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REBECCA RUTH GOULD

The Persianate Cosmology of Historical Inquiry in the Caucasus: ‘Abbās Qulī Āghā Bākīkhānūf’s Cosmological Cosmopolitanism

COSMOPOLITANISM TODAY operates within the framework of the nation-state. Its most familiar iterations are European, and even when enriched by premodern precedents from ancient Greece and Rome, political theorists have difficulty envisioning a cosmopolitanism derived from sources outside this matrix. Yet any sustained inquiry into the concept reveals that Europe has no monopoly on cosmopolitanism, and that it is older, broader, and deeper than any singular European trajectory. At the same time, the contours and textures of non-European cosmopolitanisms remain obscure relative to their European counterparts. Where, when, and how did cosmopolitanism matter in more distant times and places? Over the course of the past two decades, scholars have examined this question with respect to Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic literary histories.¹ These explorations have clarified how premodern cosmopolitanisms’ ways of mattering inflect and extend the scope and meaning of cosmopolitanism today (see Pollock, “Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History”; and Gould, “How Newness”).

The present article develops this emergent area of inquiry through an examination of the writings, life, and legacy of the polymath Persianate intellectual ‘Abbās Qulī Āghā Bākīkhānūf (1794–1847). Bākīkhānūf came of age in an era of empire, in his case specifically of Russian incursions onto Qajar territory. While Bākīkhānūf

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¹ See Pollock, “Cosmopolitan Vernacular”; and *Language of the Gods*. For preliminary efforts to adapt Pollock’s model to the Persian world, see Ricci, *Islam Translated*; King, “Ditching ‘Diglossia’”; and Gould, “Geographies of ‘Ajam.’”

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was born into what was the Qajar empire, his place of birth was incorporated into the Russian empire with the Treaty of Gulistan (1813), ratified during his teenage years. A prolific writer, scholar, and poet in multiple languages, Bākīkhānūf’s many works include a Russian-language grammar of Persian, a treatise on formal logic, a world geography, studies on Sufism and Shī‘a theology, treatises on ethical conduct, and an introduction to astronomy.² Alongside his prodigious original output, Bākīkhānūf worked as a translator from Arabic, Turkish, and Persian into Russian for the imperial administration, even as he criticized the specific modalities and practices of Russian colonialism. His relationship to Islamic culture and heritage was as pluralistic as was his critical engagement with the Russian imperial project.

As an intellectual who occupied multiple worlds simultaneously, and who deployed his formidable linguistic talents to make the specific contours of each of these worlds known to those who otherwise had no access to them, Bākīkhānūf would appear to be a paradigmatic exemplar of cosmopolitanism, however this term is understood. Yet merely asserting Bākīkhānūf’s cosmopolitanism does not clarify why and how his work matters today. Many poets, writers, and scholars, particularly from the Caucasus, aspired to Bākīkhānūf’s level of multilingual and interdisciplinary erudition. The distinctiveness of Bākīkhānūf’s cosmopolitanism’s is first and foremost epistemic; it relates to his understanding of the relationship between divergent knowledge systems, as well as to the nature of knowledge itself. Rather than simply lauding an extraordinary individual, this article documents the relationship between Bākīkhānūf’s particular brand of cosmopolitanism and his interdisciplinary work at the intersections of science, history, and poetry. Closer scrutiny of such disciplinary intersections within Bākīkhānūf’s work can help to clarify his potential contribution to contemporary thinking about cosmopolitanism as an interdisciplinary endeavor.

Concretely, the task of this article is to arrive at a clearer understanding of the relationship among poetry, history, and science, as they were articulated on an imperial periphery of the nineteenth century Persianate world. (Regions such as the Caucasus, which were heavily influenced by Persian culture yet where this culture coexisted with other literary traditions, such as Arabic and Turkic, with none achieving hegemony, are here described as Persianate.) I will show how Bākīkhānūf’s cosmopolitanism is intrinsic to his interdisciplinary approach to historical knowledge. Bākīkhānūf’s vision was not narrowly Islamic; he benefited heavily from exposure to the core works of the European Enlightenment, of Russian historiography, and of the sources of Greco-Roman antiquity. However, Bākīkhānūf’s immersion in the classical Persian and Arabic traditions of the Islamic world was the lens through which these other traditions were engaged. Bākīkhānūf’s oeuvre presents us with a unique merger of the literary, the scientific, and the historical, carried out across an astonishing diversity of sources, and with a pluralism reflective of the cultural diversity of the Caucasus as well as the epistemic diversity of the Islamic world.

That Bākīkhānūf has been to date either ignored or truncated in most accounts of Caucasus literary history is in part due to his fortuitous combination of cosmopolitanisms, which, as I suggest in the pages that follow, works against the grain of

² For a preliminary bibliography, see Hasanova 3–4.

modern knowledge, while also contesting the parameters of the modern nation-state. In the words of a recent study of the emergence of modern science in late Ottoman Egypt, scholars in this milieu, which Bākīkhānūf's writings indirectly influenced, "articulated a different set of relations of authority, in which those who studied the stars and those who studied the scripture were newly remote from each other" (Stolz 188). The present study engages with a world slightly preceding this bifurcation between science and the sacred took place, while tracing the ways in which this earlier world determined the trajectories of the bifurcation that was to follow soon after.

Bākīkhānūf's writing emerged from another cosmopolitan era, wherein "basic ideas about the meaning of history—first developed in Iran, then adopted in Egypt—became the standard approach in Ottoman lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Markiewicz 240). The early modern historiographical tradition referenced here inculcated an "approach to locating and defining history within the classification of the sciences (*taqṣīm al-'ulūm*)" (Markiewicz 224) that was epistemically and culturally cosmopolitan in equal measures. The new scientific culture that emerged from the confluence of Persian, Arabic, and Turkic literary heritage in the early modern science of history fundamentally shaped the conceptualization of other sciences, including rhetoric, grammar, and astronomy. This cultural understanding of history as science influenced the relation between poetry and science as well. Given that Bākīkhānūf's work traverses the domains of history, astronomy, and poetry, the study of his ideas and reception can tell us much concerning the interrelation of these knowledge forms in the cosmopolitan Caucasus. Bākīkhānūf's multilingual and multi-genre legacy reveals a cosmopolitan imagination that is unique partly through its combination of the epistemic and the cultural. Throughout this analysis, I draw on the Bākīkhānūf's formal and linguistic heterogeneity to advance a proleptic critique of the nationalist conceptions of community that became hegemonic following Bākīkhānūf's death.

Bruno Latour has recently warned against adopting cosmopolitanisms such as those of sociologist Ulrich Beck that entail "no cosmos and hence no politics" (450). Latour's critique can be extended to the nationally rooted cosmopolitan visions of Martha Nussbaum and Seyla Benhabib, both of whom develop a liberal vision of the human community that accepts the legitimacy of national borders. By contrast with such variations on liberal nationalism, Bākīkhānūf develops a way of being cosmopolitan that is also a way of being at one with the cosmos, immersed in the numinous, and absorbed within the vatic utterance. This cosmopolitanism prioritizes the imagination over the nation. The following section considers how Bākīkhānūf related this cosmopolitanism to the science of cosmology.

Astronomy as a Method of Inquiry

While this study is taken up with Bākīkhānūf's historiographic legacy, it was in the domain of astronomy that Bākīkhānūf was most influential outside the Caucasus. Bākīkhānūf's cosmological treatise *Secrets of the Immaterial Realm* (*Asrār al-Malakūt*) achieved significant renown during his lifetime. Originally composed in Persian and subsequently translated by the author into Arabic, this work offers an overview of the solar system, followed by the elucidation of specific Quranic verses and *ḥadīth*

(sayings of the Prophet and his companions) that can be related to the interpretation of this astronomical data.³ During a pilgrimage to Mecca toward the end of his life, Bākīkhānūf presented *Secrets of the Immaterial Realm* to Ottoman sultan Abdūlmecid (r. 1839–61), following which Grand Vizier Reşid Pasha commissioned a translation of the text into Ottoman Turkish by Şerif Halil Elbistani.⁴ The Turkish version is both a translation and a commentary that expands on Bākīkhānūf’s discussion of astronomy, while adding additional citations from the Islamic, and particularly the Ottoman, astronomical tradition, from Kâtip Çelebi to İshak Efendi.

