


revered by her contrary brothers, and as a close political adviser and confidante of her father. In this sense, Gandhi's book also contributes to recent studies on Jahanara.² One wonders, however, why Dara's other sisters, Roshanara and Gauharara, do not feature significantly in his story. Roshanara supported Aurangzeb in the War of Succession, but no clear reason is given for her animosity toward Dara.

These minor quibbles aside, *The Emperor Who Never Was* is a superbly crafted, engrossingly written, compellingly argued book that is a landmark contribution to the histories of Mughal India, Sufism, and Persian literature. Academics and lay readers alike will delight in its lucid prose, attention to detail, and careful, sensitive examination of several underused archival sources, including Dara's first *muraqqa* or album (1633), his *Samudrasamgama* (1655), and Tawakkul Beg's *Nuskha-yi Ahwāl-i Shāhī* (1666). In weaving a complex tapestry of South Asia in the seventeenth century, Gandhi accomplishes much more than a mere biography of Dara Shukoh: her anecdotal style brings to life court intrigues, battle scenes, epistolary exchanges, meditations on Indic and Islamic philosophy, nuances of the Sufi *pīr-murīd* (master-disciple) relationship, public perceptions of sovereignty, and skillfully interpreted poetry and paintings. Dara Shukoh's story has had many afterlives in South Asia, but this monograph is testament to the power of timely, persuasive scholarship in reshaping popular imagination.

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Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism. Mana Kia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020). Pp. 336. \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9781503611955

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Books begin with their titles. My first task is always to translate the title of a book into Persian. Here I asked myself, "How would 'we' render *Persianate Selves*?" The term Persianate resists a clear-cut translation, primarily because it delineates a more expansive meaning than the term "Persian." *Fārsī-zabān*¹ (Persian-speaking), which is considered the closest equivalent to "Persianate," restricts its conceptual framework to the spoken language. Marshall Hodgson, who coined the term "Persianate," reminds us that not all the people in the "Persianate zone" spoke Persian. Other translations such as *Qalamrow-i zabān-i fārsī* for "Persianate world"² also duplicate the words or cannot be applied to other adjective phrases like Persianate languages/culture or Persianate studies³.

² See Nausheen Jaffery, *Jahan Ara Begum: A Biographical Study (1614-1681)* (New Delhi: Idāra-yi Adabiyāt-i Dehlī, 2011); Afshan Bokhari, *Imperial Women in Mughal India: The Piety and Patronage of Jahanara Begum* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2015); Muzaffar Alam, *The Mughals and the Sufis: Islam and Political Imagination in India, 1500-1750* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2021), 259-330.

¹ The Association for the Study of Persianate Societies has rendered its Persian name as *Anjuman-i muṭālī'āt-i jawāmi'ī-i fārsī zabān*. See www.persianatesocieties.org/about/.

² For more suggested translations, see Amanat, "Remembering the Persianate".

³ See Amir Arjomand, "From the Editor: Defining Persianate Studies".

The lack of a satisfying and self-evident translation is instructive here. Hodgson first developed the conceptual category of “the Persianate” in order to highlight the social and cultural dynamics of a premodern world that have been poorly understood today. The pronoun “we,” as in “we Persians” formulated in my earlier question, comes from the fact that I was born to Persian parents in Iran and grew up speaking Persian. According to the logic of modern nationalism tied to ethnicity, territory, and mother tongue, I call myself a Persian. However, Mana Kia’s argument serves to show that this was not the case before modern nationalism. Over the course of seven chapters, Kia argues that Persian ethnicity was not only based on blood and lineage, nor were “native” Persian speakers the only people considered to be Persian. A Persian could be anyone in the vast cultural cosmopolis stretching from the Balkans to Bengal who was associated with a set of embedded forms, acquired and circulated transregionally, in which Persian operated as a shared language. She tells us that premodern authors did not use a single term in reference to writers and speakers of Persian (e.g., Tājīk, ‘Ajām, Qizilbāsh) and that these terms were not free-standing, but were bound to specific contexts.

Kia reconceptualizes the meaning of origin and place in the context of Persian by focusing on people who lived in Iran and Hindustan in the eighteenth century. The book’s temporal focus spans between two critical events: the fall of the Safavids in 1722 and the production of Macaulay’s famous 1835 memorandum, “Minute upon Indian Education.” The former is critical because it defined the shared meaning of place and origin and brought about the construction of our modern idea of Iran, while the latter is significant since it formally began the process of displacing Persian as the language of power in the subcontinent and thus transformed shared meanings based on origin, place, and lineage (p. 20).

