zoroastrian migration to India following the seventh-century Arab-Muslim conquest of Iran. While the historicity of the *Qissih-yi Sanjān* has been questioned by many scholars, including by nineteenth-century Parsi scholars—and by Purdavud himself—the *Irānshāh* nevertheless uses the narrative of the *Qissih-yi Sanjān* as one basis for a modern Persian prose retelling of the Parsi exodus story, this time in a narrative produced for an audience of twentieth-century Iranian readers.<sup>15</sup>

The retelling of the Parsi exodus story in the pages of a modern mass-circulating printed book was perhaps necessary. By the early decades of the twentieth century the Iranian lay population—even its then growing, literate, and educated middle class—was only dimly aware of Iran’s Zoroastrian heritage, or the existence of a living history of Iranian-Zoroastrianism that continued to survive in the form of the Parsi community of India. The intent of the *Irānshāh* volume, therefore, was precisely to introduce an audience

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<sup>13</sup> Purdavud’s connection with the Parsis was also established through the introductions made by Muhammad Qazvini, the longtime Iranian scholar-resident in Paris during the period from 1904-1939. Qazvini’s Paris apartment had become a salon, which Iranian intellectuals such as Purdavud as well as others, including visiting Parsis, would frequent. Qazvini and Purdavud had also both resided in Berlin during the war years, and collaborated in the publication of *Kavih*. Dinshah Irani writes in the introduction to Purdavud’s translation of the Gathas that Qazvini had endorsed Purdavud as a worthy candidate for Parsi sponsorship. See Purdavud (1927, translator’s note). For more on the life and work of Muhammad Qazvini see, Ansari (1990); I am grateful to Farzin Vejdani for this reference.

<sup>14</sup> The title of this book comes from the name given by the Parsis to the sacred fire at the *atash bahram* at Udvarda, close to the presumed arrival point of the Zoroastrian migrants to India following the seventh century Arab-Muslim conquest of the Sassanian Empire.

<sup>15</sup> On the *Qissih-yi Sanjān* see Williams (2009, 1-40).

of Iranian readers to what was now becoming viewed as a shared Indo-Iranian cultural heritage linking the Parsi community of India to Iran.

There were a number of other books that were published during or immediately after Ibrahim Purdavud's time in Bombay, which added to the corpus initiated by the *Irānshāh* volume. These additional texts include a collection of short and highly accessible essays written by Purdavud titled *Khurramshāh*, also published in Bombay, in 1926, again under the joint sponsorship of the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman (Purdavud 1927). The essays collected in this volume were drawn originally from lectures that Purdavud had delivered during his years in India, most of which he had delivered to audiences of Parsi priests, scholars, as well as to the general public in Bombay, Udvarda, Puna, and other centers of Indian Zoroastrianism. Some of these lectures had been simultaneously translated into Gujarati, through the efforts of the Iran League, and published separately in Bombay periodicals connected to the Parsi community, such as *Jām-i Jamshīd* and *Qaisar-i Hind* (Purdavud 1927, title page notation).<sup>16</sup>

The mission of Parsi-sponsored textual exchange was in this case—not only to produce Persian language material for an audience of Iranian readers—but instead to make the Parsi community of Bombay aware of the new culture of neo-classicism then taking shape inside Iran. The translation and publication of Purdavud's *Khurramshāh* essays in Bombay's vernacular press worked to serve this part of the mission associated with Parsi-sponsored textual philanthropy. In fact the publication of bilingual texts—in particular Persian-English bilingual texts—was common among the books published as part of the collaboration between Ibrahim Purdavud and the Parsis. These bilingual books helped to facilitate the circulation of these texts, not only as export commodities for an Iranian audience of readers, but in many cases also for the local Bombay audience of Parsi readers whose vernacular languages generally did not include Persian, but were principally limited to English and Gujarati.

Perhaps the most important bilingual book circulating between India and Iran, which was likewise published in Bombay through the collaboration of Purdavud and the Parsis, was a collection of Purdavud's poetry titled *Pūrāndukht-nāmih* ("The Book of Pūrāndukht"), published in 1928 (Purdavud 1928).<sup>17</sup> In addition to his skills as a scholar of pre-Islamic Iranian history and languages, as well as of Zoroastrian studies, Ibrahim Purdavud was also an accomplished poet of the modern Persian language.<sup>18</sup> While his productivity as a poet was not on the order of other Persian poets of the twentieth century, he nevertheless began producing Persian verse at a relatively early age and continued writing poetry for many years. His fascination with pre-Islamic Iranian history and Iran's Zoroastrian heritage also came to shape much of his poetic imagination, and his elegies invoking the memory of Iran's lost classical past became one of the central themes in his

<sup>16</sup> The weekly *Jām-i Jamshīd* began publishing in 1829. The *Qaisar-i Hind* began publishing in 1880. They were the two principal Gujarati periodicals serving Bombay's Parsi community.