It was this new composite edition of *Secrets of the Immaterial Realm*, published in 1848, that, as Daniel Stolz has shown, shaped discussions around the place of science in society, and the relation between science and other forms of scholarship, in late Ottoman Egypt. A booklet by the Egyptian official ‘Abd Allāh Fikrī Bey, entitled *A Treatise Comparing Some Astronomical Texts with what Appears in Sharī‘a Texts* (1876) used the conceptions of science embedded in Bākīkhānūf’s treatise (as it reached him through the Turkish translation and commentary) to expostulate on the role of science in society. Fikrī suggests in his booklet, which develops the line of inquiry into the new astronomy initiated by Bākīkhānūf, that future scientific discussions of public significance should be monitored by a “a great scientific society” consisting of “eminent scholars, people of expertise, insight, and knowledge . . . to whom everyone would submit their writing” (Fikrī Bey 20–21). Work found to be acceptable would be published with a note of approval (*taqrīz*). Fikrī was a thinker in his own right, but his debt to Bākīkhānūf (and to the Turkish translator and commentator Şerif Halil Elbistani) was clear, for it was in Bākīkhānūf’s treatise that the latest advances within the science of astronomy were presented in synthetic form, on the basis of what he had gleaned from Russian, as well as Arabic and Persian, sources. In this way, Bākīkhānūf, an Azeri prince from the Caucasus shaped modern scientific culture within the Ottoman Empire, in as yet largely unrecognized ways.

Yet, while the full impact of Bākīkhānūf’s text was only felt in the aftermath of his death and in the translation and dissemination of this work through subsequent commentaries, methodological innovation is intrinsic to the text itself. Bākīkhānūf went further than his predecessors in combining the epistemologies of religion and science. From his point of view, there was no contradiction between the two domains. In fact, the modern scientific Copernican system accords more closely in Bākīkhānūf’s view with the Quran and the sayings of the prophet than with the Ptolemaic system that the new astronomy had discredited. Bākīkhānūf argues that the earlier Ptolemaic view is therefore less Islamic than the modern scientific Copernican view that he wholeheartedly adopted. He advances this argument on a basis that is both preeminently scientific and rooted in Islamic law. As he reasons: Since imitation (*taqlīd*) would not be *lawful* in matters pertaining to the intellect, we accept what the intellect prefers. Some Muslim scholars of new astronomy, who compared the Copernican view with the rules of reason and observation, defended its correctness on the basis of the Quranic verses and

³ Neither the Persian nor the Arabic versions of *Asrār al-Malakūt* (completed in 1841 and 1846, respectively) have been published. For a description of a rare manuscript of the Arabic version held in the Library of the Iraq Museum, see Naqshabandi and ‘Abbās 99.

⁴ This work was published as Bakūlu Kudsi, *Efkâr ü l-Ceberût fi tercüi met-i Esrar il-melekût* (1265/1848). The reception of this text in the Ottoman Empire is documented in İhsanoğlu 36–37n81.

the traditions of the Prophet... The Copernican view conforms to the clear and definite proofs deduced from geometry and moreover, to the Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet; as for the Ptolemaic view, it is the opposite.⁵

Here we see a rationalist synthesis that is also religious in aspiration, and which is advanced in full conformity with Islamic law and the Islamic tradition. These formulations also serve as a prolegomena to Bākīkhānūf's understanding of history and its relationship to the scientific method, to which I now turn.

History as Example

Among the many fields in which he worked, Bākīkhānūf's contribution to the study of history, and in particular to history as a science, is arguably his most substantial contribution to Caucasus literature. I focus here on the dialectic of example and evidence in his work to better understand how Bākīkhānūf's epistemic cosmopolitanism intersects with the multilingual cosmopolitanism of the Caucasus. At the same time, I consider how Bākīkhānūf's dialectic between poetry and history conceptualizes anew the relation between empiricism and literary form. The Persian tradition is of course not unique in synthesizing poetic and historical knowledge; hybrid literary historiographies were widespread before modernity.⁶ And yet, in Persian as in other traditions, modern scholars often fail to discern the shaping role of poetry as they excavate works concerned with the past (Bashir 541n35). Additionally, Bākīkhānūf's programmatic statements concerning the complementarity of Islamic legal principles and the scientific method prompt the question of how the generative relationship he perceived between them pertained beyond the sphere of astronomy.

The focus of this reflection on Persianate cosmopolitanism is Bākīkhānūf's *Earthly Garden* (*Gulistān-i Iram*, 1841), a historical chronicle that is also a genre-crossing text involving poetry and other literary forms. Bākīkhānūf's astronomy forms a crucial intertext to his approach to the writing of history. *Garden* structures its material, primarily from the past, according to three broader aims: (1) as an example from which subsequent generations can learn; (2) as a source of empirical knowledge that can be revised in light of later evidence; (3) as an ethical foundation for a cosmopolitan concept of selfhood and community that contrasts with later nationalist identitarian models.

Bākīkhānūf synthesized the learning of past centuries into forms and themes that made it suitable for transmission to future generations. Audrey Altstadt helpfully summarizes his legacy when she notes that Bākīkhānūf's vision for imperial rule in the Caucasus was "usurped by tsarist bureaucrats, altered, and put into effect in a form that suited the needs of the tsarist system rather than the indigenous population" (86). Altstadt adds that Bākīkhānūf's plan "served as the basis for more than seven decades of debate on education reform and even constituted the basis—again in distorted form—for Soviet-era education policy" (86). Meanwhile, Ottomanists

⁵ I cite here the translation in İhsanoğlu 38.

⁶ For the interface of poetry and history in other Asian literatures, see Busch (for Hindi); Pollock, "Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of History in Traditional India" (for Sanskrit); and Phillips, "Histories, Micro- and Literary" (for European historiography).

have begun to document the extraordinarily geographic reach of Bākīkhānūf’s ideas about science across the Ottoman world, through the channels of transmission noted above. Given these wide-reaching temporal and spatial ramifications, it is remarkable that Bākīkhānūf remains obscure within scholarship on this period, along with a host of other marginalized writers from the Caucasus.⁷ The present inquiry aims to recover Bākīkhānūf’s forgotten legacies, and also, no less fundamentally, to explore their relevance to contemporary conceptions of cosmopolitanism, to faith-based understandings of scientific inquiry, and to the concomitant notions of intellectual community that are entangled within these relations.

In the process of investigating Bākīkhānūf’s understandings of science and cosmopolitanism, my research substantiates the historical trajectory outlined by Cemal Aydin for the concept of a Muslim world. Aydin argues that Muslims in the first half of the nineteenth century had yet to internalize the “hegemonic and monolithic narratives of Islam versus the West” that had become common sense by the 1880s (64). The precise bifurcation traced by Aydin, as Europe’s relations with the Islamic world became increasingly polarized and racialized, corresponds to the trajectory of Bākīkhānūf’s life. Born into a world that would soon be incorporated into the Russian empire, and employed as a translator of Oriental languages for the Russian administration for twenty-five years, Bākīkhānūf benefited from imperial power. At the same time, he was an impassioned advocate for Islamic learning, and an assiduous cultivator of a broadly Persianate cosmopolitanism. He produced multiple works critical of the Russian administration’s handling of Caucasus affairs, even while in imperial service, including a report critical of the 1837 uprising in Quba in support of Polish independence, and promulgated an educational policy that has been described as “an attack upon [Russian imperial] policy and [its] mode of thought” (Altstadt 89; see also Bakikhanov, *Sochineniia, zapiski, pis'ma* 16–17, 148–50; Guseinov 2:82–84, 103–4). Even as Bākīkhānūf developed the cosmopolitan ethos internal to the Persian tradition, he strove to defend the Muslims of the Caucasus “from a powerful regime’s zealous efforts to Russify and Christianize” them (Altstadt 89).

In developing a concept of history as example, Bākīkhānūf was building on predecessors such as Miskawayh (c. 940–1030), author of the historical chronicle *Tajārib al-umam* (*Experiences of Nations*) which developed the “relationship between historical phenomena, reflection, and future action” that informs many Islamic historiographic texts (Markiewicz 231). Miskawayh’s historical chronicle “reflects a new paradigm: a lesson (*ibra*) to be learned” (Endress 529–30).⁸ While the idea of history as example did not originate with Miskawayh, Bākīkhānūf’s approach was certainly shaped by these and later precedents. Similarly to the praise lavished on the historical method in his preface, Bākīkhānūf’s concluding presentation of history as the science of experience (*tajrubah*) pivots on his conviction that this experience benefits the entire community.

Among the resources at Bākīkhānūf’s disposal for structuring his narrative were past Islamic engagements with non-Islamic, particularly Indic and Mongol,

⁷ Bākīkhānūf might for example have been expected to make an appearance in important works such as Vejdani, Kashani-Sabet, and Tavakoli-Targhi, but he is nowhere to be found.