Kia has thoughtfully drawn on a constellation of primary sources by three interconnected generations of authors. These works, which she collectively calls “commemorative texts,” include a wide range of histories, *tazkirahs* (often translated as biographical dictionaries), travelogues, and autobiographies. To access the memoirs of Safavid times, Kia focuses on authors such as Muhammad ‘Alī Hazīn Lāhījī (d. 1766/1180) and Vālih Dāghistānī (d. 1756/1169). For the accounts of the next generation, particularly about Nadir Shah’s era, she has mostly focused on the works of Luṭf ‘Alī Āzar Baygdilī (d. 1780/1195) and ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī (d. 1784/1198). To examine memoirs of the third generation who fled the Iranian domain after the fall of the Safavids, she selected scholars such as Abū Ṭālib Khān Iṣfahānī (d. 1806/1220) and ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Shushtarī (d. 1806/1220). According to Kia, these *adibs* (bearers of *adab*), as the representative figures of different geographical places and lineages, are all Persians. She argues that their place of birth constituted only one element of their lineage alongside other types of places, such as ancestral homeland, and site of study or profession, which assumed more significance than their birthplace (p. 104). Kia sees these diversities as not categorical but more “aporetic” (as formulated by Derrida): meaning, based on porous limits and permeable distinction.

Adab is a key concept for Kia. It is through Persianate *adab* that lineage, place, origin, and language gained meaning for people as a basis of identification as Persians. She understands *adab* as the aesthetic and ethical form of thinking, acting, and speaking, the epistemological ground on which Persians identified themselves. In other words, perceiving, desiring, and experiencing *adab* provided the coherent logic of being Persian. Through *adab*, space turned into place, and place obtained a moral meaning (p. 96). It was through the logic of *adab* that relations between selves and collectives became intelligible (p. 100), lineage was understood (p. 102), and language was deployed. *Adab* regulated an understanding of kinship distinct from blood and situated Persians ontologically in a world of relationships (p. 200).

The centrality of the term *adab* in the main argument of the book begs a deeper and broader historical examination of the term, especially the differences that Persianate *adab*—as portrayed in Pahlavi sources, *Shāhnāma*, and *andarz* literature—may have had with the modalities of *adab* in the broader Islamicate world. Kia does not directly speak about the limitations and boundaries of *adab*. Therefore, greater clarity on the interplay of

aesthetics and ethics within the discourse of *adab* would have further strengthened her argument. Specifically, how did different manifestations of *adab* function in the process of being transregionally Persian? Also, the reader may wonder what could be considered as the counter-*adab*. That is to say, upon what basis did Persianate *adab* mark certain people as *bī-adab* (who lacks *adab*) and certain attributions and behaviors as *bī-adabāna* (lacking *adab*)?

Besides the term *adab*, throughout the book, Kia revisits many emic terms such as Turan, Hindustan, and Timurids, which, despite being approximate and contextual-based, resurrect the broader interpretations of place and origin before nationalism. In addition to the multifarious arguments in favor of the Persianate hermeneutic of *adab*, Kia also offers a novel approach to reading Persianate biographical literature (*tazkirah*). She highlights a conventional method and structure of remembering the past between the authors of commemorative texts. Apart from commenting on the lives of notable figures, Kia shows us how these texts served as means by which authors identified themselves and claimed their affiliations. Biographers represented certain pasts and certain individuals in a specific way within which their lineages and social relationships were nested, and they did so based on the epistemology of Persianate *adab*.

Kia has managed to develop and justify her argument and recover premodern configurations of identity and sociability that have been displaced by modern nationalism. *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin before Nationalism* is a strong addition to the burgeoning field of Persianate studies and a product of excellent primary source research, particularly beneficial for scholars of Persian literature, Middle Eastern and South Asian studies, Islam, and transnationalism. Overall, Kia's novel insights and approaches locate *Persianate Selves* among the books that will generate lasting conversations in the field, as suggested by the name of its author, *mānā* (perpetual).

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Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900. Kevin L. Schwartz (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). Pp. 233. \$100.00 hardcover. ISBN 9781474450843

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Kevin L. Schwartz's *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900* takes a fresh approach to discussing the "literary return" (*bāzgasht-e adabi*) school of poetry that reached its zenith at the Qajar court of Fath 'Alī Shāh (1772–1834). Schwartz frees the discussion of this era from the framework of stylistics and nationalism and considers the concept of literary return as an extra-national phenomenon, focusing on "literary communities debating and engaging an open-ended canon according to their own social and political contexts" in Iran, Afghanistan, and India (23). In doing so, he upends the conventional scholarly narrative, shedding new light on historical details and providing a model for further research.