<sup>17</sup> The collection was named after Purdavud's daughter "Pūrāndukht".

<sup>18</sup> E.G. Browne situates Purdavud alongside Bahar. See, Browne (1983 [1914], 289).

poetry.<sup>19</sup>

It was precisely because of Purdavud's invocation of Iranian neo-classicism via the idiom of modern Persian poetry, that his Bombay patrons took an interest in publishing his *Pūrāndukht-nāmih* in 1928. The book was produced in a bilingual Persian-English edition and circulated in both India and Iran. Purdavud's friend and principal Parsi interlocutor, Dinshah Irani, produced the English-language renderings of Purdavud's poems for this bilingual anthology. Funding for the publication was procured from the estate of the recently deceased Parsi philanthropist Pestonji Dhunjibhoy Patel. The endowment allowed the Iran League to inaugurate the "Patel Iranian Book Series" devoted to promoting "studies in the history, literature, and philosophy of ancient and modern Iran" (Purdavud 1928, front matter).

Purdavud's *Pūrāndukht-nāmih* is also significant because the subsequent history of this book provides us with more details regarding the circulation of the Bombay-produced printed texts once they reached Iran. As indicated above we know that the commercial contact between Bombay and Iran was greatly facilitated through the expansion of steam navigation during the course of the nineteenth century, as well as the investments in road and rail construction that took place during the Reza Shah period. These changes in technology and infrastructure greatly enabled the circulation of books—along with other goods and commercial commodities—between India and Iran. It is, however, difficult to know with much precision how these books from Bombay circulated once they reached Iran; in the case of the *Pūrāndukht-nāmih*, however, we can give some details regarding this question. This information comes to us from an obituary for Ibrahim Purdavud published after his death in 1968, written by the Iranian historian and bibliographer Iraj Afshar (1925-2011). The obituary by Afshar provides an account of Purdavud's scholarly and literary achievements over the course of his long and productive career, but more important for our present purposes are the obituary's details regarding Afshar's own initial encounter with the writing of Purdavud (Afshar 1970, 559-70). Afshar writes,

Thirty years ago, while I was completing my elementary education at Tehran's Zoroastrian school....the Zoroastrian Society gave me a collection of Purdavud's poems by the name of *Pūrāndukht*...Their intention in giving me this gift was to familiarize the students of their school with the culture of ancient Iranian Zoroastrianism. Very often I would read his patriotic poems. Portions of those poems have remained in my memory. (Afshar 1970, 560)

The Zoroastrian Society to which Afshar refers is the Anjuman-i Zartushtian, the Iran-based Zoroastrian organization, which had been established along the lines of the Parsi Panchayat of Bombay in the mid-nineteenth century with the help of Parsi emissaries to Iran (Ringer 2011, 149; Kasheff 2011). By the 1920s and 1930s, the Anjuman-i Zartushtian

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<sup>19</sup> Purdavud was also one of the chief proponents of 'pure Persian' poetry, devoid of Arabic loanwords. See Browne (1983 [1914], 292).

had become active in many areas of Iran's cultural life, including the establishment of primary and secondary schools in a number of Iranian cities. While built primarily to serve Iran's Zoroastrian school-age population, the schools were also open for enrollment to students, such as Afshar, from other religious backgrounds. Among the schools funded by the Anjuman-i Zartushtian were the Shapur Elementary School and the Firuz Bahram High School, both schools built in Tehran (Kasheff 2011; Shahrukh 1994, 22-23). As Iraj Afshar indicates in his obituary for Purdavud, it was during his early teens while he was a student at the Shapur Zoroastrian School in the late 1930s that he came into contact with Purdavud's *Pūrāndukht-nāmih*, approximately ten years after the book's original publication. This detail provides textual evidence regarding the manner of this book's circulation. As Afshar's account suggests, there were established networks of contact and textual exchange linking the Zoroastrian community of Iran with its counterpart in Bombay, and these networks facilitated the distribution of Bombay-published books inside Iran. In this case we can in fact document the young Iraj Afshar reading the Zoroastrian-inspired poetry of Ibrahim Purdavud's *Pūrāndukht-nāmih* as part of the curriculum of Tehran's Shapur Zoroastrian School in the late 1930s.