⁸ For Miskawayh’s concept of experience as adumbrated in *Tajārib*, see Khalidi 170–76.

civilizations. In the early Islamic encounter with Indic civilization, the Central Asian historian al-Bīrūnī systematically studied India's learned traditions and presented them in rigorous historical sequence in his *Book on the Verification of What Is Said about India* (*Kitāb taḥqīq mā lil-Hindmin maqūla*). Rashīd al-Dīn (1247–1318), vizier to the Mongol Ilkhanids, used the Uighur-Chinese animal calendar to examine the histories of Europe, India, Central Asia, and the rest of the Islamic world.⁹ Both al-Bīrūnī and Rashīd al-Dīn situated world history within non-Islamic chronologies. Like these Central Asian and Ilkhanid predecessors, Bākīkhānūf deployed an ecumenical and eclectic intellectual genealogy. This meant synthesizing the variegated and at times conflicting testimonies of the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus (d. 390) with the Greek historian Priscus (d. 472) concerning the Huns (Bākīkhānūf, *Gulistān-i Iram* 10), Pliny and Ptolemy concerning Armenian geography (12), Herodotus concerning the Scythians (13, 30), and the Armenian historian Moses Khorenatsi (d. 490s) concerning the Bolghars (28).

Along with its many intertexts with prior Islamic historiography, poetry permeates Bākīkhānūf's text, giving material form to its cosmology. Much of the poetry is composed by poets from the Caucasus. Centuries earlier, another writer from Shirvan, the poet Khāqānī (d. 1199), who is featured in *Garden*, had used Bākīkhānūf's concept of 'ibrat—history-as-lesson—to humble the sultan by invoking ruins from times past.¹⁰ After visiting the ancient ruins near Madā'in (called Seleucia and Ctesiphon in pre-Islamic antiquity), on the banks of the Tigris River and near contemporary Baghdad, Khāqānī composed what is arguably his most famous poem. The *qaṣīda* (ode) on Madā'in is equally legible as a lament for a lost civilization and as a critique of worldly power. Just as Bākīkhānūf saw history as a way of teaching through example and evidence, so does Khāqānī use the vatic utterance to facilitate his readers' edification. Khāqānī's *qaṣīda* on the Madā'in ruins famously begins:

هان ای دل عبرت‌بین از دیده نظر کن هان
ایوان مدائن را آینه عبرت دان

Beware, oh my lesson-taking heart, gaze with your eyes, beware!

See the aivan of Madā'in as a mirror of lessons [*'ibrat*]. (Khaqani 358)

Ruins, Khāqānī argues, have heuristic value. They comprise evidence, comparable to inscriptions, coins, and other material artifacts. Inasmuch as history instructs, these artifacts have ethical value. The poet's task of gleaning lessons from the remnants of Sasanian civilization correlates with Bākīkhānūf's understanding of the task of the historian. Whereas Khāqānī carried out this task in the form of a poem, Bākīkhānūf sought to create this effect in his prose.

History as Evidence

Islamic historiography is dense with occasions wherein historians interrupt their narratives to reflect on questions of method. Among the most famous of such interruptions is the disavowal of prejudice by the Ghaznavid-era jurist and scholar Abū'l-Faẓl Bayhaqī (994–1066). Bayhaqī is among the best known New Persian expositors

⁹ For the Persian appropriation of the Chinese animal calendar, see Ḥamadānī 1:561–80.

¹⁰ For the many meanings of 'ibrat in this text, see Clinton. For the link between classical conceptions of 'ibrat and modern Iranian historiography, see Amanat.

of what has recently been described as the “rationalist” method of Islamic historiography (Khan 545).¹¹ “I will make no statement driven by fanaticism [*ta’assub*] or anger,” writes Bayhaqī shortly before launching into his famously graphic narration of the execution of a Ghazanvid vizier, “that will cause readers to say: ‘Shame on this old man!’ Rather I will say that which readers can approve and not reproach” (251). Bayhaqī’s disavowal of prejudice precedes one of the most detailed accounts of torture in Islamic historiography. Even when Bayhaqī strives for objectivity, his “description of the events leading up to [the vizier’s] execution on a trumped-up charge of heresy, and of the indignities he was forced to suffer, present [him] in the role of a martyr” (Meisami, “Exemplary Lives” 357).

Bākīkhānūf combines the genres of travelogue, historical chronicle (*ṭabaqāt*), and *tazkirah* (a commemorative compendium of famed individuals, often poets) to develop his cosmopolitan historiographic mission.¹² In the preface to his *Garden*, Bākīkhānūf takes Bayhaqī’s methodological reflexivity a step further. Turning in New Historicist fashion to the past, “not as an end in itself, but as a way of providing perspectives on the present” (White 41), Bākīkhānūf appeals to history to teach lessons that cannot be imparted by other discourses. Functioning like a school, history offers instruction in “life experience [*tajrubah-i’ umrī*]” (Bākīkhānūf, *Gulistān-i Iram* 2). In making history a foundation for future action, Bākīkhānūf develops an understanding of history that resonates with that of the fifteenth century Timurid historian Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, for whom “the purpose of history is consideration and reflection (*i’ tibār va istibṣār*) upon that knowledge, through which a historian could discern the appropriate course of future action” (Abrū 73).

By appealing to history as to a school of experience, Bākīkhānūf adds to an earlier historical tradition’s emphasis on objectivity a new interest in perception as a nexus of historical meaning. Bākīkhānūf also adds to this insight an additional interest, drawn from his interest in science, in the fruits of evidence as gleaned through the eyes. The travelogue of Zayn al-‘Ābidīn Shīrvānī (1780–1837) expresses the high value placed on evidence gleaned through travel. In an oft-cited aphorism, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn declares:

چرا عقل ره نادیده پوید
قلندر هر چه گوید دیده گوید

Why should reason tread the unseen path?
The eye says whatever the wanderer [*qalandar*] says. (69)

Here Zayn al-‘Ābidīn compares the process of evidence-based reasoning to the acquisition of knowledge about the world through wandering. Empirical results are generated by what is seen on a journey. Crucially, both processes mentioned in this verse, reasoning and seeing, depend on evidence. Bākīkhānūf similarly insists on history as a form of intellectual inquiry that is based on reason as well as evidence. For him, the imagination advances reasoned inquiry and the results of the imagination are subject to empirical verification. Historical inquiry thereby

¹¹ Khan distinguishes between ‘*aqlī* (rationalist) historiography, which he associates with authors like Bayhaqī and *naqlī* (transmission-based) historiography, which he associates with authors who engaged more extensively with the imagination. Bākīkhānūf combines both methods.

¹² In rendering *tazkirah* as a “commemorative compendium of poets,” I follow Kia, for whom this rendering “shows us something about the cultural and social contexts of [Persian] authors in a way that is less dependent on, but still mindful of, the value of the factual content of their entries” (90).

parallels the process through which scientific knowledge is acquired, refined, and tested.

Bākīkhānūf adopts a somewhat different approach to the evidentiary value conferred by travel. As he recounts, travel reduced his ignorance (*jahl*), added to his repertoire of experience (*Gulistān* 281), and revealed the absurdity of his former convictions and assumptions. His capacity to traverse genres and disciplines was extended as a result of what he saw abroad. However, while he eulogizes the value of experience in terms that resonate with Persian travelogues such as those of Zayn al-Ābidīn, Bākīkhānūf's cosmopolitanism is cultivated by his imagination rather than by his movements between countries. Bākīkhānūf comes closer to developing a stationary cosmopolitanism that resonates with the efforts of Latour, Stengers, Appiah, and Jusdanis (204–5) to theorize cosmopolitanism through the experiences of those who lack the means or ability to traverse continents.

While crossing genres, Bākīkhānūf also refines ethical norms. New Historicist Stephen Greenblatt has programatically argued that “art”—a category that for him includes historiography—“does not pretend to autonomy, and the written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities” (7). Although Greenblatt's subject is Renaissance England, his New Historicism shares much in common with early modern Persianate culture's conceptual terrain. As with his predecessors such as Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, Bākīkhānūf's conception of historical inquiry involves the self-scrutiny of the object on itself. His conceptualization of history as both evidence and example addressed to future rulers also brings his text into relation with the mirror-for-princes genre, known in Persian as *akhlāq*. Bākīkhānūf's initial contribution to this genre was *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (*The Refinement of Character*), a title that invokes Miskawayh's *Experience of Nations*, mentioned above.¹³ An abridged version of *Tahdhīb* was translated by the author from Persian into Turkish and entitled *Admonitions* (*Naṣīhatlar*). As he brought the agenda of this genre of ethical norms (*akhlāq*) into alignment with a new science of history, Bākīkhānūf developed a cosmopolitanism comprised of multiple different modes of intellectual inquiry.

In concluding, Bākīkhānūf recapitulates his biography, including the circumstances of his birth, his education, and his career in the service of the tsar (*Gulistān* 281). In opening, he presents himself as a “humble author who, lacking accomplishment, is always eager to improve his self” (2). The self-effacements that puncture the preface are found throughout this work, which culminates in a brief account of the author's travels through imperial Russia and its bordering territories. Notwithstanding the text's broad temporal ambit, which originates in pre-Islamic antiquity and concludes with the incorporation of Shirvan into the Russian empire in 1813, *Garden* is bookmarked by the author's own temporal trajectory. In generating a dual narrative—first, of the geography the author has seen with his eyes, and second of his personal biography—this text adheres to the “pattern of representing alternative histories as independent streams of time” (Bashir, 533) followed by Safavid-era text such as *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (*Friend of Biographies*) by Khwāndamīr (d. 1534). Additionally, however, Bākīkhānūf's understanding of history as evidence and example is informed by an engagement with what he terms *wāqī'ī* (the actual).

¹³ An edition of this unpublished work is being prepared in Persian by Elmin Aliyev (Khazar University, Azerbaijan). On this work, also see Hasanova 21.

While European rationalists from Hume onward severed myths ineradicably from facts in their philosophies of history, Bākīkhānūf’s cosmology of historical inquiry envisions a discipline that synthesizes all eclectic domains of experience, including myth, astronomy, and poetry, into an epistemically heterogeneous whole.¹⁴

During the same years that Bayhaqī was composing his history in Persophone Ghazna, al-Bīrūnī (973–1048) castigated Persian court poets in Arabic for crafting royal genealogies from the lineages propounded in Ferdowsī’s poetry and for inventing “laudatory stories” (al-Bīrūnī, *Al-āthār al-bāqiyah*, 37). Bākīkhānūf’s ecumenical approach roots Ferdowsī’s partly pre-historical lineages fully within historical time. Although “our nature [*tab’-i mā*] is attracted to the science of history [*‘ilm-i tārikh*],” Bākīkhānūf writes, we must reconcile empirical approaches with aesthetic ones. He therefore incorporates “actual stories [*hikāyat-i waqi’i*]” alongside “legends [*afsanah*]” (*Gulistān* 1) into his historical cosmology.

Partly through his rendering of literary events in historical time, Bākīkhānūf initiates a dialogue between science and the imagination within his text. On multiple occasions, he treats Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāmah* and the narrative romances of Niẓāmī (d. 1214) from nearby Ganja as historical and ethnographic sources. Similarly to Bākīkhānūf, ‘Aṭā Malik Juvaynī (d. 1283), historian of the Mongol empire, relied heavily on the *Shāhnāmah* in his history of the Mongol conquest of the Caucasus (Juvaynī 442). The evidentiary value Juvaynī attributed to poetry typified the historiographic tradition within which he worked. Subsequent Persian historians including Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī (d. 1349), Aḥmad Tabrīzī (fourteenth century), and ‘Abd al-Malik ‘Iṣāmī (d. 1350) all modeled their historical works on Ferdowsī’s epic.¹⁵ By incorporating this epic into their canon, Persian historians learned to portray the past cyclically, as an imaginary geography wherein “kings are confronted with analogous situations as they attempt to rule their dominion with justice and to deal with political realities and ethical choices regarding their sons, warriors, subjects, and neighbors” (Babayan, 29). Bākīkhānūf adds to the old Islamic conception of history as example a new conception of history as an evidence-based science that is subject to contingency and verification. While there were premodern precedents for this latter school of thought, in Bākīkhānūf, this development is associated with the science of the new astronomy that promoted a Copernican over a Ptolemaic conception of the universe.

Buttressing history with poetry, Bākīkhānūf explicates his geography of the Caucasus through the *Shāhnāmah*’s accounts of battles and wars (*Gulistān* 14). Bākīkhānūf also describes a Safavid military campaign in the Caucasus by citing Ferdowsī’s epic poem (132). Ferdowsī’s *Shāhnāmah* is treated as a text with evidentiary value, and hence as removed from the cyclical pattern described above. Throughout his engagement with Ferdowsī, Bākīkhānūf continues the tradition of treating epic poetry as a source of evidence concerning pre-Islamic Iran.¹⁶ Alongside his time-honored use of Ferdowsī’s epic as history, Bākīkhānūf drew on additional poetic sources of authority, in particular Niẓāmī’s verse romances. For example, Bākīkhānūf

¹⁴ On Hume’s severance of history from the miraculous, see Phillips, “Relocating Inwardness.”

¹⁵ These are the authors of, respectively, *Zafarnāma*, the *Shāhanshāhnāma*, and *Futūḥ al-salāṭīn*. For a discussion of later Persian authors who modeled their historical works after Ferdowsī’s epic, see Sharma.

¹⁶ For Ferdowsī as an historian in the Persian historiographic tradition, see Melville xlv.

turns to Nizāmī's poetry to explain why *sarīr*, the Arabic word for throne, was also used to name a kingdom in Daghستان (7) and elsewhere narrates the events that transpired in history between the Sassanian ruler Khusrow Parvīz and his beloved Shīrīn (58–59), using Nizāmī's narrative as his primary source. Arabic historians such as al-Kūfī, al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabarī drew extensively on a poetic corpus to advance their historiographic agendas, but they did not explicitly theorize the scientific value of such evidence (Beeston and Conrad 191).

Bākīkhānūf's treatment of poetry as evidence does not prevent him from critically scrutinizing his sources, poetic and otherwise. Doubly advancing a scientific method while honoring poetry's felicitous fictionality, Bākīkhānūf regarded the weighing of conflicting "reports [*akhbār*]" and "scarce materials [*qillat-i āthār*]" as fundamental to the pursuit of historical objectivity (*Gulistān* 22). Rather than uncritically adopting rubrics inherited from the proto-nationalist knowledge systems of colonial modernity, Bākīkhānūf's cosmological cosmopolitanism emerged from Islamic ways of knowing and Persianate visions of human belonging. The historical juncture he inhabited, within the geography of empire while contesting colonial knowledge, and wherein science and the imagination were mutually constitutive rather than mutually excluding, enabled him to gracefully traverse the epistemic domains of science and the imagination, in terms that remain in many respects unsurpassed to this day.

For Bākīkhānūf time is personified, and made to commune with itself in all its multiplicity. "As on the day of resurrection [*rūz-i rastākhīz*]," writes the historian, "tribes from different centuries [*ṭawā'if mukhtalīfeh-i qurūn*] assemble each in their own garments, with their own norms [*akhlāq*], customs [*ādāt*], and traditions" (*Gulistān* 1). When Bākīkhānūf imagines the centuries assembling together at the end of time, he notes that they will "receive the results of their good or bad deeds, without vested interests [*bī'gharaz*]" (2). Through such dialectics, Bākīkhānūf's historiography mediates between past and present. While cultivating impartiality, history transmits the advice of the ancestors (*aslāf*) to their descendants (*akhlāf*) (2). It also accounts for seemingly random distributions of wealth and the seemingly arbitrary rise and fall of civilizations. Embodied in this way, history functions for Bākīkhānūf as it did for the Italian historian Arnaldo Momigliano, as "a way of seeing how the world was formed, how man came about, what religion and morality were" (Momigliano 177; see also Gould, "Antiquarianism as Genealogy"). History is, in brief, a method for making sense of a seemingly arbitrary assemblage of facts. For Bākīkhānūf as for Momigliano, history encompasses multiple worlds, and multiple levels of creation, including "all the vast numbers of nonhuman entities making humans act" (Latour 454). Bākīkhānūf's cosmopolitan historical method also resonates with William James's concept of the pluriverse, whereby heterogeneity is written into the structure of experience. Such is Persianate cosmopolitanism at the level of the cosmos.

Much of what has been argued this far concerning Bākīkhānūf could be claimed for many Persianate texts. And this is perhaps the most important point to stress: even when Bākīkhānūf introduced a new scientific dimension into Persianate historical inquiry, he kept faith with cosmologies of his predecessors. In rejecting the Ptolemaic system, Bākīkhānūf saw no reason to lose sight of the numinous. Having considered how Bākīkhānūf's cosmological historical method intersects with past

methods of inquiry, I now turn to his immediate temporal and political horizon, to examine how Bākīkhānūf engaged with his colonial present. Of particular interest and importance to any inquiry into the influence of European historiography on this Persianate author is the work of the famed historian of the Russian state Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826).

Historicism and Nationalism

While Bākīkhānūf’s familiarity with Islamic and especially Persian historiography is profound, the references to modern European sources that suffuse his text, above all to the Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin, testify to his engagement with a new genre of historical writing. Karamzin’s magnum opus, the twelve-volume *History of the Russian State* (1818–26), was completed just fifteen years before Bākīkhānūf concluded his history of Shirvan and Daghestan. A critic, statesman, and founder of Russian sentimentalism, Karamzin modeled his history of the Russian state, which marks the apex of eighteenth-century Russia’s “textual approach to history” (Schönle 748), on the monumental survey of the rise and fall of the Roman empire that Edward Gibbon had published three decades earlier.¹⁷ Like Bākīkhānūf, Karamzin embarked late in life on formal historiographic inquiry. Both authors began their writing careers in the sphere of belles-lettres, and both wrote history with the intentions of creating new worlds rather than simply documenting existing ones. “The history he had in mind,” Karamzin’s best biographer states, “was not an academic but rather a literary *creation* [that] . . . sought in the records of the past raw materials for an essentially imaginative undertaking” (Pipes 52; emphasis added). This characterization of Karamzin’s historiography is equally apt as a description of Bākīkhānūf’s dialectic of science and the literary imagination.