In addition to textual distribution through Zoroastrian schools and religious associations, we can also point to additional evidence regarding other methods of circulation. This evidence highlights the connection between the Bombay-published books and the larger context of the social and cultural changes taking place in early twentieth-century Iran, specifically pointing to the connection between a new commercial economy of book consumption and the changing urban morphology of Iran's major cities during the 1920s and 1930s.

In the early twentieth century, the economy of the modern bookstore, as a new urban site where the buying and selling of books took place, stood alongside the still enduring traditions of the specialized book seller and the often itinerant "book peddler" (Marashi 2015, 96). The latter either worked with individual patrons to produce hand-scribed manuscript copies of books, or sold books in the once thriving but now declining economy of the lithograph tradition (Pedersen 1984, 50; Mahdi 1995, 1-16; Marzolph 2001; Green 2010a; Nafisi 2002, 147-149). By the 1930s, the growth of a nationwide Iranian system of education had produced rapidly expanding social strata of new Persian-language readers on an unprecedented scale (Mathee 1993, 333-334; Schayegh 2009). The effect of this growing supply of readers-consumers was to produce new sites of book circulation within Iran's cities that catered to the new tastes and habits of this growing class of citizens educated in the modern public school system. In practice this meant that the social changes in Iran during the 1920s and 1930s, as engendered by the expanding education system, combined with the changes in the urban morphology of the major cities, to produce "modern bookstores" as new sites for the buying and selling of books. The newly literate graduates of the recently established public schools were also increasingly habituated towards the ocular experience of typeset printed texts, in contrast to the older hand-scribed manuscript texts, which had traditionally monopolized the visual and aesthetic experience of reading in the Persian language (Marzolph 2001, 14-15). One of the effects of modern schooling was in fact to train a new social stratum of Iranian

Persian-language readers in the new visual habit of seeing the Persian language in printed typeset form. These textual tastes and visual habits were congruent with new commercial practices associated with the modern experience of book circulation. As Tehran's urban landscape increasingly took on the form of a modern urban space, modern bookstores likewise emerged as sites for the distribution of new printed books intended for this expanding reading market (Marashi, 2015, 97).

The Bombay books produced in the collaboration between Ibrahim Purdavud and the Parsis of Bombay found a perfect home in the new bookstores of Iran's major cities. Tehran, in particular, served as a major site for the sale of books imported from Bombay. Some of the Bombay books in fact provide details regarding the places in both India and Iran where they were sold. For example, the 1928 publication of the first edition of Muhammad Qazvini's (1877-1949) famous collection of essays, the *Bīst Maqālih-yi Qazvīnī* ("Twenty Essays by Qazvini") (Qazvini 1928)—edited by Ibrahim Purdavud and published in typeset form in Bombay by the Iran League<sup>20</sup>—included a colophon and advertising page that tell us precisely where it and the other books sponsored by the Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman were sold (Qazvini 1928, front matter).<sup>21</sup> It tells us, for example, that these books could be purchased in Bombay at the offices of the Iran League on Cama Street, and at the offices of the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman on Cawasji Patel Street. The colophon also indicates where the book could be purchased inside Iran, listing two bookstores in Tehran: one on Lalihzar Street and the other on Nasiriyih Street.<sup>22</sup> Both of these bookstores were located in new commercial zones in central Tehran that by the late 1920s had become hubs of pedestrian activity connected to the social and cultural changes taking place in the city. Purdavud's most significant work—the translation of the Gathas (Purdavud 1927) and the Yashts (Purdavud 1928)—both also published via the typographic method through the auspices of the Parsis during his years in Bombay, were also listed as available for purchase in Tehran's new bookstores.

Other more popular and broadly accessible writings, such as Dinshah Irani's 1927 *Paik-i Mazdāyasnān* ("Messenger of Zoroastrianism), his 1928 work, *Akhlāq-i Irān-i Bāstān* ("The Morals of Ancient Iran")<sup>23</sup>—which sold-out in its first printing only to be re-issued in a 1930 second edition—and his 1933 work *Falsafih-yi Irān-i Bāstān* ("The Philosophy of Ancient Iran"), also gained significant circulation inside Iran through Zoroastrian

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<sup>20</sup> There were numerous other editions of this work later in the century, the first an expanded edition appeared in 1934 co-edited by Abbas Iqbal and Ibrahim Purdavud, and was published in Iran. This edition was later reissued in the early 1950s after the death of Qazvini. Qazvini's writings remain in print in numerous collections produced since the 1980s. The original Bombay edition of 1928 included an English-language introduction by Dinshah Irani, which does not exist in subsequent editions.