While Bākīkhānūf combined an interest in history and astronomy with a love of poetry, by the time he composed his *History of the Russian State*, Karamzin had made a name for himself as a writer of sentimentalist fiction. Karamzin’s most famous work, “Poor Liza” (1792), a short story that chronicles a Russian nobleman’s seduction of a young peasant girl, has been deemed “the most powerful and popular work of high literature Russia had ever seen” when it was published (Herman 1). In his *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (1801), Karamzin enhanced his literary reputation by producing a series of “candid, direct, factual, and discriminating” depictions of European mores (Freeborn 2). Bākīkhānūf’s description of his journey through Eastern Europe at the end of his *Garden* may also have been influenced by Karamzin. As in early modern Persian, in the Russian intellectual milieu, “history was still considered an integral branch of literature” at the time of Karamzin’s writing (Pipes 52). In this respect, it resembled the Persian, Arabic, and Turkic traditions that similarly valued the role of the literary imagination in empirical inquiry. In arguing that reflection on the events of times past aided in the cultivation of aesthetic and ethical experience, Bākīkhānūf and Karamzin both stressed the evidentiary value of the imagination, as a mode of perception that assists in distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

¹⁷ Karamzin discusses Gibbon in his diary (*Neizdannyya* 1:203).

In accounting for the beginnings of human history, Bākīkhānūf relies on major Persian histories, most prominent among which are al-Ṭabarī's *History* (*Tārīkh*), Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazwīnī's *Select History* (*Tārīkh-i guzīdeh*) and his *Book of Victory* (*Zafarnāma*), Mīr Khvānd's *Garden of Purity* (*Rawḍat al-safā*), and its anonymous abridgement, *Compendium of Reports* (*Khulāṣat al-akhbār*). As he moves forward in time, Bākīkhānūf's source base diversifies. Allusions to the aforementioned Arabic and Persian texts are mixed with references to "Karamzin and other chroniclers" (*Gulistān* 24), "Karamzin and other Russian annalists [*qāramzīn va sār-i mūvarrehkān-i rūs*]" (27), while adding the qualifier "according to Karamzin [*be qawl-i qāramzīn*]" (32). Bākīkhānūf does not generally organize his narrative according to the provenance of his sources. Instead, he produces a synthetic narrative that gives equal weight to poetry and prose, as well as to materials of Persian, Arabic, and Russian origin.

Early in his narrative, Bākīkhānūf cites the German historian Johann Christoph Gatterer (1727–99) to improve on Herodotus's account of the origins of the Sarmatians (*Gulistān* 13). Bākīkhānūf writes as if the Russian historian belonged to his own tradition. The author of *Khulāṣat al-akhbār*, Mīr Khvānd, and Karamzin are all described as annalists (*mūvarrehkān*, 32). When he introduces Gatterer, Bākīkhānūf distinguishes modern historiography from its ancient (Herodotean) counterpart, which he critiques as founded on myth rather than evidence. When he comes to Karamzin, Bākīkhānūf incorporates him into a longer-standing Persian tradition, thereby merging the Russian historian's voice with his own.

Like Bākīkhānūf, Karamzin begins his magnum opus with a dictum that reveals his understanding of history's social mandate. "History is in a certain sense the sacred text of peoples [*sviashchennaia kniga narodov*]," Karamzin writes. "It is primary, necessary; the window reflecting [people's] ways and activities; it is the explanation of the present and exemplification of the future [*iz'iasnenie nastoiashego i primer budushego*]" (*Istoriia* ix). Bākīkhānūf makes a closely related claim. Indeed, his statement in his preface that history "gives the form [*šūrat*] of the future [*āyandah*] in the clothing of the past [*lebās-i guzashtah*], so that you may learn from its example [*ibrat*]" (*Gulistān* 2) skillfully interweaves Karamzin's vision with a longer tradition of history-as-example within Islamic historiography. And yet whatever Karamzin may have contributed to Bākīkhānūf's account of history-as-example, there were also older precedents for this discourse within Persian poetry and Islamic history, some of which have been outlined above.

Even closer to the spirit of Bākīkhānūf's text is Karamzin's argument for history's social relevance. Bākīkhānūf describes history as a discourse that effects a resurrection (*rastākhīz*) across generations and centuries. Similarly, for Karamzin, "history speaks from beyond the grave, raising the dead, and puts life into hearts and words into ears" (Karamzin, *Istoriia* x). Just as Bākīkhānūf noted that history (*tārīkh*) explains the reasons of poverty and wealth and rise and decline, so does Karamzin affirm that *istoriia* reconciles the citizen (*grazhdanin*) to the world's injustice, and specifically to the injustice rife in political life. "History," writes Karamzin, "encourages acquiescence towards the incomplete order of things [*poriadka veshchei*] . . . it consoles [citizens] for political catastrophes, and testifies that disasters, and even worse, have always occurred, while the government stood firm" (Karamzin, *Istoriia* ix–x). Cultivating an ethical sensibility, history inclines the soul toward a collective

sense of justice (*nashe blago*) that reaches beyond the individual (x). Working within a discursive space that accepts the evidentiary value of the imagination along with its role in creating history as an example to future generations, Karamzin and Bākīkhānūf advance cognate visions of history as a discourse necessary for the stability of the polity.

While Bākīkhānūf follows Karamzin in many particulars, he diverges from his example in at least two respects. The first pertains to his treatment of the imagination, which for Karamzin is primarily a function of individual taste. Karamzin is regarded as the foremost exponent of Russian sentimentalism, a literary movement originating in Germany which profoundly influenced pre-Romantic Russian literary culture.¹⁸ Foregrounding the role played by taste—*Geschmack*, *vkus*, *goût*, in their respective European languages—in the formation of character, sentimentalists such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Laurence Sterne turned to fiction to examine the process whereby the self became an affective category.¹⁹ Karamzin contributed to this movement by applying sentimentalist aesthetics to the writing of history. While Karamzin is persuaded that knowledge about the past is best accessed affectively, Bākīkhānūf approached the imagination by means of classical Persian poetics. This approach conceives of the imagination scientifically, as a system governed by rules that elucidate a collective aesthetic experience. Rather than naming individual emotions, Bākīkhānūf is interested in how specific material artifacts, such as ruins (*āthār*), generate specific kinds of evidence.

The second divergence between the Persian and Russian historian stems from the Persianate cosmology that informed Bākīkhānūf historical writings as much as it did his work on astronomy. This is reflected in their starkly different treatment of the concept of the nation-state, which Karamzin glorifies, while Bākīkhānūf, writing for a different audience, downplays. Whereas Karamzin frames his work as a history of the Russian state told from the perspective of an emergent nation, Bākīkhānūf is less tethered to a perception of the nation as the key agent in history. What Nussbaum might have called Karamzin’s patriotic cosmopolitanism is negated by Bākīkhānūf’s nonnational cosmological cosmopolitanism.

As Bākīkhānūf no doubt perceived, Karamzin performed a tense balancing act in his efforts to reconcile the writing of cosmopolitan history with the construction of the nation-state. At one level, the Russian historian celebrates the cosmopolitan outlook of the modern citizen (*grazhdanin*). “We are all citizens, in Europe, India, Mexico, and Abyssinia,” Karamzin proclaims in a plural voice that conjoins the project of state building with the territoriality of empire. “Our personhoods are tied to our homelands,” he continues. “We love [our homelands] with all our heart, because we love ourselves. Let the Greeks and the Romans captivate our imaginations; they belong to the human family and are not alien to us on account of our goodness and weakness, glory and shame” (*Istoriia* xi). Here as elsewhere, Karamzin makes of national identity a foundation for cosmopolitan solidarity. His use of national history to construct a political self diverges sharply from Bākīkhānūf’s cosmopolitanism, which is structured more by the cosmos than by the nation.

¹⁸ For Karamzin and Russian sentimentalism, see Hammarberg, *From the Idyll to the Novel*. A classic study of Russian sentimentalism is Kochetkova.

¹⁹ For philosophical links between taste and ethical self-fashioning, see Saisselin 121.