<sup>21</sup> The other books listed in the advertising page include the *Irānshāh*, *Khurramshāh*, and the *Pūrāndukht-nāmih*, as well as several other volumes that had been published as of 1928.

<sup>22</sup> Nasiriyih Street was renamed Nasir Khusraw Street at around this time.

<sup>23</sup> "Shādravān Dīnshāh Irānī," *Andīshih-yi Mā*, (1946) 1:5, gives the publication history of this book.



textual networks linking India and Iran, as well as via modern bookstores now emerging in major urban commercial centers. Most of the Bombay books also indicate that they were published in both a more expensive hardcover price (*jild-i khūb*) and a cheaper softcover (*jild-i m'amūlī*) version. This differential pricing is perhaps another indication of the modern techniques of distribution and sale associated with these new textual commodities that were exported from Bombay and found their way to the bookstores of Iran's new commercial districts.

### Conclusion

The history of these books from Bombay highlights a number of trends that were accelerating in both Iran and India during the 1920s and 1930s. At the most general level these books reveal the growing interest in a shared classical past that linked India's Parsi community with the nation-building project of the new Pahlavi state in Iran. Promoting this shared history was seen as mutually beneficial for both Parsis and Iranians. From the Parsi point of view, building cultural ties with Iran worked to reconnect the Parsis with their ancestral homeland, and likewise helped to elevate the social status of their Zoroastrian co-religionists inside Iran. From the point of view of the Pahlavi state, the promotion of Iran's classical heritage had become a major part of the cultural policy of nation-building by the mid-1920s; encouraging the Parsis of Bombay to establish ties with Iran was seen as a natural extension of this larger project of Iranian neo-classicism, especially given the great cultural, political, and economic resources that were at the disposal of the Parsis.

Just as importantly, however, the history of Parsi textual philanthropy highlights the changes taking place in the nature of book production, sponsorship, publication, and circulation within the Indo-Iranian cultural world of the early twentieth century. The "books from Bombay" became new textual and cultural commodities that now moved with much greater facility between India and Iran as a result of the technological innovations in steam, rail, and road transportation. These technological changes — when combined with the social and cultural transformations taking place within Iran that produced a new reading public for these books — enabled the Parsis of Bombay to reach out and communicate with their ancestral homeland with much greater ease and on an unprecedented scale. The Iran League and the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjuman, in particular, mobilized the great resources of the Bombay Zoroastrian community in order to harness these technological and social changes for the purpose of enabling this new engagement with Iran. The sponsorship, production, and distribution of books, was one of the ways in which this Parsi re-engagement with their ancestral homeland occurred.

Ultimately, the most important consequence of the changing nature of book production and circulation within the Indo-Iranian cultural world was the way in which Bombay book production worked to empower the Persianate periphery. Despite the great distance that still separated India and Iran, the Parsi community of Bombay, who had come to imagine themselves as having a special relationship with what they saw as their ancestral homeland, were — through the practice of textual philanthropy— now able to participate in the cultural and political changes taking place inside Iran.

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**Contributors**  
(in alphabetical order)

<b>Ali Anooshahr</b>	91
<i>Associate Professor, Department of History &amp; Program on Middle East/South Asia Studies, UC-Davis</i>	
<b>Osmund Bopearachchi</b>	15
<i>Emeritus, Ecole Normale Supérieure (Paris)</i> <i>University of California, Berkeley</i>	
<b>Touraj Daryaee</b>	61
<i>Professor, Department of History, UC-Irvine</i>	
<b>Frantz Grenet</b>	75
<i>Collège de France</i>	
<b>Soodabeh Malekzadeh</b>	61
<i>PhD Candidate in History, UC-Irvine</i>	
<b>Afshin Marashi</b>	125
<i>Associate Professor, Department of International and Area Studies &amp; Farzaneh Family Chair of Iranian Studies, University of Oklahoma</i>	
<b>Grant Parker</b>	49
<i>Associate Professor, Department of Classics, Stanford University</i>	
<b>Alka Patel</b>	143
<i>Associate Professor, Department of Art History &amp; Visual Studies, UC-Irvine</i>	
<b>Sudipta Sen</b>	103
<i>Professor, Department of History &amp; Director, Program on Middle East/South Asia Studies, UC-Davis</i>	