In contradistinction to Bākīkhānūf's cosmological cosmopolitanism, Karamzin's thinking is structured by national boundaries. In this respect as in others, his ideology of space corresponds to the cosmopolitan idioms associated with the Enlightenment, most famous among which is Immanuel Kant's insistence on replacing "national delusion [*Nationalwahn*]" with a combination of "patriotism and cosmopolitanism" (Kant 1353, 591). Even while discerning traces of an "enlightened cosmopolitanism" in Karamzin's oeuvre, scholars caution against taking "Karamzin's apparent cosmopolitanism too literally," given his "romantic idealization of pre-Petrine Moscow" as a prefiguration of the Russian nation (Offord 99). Similarly, others have remarked on how Karamzin combined a "cosmopolitan culture" with an "increasing nationalism" (Martin 185). While these caveats tell us much about nineteenth century Russian historiography, they also reveal tensions internal to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism that persist to this day in the thinking of Martha Nussbaum and Seyla Benhabib, both of whose cosmopolitanisms accept the legitimacy of the nation as a unit for political belonging. Far from being an anomaly within Karamzin's oeuvre, the tension between nationalist nostalgia and territorial cosmopolitanism is internal to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism as such.²⁰ Karamzin is in this respect an intellectual progeny of the Enlightenment, rather than an anomaly within the Enlightenment universalist mandate. When the peculiar affiliation between nation-based thinking and cosmopolitan aspiration in Karamzin's work is situated within its time and place, it becomes apparent that it was Bākīkhānūf, more than Karamzin, whose cosmopolitanism overcame national categories that were treated as natural within Enlightenment imperialism. By contesting the territoriality along with the historiography that constituted the sovereign nation, Bākīkhānūf's cosmology also contains the seeds through which imperial legacies can be effectively contested today.

Even as Karamzin optimistically universalizes nation-based affiliation, he contrasts Pozharsky, the seventeenth century prince who led Moscow's struggle for independence, to Themistocles and Scipio, the archetypal heroes of Greek and Roman antiquity. This parallel serves to legitimize affective ties based on national identity by conferring on them an ancient etiology. "My heart still beats faster for Pozharsky than for Themistocles and Scipio," Karamzin declares (*Istoriia* xi). The Russian historian explains his passion for nation-based identity by contrasting the generality of feeling entailed in world history to national history's ability to generate affective ties to a specific place. "World history, with all of its great memories, beautifies the world for the mind," proclaims Karamzin (xi). By contrast, "Russian [*rossiiskaia*] history beautifies the homeland [*otechestvo*] where we live and where we feel" (xii).

Karamzin's affective appeal to national sentiment is succeeded by an even more contentious framing of Russia's imperial geography, ripe with implications for our understanding of Russian imperialism in the Caucasus. *The History of the Russian State* incorporated the Caucasus into the Russian empire only five years after the Treaty of Gulistān (1813) brought parts of the Caucasus, including Bākīkhānūf's

²⁰ For the intertwinement of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and nationalism, see Delanty, esp. 42; van Hoof and Vandekerckhove (esp. Siby K. George, "Cosmopolitan Self and the Fetishism of Identity," 63–82); and Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions* esp. 20–44.

place of birth, under Russian rule. In Bākīkhānūf’s words, this treaty, signed in the village of Gulistan on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, required Qajar Iran to yield to Russia “the lands and the khanates of Ganja, Qarabagh, Talesh, Sheki, Shirvan, Baku, Qobbeh and Darband, all of Daghestan and Georgia and the neighboring tribes, and relinquished any claim on [these territories]” (*Gulistān* 201). In recognition of the intimate links between imperial expansion and historical knowledge, Bākīkhānūf named his text in part after this treatise, the signing of which Karamzin elliptically commemorates in a subtle and strategic vindication of the imperial project:

As we gaze on this singular power that is Russia, [we see that] Rome in its greatness could never have been compared with this empire that reigns from the Tiber to the Caucasus, from the Elba to the African sands. Is it not surprising how this earth, so divided by natural boundaries, immeasurable in its expanses and impassable forests, its cold and hot climates, such as Astrakhan and Lapland, Siberia and Bessarabia, can comprise a single state [*derzhavuyū*] with Moscow? It is even more surprising that this mixture of peoples is so ethnically distinct [*raznoplemennykh*], so various, and so distant from each other in their educational attainments. Just like America, Russia has its barbarians [*dikikh*]; like other European countries, there is also [on Russian territory] the foundations of a long-standing public life [*grazhdanskoi zhizni*]. (Karamzin, *Istoriia* xii)

Karamzin’s favorable comparison of Russia to Rome, his celebration of the former’s empire’s ethnic diversity at a time when many of the territories claimed by this empire had yet to be officially annexed, and his contrast between citizens and barbarians are all part of an endeavor to strengthen and legitimate the Russian imperial project.

Karamzin’s imperial rhetoric makes Bākīkhānūf’s engagement with him all the more striking. By contrast with Karamzin, Bākīkhānūf offers a vision of cosmopolitan community rooted in the cosmos rather than the nation. Even when he concurs with Karamzin in celebrating the Treaty of Gulistān, Bākīkhānūf’s cosmopolitanism is cosmological rather than nationalist. Rejecting the omnipotent angle of vision fostered by history written from the perspective of the state, Bākīkhānūf describes contacts and exchanges instead of conquests and battles. His historiographic method is particularly apparent at the end of the text, which is devoted to poets from the Caucasus. The cosmopolitanism that informs Bākīkhānūf’s conception of place generates a mode of thinking about community that is non-territorial and non-national and as such epitomizes the Persianate literary legacy.²¹

Karamzin’s territorial approach to history is problematized within Bākīkhānūf’s historical method. To Karamzin’s historicism, Bākīkhānūf counters with scientific cosmology. He counters Karamzin’s nationalism with the injunction to the erstwhile historian to avoid fanaticism (*ta’aṣṣub-i millat*) and to resist partisanship toward one’s own country (*ṭarafdārī-yi waṭan*) (*Gulistān* 2). Both points recall Bayhaqī, yet now there is a greater emphasis in Bākīkhānūf on the scientific method as refracted by modernity. Keeping faith with the poetic forms through which the past is mediated to the present, Bākīkhānūf rejects Karamzin’s dictum that “history is not a novel [*istoriia ne roman*]” (*Istoriia* xv). He insists on the literary status of

²¹ For another perspective on Persian poetry’s contribution to thinking beyond the nation, see Gould, “Hard Translation.” Also compare the analysis of the *Ātishkadah*, a *tazkirah* by Luṭf‘Alī ibn Āzar Baygdīlī (d. 1781) by Kia, who argues that while this text “seeks to map poets onto geography” there are many junctures in which “place has a secondary role as a marker of origin” (104).

historical events, while also treating poetry as evidence. The modern historicist construction of poetry as the opposite of evidence that was already gaining ground in Karazmin, and which was to inform subsequent Rankean historiography, was alien to Bākīkhānūf's historical imagination.

In his efforts to envision communal belonging outside the framework of the nation, and outside the world constructed by colonialism, Bākīkhānūf found that the Persian texts from eras past came to his aid. He crafted a uniquely cosmopolitan cosmology that was as historical as it was literary by conjoining Islamic science, poetry, and the new nationalist historiography, with the new astronomy he gleaned from Russian sources. Bākīkhānūf's cosmological cosmopolitanism is a combined product of the empiricism of modern science and classical Persian aesthetics. In contradistinction to the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism promulgated by Karamzin, Bākīkhānūf's geography resists the seamless boundaries of territorial nation-states.

Bākīkhānūf's geography elaborates a conception of Persianate identity broader than that captured by a single language. His Caucasus comprises "a mixture of all human groups" (*Gulistān* 252) and is characterized by the "intermingling of peoples" (*mamzūwaj-i ahlī*) (17). Alongside his cosmological cosmopolitanism that emphasizes continuities in time over contiguities in space, Bākīkhānūf follows in the footsteps of the Persian travellers Mīr 'Abd al-Laṭīf Shūshtarī (d. 1805) and Tafazzul Ḥusayn Khān (d. 1800), whose journeys across the world in search of knowledge engaged critically with European scientific norms (Tavakoli-Targhi 1–17). Like these authors, Bākīkhānūf's synthesis of poetry and history resists nationalist paradigms that erect borders around identities.

Bākīkhānūf's cosmological cosmopolitanism is realized through a deep textual lineage: from antiquity to the present, from Arabic to Persian, and from a seemingly placeless Persianate geography to a strikingly local and provincial Caucasus. Although he traveled throughout the Russian empire and its bordering domains in an official capacity as translator for the Russian state, Bākīkhānūf's travels did not shape his thinking as fundamentally as did what he read at home. Bākīkhānūf's intellectual biography substantiates Paolo Sartori's assertion that among Muslims of the Russian empire, salient connections were forged "across compositional genres" as well as across polities (227). Persianate Central Asia and the Caucasus were linked by the literary forms their authors chose to work within as much as by the imperial formation that linked them politically. The deterritorialized literary community that comprised Persophone cosmopolitanism "transcended actual acquaintance, political loyalties, social ties . . . and ethnic commonalities . . . to create lineages based on poetic sensibilities" (Kia 90).

Generating Wonder in the Caucasus

Among the distinctive features of Bākīkhānūf's merger of poetry and history is its use of a mountainous topography to generate wonder. Bākīkhānūf builds here on the rich 'ajā'ib (*mirabilia*) tradition in both Arabic and Persian.²² Collectively, this tradition represents the Caucasus, alongside other exotic geographies such as

²² For a recent study of this genre, see Hees.

Hindustan, as a space beyond national geography.²³ Having drawn on the Caucasus in developing his cosmological cosmopolitanism, Bākīkhānūf perceived how its geography could also structure a distinctive understanding of the relationship between poetry and history.

As his narrative draws to a close, Bākīkhānūf returns to the methodological reflections with which he opened, while shifting away from history and toward the genre of the commemorative compendium (*tazkirah*), through which poetry was transmitted to Persian readers.²⁴ Bākīkhānūf’s *tazkirahs* in miniature include biographical introductions to and lengthy quotations from the oeuvres of poets chosen by region, era, or other relevant rubrics. He introduces the “people of the province of Shirvan who are masters of composition [*ṣāheb-i ta’līf*] or who have other virtues that merit description” (*Gulistān* 252). The vast majority of these figures are poets, and, as might be expected given the geographic focus, the list is illustrious. It includes Khāqānī (cited above), Falakī, Niẓāmī, Mahsatī, Abū’l ‘Alā Ganjevī, and Mujīr al-Dīn Baylaqānī (252–66). After exhausting the catalog of poets from times past, Bākīkhānūf embarks on the lengthiest entry. Symptomatically for a text concerned with the creation of new knowledge and new ways of knowing, this entry is dedicated to the author himself.²⁵

Referring to himself in self-deflecting Persian style as “a poor soul [*bī bizā‘at jānī*],” Bākīkhānūf describes how his prodigious erudition and multilingual fluency attracted the attention of General Ermolov, commander in chief of the Russian armies in the Caucasus from 1817 to 1827. In the annals of Caucasus historiography, Ermolov is known for promoting a policy of “ruthless expansion that soon turned the region into a cauldron of anti-Russian resistance” (Khodarkovsky 44). Bākīkhānūf’s suggestion of a different side to Ermolov’s character signals another departure by the author from the norm. Bākīkhānūf recalls how Ermolov employed him in government service as an interpreter in Tiflis, where he learned to read and write in Russian (*Gulistān* 280). His position in the colonial administration required him to travel throughout the regions (*wilāyāt*) of Shirvan, Armenia, Daghestan, Cherkessia, and Georgia, as well as to the Ottoman Empire, Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania, and Poland (280).²⁶

In spite, or perhaps because, of having been introduced to “scholars of great fame of Europe” (*Gulistān* 281), and to wondrous lands, in each of which he added to his experience (*tajrubah*), Bākīkhānūf’s exposure to the world taught him that “the high positions of the world are in fact extremely low” (281). “Our great accomplishments,” Bākīkhānūf philosophizes in rhyming prose, “are mere products of nothingness” (281). Consistent with *saj‘*, a form of prose that borrows from the associative structures of poetry (as well as the Quran), Bākīkhānūf’s rhymed prose semantically conjoins “property” (*māl*) and “condition” (*hāl*) to “destruction”

²³ The best-known text in this tradition is Zakariyyā’ b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt*, on which, see Zadeh.

²⁴ For an overview of this genre, see Gulchīn Ma‘ānī.

²⁵ This same structure, a *tazkirah*-esque summary of local intellectual life followed by an encapsulated authorial biography, was later deployed by the Daghestani writer Ḥasan al-Alqadārī, who consciously modeled his *Athār-i Dāghistān* on Bākīkhānūf’s *Gulistān*.

²⁶ Bākīkhānūf’s travels are discussed in Keremov.

(*zevāl*).²⁷ Recollecting the reversals of fortune that he witnessed over the course of his life propels Bākīkhānūf toward his conclusion. Bākīkhānūf embraces history as example and poetry as evidence rather than isolating scientific inquiry from the imagination. “In that our wealth is subject to destruction, our freedom and power are subject to change,” Bākīkhānūf reasons, only “education and culture [*‘ilm o adab*]” can be depended on to cultivate ethical selves (281).

Per Bākīkhānūf, science confers stability amid social upheaval. Cosmology sustains Bākīkhānūf’s historical imagination, which diverged as substantively from its Enlightenment precedents as it did from the nationalist forms of historical discourse that followed. Whereas Karamzin glorifies the state, Bākīkhānūf’s cosmology is informed by a cosmopolitan Caucasus that was never, until it came under Russian rule, in thrall to any single empire, and which until the Soviet period was not subject to a totalizing nation-based understanding of its space. The geographic expansiveness of the pre-Soviet Caucasus results in part from the Persianate conceptions of community and identity that inform Bert Fragner’s conception of “Persophonie.”

Much more than a battleground for imperial ambitions, as in the vast majority of colonial (and indeed precolonial) histories, the Caucasus for Bākīkhānūf is a place (*maḥal*) of wonders (*Gulistān* 15), a mountain full of wonders (16), and an abode (*dīyār*) full of wonders (29). In contrast to Qazwīnī and other medieval authors working in the *‘ajā’ib* tradition, Bākīkhānūf’s conception of wonder deploys the new scientific methods associated with the Copernican system. Recalling his predecessors whose musings about the Caucasus were unsubstantiated by evidence, or based on outmoded conceptions of science, Bākīkhānūf takes to task their rendering of this region as a geography situated “at the end of the civilized world” (15) and populated by demons and fairies (*dīvān o parīyān*). In an age of world travel, where readers and authors alike travel “to the far corners of the world” and traverse “the western and eastern hemispheres,” Bākīkhānūf rejects the tendency, prevalent in the writings of both Islamic and European travelers to the Caucasus, to treat this region as an empty receptacle for myth and fantasy.²⁸ He thereby moves beyond much conventional travel literature by rejecting an epistemology grounded in an exoticizing framework. For exoticism and fantasy, Bākīkhānūf’s cosmological cosmopolitanism substitutes scientific knowledge. Without disdaining wonder, Bākīkhānūf asks his readers to use poetry to nuance rather than simplify their understandings of place. By historicizing wonder, Bākīkhānūf gives narrative priority to a long history of cultural exchange over ethnic animosity (between for example Armenians and Azeris) in his broad narrative of Caucasus history.

Epistemic cosmopolitanism and cultural cosmopolitanism converge increasingly as his narrative progresses. Bākīkhānūf fittingly concludes his narrative of Shirvan and Daghestan, as well as the story of his life, with a poem, composed by himself, that argues for poetry’s capacity to generate new styles (*tarh-i now*) and to offer lessons to the future by transforming old designs (*rasm-i kuhan*) (*Gulistān* 282):

²⁷ For *saj’* in classical Arabic oratory, see Jones 95–97.

²⁸ For European travel literature, see Knut Hamsun’s *In Adventure Land* (*I Æventyrland*, 1903), published in English as *In Wonderland*; and Alexandre Dumas, *Adventures in Caucasia* (originally: *Impressions de voyage: Le Caucase*). Older Islamic examples are discussed in Gould, “Modernity of Premodern Islam.”

گر نکند کلک بدایع‌نگار
 طرح نو از رسم کهن آشکار
 کیست ز اسلاف نشانی دهد
 تحفه به اخلاف نهد یادگار

If the wondrous pen does not inscribe
 a clear new style from the old,
 who can give the account of the ancestors
 as a remembrance gift to their descendants?

The purpose of histories such as his own, Bākīkhānūf implies in these and other concluding verses, is to transcend passing fashions with an example inspired by gleanings from the past. Notably, the poet’s pen (*kilk*) is as wondrous, and indeed as cosmopolitan, as are the geographies traversed by his work.

Two contradictory goals drive Bākīkhānūf’s *Garden*. In the first instance, Bākīkhānūf wishes to shine a light on recent events. In the second instance, he generates a text that will signify across time, and for a distant audience. Bākīkhānūf’s title, *Gulistān-i Iram*, condenses this duality of purpose. At its most literal, *gulistān* evokes a rose-garden, the archetypal symbol in Persian poetics for order and harmony (see Subtelny; and Husain esp. 87–113). At the same time, the word *gulistān* names both the village where the treaty that ratified Azerbaijan’s incorporation into the Russian empire was signed and the famous text on ethics and self-fashioning by the poet Sa’ dī of Shiraz (1210–91), which exemplifies the *akhlāq* genre.

Bākīkhānūf merges the imaginary and the historical qualities of his garden. “The earthly garden [*gulistān-i iram*],” he begins by explaining, “is situated near Mount Qāf” and is “full of streams and fruit-bearing trees” (*Gulistān* 15). Linking the imagination to history, Bākīkhānūf adds that “some say that Gulistān-i Iram is the place called Gulistān in Qarabagh, where the treaty [*‘ahdnāmah*] between Russia and Iran was signed in the year 1228 [=1813]” (15). Implicitly, these words activate the Quranic meaning of Iram as an earthly paradise, inhabited by the people of ‘Ād, “possessors of lofty buildings, / the like of which were not created in the [other] cities” (Q. 89: 6–9).²⁹ Particularly important in this context are the earthly associations of Iram, an unknown city that some scholars have linked to ancient cities such as Alexandria or Damascus. As a result of such (unconfirmed) linkages, Iram has a historicity lacking in non-earthly paradises. Persian authors prior to Bākīkhānūf capitalized on Iram’s historical associations, including Mīrzā Aqbal, who served at the court of Tipu Sultan (r. 1782–1799) in the Carnatic region of southern India and described the Sultan’s garden (*Bāgh-i Iram*) in a treatise on the subject, and the Urdu poet Shāh Musta‘ān, who used the *Iram* motif in his Urdu abridgement of Rūmī’s *Masnawī*.³⁰ Iram’s historicity assisted Bākīkhānūf in his efforts to link poetics to scientific cosmology.

In composing *Garden*, Bākīkhānūf grafted onto Persian and Arabic history the methodologies he gleaned from Karamzin and other modern European historians. Yet his approach was reflexive and transformative. Enriched by European norms, styles, and values, he transformed these methods through his expertise in

²⁹ For the possible historical correspondents for the Quranic Iram, see Glidden. For Iram in Persian poetry, see Meisami, “World’s Pleasance.”

³⁰ Mīrzā Aqbal, *Aḥwāl-i bāgh-i Iram* (India Office Library #2813, fol. 76–80) and Shāh Musta‘ān, *Bāgh-i iram* (Bangalore: Maṭba‘-i Firdausī, 1874).

Persian genres and Islamic historical traditions. Long before the project of provincializing Europe became a battle cry within the academy, Bākīkhānūf provincialized European historiography, not in the sense of making it marginal (as per Chakrabarty) but in the sense of expanding its range of meanings to accommodate the Caucasus. In Persianizing European knowledge and Europeanizing the Islamic historiographic tradition, Bākīkhānūf made the literatures within which he worked legible to a much wider audience, many of who later accessed his work in Russian translation.³¹

Cosmological Cosmopolitanism after Colonialism

Among the most interesting aspects of Bākīkhānūf's *Garden* is its rich tsarist-era and Soviet reception history. Although it has not been substantively discussed in English, Bākīkhānūf's *Garden* is arguably the most influential, and certainly the most original, work of history composed in the nineteenth century Caucasus. Its influence is attested through its incorporation into two key modern histories of Daghestan, in Azeri Turkish and Arabic, respectively: Ḥasan al-Alqadārī's *Vestiges of Daghestan* (1894/5) and Nadhīr al-Durgilī's *Stroll through the Minds of the Generations of Daghestan Scholars* (c. 1935). The work's multilingual impact suggests the need for rethinking the relation between Persophone and Persianate literary traditions. Bākīkhānūf's hybrid text inculcates a Persian ethos to a variety of non-Persian authors and audiences, in many cases motivating these authors to conceptualize the history of the Caucasus in more cosmopolitan terms.

Bākīkhānūf's history was written in a context that clashed sharply with the world within which it was received. New borders were introduced into Persianate culture during the late Qajar period, along with an "historical consciousness attuned to . . . Iranian nationalism" (Amanat 4). When he treated poetry as evidence and history as example, and developed a non-national and non-territorial cosmopolitan cosmology, Bākīkhānūf chronicled a juncture in space and time that was on the threshold of radical transformation. Persian authors who followed in Bākīkhānūf's wake, above all Faṭḥ-ʿAlī Mīrẓā Ākhūndzāda (1812–78), another Turkic writer from nearby Nukha, were more inclined to uncritically embrace European forms of knowledge as an alternative to Qajar backwardness.³² This embrace extended in Ākhūndzāda's case to a plan to abolish the Arabic script and replace it with his own version of the Latin alphabet (Ākhūndzāda, *Alifbā-yi jadīd va maktūbāt*). The hostility expressed by Ākhūndzāda toward Islamic learning was part of a broad campaign to replace Islamic pasts with ascendant European ideologies, which acquired particular force during the Soviet period. Finally, another thinker, Mīrẓā ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Ṭālibūf (1834–1911), who shared Bākīkhānūf's cosmopolitan outlook especially as regards modern science, also developed a unique means of challenging hegemonic concepts and ideologies through his location in the

³¹ For the Russian translation, done by the author himself but unpublished during his lifetime, see Bākīkhānūf, *Gulistan-i Iram*.

³² A significant contrast to Bākīkhānūf's idealism is the more cynical approach of Ākhūndzāda, as evidenced in his *Maktūbāt Kamāl al-Dowleh*. See Gould, "Critique of Religion as Political Critique" and "Memorializing Akhundzadeh."

Caucasus (Gould, “Dissidence”). Each of these figures in their own way developed the tradition inaugurated in 1841 by Bākīkhānūf’s *Garden*. The resistance Bākīkhānūf’s work continues to offer to nationalisms of east and west partly explains the neglect of his deterritorialized historiography, both within his lifetime by Russian readers, and in the centuries following his death, within Iranian intellectual history.

Although (or precisely because) they were never absorbed within their own time, the deterritorialized geographies that span Bākīkhānūf’s vast and variegated oeuvre can guide readers in the postcolonial post-Soviet present as we retrieve cosmopolitan forms of knowledge and experience that were silenced when colonial modes of thought, with their attendant bifurcations of poetry and the imagination, were internalized in the Caucasus. Although Bākīkhānūf’s text was in Persian, its reception helped to bring Arabic, Turkish, and Russian authors into conversation with each other. When the classical Persian tradition was superseded by Russian Orientalist learning, the readerly community that spanned Bengal to Bosnia was further torn apart. At the same time, Bākīkhānūf’s cosmological cosmopolitanism gave way to more localized channels of transmission and influence. *Garden* was read so widely across the Caucasus during the Soviet period in Russian translation, that, as Altstadt noted, the text became “imbedded in contemporary policy” (86).

The influence of this work has not diminished to this day, where it is among the most widely distributed pre-Soviet text in Baku bookstores, even when its content is censored in recognizably Soviet ways, to reinforce ethnonationalist divisions. Soviet and post-Soviet censorship focuses on Bākīkhānūf’s favorable depiction of Armenians, which has proven impossible to reconcile with current (state-backed) hostility toward Armenians in connection with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Floor and Javadi’s criticism of the Soviet edition of *Garden* speaks volumes for the epistemic limits, not only of the Soviet reception of Bākīkhānūf, but of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in general, and sheds new light on an undertheorized dimension of the lineage leading from Kant and Karamzin to Nussbaum and Benhabib. Not only did the Soviet editor not translate any of the poems in the text; “he does not even mention that he has not done so” (Floor and Javadi xvi). Most tellingly, the Soviet edition “suppresses . . . the mention of territory inhabited by Armenians, thus falsifying history” (xvi).

Such criticisms reveal how, in the Caucasus and generally, epistemic cosmopolitanism and cultural cosmopolitanism are dependent on each other. The loss of one entails the loss of the other. The more the censor clamps down on the first, the more likely the latter will be impoverished. With his *Garden*, Bākīkhānūf developed an epistemic cosmopolitanism rich in cultural content. He forged a science of history through his knowledge of the cosmos. As with the ancient Cynics who were among the first to develop this concept, Bākīkhānūf’s cosmos refers “to the world, not in the sense of the earth, but in the sense of the universal” (Appiah xiv). Bākīkhānūf is a universalist, with all that that entails, but his universalism is literary and aesthetic rather than imperial and hegemonic. Methodologically innovative and culturally cosmopolitan in the pre-Enlightenment sense, Bākīkhānūf looks beyond (and before) the territoriality of the nation-state. His work thereby anticipates recent advances in the critique of scientific knowledge by Bruno Latour, for whom the proposition of Ulrich Beck and other proponents of liberal cosmopolitanism are

marred by a limited capacity to engage with radical difference. Hence Latour's advocacy of the "cosmopolitical" in contrast to (Enlightenment) cosmopolitanism, and his kinship with Bākīkhānūf. With Latour and a range of other post-liberal scholars, Bākīkhānūf asks, in a language all his own, how the world we inhabit "can be slowly composed" (Latour 457) of our multitudinous differences.

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